



KUWAIT SETS STRICT RULES FOR GRADUATIONS, SCHOOL EVENTS

Less glitz ... more grit

Co-ops eye takeover of school canteens under new proposal

By Fares Ghaleb and Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education Eng. Hamad Al-Hamad issued a circular to the directors of public, private, religious and special education schools and the educational districts, setting the official framework and standards for organizing graduation ceremonies, celebrations and various school events for secondary students.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that this move is in line with its commitment to maintain public order and promote core educational values.

According to the ministry, the circular is based on Ministerial Resolution No. 135/2025, which regulates graduation ceremonies in public and private schools. It aims to strengthen the role of schools in fostering a sense of belonging and reinforcing positive values, while ensuring the continuity of the educational process.

It underscored the need for all school administrations to comply with these general guidelines when organizing celebrations or events inside or outside school premises. Graduation ceremonies and other special occasions must take place only in the school auditorium, not the school grounds or any other venue.

It clarified that any event not included in the approved annual plan of the school requires written approval from the relevant departments in the Educational Support Services General Directorate, with endorsement from the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs.

It added that each event must have a clearly defined educational purpose that supports the curriculum or promotes ethical, national or educational values.

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Photo by Rezk Tawfik

On the last day of April, the Kuwait Towers rise against a hazy skyline, marking the quiet turn from spring warmth to summer heat.

Kuwait weather turns pages as sun and drizzle to share weekend stage

KUWAIT CITY, April 30 (KUNA): The Meteorological Department forecasts the country to be affected by chances of light scattered rain starting Friday morning, with weather generally ranging from warm to hot during the day and moderate at night over the weekend.

The acting Director of the department, Dhirar Al-Ali, explained to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the

weather on Friday will be warm and partly cloudy during the day with a chance of light scattered rain, while at night it will be moderate with some scattered clouds and a chance of light rain.

On Saturday, the weather will be warm during the day with some scattered clouds, while at night it will be moderate.



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the Prime Minister chairs a high-level meeting on FATF compliance efforts and financial integrity reforms.

Kuwait PM leads FATF compliance drive

KUWAIT CITY, April 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chaired Thursday a meeting on Financial Action Task Force (FATF) observations and requirements.

The meeting discussed ways to support integration and strengthen coordination and follow-up mechanisms among relevant government entities, ensuring compliance with anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing frameworks and reflecting

Kuwait's commitment to international standards within set timelines.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Justice Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Khaled Boodai, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Also attending were Advisor to the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Dr. Basel Humoud Al-Sabah, Central Bank

Governor Basel Ahmad Al-Haroun, Acting Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Al-Sabah, Head of Fatwa and Legislation Salah Ateeg Al-Majed, Chairman of the Financial Intelligence Unit Dr. Hamad Khaled Al-Mekrad, and officials from the Ministry of Interior, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Public Prosecution's Financial Crimes Department.

Capital projects reviewed as MPW minister urges speed

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan conducted an inspection tour of the Capital Governorate to follow up on the progress of important projects being implemented by the ministry.

The tour included several work sites, where she monitored progress rates firsthand and reviewed the main challenges facing implementation teams.

Dr. Al-Mashaan stressed the need to accelerate the pace of work and adhere to established timelines, while maintaining the highest standards of quality and safety.

During the tour, Dr. Al-Mashaan affirmed that the ministry is continuing to implement its development plans according to a clear vision aimed at improving infrastructure and enhancing its efficiency to meet the needs of citizens and residents.



MPW photo

Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan during an inspection tour of the Capital Governorate.

She stressed that the current phase requires intensified efforts and coordination among various stakeholders to ensure that projects are completed according to the highest technical specifications, reflecting the ministry's commitment to providing sustainable services that enhance quality of life.

Kuwait rejects any threats to close Strait of Hormuz

NEW YORK, April 30, (KUNA): Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai voiced Wednesday Kuwait's categorical rejection of any Iranian measures aimed at shutting down the Strait of Hormuz or disrupting international navigation.

Delivering a speech before a high-level Security Council session at the call of Bahrain to discuss the safety and protection of maritime passages, Al-Bannai stressed that international straits are shared arteries of trade and passage through which the interests of all countries pass.

He noted that the session is being held at a critical moment in which commercial or technical dimensions of the

issue of maritime navigation security go beyond to become a direct test of the international community ability to uphold international law and preserve international security and peace as well as prevent turning vital waterways into tools of political coercion or arenas of open conflict.

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the arteries of global economy as vital supplies of oil, gas, food commodities and fertilizers pass through this waterway, he said, noting that the chains of supply extending from the Arabian Gulf, Asia, Europe, Africa to the Americans are related to this Strait.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, disrupting its navigation and subjecting crossing through it to unlawful conditions are not seen as a limited regional crisis but a direct threat to international security and peace, and an attack on the right of the whole world to freedom of navigation and legal trade, Al-Bannai elaborated.

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Day by Day

REACHING Kuwait International Airport feels as difficult as reaching Malta. What is the reason behind these complicated procedures? Why must a passenger arrive four hours before departure?

At most airports worldwide, operations run smoothly even under the strictest security measures. Yet here, passengers spend nearly four hours completing procedures, part of it on foot. It almost feels as if the only remaining step is for passengers to continue walking to reach their destination.

Please simplify the procedures for travelers, or ban travel altogether.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Other Voices

Convictions, not structures, shape positions

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

In every new regional escalation, the same questions return: Where is the Arab League? What has the Organization of Islamic Cooperation done? What about other international institutions?

These are legitimate questions. But making them the center of every debate reflects a misunderstanding of how political action works. Organizations are not independent actors. They are frameworks that bring together states with different priorities, sovereign calculations, and political constraints.

The problem is not the existence of these institutions, nor their symbolic or coordinating value. The problem is treating them as the only possible path for collective action. When political action is confined to formal structures, societies often fall into passive waiting instead of searching for more flexible and effective forms of alignment.



Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

The positions taken by some Latin American states, and by European countries such as Spain and Ireland, show that convergence on just causes does not always require a single institutional umbrella. It requires clarity of conviction and the willingness to translate that conviction into a political position. Sometimes, it is more useful to stand with those who truly believe in the cause than with those who merely share a formal framework but lack the will to act.

The central question, therefore, should not be: Which organization brings us together? It should be: Who shares the same vision, and who is prepared to turn it into practical action?

Major causes are not advanced by big names, formal meetings, large delegations, or repeated statements. Real influence comes from will, clarity, and the readiness to bear the cost of a position.

The point is not to abandon existing institutions, but to abandon the illusion that they are sufficient. Institutions do not create impact simply by existing. When there is no will, structures cannot compensate. When conviction exists, more effective spaces of action can emerge beyond traditional frameworks.

Telecom works for 7 exchanges

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The Ministry of Communications announced that the maintenance works in seven telephone exchanges are scheduled for next week - from midnight to 6:00 am starting Sunday until Thursday.

The ministry disclosed these telephone exchanges include Hawally, Kuwait City, Shuwaikh, Ras Al-Salmiya, Sabahiya, Riqqa and Qurain.

Meanwhile, the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) rejected the proposal of the ministry to award a three-year contract worth KD1.888 million for fire alarm and firefighting systems.

The tender, which covers supply, installation, testing and maintenance, was initially recommended for the lowest bidder that met all the criteria.

CAPT cited the failure to meet the technical specifications as the reason for rejection and it will evaluate other bids before presenting a new recommendation.

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Kuwait, Egypt pursue wider collaboration across sectors

KUWAIT CITY, April 30, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Mousherji discussed Thursday, with Egypt's Ambassador

to Kuwait Osama Abu El-Wafa ways of enhancing bilateral relations across various fields.

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Cabinet Affairs photo

Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Mousherji receives Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Abu El-Wafa.



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:42 Asr 15:21
 Sunrise .. 05:08 Maghrib .. 18:24
 Zohr 11:45 Isha 19:47

Kuwait rolls out recipe to invigorate economy

Private sector role vital, must create jobs for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT CITY, April 30, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refaei outlined Thursday a roadmap to stimulate economy, enhance financial sustainability, create greater and more sustainable job opportunities for national workforce in the private sector.

In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Minister Al-Refaei reviewed the key features of the government's direction to stimulate the economy.

These include increasing the private sector's contribution to development projects, strengthening partnerships with it, accelerating administrative processes for government projects, supporting infrastructure and improving services' efficiency.

He noted the recent stimulus measures launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) for local banks in light of ongoing geopolitical developments aimed to support sustainability of economy and financial stability.

Spending

The Minister also pointed to increased spending on investment due to expanded implementation of strategic projects in construction and development.

Al-Refaei attributed government's approach to stimulating economic activity to current regional developments and was based on multiple tracks: financial and executive measures that complement the stimulus package introduced by CBK on March 26, 2026, as part of its ongoing monitoring of geopolitical developments, support for continued credit flow to various sectors and boosting economic activity.

He explained that the government measures include continuing capital spending directed at development projects, focusing on completing ongoing projects, strengthening partnerships with the private sector and accelerating procedures for government projects.

He also pointed to efforts to reform and develop the regulatory framework governing private sector work to enhance its capacity to hire more citizens, expand economic opportunities and new sectors aligned with Kuwait's labor market output.

The Minister emphasized support for private sector's participation in development projects, contributing to sustainable job creation for citizens and increasing the sector's role in national economy.

He praised CBK's recent measures, which granted banks greater flexibility in liquidity and capital adequacy requirements.



Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refaei

These measures also directed banks and supervised companies to deal positively with customers affected by geopolitical developments by easing financial pressures, including allowing deferral of obligations within approved credit policies, thereby supporting economic sustainability and financial stability.

Al-Refaei said CBK's stimulus package included supervisory instructions and macroprudential tools related to liquidity requirements and capital adequacy ratios, enhancing the resilience of the banking sector, ensuring stability and supporting local economic activity.

He noted CBK's instructions included reducing liquidity standards applied to banks - such as liquidity coverage, net stable funding ratio and supervisory liquidity ratio - raising limits on cumulative gaps in the liquidity system, increasing maximum financing limits and releasing part of the precautionary capital buffers within the capital base.

Instructions

He added that the Financing and Liquidity Law, issued on March 26, 2025, in line with Decree No. 60 of 2025, provides the state with an additional tool to support liquidity and direct resources toward development projects, infrastructure and growth-supporting activities, alongside CBK's recent measures aimed at enhancing flexibility of local banking sector and its capacity to finance economic activity while maintaining financial stability.

The Minister said the increase in investment spending in the current budget was due to expanded implementation of strategic construction and development projects. These include Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, the expansion of the Umm Al-Haiman wastewater treatment plant,

the Kabd North wastewater treatment plant, the expansion of Kuwait International Airport (Terminal 2) and related roads' development.

He added that projects also include expansion of the State Audit Bureau building, completion of the Kuwait Cancer Center project, major maintenance works for essential contracts, and electricity capacity enhancement projects at Sabbiya power plant using combined cycle systems. These directions reflect support for infrastructure, improved public service efficiency and enhanced productivity in vital sectors.

Regarding financing the current fiscal year (2026-27) budget amid disruptions in oil supplies, he said such situations are handled according to legal frameworks, particularly Law No. 31 of 1978, which allows recourse to the state's general reserve to cover any deficit. He noted that management of this reserve falls under the Kuwait Investment Authority.

Prepared

On whether the current budget continues using the same oil price estimates despite recent volatility, he explained the budget was prepared based on an institutional methodology approved by the Supreme Budget Committee under Ministerial Resolution No. 71 of 2016, using conservative estimates that account for oil market fluctuations, ensuring financial sustainability and stable financial planning taking into consideration short-term changes.

He stated that adjusting budget estimates during the fiscal year was subject to legal and procedural controls, making continued use of approved estimates the most efficient administrative and financial option, while allowing flexibility to address developments through public finance management tools.

He added that any differences resulting from changes in oil prices or production levels were addressed in the state's final statements, determining whether there was a surplus or deficit compared to projections, reflecting actual oil revenue performance during the fiscal year.

Regarding the Deposit Guarantee Law for local banks, the Minister affirmed that Law No. 30 of 2008 was a key pillar supporting financial stability. It enhances confidence in the banking system and reduces the risk of deposit withdrawals during crises, especially in light of global financial crises that may weaken depositor confidence in banks' ability to meet obligations.

The draft state budget for fiscal year 2026-27 includes estimated revenues of 16.3 billion Kuwaiti dinars (approximately USD 53.1 billion), expenditures of KD 26.1 billion (about USD 85 billion), an expected deficit of KD 9.8 billion (around USD 31.9 billion), and capital KD spending of 3.1 billion (about USD 10.1 billion).



Dr. Salah Bouresli



Abdul Latif Al-Ahmad



Hajjaj Boukhadour

Decline in 2025 funds fraud to positively impact budget

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Accounting and economic experts affirmed that the decline in public funds embezzlement cases in 2025 will positively impact the State budget in the coming years and improve the ranking of Kuwait in the global Corruption Perceptions Index.

In an exclusive interview with the newspaper, these experts explained that pursuing those who misappropriate public funds will not, by itself, resolve the budget deficit. However, reducing such incidents is an essential step within the broader State efforts to ease the deficit burden, particularly in light of the anticipated increase in the current deficit due to the suspension of Kuwaiti oil and petroleum product exports following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Economist and former member of an investigative committee Hajjaj Boukhadour pointed out that the announcement of the Public Prosecution about the decrease in the number of public funds embezzlement cases in recent years is a significant and encouraging development.

He said 73 cases were recorded in 2025, compared to around 221 in 2024. He stressed that the rate of public funds theft in the past was extremely high, referring to a previous case in which he participated as a member of the investigation committee. He revealed that the amount stolen in that case alone reached KD200 million, leading to total losses of more than KD800 million.

He also cited the case related to Kuwaiti foreign investments several years ago, the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) case earlier, and numerous other incidents that occurred previously. He disclosed that the cumulative value of these thefts is immeasurable and amounts to billions.

Investments

On the impact of the reduction of embezzlement cases on the State budget, Boukhadour asserted that it contributed to the ongoing efforts to support the budget, minimize waste, deter offenders, increase productivity, reduce expenses, solidify operations and improve service performance.

He called for the creation of a specialized court for protecting public funds, similar to the Family Court and other specialized judicial bodies, alongside the need to modernize legislation related to safeguarding public funds.

Meanwhile, accounting expert Abdulatif Al-Ahmad stated that the decline in public funds embezzlement rates reinforces the State budget, which has been facing deficits in recent years. He referred to the

estimated deficit in the 2026/2027 fiscal year budget, which reached KD9.8 billion.

He added that halting the embezzlement of public funds will not eliminate the projected or actual deficit, particularly due to the Iran war, which resulted in the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the stoppage of Kuwaiti oil and petroleum product exports. He emphasized, however, that continuous protection of public funds from theft remains vital in supporting the State budget.

Decisiveness

Dr. Salah Bouresli, former head of the Kuwaiti Contractors Association, indicated that corruption and embezzlement in the sector have taken multiple forms, including awarding projects without proper execution, which later necessitated re-tendering. He clarified that although not all contracting companies were involved in corruption, a limited number were responsible.

He stressed that the current period should be described as an "era of decisiveness," highlighting that Kuwait is undergoing a new phase of reform aimed at eliminating all forms of corruption. He asserted that the State budget is expected to recover in the coming years as a result of curbing the misuse of public funds.

He endorsed the proposal to establish a specialized court for the protection of public funds, in addition to revising all economic legislation to strengthen oversight of such funds.

He underscored the importance of closing loopholes exploited by those who misappropriate public money, adding that the reduction in embezzlement cases will help ensure the sustainability of the finances of the country. He also pointed out that recovering stolen funds will increase government revenues and enhance the liquidity of the Ministry of Finance.

He revealed that among the measures taken by the State to combat the misuse of public funds are tightening oversight of companies, ensuring adherence to electronic filing systems, continuing legal prosecutions, and eliminating all forms of corruption, including bribery and abuse of authority. He stressed that stricter oversight strengthens the rule of law and protects the financial resources of the country.

He confirmed that these efforts contributed to improving the position of Kuwait in the Corruption Perceptions Index, raising it above the global average of 42 points. "Kuwait recorded 46 out of 100 on the index in 2025, ranking 65th among 182 countries. This proves the effectiveness of its ongoing oversight measures to combat corruption," he concluded.

News in Brief

Al-Hajri promoted to rank of Colonel

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Assistant Director of the Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Saad Al-Hajri, has been promoted to the rank of Colonel as part of a series of promotions that included several officers within the ministry, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The daily extends its sincere congratulations to Colonel Abdullah Al-Hajri and all officers included in the promotions, wishing them continued success in serving the nation.

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Fraudulent offers: The Government Communication Center uploaded an awareness video on Wednesday from the National Cybersecurity Center, warning against fraudulent offers that often lead to the theft of bank account balances, reports Al-Anba daily.

The center explained that these scams appear in various forms, including messages such as "Congratulations, you've won a prize," "Your account has been suspended," or "You have a shipment package," which prompt recipients to click on a link to complete the process. However, clicking on such links can lead to the theft of banking and personal data.

The center urged the public to ignore these messages and avoid interacting with them to protect their information security.

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Fire burns two: Two Syrians, aged 30 and 38, sustained severe burns when their vehicle caught fire and was completely charred on the Fourth Ring Road, specifically the area between Jabriya and Hawally, reports Al-Anba daily.

The injured were rushed to the nearest hospital. A security source stated that a team from the Investigation Unit at Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) started investigations to determine the cause of fire.

Meanwhile, a source from KFF reiterated the importance of checking radiator water levels, conducting regular vehicle maintenance, and inspecting electrical and mechanical systems to prevent such accidents.

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Nationality revoked: The official gazette "Kuwait al-yaum" published Decision No. 7/43/2026 issued by the Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigation, revoking the Kuwaiti citizenship of 21 individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision was based on Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments.

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Mechanic killed: A tragic accident in Naem scrapyard resulted in the death of an Asian whose vehicle fell on him while he was carrying out repair work. Security sources stated that the victim was underneath the car when it suddenly fell on him.

He was rushed to the hospital, but succumbed to his injuries shortly thereafter. Authorities launched an investigation to determine the circumstances that led to the fatal accident.

Kuwait committed to global climate action, clean energy

BEIJING, April 30, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to China Jassim Al-Najem

affirmed on Thursday Kuwait's commitment to supporting international cooperation to address climate change challenges and promote the transition toward clean energy.

His remarks came during the Green and Sustainable Development Forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, held in the Chinese city of Ningbo.

Al-Najem stressed Kuwait's keenness to

accelerate the transition toward clean energy and deepen international cooperation in sustainable energy fields, noting that Kuwait Vision 2035 represents the national framework for economic and energy transformation.

He added that the vision aims to diversify income sources and expand investment in renewable energy sectors, reaffirming Kuwait's pursuit of strengthening partnerships with China and friendly countries to build a more sustainable, secure and prosperous future.

The forum, held under the theme of implementing the Global Governance Initiative and promoting green development and sustainability, runs over two days with participation of more than 300 officials from around the world.



Al-Najem

Boubyan Bank supporting role in community initiatives hailed

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received the CEO of Boubyan Bank Abdullah Al-Tuwaijri, Executive Director of Communications and Corporate Relations Waleed Al-Saqabi, and Deputy General Manager of Public Services Yahya Al-Nasser.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Governor Sheikh Athbi praised Boubyan Bank's role in supporting community initiatives and social responsibility, as well as its contributions to community service and the promotion of volunteer work.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to cooperate in implementing a number of

community initiatives and impactful activities aimed at strengthening the partnership between the public and private sectors and contributing to the service of residents in Farwaniya Governorate.

Al-Tuwaijri expressed his pleasure at the meeting, emphasizing Boubyan Bank's commitment to supporting community initiatives and enhancing its role in the field of social responsibility.

At the end of the meeting, the attendees expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the governor for the warm reception, affirming their commitment to continuing cooperation and supporting initiatives that serve the community.



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

Other Voices

Do you wash new clothes?

By Ahmad alsarraf

Isuffered from a skin allergy that lasted for more than ten years before my condition recently improved.

Throughout that period, I went through a lot of hardship, spent a large amount of money, and consulted nearly ten doctors in both public and private hospitals in more than three countries.

In the beginning, I managed the condition with standard creams, but it eventually progressed to cortisone ointments, which did not provide any real or lasting improvement.

I was terrified when a retired dermatologist told me that most skin diseases tend to improve for a period of time and then recur, especially after my condition worsened and developed into a red rash, inflammation, and a fungal infection, accompanied by constant itching and severe pain, particularly while walking. Because of these symptoms, I was unable to sleep properly at night.

The last doctor I consulted was Dr. Ibrahim Al-Arabi, a dermatology consultant, who guided me onto the right path, which I then followed on my own based on his advice. I am deeply grateful to him.

Many people enjoy wearing new clothes, especially when they are bright and attractive. Others prefer to wash new clothes before wearing them, regardless of how appealing they look, believing they may have been handled by many people, some of whom may not have had clean hands or may have carried substances that could trigger allergies.

Dr. Susan Macek, a dermatologist at Ohio State University, says it is common for patients to report skin reactions to new clothes, especially in areas prone to friction such as the armpits, groin, waist, and neck.

In general, new clothes may contain materials that can irritate the skin or trigger allergic reactions. Dust and dirt can also accumulate during storage, handling, or while garments are being

tried on.

One of the most common causes of irritation is the chemicals used in textile manufacturing. Many clothes are treated with various substances, such as fungicides, chemical finishes, and perfumes, to reduce wrinkles, extend their lifespan, and resist stains and mold.

Although not all of these substances cause allergic reactions, dyes are a common trigger, especially azo dyes, which are frequently used on synthetic fabrics such as polyester.

The use of formaldehyde to prevent wrinkles, pesticide residues commonly found in cotton clothing, and added perfumes can cause a red, itchy rash at the points of direct contact. Infants are particularly vulnerable.

Washing clothes before wearing them can help remove some potential irritants, such as excess dyes, perfumes, and formaldehyde. However, washing does not eliminate all harmful chemicals completely.

Many of these substances can irritate the skin, including flame retardants and antimicrobial treatments used to prevent odors in some sportswear, which are designed to remain on the garment even after repeated washing. People who are sensitive to these chemicals may experience allergic reactions regardless of how often the clothes are washed.

For dry-clean-only garments, steaming or airing them out before wearing them for the first time may help reduce some perfumes or other odors.

However, this is unlikely to be effective for more durable finishes, such as wrinkle-resistant fabrics, stain-resistant treatments, and some high-performance coatings.

Dr. Macek suggested wearing a barrier layer, such as a thin cotton shirt, under new clothes that cannot be washed.

While writing this article and reviewing sources, I realized that my skin irritations were likely caused by cotton underwear and socks that I repeatedly purchased in Egypt.

We hope that dermatologists will advise their patients about the potential risks of wearing new clothes, especially those that come into direct contact with the skin, before washing them.

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 email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

'Tedious' procedures at airport raises eyebrows

"SINCE Kuwait International Airport was closed due to the Iranian aggression against Kuwait, many have been wondering when it will reopen, especially with the approach of summer, when citizens typically travel for tourism," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"However, the greater concern should be the resumption of cargo flights and the steady flow of medicine, food supplies, and other essential goods that people rely on during crises and war-time.

"This issue has two dimensions. First, reopening the airport for tourism suggests the return of security, safety, and stability, which is a positive sign.

"The other dimension is that citizens have developed experience in adapting to new circumstances. The region has gone through a war, but thanks to wise leadership, the ability to manage exceptional situations, and national unity, we were able to emerge from this crisis with minimal losses, even though the overall picture is still unclear and stability has not yet been fully restored.

"Hopefully, the war has already settled. Thank God, we lacked nothing and felt no real hardship. Although the economy was somewhat affected and oil prices were impacted, nothing truly disrupted daily life. Our valiant army confronted the aggression with utmost competence.

"Even if the worst were to happen, Kuwaitis would remain composed. Nothing was more difficult than the Iraqi invasion of 1990.

"What is puzzling, however, is the complexity of procedures at Kuwait International Airport. I am not aware of the reasons. Since the beginning of the crisis, I have not criticized any measures, but I am surprised, especially since procedures at other airports, such as Dammam Airport, seem much simpler.

"Why must a traveler walk a long distance to reach the terminal? Why is it necessary to arrive four hours before departure? There may be technical reasons I am unaware of, so I will not comment further, but it remains a valid question.

"Thank God we are safe in Kuwait, but isn't it better to remain cautious?"



Al-Kharafi

Also:

"By mid-2025, Iran possessed about 1,000 pounds of uranium enriched to 60 percent, a level deemed sufficient for the production of nuclear weapons. So much so that U.S. intelligence stated that the Iranians were capable of producing fuel for a bomb in less than a week," columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The International Atomic Energy Agency estimated that Iran could produce enough material for nine bombs, and they appeared to be only days, not years, away from possessing a nuclear weapon.

"Now imagine what would have happened. With a nuclear-armed Iran, the Revolutionary Guard and the Houthis could control the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, posing far greater threats to ships than they do currently.

"Hezbollah would operate under a nuclear umbrella, and the Gulf states would face a stark choice - either submit or develop their own nuclear weapons.

"Saudi Arabia has already announced its intention to do so. If Iran acquires a nuclear bomb, a chain of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East could follow.

"Even more concerning, the recent war in the Gulf region aimed at weakening the Iranian regime would become far more difficult. In other words, had Iran's behavior gone unchallenged over the years, it would have been significantly harder, if not impossible, to undermine its military capabilities as is currently being attempted.

"In other words, President Trump's policy is correct. When assessing the war, which is likely not yet over, we should not only consider how it is being conducted or its consequences, but also the scenario of non-intervention.

"This is what British Minister Nadhim Zahawi, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer of Iraqi origin, wrote in an article published in 'The Telegraph' on April 14, 2026."

"There are moments when corporate social responsibility goes beyond brand promotion and becomes a reflection of social values," researcher in social sciences Dr. Randa Bahman wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The current situation in the region is one such example. However, the response from the Kuwaiti private sector has been limited.

"Unfortunately, many companies have stayed silent, despite frequently highlighting their social responsibility initiatives and despite the fact that the current circumstances require practical solutions that go beyond slogans and patriotic campaigns.

"Corporate social responsibility is measured by its relevance and timing. Periods of instability place immense pressure on families, especially parents, who are struggling to balance their professional responsibilities with supporting their children in online learning.

"This challenge is not only logistical but also carries a psychological burden and stress, which has led many parents to call for the reopening of schools.

"With nearly two decades of practical experience in classrooms, I can confirm that the impact of instability on students is clear and evident.

"Anxiety, distractibility, and mental exhaustion have become integral parts of the learning environment. Under these circumstances, calling for a full return to traditional classrooms needs to be carefully studied.

"In my view, it is not a practical step during times of uncertainty. I am satisfied with the Minister of Education's insistence on online learning, as introducing further changes to the education system under such unstable conditions only adds psychological and logistical pressure to existing challenges.

"While online learning is not a perfect solution, it does provide a necessary balance during times of instability. Although it does not replicate the structure of in-person education, online learning helps reduce the heightened psychological stress experienced by students, teachers, and administrators during such periods.

"While online learning does not replicate the structure of in-person education, it helps reduce the increased psychological stress experienced by students, teachers, and administrators during periods of instability.

"The flexibility and controlled environment of online learning can ease some of this stress, allowing individuals to interact more comfortably within their circumstances.

"Over time, this balance can produce similar outcomes. Online learning during stressful circumstances can be as effective as in-person education in stable conditions.

"At the very least, it ensures one constant - the safety of our students at home.

"This context highlights the important role of private sector institutions, as companies benefit greatly from the communities in which they operate, particularly through their employees.

"Employees face similar pressures as parents and guardians. Supporting them during these times reflects not only awareness but also genuine responsibility in difficult circumstances.

"For example, flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and adjusted expectations can significantly ease the burden, especially for employees with larger families.

"These measures require more willpower than financial resources.

"As a matter of fact, everything is interconnected; nothing exists in isolation. Exceptional times provide an opportunity for institutions to demonstrate their commitment and social responsibility.

"When actions are aligned with current circumstances, trust is strengthened in a way that cannot be achieved through temporary campaigns alone.

"Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not limited to participating in marathons or flag-raising events. Rather, it means giving back to the community from which companies benefit both materially and morally.

"Caring for people during these challenging times is the highest expression of CSR, especially when it comes to the family, which forms the basic unit of society.

"I urge all private sector companies that often highlight their CSR efforts to become pioneering leaders in this field, because our society needs resilience. Let these actions be part of companies' investment in a sustainable future for Kuwait."

- Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Meals advertised on social media

7 arrested in PAFN raid on 'home eatery'

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, discovered a private residence in Hawally that was being illegally used for the preparation of food products.

PAFN explained in a press release that the seizure was carried out in the presence of the Deputy Director General for Inspection and Control Affairs. The site was being run without obtaining a health license, and serious violations of health and public hygiene requirements were observed.

According to another source, the Criminal Security Sector, represented by the General Department of Criminal Investigations' Financial Crimes Department has shut down

an illegally operated facility inside a residential property that was being used as a central kitchen, and arrested seven workers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Security sources said the location was being used to prepare and serve meals that were promoted for sale through a social media account, in violation of Kuwait Municipality regulations and without oversight from the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN).

Following investigations and in coordination with the PAFN, authorities raided the premises. The raid revealed several violations, including employing workers without valid health certificates, failing to comply with public hygiene standards, and operating a food establishment without obtaining the required license.

The seven workers apprehended at the site were referred with the seized materials to the

Public Prosecution for legal action.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed that monitoring campaigns will continue in cooperation with relevant authorities to apprehend violators, stressing its commitment to enforcing the law to protect public health and safety.

PAFN's Mubarak Al-Kabeer Inspection Department carried out a tour of several food factories, covering all stages of production, including verification of the safety and sources of raw materials, manufacturing processes, packaging, and storage. It was aimed to ensure compliance with health and technical requirements, as well as good manufacturing practices in the production lines.

PAFN emphasized that these tours are part of its commitment to enhancing food safety and ensuring that consumers receive safe food products.

GTD partially shuts 5th Ring Road for 14 days

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The General Traffic Department announced the closure of the third left-hand express lanes on Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Road (Fifth Ring Road) opposite Qurtuba, for traffic coming from Salmiya toward Jahra, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The department clarified that the closure will begin on Thursday, April 30, and will continue for 14 days.

Mol probes hit-and-run claim in Rihab accident

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Ministry of Interior (MoI) has opened an investigation into a citizen's claim that an expatriate deliberately threw himself in front of his luxury vehicle, reports Al-Anba daily.

The injured man was taken to Farwaniya Hospital and admitted to the intensive care unit, while the driver of the vehicle was detained in connection with the incident.

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report of a hit-and-run accident in Al-Rihab. Farwaniya security personnel were dispatched to the scene, where they located the driver of the vehicle. When questioned, he stated that the expatriate, born in 1974, had intentionally thrown himself in front of the car.

The detectives intend to verify the driver's claim by reviewing surveillance camera footage to determine the circumstances of the incident.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department conducted intensive traffic campaigns in a number of governorates during the period from April 20 to April 26, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to statistics issued by the General Traffic Department, the campaigns resulted in the arrest of 48 reckless drivers and the referral of 11 juveniles to the Juvenile Prosecution. A large number of traffic violations were recorded, and violating vehicles and motorcycles were impounded in accordance with Article 207 of the Executive Regulations of the Traffic Law.

A total of 13,744 traffic violations were recorded, while 137 vehicles and 15 motorcycles were impounded. In addition, 63 individuals were apprehended for violating residency laws, and 6 individuals were found without identification. One person in an abnormal condition was referred to the relevant authorities.

Authorities also apprehended 122 individuals wanted in connection with various cases, along with 26 vehicles wanted by the judiciary. A total of 2,375 traffic reports were also processed.

The campaigns also dealt with 205 collision accidents resulting in injuries, in addition to 865 collision accidents without any reported casualties.

Traffic cops arrest two young men with drugs

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Hawally traffic officers arrested two young men found in an abnormal condition and in possession of suspected narcotics.

According to a security source, this is part of the ongoing efforts by the General Traffic Department to apprehend wanted individuals and those who violate traffic laws and regulations.

While officers were patrolling Hawally, they became suspicious of the two individuals. The suspects were immediately taken into custody, and the seized items were confiscated.

The two men have been referred, along with the recovered substances, to the relevant authorities for further investigation and legal action.

Two Kuwaiti citizens perish in 2-car crash

KUWAIT CITY, April 30 : Two Kuwaiti citizens, aged 24 and 19, died, and two others - a Kuwaiti citizen and a Gulf national aged 27 and 22 respectively - were injured in a horrific collision that occurred on Wednesday in Jahra, reports Al-Anba daily.

Security personnel and paramedics rushed to the scene, where the injured were transported to hospital for treatment of various fractures. A case of a two-vehicle collision resulting in death was registered at Taima Police Station.

Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti citizen filed a report on behalf of his sister, stating that she was struck by a vehicle in Shaab Residential area and was transported by Hawally ambulance to Amiri Hospital.

He revealed that the driver involved was a Kuwaiti citizen.

The accused, however, stated that he did not know the victim and that he was surprised when she suddenly crossed in front of him, adding that he attempted to avoid hitting her by all possible means.

Promotions to motivate staff

Sheikh Fahad congrats officers

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Many officers in various security sectors at the Ministry of Interior were promoted in line with the commitment of the ministry to fully support and motivate its staff.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusef Saud Al-Sabah on Wednesday conferred new ranks on the promoted officers in a ceremony held in the presence of Undersecretary Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, several assistant undersecretaries and heads of security sectors.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef congratulated the promoted officers, attributing their new ranks to their tremendous efforts and outstanding service in their respective roles. He stressed that the coming period demands their continuous commitment to shoulder their responsibilities and maintain discipline to guarantee national security and stability. He affirmed that the ministry personnel remain vigilant guardians of national security, working with unwavering determination and boundless dedication.

He indicated that the current phase requires the highest level of readiness and vigilance and a firm response to anything that might threaten national security, under the guidance of the wise leadership.

He added that the ministry is keen on supporting and empowering national personnel and improving institutional performance, thereby, enhancing the efficiency of the security system and to keep pace with current requirements.

The security officials, who attended the ceremony, congratulated the promoted officers and wished them success in their new duties and responsibilities.

The newspaper obtained information that the officers were promoted from first lieutenant to captain, captain to major, major to lieutenant colonel, and lieutenant colonel to colonel.



Sheikh Fahad



Al-Wuhaib

Contract annulled: The Court of First Instance annulled an investment contract between a female citizen and a real estate company, ordering the company to return KD30,000 -- the initial capital of the citizen -- after proving the company breached its contractual obligations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the case file, Attorney Ali Jawhar filed the lawsuit on behalf of the plaintiff, demanding the cancellation of the contract and to obligate the company to return the full amount that his client paid as contribution to the real estate investment project covering several countries. This was based on the failure of the company to return the capital or achieve the agreed returns.

In his lawsuit, Jawhar explained that his client paid KD30,000 as per the contract, which allows her to withdraw and recover her capital after two years. She sent a formal notice demanding the return of the amount, but the company did not respond, forcing her to resort to the court.

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Council proposes strict rules for restaurant nutrition data

Mandatory QR codes, FDA-style audits sought

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Municipal Council member Fahad Al-Abdaljader on Monday submitted a proposal to guarantee the accuracy of nutritional information presented in restaurants.

In the introduction to his proposal, Al-Abdaljader cited several justifications, specifically the rising health awareness within the community and the growing number of individuals who are calculating nutritional values like calories, protein, carbohydrates and fats as an essential component of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

He pointed out that there have been inaccuracies in the figures displayed on the menus of many restaurants, hence, the need for a clear regulatory structure to maintain reliability and trustworthiness.

He revealed that his proposal is based on leading international practices adopted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States of America and the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA). He called for its approval in coordination with SFDA, while enumerating the main goals of the proposal as follows:

□ **Prior Oversight** (approval before publication): No restaurant or café should be allowed to display or publish nutritional information on the menu without obtaining the Nutritional Label Approval Certificate, which will be based on the results of meal testing conducted through an accredited analytical software or the laboratories that



Al-Abdaljader

check the ingredients and preparation methods. Restaurants must be required to link each meal with a QR code for the consumers and regulatory authorities to access the certificate of conformity.

□ **Post-Test Monitoring and Ensuring Test Integrity:** A system of unannounced periodic inspections should be introduced, including the random sampling of restaurant meals every three months to verify the declared values. The blind testing approach should be implemented, such that samples are sent to laboratories identified only by serial numbers, without disclosing the name of the restaurant in order to prevent the manipulation of results. This is in addition to the establishment of a central laboratory affiliated with the Kuwait Municipality, or signing a contract with an accredited laboratory, to act as a regulatory body for testing random samples, particularly if blind testing cannot be carried out through private laboratories.

□ **Margin of Error and Penalty Range:** The margin of error between declared values and laboratory findings should range from 10 percent to 15 percent. Penalties for exceeding this margin are as follows:

□ **First violation:** a formal warning, along with the removal of nutritional information from menus until the re-inspection is conducted at the expense of the violating establishment.

□ **Second violation:** imposition of financial penalty under the 'commercial deception and endangering consumer health' classification.

□ **Third violation:** permanent revocation of the license to display nutritional information, with the possibility of temporarily closing the establishment.

Al-Abdaljader underscored the importance of approving the proposal immediately due to its significance in protecting public health and maintaining transparency in the local market.

Shops warned as 90 citations issued

Municipality steps up enforcement in Ahmadi

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality announced that the Audit and Municipal Services Monitoring Department in Ahmadi Governorate conducted an inspection campaign.

In a press statement, the department disclosed that the inspection teams checked the

health licenses and advertising permits of shops, took regulatory measures against violators, and ensured compliance with regulations governing shops and advertisements for all activities.

The department confirmed that the campaign resulted in the issuance of 90 citations for various violations, such as displaying advertise-

ments without a permit, adding business advertisements without a permit, and failing to renew advertising permits.

The department indicated that several inspection campaigns will be carried out in all governorates in the coming weeks according to the schedule it prepared in coordination with other concerned departments.

132 candidates nominated

Justice Ministry announces historic batch for public prosecution posts

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30:

Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait confirmed that the recent batch of candidates nominated for the position of "Junior Legal Researcher," eligible for appointment as Public Prosecu-



Al-Sumait

tors, is the largest in the history of the Public Prosecution in Kuwait.

He explained that the number of accepted candidates reached 132. This step is a response to the directives of the political leadership and falls within the state's policy aimed at fully Kuwaitizing the judiciary by 2030. Approval of this batch came after a thorough review of the admission procedures, to ensure integrity and equal opportunity among applicants, and to enhance the soundness of the selection process, the quality of outcomes, and public trust.

Salaries account for largest share

Communications Ministry budget set at KD 100.5mn

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The State Public Budget Report for the 2026/2027 fiscal year revealed that KD 100.538 million has been allocated for the expenditures of the Ministry of Communications.

This includes KD 71.041 million for employee salaries, covering all cash and in-kind allowances payable to ministry staff in all sectors.

The total amount allocated for capital expenditures reached KD 9.315 million, allocated to the ministry's projects and activities.

The budget allocated KD 18.934 million for goods and services provided by the ministry to support its operations.

Also, KD 1.248 million was allocated under the "Transfers and Others" item, representing funds for asset leasing and other miscellaneous expenses.

The ministry's estimated revenue for the same fiscal year is KD 58.920 million, derived primarily from telephone and telegraph services amounting to KD 58 million, including subscriptions and international call and telegraph fees. Postal services represent the second source of revenue, estimated at KD 920,000.

Faculty of Law exams advancing to May 2

KU, Abdullah Al-Salem University set final exams in-person starting May 9

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The Kuwait University Council has approved to conduct the final examinations for the 2025/2026 academic year in person, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to an official statement issued by Kuwait University on Tuesday, the final exam period will begin on May 9, and will follow in-person procedures in line with the applicable regulations.

The University Council also decided to shift the Faculty of Law's current final examinations to in-person format, starting Saturday, May 2, 2026.

In addition, the university confirmed that the academic aptitude test will be held in person, with further details to be announced at a later date.

The University Council confirmed that classes and semester examinations

will continue to be conducted online in all colleges and university campuses until the end of the academic year, in accordance with the approved schedules.

Kuwait University stated that it is maintaining coordination with the relevant authorities to ensure the safety of students and staff, while also preserving the stability, quality, and continuity of the educational process.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Salem University confirmed that final examinations for the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year will be held in person at all colleges.

The university clarified in a press release issued on Tuesday that classes and midterm exams will remain online until the end of the second semester, as per the approved schedules.

CSC nominates 4,567 citizens for jobs across 34 government units

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced the nomination of 4,567 citizens registered in the Central Employment System for positions in 34 government entities, in accordance with their job requirements, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

CSC explained that the nomination process was carried out based on established criteria for prioritizing candidates. Priority was given to applicants who had not previously completed the nomination process with any entity and were being nominated for the first time, followed by those who had been previously rejected by the entity to which they were first nominated, and then those who had rejected nominations more than once.

CSC confirmed that it will continue issuing new rounds of job nominations in the coming period, covering various job categories for university graduates and post-secondary diploma holders, as soon as government entities complete the electronic entry of their job requirements into the integrated civil service systems.

Regarding 250 secondary and intermediate qualification holders registered in the Central Employment System who participated in training courses held in cooperation with the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in February, CSC revealed that their nomination procedures for employment in government entities will begin immediately upon successful completion of the training course.

News in Brief

PAHW holds lottery for 34 women applicants in Sulaibiya and Taima

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: The Women's Housing Affairs Committee of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) held a lottery on Wednesday for 34 Kuwaiti women in Sulaibiya and Taima who had submitted applications for rental housing, updated their information, and received notifications through the government's Sahel application, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The committee affirmed its commitment to continue the distribution process as soon as housing units become available.

It also highlighted its keenness to preserve the rights of eligible applicants in accordance with the approved terms and regulations.

MPW continues Abdali Road paving: Ministry of Public Works announced on Wednesday that asphalt paving works on Abdali Road are being carried out in accordance with the new contracts for comprehensive road maintenance, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Meanwhile, the ministry's Maintenance Engineering Affairs Sector announced the temporary suspension of its hotline call center service No. 150, which is designated for receiving maintenance-related reports.

The ministry clarified that it continues to receive complaints and reports through the alternative number 93333150, and urged citizens and residents to use this number until the hotline service is restored.



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)		Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast		BHD 53.361 / Net
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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

Follows Council of Ministers and CSC directives, signaling administrative stability

PADA and PAAET announce return to full attendance starting May 3

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Director of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) Dr. Dalal Al-Othman issued a circular regarding the resumption of regular working hours for all employees at 100 percent capacity.

Article One of the circular stipulates the return of the official workforce at 100 percent capacity starting Sunday.

Article Two states the resumption of evening shift system.

Article Three stipulates the return of regular working hours (morning shift system) – seven hours.

Article Four mandates full compli-

ance with Civil Service Commission (CSC) Resolution No. 41/2006 on the rules, regulations and controls for official work and its amendments.

Article Five suspends the implementation of CSC Circular No. 4/2026 on determining the number of employees in government entities under the circumstances in the region and CSC Circular No. 7/ 2026 regarding the

official working hours after the holy month of Ramadan.

In addition, Sheikha Al-Azmi, Director of Public Relations and Media and the official spokesperson for the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), announced the resumption of official working hours and the return to full attendance for all employees of colleges,

institutes, and affiliated departments, effective Sunday, May 3.

Al-Azmi explained that this decision is based on the directives of the Council of Ministers and the decision of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), and comes in light of improving conditions and growing stability. This step represents an important phase towards strengthening admin-

istrative and academic stability, and reflects PAAET's readiness and that of its staff to continue work and achieve institutional goals.

She expressed her deep appreciation and gratitude to administrative staff for their dedicated efforts over the past period, which played a major role in maintaining work continuity and achieving this stability.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait, Egypt

In a statement, the Minister's Office said the meeting took place at Al-Seif Palace in the presence of Egyptian Deputy Ambassador Noura Abdulhadi.

Al-Mousherji affirmed the depth of relations between both countries, and Kuwait's keenness on maintaining joint coordination to further strengthen strategic bilateral cooperation.

Abu El-Wafa expressed pride in strong bilateral ties, affirming Egypt's diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions, resolve conflicts peacefully, and uphold international law to ensure security and stability in GCC countries.

Kuwait rejects

Turning an international strait into a political or military bargaining chip is not accepted as this destroys bases on which the rules of passage through international straits are based and undermines confidence in the entire global maritime system, he noted.

He cited international law, foremost of the UN Charter and the rules of the law of the sea, that established clear principles based on freedom of navigation, the non-obstruction of passage, and the prohibition of the use of force or threats against civilian and commercial vessels.

He highlighted the UN Security Council Resolution 522 which stressed the necessity of respecting freedom of navigation in international waters and maritime passages and the Resolution 2817 which apparently condemned acts and threats that target the obstruction of international navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Al-Bannai warned that lax enforcement of Security Council resolutions sends a dangerous message that threatening navigation may go unpunished and international trade security can be left risk-taking and coercion, calling on the Council to take practical procedures which ensure the protection of international navigation and holding accountable those who threaten it.

Kuwait, like its GCC sisterly countries and Jordan, has faced the repercussions of this escalation on its security, sover-

eignty and vital facilities, the ambassador pointed out.

He indicated that the brutal Iranian attacks are part of a dangerous approach based on expanding the scope of threats from land to sea, from civilian facilities to international waterways and from the security of countries to the security of global economy.

The security of GCC States is an integrated part and that any attacks on the sovereignty of any country of this bloc, its vital facilities or maritime passages is an assault on the security of the whole region, he affirmed.

Al-Bannai reiterated Kuwait's stance aligning with the Gulf position based on firm abidance by international law, the respect for countries' sovereignty and good-neighborliness, the rejection of interference into domestic affairs and prioritizing diplomacy.

Safeguarding the Strait of Hormuz today is the protection of a broader principle, namely that law is stronger than force; the sea is a route for communication not an arena for threats; and the security of peoples must not be held hostage to political and military adventurism, he emphasized.

Concluding the speech, Al-Bannai reiterated Kuwait's call for taking coordinated international action to restore the security of navigation, stability to the region, and the international law, and to compel Iran to halt its blatant violations of all international laws and ensure the firm enforcement of relevant Security Council resolutions without any leniency.

Telecom works

Moreover, CAPT reviewed bids for the operation and maintenance of electrical power systems in all the sites of the ministry.

In accordance with Article 40 of the Public Tenders Law, five bids were accepted, and one was dismissed.

These tenders will be referred to the ministry for technical review and present the contract award recommendations based on the standards.

Once audited by the State Audit Bureau, the ministry will implement

these projects to ensure uninterrupted electrical service in its facilities and service locations.

Less glitz ...

It stressed the need to schedule events at times that do not interfere with the academic timetable or distract students from their studies, while avoiding organizing events during examination periods or review sessions.

It indicated that public figures from outside the ministry should not be invited to sponsor events, or external entities must not be approached, without coordinating with the Educational Support Services General Directorate and obtaining approval from the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at least two weeks before the event.

It confirmed that students and their parents must not bear any cost or be asked to provide monetary or in-kind contributions to fund celebrations. Parents are allowed to attend excellence ceremonies in schools, provided that regulations are followed and appropriate arrangements are made to ensure privacy and public order.

It emphasized that photographing students during celebrations and programs is prohibited without parental consent.

Television coverage of such events by entities outside the ministry is prohibited as well, unless it is approved by the Public Relations and Educational Media Department.

Students and schools are not permitted to participate in celebrations organized by external parties without approval from the Educational Support Services General Directorate.

The ministry underscored the importance of adhering to the prescribed school uniform for students during events. When special attire is worn, it must comply with the standards of modesty and public decency.

Excessive decorations, festivities or hospitality should be avoided, along with displays of extravagance or wastefulness that conflict with the educational mission.

It is prohibited to play or display audio or visual material that contradicts the values, customs and traditions of Kuwaiti

society or promotes ideas unrelated to education.

Events connected to national or religious occasions must reflect their significance and value.

The ministry then called for the circulation of these regulations to the principals of secondary schools and ensure their strict implementation.

On the other hand, Head of the Awareness Department at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Maryam Ibrahim unveiled a plan to develop the school canteen system, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, as per the best nutritional and regulatory standards.

In a press statement, Ibrahim revealed that this step is in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 15/2025 on the school canteen regulations.

She said PAFN invited food companies wishing to supply or invest in the school canteen development project as per the regulations, indicating that the aim is to improve the quality of food services provided to students. She added that the submission of applications started on April 12 and it will continue until May 12, through the public registry of PAFN at its headquarters in Sabah Al-Salem.

She stated that applicants must fulfill the requirements, such as obtaining a letter of approval from the Educational Activities Department at the Ministry of Education, and submitting copies of the health and commercial licenses of the food establishment, as well as a copy of the civil identification card of the legal representative.

She stressed the need for companies to strictly comply with the list of food products allowed in school canteens, as stipulated in the regulations, to ensure the provision of healthy and safe options for the students.

She explained that this approach is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen partnership with the private sector and support national efforts to provide a healthy and safe school environment.

She added that PAFN remains committed to the development of the nutrition system and public health through the efficient implementation of initiatives, particularly those within the educational

environment, which is considered the pillar in building future generations.

She indicated that paying attention to the health of students is not less important than the educational process, as it is vital for ensuring excellence and healthy development through the integrated roles of all concerned parties.

In a related development, The Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS) has begun assessing the capacity of cooperative societies to manage school canteens under the Ministry of Education, according to a proposed mechanism that is still under review and subject to ongoing discussions between the relevant authorities.

According to informed sources, the mechanism has not yet been finalized.

In a letter sent by UCCS to the chairpersons of cooperative boards, it was explained that the initiative follows a meeting held at the end of last year with Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei regarding the proposed mechanism for managing school canteens. This is in addition to a previous proposal submitted to the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila.

UCCS has requested cooperative societies to demonstrate their ability to manage school canteens within their respective operational areas, in accordance with the conditions outlined in the proposal, and to provide a direct sales outlet for cooperative societies.

It also called on cooperative societies to submit official written confirmations of their approval, so that UCCS can proceed with coordinating with the relevant authorities in this regard.

The proposed mechanism involves transforming school canteens into direct sales points affiliated with cooperative societies. This includes renovating the canteens, displaying the name of the local cooperative society, and standardizing the design of kiosks and service windows in a modern and aesthetically pleasing manner, subject to obtaining the necessary approvals from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The mechanism also includes supplying the required food products in accordance with the standards of the Public Au-

thority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), with the possibility of increasing the number of permitted items in school canteens and adding fresh food and juices.

In addition, the mechanism suggests allocating a cash register linked to the cooperative society, along with a computerized system for entering shareholder numbers and calculating purchases as part of shareholder returns.

Given the large number of students, the proposal stipulates that sales will be conducted through canteen windows. The goods delivered will be held in trust by a school employee, who will be responsible for conducting a daily inventory at the end of the school day. This inventory will be registered under the name of the designated school employee.

Teachers or assigned personnel will handle direct sales to students. Cooperative society employees may be utilized if the society is capable of fully managing the canteen for a specified period.

UCCS also proposes that payments be made in cash only, with collections carried out at the end of school hours and deposited into the cooperative society's accounts on the same day or, at the latest, the following day.

The proceeds will be transferred in full to the cooperative society's account without any deductions for the Ministry of Education.

The proposal includes the installation of security cameras belonging to the Ministry of Education, to be monitored by each school. The Ministry of Education will provide the relevant investigative authorities with camera recordings in cases of shortages or suspected theft.

The proposed mechanism also suggests that, if approved by the relevant authorities, the plan would be implemented starting in the 2026/2027 academic year for a period of three years, renewable for a similar term.

The first semester of that academic year would serve as a trial period, during which weekly reports would be submitted in the first month, followed by monthly reports in the second month, in order to address any issues and develop solutions for future requirements.



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'This is a complete and total victory for American voters'

US Supreme Court weakens Voting Rights Act and aids GOP efforts to control House

WASHINGTON, April 30, (AP): The Supreme Court on Wednesday hollowed out a landmark Civil Rights-era law that has increased minority representation in Congress and elsewhere, striking down a majority Black congressional district in Louisiana and opening the door for more redistricting across the country that could aid Republican efforts to control the House.

In a 6-3 ruling, the court's conservative majority found that the Louisiana district represented by Democrat Cleo Fields relied too heavily on race. Chief Justice John Roberts had described the 6th Congressional District as a "snake" that stretches more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) to link parts of Shreveport, Alexandria, Lafayette and Baton Rouge.

"That map is an unconstitutional gerrymander," Justice Samuel Alito wrote for the six conservatives.

The effect of the ruling may be felt more strongly in 2028 because most

filing deadlines for this year's congressional races have passed. Louisiana, though, may have to change its redistricting plan to comply with the decision.

It is unclear how much of the provision - known as Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 - remains.

When he signed the bill - the main way to challenge racially discriminatory election practices - into law more than 60 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson called it "a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory on any battlefield."

In her dissent for the three liberal justices, Justice Elena Kagan wrote that the court's "gutting of Section 2 puts that achievement in peril."

Her sentiment was shared by former President Barack Obama, who said the decision showed "how a majority of the current Court seems intent on abandoning its vital role in ensuring equal participation in our democracy."



The US Supreme Court is seen in Washington on April 7. (AP)

In a statement, Fields said the decision's "practical effect is to make it far harder for minority communities to

challenge redistricting maps that dilute their political voice."

The voting rights law succeeded in

opening the ballot box to Black Americans and reducing persistent discrimination in voting. Nearly 70 of the 435 congressional districts are protected by Section 2, election law expert Nicholas Stephanopoulos has estimated.

Alito wrote that "allowing race to play any part in government decision-making represents a departure from the constitutional rule that applies in almost every other context." He said Section 2 is effectively limited to instances of intentional discrimination, a very high standard.

Kagan said the upshot of the decision is that states "can, without legal consequence, systematically dilute minority citizens' voting power."

Reaction to the decision broke along partisan lines.

"This is a complete and total victory for American voters. The color of one's skin should not dictate which congressional district you belong in. We commend the court for putting an end to the unconstitutional abuse of

the Voting Rights Act and protecting civil rights," White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson wrote in an email.

The chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee called the decision "appalling." Rep. Suzan DelBene of Washington state said it was the latest in a long line of attacks by President Donald Trump and the conservative court "against the fundamental right of every American citizen to vote."

She said Democrats remained poised to regain the House majority in November "despite this corrupt and targeted assault on the voting rights of Black and Brown Americans from the Supreme Court."

Trump had touched off a nationwide redistricting competition this year to boost Republican chances of preserving their House edge. The president said some states should redraw their maps and he called the decision the "kind of ruling I like."

Agents armed with search warrants keep focus on Minnesota in public fraud probe

MINNEAPOLIS, April 30, (AP): Federal agents executed multiple searches in Minnesota on Tuesday, seizing records and other evidence in an ongoing fraud investigation by the Trump administration of publicly funded social programs for children, authorities said.

No details about possible crimes were disclosed, though armed agents were seen at childcare centers in the Minneapolis area. KSTP-TV said one crew even had a battering ram.

The searches occurred months after right-wing influencer Nick Shirley posted a video that said members of Minnesota's Somali community were running fake childcare centers to collect federal subsidies. It caught the attention of the administration and conservative activists, though inspectors said the centers were operating as expected.

Minnesota has been dogged by fraud: At least 65 people, many of them Somali Americans, have been convicted of ripping off a federal program that was meant to provide food to children. The investigation began during the Biden administration.

Separately, a federal prosecutor in December said as much as \$9 billion in federal funds that supported 14 Minnesota-run programs since 2018 may have been stolen.

Democratic Gov. Tim Walz, who has been on the defensive about not do-



State and federal agents remove boxes of evidence collected from Metro Learning Center on April 28, 2026 in Minneapolis, Minn. (AP)

ing enough to root out fraud, welcomed the raids Tuesday. Minnesota's child welfare agency said it shared key information with law enforcement to "hold bad actors accountable."

"We catch criminals when state and federal agencies share information. Joint investigations work, and securing justice depends on it," Walz said.

The searches were being conducted at day cares, businesses and some residences, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because they were not au-

thorized to publicly discuss the investigation.

Various state and federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, participated in searches. At least two of the sites were in Shirley's video. Officers from Minnesota's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension were removing boxes at some locations.

"The American people deserve to know how their taxpayer money was abused. ... No stone will be left unturned," said DHS, which also noted the cooperation of local and state authorities.

House takes step toward funding DHS as WH warns money will 'soon run out'

WASHINGTON, April 30, (AP): The House took a crucial step Wednesday toward funding the Department of Homeland Security, as the Trump administration warned that money to pay Transportation Security Administration and other agency personnel will "soon run out," sparking new threats of airport disruptions and national security concerns.

House Republicans adopted a budget resolution on a largely party-line vote, 215-211. The action doesn't automatically fund the department - it's focused on eventually providing \$70 billion for immigration enforcement and deportations for the remainder of President Donald Trump's time in office, which Democrats oppose.

But launching the GOP budget process, which will play out over weeks to come, has been what Speaker Mike Johnson needed to unlock a broader bipartisan bill for TSA agents and others that has languished during the longest-ever agency shutdown in history. That bill is expected to come to a vote Thursday to fund much of the agency.

"It takes time," Johnson, R-La., said after another day of start-stop action in the chamber that dragged for hours into the evening. "We will get there."



US Sen Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., speaks with reporters on the steps at the Capitol in Washington on March 5. (AP)

The House's narrow Republican majority has repeatedly stalled out under Johnson's gavel, with his own party tangled in internal disputes on a range of pending issues, including the Homeland Security funding.

Democrats refused to fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol without changes to those operations after the deaths of Americans protesting Trump's deportation agenda. Republicans refused the broader Democratic-

backed bill to fund TSA and the other aspects of Homeland Security without the money for ICE and Border Patrol.

But the White House urged Congress this week to act, warning the money Trump tapped to temporarily pay TSA and other workers through executive actions is drying up.

"DHS will soon run out of critical operating funds, placing essential personnel and operations at risk," said a memo from the Office of Management and Budget.

Royal recruits boost volunteers as Netherlands builds up army reservists

HAVELTE, Netherlands, April 30, (AP): Their faces daubed with camouflage, the troops emerge almost silently from a forest with Colt C7 rifles slung across their chests. They scan their surroundings for potential threats.

The soldiers are members of the 10th Infantry Battalion Guard Security Corps National Reserve on a weekend exercise to hone their skills as the Netherlands bolsters its military with new recruits and volunteers. The Dutch government and top brass have committed to raising military personnel from its current 80,000 to 120,000 by 2035 - plans that have broad political support.

The recent enlistment by the country's queen and her eldest daughter as reservists look to be helping, with authorities now scrambling to arm and train new recruits.

The recruitment drive in the Netherlands reflects moves across Europe to expand and modernize militaries as leaders warily eye the grinding war launched by Russia against Ukraine and the disenchantment expressed by US President Donald Trump with the NATO alliance that has been the cornerstone of the defense and security architecture of the continent since World War II laid ruin to much of it.

A corporal in the reserve battalion, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the nature of her service, said she's seen a shift in priorities as the global security outlook has gotten more volatile and less predictable.



Members of the 10th Infantry Battalion Guard Security Corps National Reserve high-five after unearthing an enemy foxhole during a weekend exercise to hone their military skills as the Netherlands beefs up its military with new recruits and volunteer reservists in Havelte, Netherlands on April 25. (AP)

"When I first joined, there was almost no risk or almost no threat ... and now it's changing so we are more aware of it," she said. That has meant a mindset shift toward "more what we call 'green things,' infantry things."

She added: "We are here to defend our country and to make sure to keep the threat down."

The threat is very real, according to European Union and NATO officials, who believe Russian President Vladimir Putin could be ready to launch an attack elsewhere in Europe in three to five years, especially if he wins the war in Ukraine.

New NATO plans aimed at countering that threat require allies to prepare their armies for big battles, focused on more mobile forces that can be quickly deployed.

Dutch recruitment got a significant boost when Queen Maxima and her eldest daughter and heir to the throne Amalia, Princess of Orange, enlisted as volunteer reservists. Photos of Maxima in training and aiming a pistol on a shooting range were published around the world.

That royal seal of approval, together with recruiting campaigns running everywhere from newspapers and billboards to social media, has proven so successful that the military is now working overtime to arm, train and accommodate all the newcomers.

At the Defense Ministry, it's known as "the Amalia effect."

"It's really a thing, yes," State Secretary for Defense Derk Boswijk told The Associated Press. "It's very inspiring to see how members of our royal family inspired people to join our armed forces."

Boswijk said there are about 9,000 reservists in the Netherlands, and recruiters aim to have at least 20,000 in 2030.



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

USS Ford aircraft carrier will be heading home after deployment

The world's largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, will be heading home following a record-setting deployment of more than 300 days that included participating in the war against Iran and capture

of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, two US officials said Wednesday.

The Ford will be leaving the Middle East in the coming days and returning to its home port in Vir-

ginia in mid-May, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to detail sensitive military movements. The Washington Post reported the development earlier. (AP)

US weighs reducing troops in Germany

Merz says ties with Trump remain good

BERLIN, April 30, (Agencies): German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Wednesday said his personal relationship with US President Donald Trump remains good despite a recent exchange of sharp rhetoric regarding the war in Iran.

Speaking at a press conference in Berlin, Merz said he and Trump remain "on good speaking terms," adding that he simply had doubts from the beginning regarding the actions initiated with the war.

Merz called for a swift resolution to the conflicts in Iran as Germany and Europe are suffering considerably from the consequences of the conflicts.

Earlier this week, Merz criticized the United States for its "planless" military engagement in Iran, saying that the United States "is being humiliated by the Iranian leadership."

In response, Trump wrote on social media on Tuesday that Merz "doesn't know what he's talking about" and is indifferent to Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Trump on Wednesday leveled a new threat against NATO ally Germany, suggesting he could soon reduce the US military presence there as he continues

to feud with Chancellor Friedrich Merz over the U.S-Israel war against Iran.

Trump made the threat after Merz earlier this week said that the US was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership and criticized Washington's lack of strategy in the war. Trump has also repeatedly railed against NATO for the alliance's refusal to assist the US in its two-month-old war.

"The United States is studying and reviewing the possible reduction of

Troops in Germany, with a determination to be made over the next short period of time," Trump said in a social media post.

Merz had said earlier Wednesday that his personal relationship with Trump remained "as good as ever," but he had "had doubts from the very beginning about what was started there with the war in Iran."

During his first term in the White House, Trump also moved to cut US troops in Germany because he said the country spent too little on defense.

In June 2020, Trump announced he was going to pull out about 9,500 of the roughly 34,500 US troops who were then stationed in Germany, but the process never actually started. Democratic President Joe Biden formally stopped the planned withdrawal soon after taking office in 2021.

The U.S. has several major military facilities in the country, including the headquarters for US European Command and US Africa Command, Ramstein Air Base and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, the largest American hospital outside the United States.

Merz met with Trump at the White House in March, just days after the US and Israel began their bombardment of Iran. At the time, Merz told Trump that Germany was eager to work with the U.S. on a strategy for when the current Iranian government no longer exists. Merz also expressed concern that an extended conflict could do great damage to the global economy.

Europe

UK police probe double stabbing attack: The British government Thursday called antisemitism in the UK an "emergency," and said it would spend millions increasing security around Jewish sites after a string of arson attacks and a double stabbing.

The government announced 25 million pounds (\$34 million) for more police patrols and protection around synagogues, schools and community centers after two men were stabbed and seriously injured in London's Golders Green neighborhood on Wednesday. The victims, aged 34 and 76, are in stable condition.

Police arrested a 45-year-old man on suspicion of attempted murder and labeled the attack an act of terrorism. Detectives are working to determine a motive, and whether there could be a link to Iranian proxies.

Counterterrorism police are investigating whether the stabbings are linked to recent arson attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites in the British capital.

Police said the suspect, whose name hasn't been released, had "a history of serious violence and mental health issues." Police searched a property in southeast London after reports the suspect was involved in an "altercation" in the area hours before the Golders Green attack.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said she was treating antisemitism as "an emergency," calling it "the top pressing issue in relation to security" she faced. (AP)

Magyar pursues EU deal: Peter Magyar, leader of Hungary's Tiszta Party, held talks with European Commission

(EC) President Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday on the release of EU funds earmarked for Hungary, which remain frozen over EU's concerns about Hungary.

Describing his meeting with the EC president as "highly constructive and productive," Magyar said in a post on X that they agreed that he would return to Brussels in the week of May 25 to seek a political agreement on the release of EU funds for Hungary.

The funds have been frozen over EU concerns about corruption and the rule of law in Hungary. Magyar said the EU has not set any conditions that will run counter to Hungary's national interests.

The Tiszta party secured a landslide victory in the April 12 parliamentary elections, winning 141 seats in the 199-member National Assembly, paving the way for the formation of a new government led by Magyar.

Magyar has pledged to improve Hungary's relations with the EU. His incoming government is seeking the release of about 18 billion euros (21 billion U.S. dollars) in EU funds, which were frozen during the term of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government. (Xinhua)

Ukrainian drone attack kills 3 in Russia: Three people have been killed and eight wounded in a Ukrainian military drone attack on a passenger bus in Russia's Belgorod region, regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Wednesday.

"The enemy carried out a targeted strike on a passenger bus in the village of Voznesenovka. Three women died at the scene," Gladkov wrote on his Telegram channel.

The injured have been taken to hospital with wounds to the head, limbs and abdomen, with two of them in serious condition, the governor added. (Xinhua)

Asia

Chinese VP meets Australian foreign minister on bilateral ties: Chinese Vice President Han Zheng met with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong on bilateral relations in Beijing on Wednesday.

Han said that China-Australia relations have made significant progress over the past decade or so, but also experienced ups and downs. China and Australia's adherence to treating each other as equals, seeking common ground while reserving differences, and mutually beneficial cooperation, conforms to the fundamental interests of both sides, Han added.

He noted that China stands ready to work with Australia to implement the important common understandings reached by the leaders of both countries, hold on to the right direction for bilateral ties, strengthen alignment of development strategies, enhance dialogue and exchanges, and build a more mature, stable and fruitful China-Australia comprehensive strategic partnership.

Penny Wong said that currently Australia-China relations have maintained a sound growth momentum, with steady progress in mutually beneficial cooperation, adding that Australia highly values its ties with China and will enhance communication and dialogue, expand pragmatic cooperation, and advance sustained development of bilateral relations. (Xinhua)

Fire breaks out in apartment tower in Jakarta: A fire broke out in an apartment building in West Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday morning.

Thick smoke was seen rising from the building at around 7:15 a.m. local time, prompting residents to evacuate.

Firefighters were still working to extinguish the blaze and evacuate residents. It was not immediately known whether there were any casualties. (Xinhua)

French teen charged in Singapore over straw-licking video: A French teen is facing mischief and public nuisance charges in Singapore after posting a video on social media of himself licking a straw from an orange juice vending machine and then putting it back.

Didier Gaspard Owen Maximilien, 18, was charged April 24 and hasn't entered a plea, the city-state's largest English-language newspaper, The Straits Times, said. He allegedly committed the offense at a shopping mall on March 12, and his video spread rapidly when it surfaced, the report said.

The teen was granted court permission Wednesday to travel to Manila from May 2-25 for a school trip required for his graduation, the Straits Times said. He is due back in court on May 29.

Mischief carries a penalty of up to two years in prison or a fine, or both, while public nuisance is less severe with up to three months in prison or a fine, or both.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, holds the eighth China-Australia diplomatic and strategic dialogue with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Beijing, capital of China, April 29. (Xinhua)

Iloos, the company operating the juice vending machine, filed a police report, and sanitized the dispenser while replacing all 500 straws in the machine. It said it would upgrade its machines to include measures such as individually packaged straws and straw compartments that unlock only after the transaction is completed.

Lawyers for the teen, who is studying in a French business school in Singapore, declined to comment on the case when contacted.

Singapore, a small, densely populated city-state, tightly regulates public behavior and cleanliness. (AP)

Man on the run after attacking 2 students in Tokyo: A man who allegedly attacked two high school students with a hammer and sprayed an unidentified substance at police in Tokyo on Wednesday morning has been on the run after initially barricading himself inside his home, local media reported.

Police have launched a search for the man on suspicion of attempted murder. The incident occurred at around 7:20 a.m. local time on a street in Fussa, a suburb

ban area in western Tokyo. The suspect, believed to be in his 40s, hit one student in the face and another in the shoulder, according to Kyodo News.

Responding police officers were threatened with a knife before the man sprayed an unknown substance at them, leaving three injured. All of those affected have been taken to the hospital, none in life-threatening condition.

Believing the man had barricaded himself inside his home, police stormed the residence around noon but didn't find the suspect.

Security camera footage showed he had fled through a back door before police entered, the report said. (Xinhua)

Cambodian court upholds opp'n leader's treason conviction: A Cambodian court Thursday upheld the treason conviction and 27-year prison sentence for opposition leader Kem Sokha, whose 2017 arrest opened a broad government crackdown on political opponents in the country.

The Phnom Penh Appeals Court also barred Kem Sokha from leaving the country for five years after he finishes his sentence, which he is serving under house arrest.

Cambodia's government has long been accused of using the judicial system to persecute critics and political opponents. The government insists it promotes the rule of law under an electoral democracy, but political parties seen as potential rivals have been dissolved by the courts or had their leaders jailed or harassed.

Kem Sokha, now 72, was convicted in 2023 following a long pretrial detention. He was accused of conspiring with the United States to topple the Cambodian government. The primary evidence against him was a video of him discussing political advice from US-based pro-democracy groups.

His Cambodia National Rescue Party had been the only credible opponent of the ruling Cambodian People's Party, but it was dissolved by the Supreme Court after his arrest and was unable to contest the 2018 election. The party of long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen subsequently swept all the seats in the National Assembly. His son, Hun Manet, succeeded him in the position in 2023 but has not liberalized the system. (Xinhua)

NZ court rejects appeal by gunman to abandon guilty pleas: The white supremacist who shot and killed 51 at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, lost an attempt to undo his guilty pleas in a Court of Appeal ruling Thursday.

The panel of three judges dismissed Brenton Tarrant's claim that harsh prison conditions prompted him to make an involuntarily admission to terrorism, murder and attempted murder charges. His bid to withdraw his guilty pleas and seek a trial was "utterly devoid of merit," they wrote.

The Australian man, who is now 35, killed 51 worshippers and injured dozens more in March 2019 when he drove to two Christchurch mosques and opened fire with semiautomatic weapons during Friday prayers. Tarrant's guilty pleas in March 2020 brought relief to bereaved families and survivors of the attack, who feared he would use a public trial to air his hateful views. (AP)

5.0-magnitude quake hits Mindanao

Philippine vice president's team rejects House claim of 'probable cause' to impeach

MANILA, April 30, (Agencies): The defense team of Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday rejected the claim by the Committee on Justice of the House of Representatives that it had found probable cause to impeach her after three clarificatory hearings on two complaints under the panel's jurisdiction.

A total of 53 lawmakers voted in favor of the motions, accusing Duterte of corruption, assassination plots, inciting sedition and patterns of abuse, among others.

Duterte did not attend the hearing on Wednesday. Her defense team said the proceedings before the Committee on Justice departed from the constitutional design, as the process had not confined itself to the verified complaints and their attachments.

The impeachment complaint now moves to the House plenary, which is set to vote on the articles in May, and a one-third vote would send Sara to trial in the Senate.

Duterte is the daughter of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. She announced her candidacy for the 2028 Philippine presidential election in February. If impeached and found guilty, Duterte would be removed from office and banned from elected office for life.

This is the second time the Philippine House of Representatives has attempted to impeach Duterte. During the first impeachment attempt, the Philippine Supreme Court unanimously ruled the Articles of Impeachment against Duterte unconstitutional in July 2025, preventing the Senate from assuming jurisdiction. The court said that Sara was not absolved of the allegations and that a new complaint may only be filed after Feb. 6, 2026.

The Philippines' democracy has been long plagued by allegations of poor governance and political turbulence, including a raging conflict between Duterte and Marcos.

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 speaker killed if she herself was assassinated was a threat to national security.

Opponents have been specially concerned over Duterte's alleged crimes after



Protesters shout slogans as they hold a rally outside the House of Representatives while a congressional hearing on an impeachment bid against Vice President Sara Duterte is ongoing in Quezon, Philippines on April 29. (AP)

she declared her intention to seek the presidency in 2028.

Rep Gerville Luistro, who heads the justice committee, blasted the vice president for failing to appear in six televised hearings and for asking the Supreme Court to stop the impeachment inquiry on several allegations, including huge bank transactions over the years that she has not declared as required by law.

"If there is nothing to hide, there is no reason to hide, there is no reason to

obstruct," Luistro said at the start of Wednesday's committee hearing. "The only people who fear the disclosures of these transactions are those with dirty secrets."

Duterte's lawyers said in response to the House's committee's decision that "the proceedings before the committee departed from the constitutional design."

"Instead of confining itself to the verified complaints and their attachments, the process expanded into matters that properly belong to a full trial," Duterte's lawyers said without elaborating.

Duterte's husband, Manases Carpio, filed criminal complaints Monday against Luistro and other legislators and officials after government records of the couple's bank transactions were made public in a recent House hearing. They said that violated the country's bank secrecy law.

Duterte is the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, who is detained by the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands for alleged crimes against humanity. The charges stem from the deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he oversaw while in office.

Most of the allegations against Sara Duterte had been included in an impeachment complaint she survived on a technicality last year.

The House of Representatives voted to impeach her last year and sent the case to the Senate for trial. The Supreme Court later ruled that the lower chamber violated a constitutional rule that only one impeachment case could be processed by it in a single year.

The vice president remains popular based on independent surveys.

Duterte and the president were running mates in a whirlwind alliance in the 2022 election but have since had a bitter falling out.

Also:

BEIJING: An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.0 jolted Mindanao, the Philippines, at 22:04 GMT on Wednesday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10 km, was initially determined to be at 8.99 degrees north latitude and 126.70 degrees east longitude.

Brazil's Senate blocks Lula's Supreme Court nominee, 1st rejection in 132 yrs

SAO PAULO, April 30, (AP): Brazil's Senate dealt a political blow to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Wednesday by rejecting his nomination to the Supreme Court, the first in more than 130 years and a sign that the veteran leader is not popular among many important lawmakers as he seeks reelection.

Only 34 senators voted in favor of Jorge Messias, who has been Brazil's solicitor-general since 2023 and a close legal adviser to Lula, while another 42 rejected his appointment. Many of the latter, including presidential hopeful Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, celebrated in the chambers after the result.

Messias, who also worked for former president and Lula ally Dilma Rousseff, needed 41 votes to be approved.

"I am thankful to each vote I received. I think each of you fulfills a purpose and I fulfilled mine," Messias told journalists in capital Brasilia after being rejected by the Senate. "That's life. There's days of victory, days of defeat. We have to accept it."

The president of Brazil's Senate, Davi Alcolumbre, openly advocated for another candidate before Lula picked Messias as his nominee. Brazilian media has reported for months that the senator was at odds with Lula for not choosing former senator Rodrigo Pacheco.

Creomar de Souza, a political analyst with Dharma Political Risk and Strategy, a political consultancy firm based in Brasilia, said Lula has struggled to work with the legislature since he returned to office, and the rebuke of Messias is the ultimate sign of that.

"This dispute around Messias involved putting him in



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during a joint press conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz at the end of the German-Brazilian intergovernmental consultations at Herrenhausen Palace, in Hannover, northern Germany on April 20. (AP)

a difficult position. The administration announced it was him and then it took long to properly nominate him. After that, the voting process did not include a real coordination," de Souza said. "He was too exposed, there was not an efficient defense of him and the result couldn't have been different."

Lula, who is seeking reelection in October for his fourth consecutive term, picked Messias to replace Luís Roberto Barroso, who resigned in November. Since then, Brazil's top court has operated with 10 members.

Cubans back 'My signature for the Homeland' campaign as tensions with US intensify

HAVANA, April 30, (AP): Cubans hunched over tables this month to sign up for the socialist government's campaign to support national sovereignty and defy the US as tensions between the countries escalate.

They are endorsing "My signature for the Homeland" movement, which President Miguel Díaz-Canel launched earlier this month.

The initiative is mocked by some who question why people stood in line to sign when hunger and poverty are growing across the island, while supporters say it serves as a warning to the US that civilians want peace but will not back down despite recent threats of invasion.

"Anything for the revolution," said Rodolfo Ruiz, 64, who sells sunglasses and other items out of his home in Havana. He said he signed last week because of President Donald Trump's ongoing comments over Cuba, "so that he may hear and know that we are willing to defend our sovereignty."

"Watch out, Trump. Think before you invade Cuba, think carefully. The people are prepared," Ruiz said.

In January, Trump signed an executive order asserting that the "policies, practices, and actions of the Govern-



ment of Cuba constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat," something Cuban officials have repeatedly scoffed at.

Trump has referred to the island as a "failing nation" and suggested a "friendly takeover."

"We may stop by Cuba after we're finished with this," he said in mid-April, referring to the war in Iran.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio - the son of Cuban immi-

grants who fled before the revolution - has called for "new people in charge" of Cuba.

"It is absurd for the State Department to claim that Cuba - a relatively small, developing country subjected to a brutal economic war - could pose a threat to the world's greatest military, technological, and economic power," Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodríguez wrote in a post on X on Wednesday.

Africa

138 killed in Zimbabwe's seasonal rainfall-induced hazards: At least 138 people have been killed and 72 others injured across Zimbabwe due to rain-induced hazards since the start of the rainy season last October, the Department of Civil Protection (DCP) said Wednesday.

In its latest situation report, the DCP stated that persistent heavy rains in March triggered widespread flooding, dam breaches, and marooning incidents. The severe weather also devastated critical infrastructure, including bridges, in some parts of the country.

The fatalities were primarily attributed to drowning as individuals attempted to cross flooded rivers, as well as lightning strikes and mine collapses caused by the heavy downpours.

The impact has been extensive, with 8,352 households affected and damage reported to 347 houses, 237 schools, and 15 health facilities. Major highways and roads in both urban and rural areas have also been rendered impassable and require urgent rehabilitation. (Xinhua)

Mugabe's son ordered deported from S.Africa: A magistrate ordered a son of the late Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe to be immediately deported from South Africa on Wednesday after he pleaded guilty to two criminal charges earlier this month.

Magistrate Renier Boshoff ordered that Bellarmine Mugabe be taken by police to an international airport in Johannesburg and be sent back.

Mugabe, 29, had pleaded guilty to brandishing an object "likely to lead a person to believe it is a firearm" and being in South Africa illegally. He was ordered to pay around \$36,000 in fines or serve two years in prison.

Mugabe and another man, identified as his cousin, were arrested in February and initially faced charges of attempted murder over the shooting of an employee at Mugabe's home in Johannesburg. The police have not found the gun used.

Mugabe pleaded guilty to lesser charges unrelated to the shooting in a deal with prosecutors. (Xinhua)



Mali's junta leader Assimi Goita, (front), visits a victim at a hospital in Kati, Mali on April 28, after a coordinated attack by Islamic militants and separatists over the weekend. (AP)



Armed al-Shabab fighters ride on pickup trucks as they prepare to travel into the city, just outside the capital Mogadishu, in Somalia on Dec. 8, 2008. (AP)

Mali sets strategic directions after coordinated attacks: Assimi Goita, Mali's transitional president, on Wednesday chaired a session of the Superior Council of National Defense to assess the security situation across the country following the coordinated attacks launched on April 25.

According to a statement posted by the Malian presidency on its official Facebook page, Minister of Security and Civil Protection Daoud Aly Mohammedine told the press that the April 25 attacks, which targeted several localities, had been carefully planned by armed terrorist groups with clearly defined strategic objectives.

He said the attackers suffered heavy human and material losses before being forced to retreat, thanks to the responsiveness, determination, and professionalism of the defense and security forces.

Mohammedine also expressed condolences to the victims of the April 25 events and paid tribute to the late Minister of State and Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs Sadio Camara. (Xinhua)

22 militants killed in southern Somalia: Somali armed forces, backed by international partners, have killed 22 al-Shabaab militants, including a commander, during targeted operations carried out over the past three days in the country's southern region.

The Ministry of Defense said on Wednesday that the operations, involving ground forces and airstrikes, resulted in the killing of militants in Buulo Cabdalla in the Lower Shabelle region.

Among the dead was Commander Cabdiraxmaan Jeeri, who was known for terrorizing the local civilian population.

"The ministry also expresses its appreciation to international partners for their continued support for operations aimed at advancing peace and stability in Somalia," it said in a statement.

The ministry underlined its ongoing commitment to intensifying operations, which are part of a broader strategy to maintain stability by eliminating al-Shabaab terrorists.

The al-Shabaab extremist group was driven out of the capital, Mogadishu, in 2011, but militants are still hiding in rural areas of these regions, conducting ambushes and planting landmines. (Xinhua)

Oil price up 37 cents to \$106.18 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 30, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil price rose by 37 cents to reach USD 106.18 per barrel (pb) in Wednesday's trading, compared to USD 105.81 pb Tuesday, Kuwait Petroleum

Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. In global markets, Brent crude increased by USD 6.77 to settle at USD 118.03 pb, while West Texas Intermediate rose by USD 6.95 to USD 106.88 pb.

Business

Al-Sager, Al-Fares highlight 'Bankee' impact on youth literacy

NBK, Nazaha discuss strengthening partnership to promote financial literacy and integrity

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: In line with the efforts to strengthen strategic private and public partnerships, Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, paid an official visit to the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), where he met with its Chairperson, Dr. Rana Al-Fares and members of the Board of Directors. The meeting focused on exploring opportunities for collaboration and further partnerships in educational and awareness-raising initiatives that enhance integrity and social responsibility values and achieve a sustainable impact on society.

The visit aimed to underscore the importance of institutional collaboration between NBK, one of Kuwait's leading financial institutions, and Nazaha, which reflects the commitment of both parties towards supporting national initiatives and promoting positive behavioral values within the community.

The meeting involved reviewing the achievements of "Bankee", the first program of its kind in Kuwait, which was established by NBK in collaboration with Nazaha and the Ministry of Education to promote financial literacy among learners from a young age. Since its launch 4 years ago, "Bankee" has achieved noticeable successes, as it reached more than 104 schools, and benefiting



NBK, Nazaha step up collaboration to boost financial literacy and integrity.

more than 50,000 learners, with the participation of more than 12,000 teachers in various regions of Kuwait, which echoes the wide and positive impact of the program on the educational system.

Moreover, the meeting explored the qualitative impact of "Bankee" in developing financial literacy among learners, as well as instilling in them a set of

- NBK's efforts align with Nazaha's vision of building a generation capable of achieving sustainable development and economic prosperity.
- Since its launch in, Bankee saw noticeable successes and widespread adoption of the program in schools.
- NBK is committed to providing comprehensive support for educational development.
- Bankee is a cornerstone of the Bank's corporate social responsibility strategy.

core values, such as responsibility, discipline, honesty and integrity, in addition to enhancing personal development skills, as well as the spirit of cooperation and teamwork. All these values contribute to raising a generation of Kuwaiti youth who are aware of the importance of stability and financial independence, and who possess the financial knowledge and skills

necessary to achieve sustainable development and enhance the economic well-being of individuals and society.

Additionally, these efforts align with the role of Nazaha in promoting a culture of integrity, transparency and respect for public funds through awareness and educational initiatives that target students and build sustainable community awareness.

"Bankee" is a key pillar of NBK's corporate social responsibility strategy, which focuses on supporting education, empowering youth, and preparing a conscious and responsible generation capable of positively adding to Kuwait's comprehensive development.

This visit underscores the importance of maintaining joint initiatives that combine awareness and education, ensuring their lasting positive impact on students and the community, and strengthening national efforts to build a generation aware of the values of integrity and responsibility.

It is worth noting that NBK is committed to dedicating its efforts and resources to fruitful cooperation with all state institutions to develop society and human resources, which are the cornerstone of growth and prosperity, particularly in the field of education, to which the Bank is committed to providing all forms of support for its development.

Kuwait Airways launches Jahra office to boost customer access

KUWAIT CITY, April 30, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways inaugurated on Thursday a new sales office at Jahra Mall as part of efforts to expand services and enhance accessibility for customers across the country.

The opening ceremony was attended by Hamad Al-Habshi and Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan, alongside several officials.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Habshi said the step reflects coordinated efforts between Jahra Governorate and Kuwait Airways, adding it represents a qualitative addition that enhances services provided to citizens and residents in the governorate.

He noted that the new office would help facilitate travel procedures and save time and effort for customers, particularly in light of the governorate's growing population and rapid

urban expansion.

Al-Habshi praised Kuwait Airways as a leading national institution reflecting Kuwait's standing in the aviation sector, commending its efforts to expand services locally and internationally in line with customer expectations and quality standards.

For his part, Al-Fagaan said the opening falls as part of the national carrier's strategy to strengthen its presence and provide services closer and more efficiently to customers across Kuwait.

He affirmed the company's commitment to developing its service system and offering integrated solutions that meet travelers' needs, reflecting its ongoing dedication to enhancing travel experience and delivering high standards of quality and excellence.



The Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habshi, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of Kuwait Airways, Capt. Abdulwahab Al Shatti, participated in the opening ceremony of the new sales office in Jahra Mall.

Land reform push shifts market toward development and investment

Real Estate enters new phase as land hoarding curbed

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: As the government moves to redraw the map for using undeveloped land through inventory and classification, a new phase is emerging in the Kuwaiti real estate market. This phase is marked by a shift away from land hoarding and speculation toward utilizing land as a productive economic asset that supports growth and diversifies income sources.

Between land classification and new legislation, experts have indicated that mixed-use projects, logistics, and housing are among the main drivers of the next phase, supported by regulatory measures aimed at encouraging landowners to develop or sell their property.

Former Municipal Council member Hamoud Oqla Al-Enezi explained that the government's move to inventory undeveloped land represents a pivotal turning point in the trajectory of real estate and economic development.

The true value does not lie in merely selling land, but in transforming it into a productive economic asset capable of generating sustainable returns.

The next phase will witness a rise in mixed-use projects that combine residential, service, retail, office, and public facilities, as these projects are more capable of generating added value compared to single-use developments. The residential sector will remain a top priority due to increasing demand, with approximately 105,000 housing applications currently pending, a number expected to rise to nearly 197,000 by 2035.

The success of land allocation depends on the ability of the relevant authorities to link it to clear and measurable economic outcomes, such as the number of jobs created, the size of investments, and operational returns.

Al-Enezi cautioned against the process becoming merely a real estate recycling scheme or new forms of speculation that do not add real value to the economy.

He highlighted that real estate-related sectors capable of supporting non-oil GDP include logistics, warehousing, light industries, craft zones, tourism and entertainment, education, and healthcare, in addition to waterfront projects and modern markets, in line with the objectives of New Kuwait 2035 vision.

Al-Enezi indicated that the implementation of Law No. 126/2023, which prohibits the monopolization of vacant land and imposes fees from March 2026, will significantly change landowners' attitude, pushing them towards two clear economic options - development or sale, instead of holding land without development.

He predicted that the next three years will witness a shift in investor trend, with a decline in the role of speculators and a rise in the role of long-term investors, along with a growing tendency among landowners to enter into partnerships with developers or restructure their real estate portfolios.

Al-Enezi indicated that there are several challenges, particularly lengthy bureaucratic procedures, the multiplicity of stakeholders, the slow pace of land-use changes, and high financing costs.

He emphasized that public-private partnerships represent the ideal model for developing large-scale land projects, as they strike a balance between state ownership of assets and the private sector's capacity for financing and execution.

Al-Enezi stressed that the success of the next phase will not be measured by the volume of transactions, but rather by the ability of these projects to create real job opportunities, increase non-oil GDP, and transform land from static assets into active drivers of the national economy.

For his part, the CEO of Reem Real Estate Company and real estate expert Khaled Ali Al-Saghir stated that this step establishes a new phase based on planning that rely on accurate data and a professional database rather than individual interpretations.

He explained that building an accurate and updated database of land, and classifying it according to its uses, represents the first pillar of any successful development project. The quality of information will be directly reflected in the efficiency of investment and real estate decisions, whether at the state level or in the private sector.

The next phase will witness the emergence of new investment sectors, primarily warehousing and logistics services, given the increasing demand for storage space resulting from regional changes, disruptions in some supply chains, and regulatory decisions that have closed a number of unlicensed warehouses.

The logistics sector is not merely a traditional real estate activity, but rather the lifeblood of the

economic cycle, as it is directly linked to supply chains, the storage of food, commodities, and raw materials, and the maintenance of strategic reserves of these goods.

Land development must be part of a comprehensive vision that includes infrastructure development, road and transportation networks, as well as tourism and industrial projects. Real estate development cannot be separated from other economic sectors; rather, it is an integral part of a cohesive system that contributes to supporting non-oil GDP.

Al-Saghir emphasized that the timing of these measures, along with the implementation of the law preventing the monopolization of vacant land, represents a significant reform initiative. However, he said it still requires further development through a package of complementary legislation and decisions.

He commended the Cabinet's recent decision to form a temporary committee to study the shortcomings and implications of implementing Law No. 126/2023, which combats the monopolization of vacant land.

Al-Saghir explained that the real estate market needs to move beyond its comfort zone by adopting new regulatory tools that enhance transparency and curb negative practices. Recent decisions regulating real estate advertisements and updating municipal requirements have contributed to improving the business environment and redefining market practices.

He called for the establishment of a unified umbrella organization or real estate authority encompassing all relevant entities, including Kuwait Municipality, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Real Estate Registration Department, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and other related bodies, in order to streamline procedures.

Al-Saghir stressed that relying on existing tools will not address the current backlog in the housing issue due to continuously rising demand.

He highlighted that the current number of housing applications is close to 100,000, with approximately 8,000 new applications added annually, meaning the challenge is expected to double in the coming years.

Al-Saghir pointed out that addressing this crisis requires adopting a real partnership model with the private sector, both in developing housing projects and in providing innovative financing solutions.

Highlighting community demand for digital learning

Warba Bank honors winners of 'Qurra Warba' Quran Competition

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Warba Bank honored the winners of the fourth edition of its "Qurra Warba" Ramadan competition, held in collaboration with the "Saad" application. The competition drew 3,662 participants across various age groups, making it a significant community initiative aimed

at promoting Quranic recitation and Tajweed through interactive digital platforms.

The event saw strong engagement during the Holy Month of Ramadan,

reflecting the bank's success in using digital technology to foster positive competition and religious education.

Social Impact and Community Development:



Abdullah Fakhro, Executive Manager of Sharia Management at Warba Bank, said the participation of 3,662 individuals reflects the community's demand for initiatives that combine Islamic values with modern digital tools.

"We believe our social responsibility extends beyond launching initiatives to providing platforms that support community development and cultural identity," Fakhro said. He added that the competition offered participants an oppor-



Part of the ceremony honoring the winners.

tunity to learn and improve their recitation skills through a digital platform.

Leveraging Technology for Religious Education:

Fakhro said the competition aligns with the bank's vision of employing

digital solutions to expand access to educational content. The partnership with the "Saad" app provided a specialized and user-friendly experience for participants across different age groups.

As part of the campaign, Warba

Bank and "Saad" hosted an introductory booth at Assima Mall, featuring a mini-studio that enabled visitors to experience Quranic recitation firsthand. This two-day event helped increase participation and engagement throughout the competition period.

Ongoing Community Initiatives:

The bank said such initiatives are central to its strategy of supporting sustainable community programs that promote knowledge and cultural values. The closing ceremony honored the winners to encourage continued learning and engagement with Quranic studies.

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.

Gulf Bank records KD 9.4 million in net profit and recorded a 4% growth in operating profit for the first quarter of 2026

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced its financial results for the first three months ending 31 March 2026. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 9.4 million, in line with its 2025 first three months net profit of KD 9.4 million.

In addition, Gulf Bank recorded an operating income of KD 45.1 million for the first three months of 2026, representing an increase of 2.6% compared to the same period of last year.

Moreover, operating profit before total provisions and impairments was KD 21.7 million, representing an increase of 4.0% compared to the first quarter of 2025.

Financial Performance

The first quarter of 2026 financial results were primarily driven by a stable, yet slightly improved, net interest income of KD 35.3 million, alongside an increase in net fees and commissions of 15.5% to reach KD 6.7 million. This was partially offset by a marginal increase in operating expenses by 1.3%, alongside an increase in total provisions and impairments of 6.4%.

As for asset quality, the non-performing loans (NPL) ratio was 1.3% as of 31 March 2026, compared to the prior year level of 1.5%. Additionally, the Bank continues to have significant non-performing loans coverage ratio of 312% including total provisions and collaterals.

Total credit provisions as of 31 March 2026 reached KD 260 million whereas IFRS 9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 187 million. As a result, the Bank has a healthy excess provision level of KD 74 million, above and beyond what is required by IFRS 9 accounting requirements.

Compared to 31 December 2025, total assets increased by 4.4% to KD 8.0 billion, net loans and advances increased by 5.6% to KD 6.2 billion, total deposits increased by 3.8% to reach KD 5.9 billion, while total shareholders' equity reached KD 828 million.

The Bank's regulatory Tier 1 ratio of 13.7% was 2.7% above the regulatory minimum of 11% and the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 15.7% was 2.7% above the regulatory minimum of 13%.

On the 14th of March 2026, Gulf Bank held its Annual General Assembly Meeting, where shareholders approved the distribution of a cash dividend of 9 fils per share for the year 2025, representing a 68% cash payout ratio per share, in addition to a distribution of 5% bonus shares.

Sovereign Stability

Commenting on the financial results for the first quarter of 2026, Gulf Bank Chairman Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar stated: "We are operating in an exceptionally challenging environment, as Kuwait is facing hostile security developments and heightened regional tensions during the first quarter of 2026. While these conditions have weighed on market senti-



Ahmad Al-Bahar

- Gulf Bank continues to demonstrate financial resilience, supported by its solid financial position.
- Kuwait's institutional strength and coordinated policy response have supported the continuity of economic activity during an exceptionally challenging environment.
- The Banking sector continues to operate from a position of strength, with comfortable liquidity and capital levels.
- We monitor local and regional developments closely, while focusing on executing our strategic priorities with discipline.

ment and affected parts of the local and regional economic landscape, the State's institutional strength and coordinated policy response have supported the continuity of economic activity."

He continued: "During the quarter, key sovereign indicators remained robust. Kuwait's credit ratings were reaffirmed by leading rating agencies, reflecting the country's strong financial position and external buffers. In parallel, the Kuwait Ministry of Finance presented the draft budget for FY2026/2027 with no changes, describing the fiscal position as stable, with sufficient liquidity to meet both near- and medium-term obligations. While current conditions may place pressure on fiscal balances, Kuwait continues to benefit from funding flexibility supported by domestic market depth and access to international capital markets."

"In response to these developments, the Central Bank of Kuwait introduced targeted regulatory and macroprudential measures, including adjustments to liquidity requirements, expansion of lending limits, and the partial release of capital conservation buffers. These measures are aimed at enhancing the banking sector's flexibility, supporting credit flows to the economy, and safeguarding financial stability."

Mr. Al Bahar added: "Against this backdrop, Gulf Bank continues to demonstrate resilience in its first quarter of 2026 financial performance, supported by its solid financial position. Despite ongoing headwinds, the Bank sustained its profitability, reporting a



Sami Mahfouz

- We have activated our business continuity protocols in response to the evolving operating environment.
- Gulf Bank launched its new SME and Corporate banking mobile application during the first quarter of 2026.
- We achieved healthy balance sheet growth, with the Bank's total assets surpassing KD 8.0 billion.
- We emphasize on employee wellbeing and operational readiness to effectively support customers under all circumstances.

net profit of KD 9.4 million, broadly consistent with the first quarter of last year."

Operational Progress

Commenting on the operational performance of Gulf Bank, Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr. Sami Mahfouz said: "During the first quarter of 2026, and in response to the evolving operating environment, the Bank activated its business continuity and risk management protocols in line with established frameworks and the directives of the Central Bank of Kuwait. This ensured the uninterrupted operation of our systems and the continued delivery of services across all channels. Our customers maintained full access to the Bank's services through our branch network, digital platforms, call center, and ATM infrastructure, enabling seamless and secure transactions for both individual and corporate clients. At the same time, we placed strong emphasis on employee wellbeing and operational readiness, ensuring that our teams remain fully equipped to support customers effectively under all circumstances."

Mr. Mahfouz added: "Operationally, we continued to advance our digital capabilities, enhancing the accessibility, security, and efficiency of our services. At the beginning of the year, Gulf Bank announced the launch of its new mobile application dedicated to SME and Corporate banking, designed to meet the evolving needs of businesses across various sectors. The application enables faster decision-making, particularly for

critical approvals such as payroll transfers and other transactions carried out by corporate teams, while providing greater flexibility and control over banking activities."

On the financial performance of the Bank during the first quarter of 2026, Mr. Mahfouz stated: "Financially, Gulf Bank delivered a stable performance during the first quarter of 2026, reflecting the consistency and resilience of its core operating model. The Bank continued to record healthy balance sheet expansion, with total assets increasing by 4.4% year to date to surpass KD 8.0 billion, supported by a 5.6% growth in net loans, reaching KD 6.2 billion.

Additionally, the Bank's operating income rose to KD 45.1 million, marking a 2.6% increase year on year. This performance was primarily driven by a 0.5% growth in net interest income, alongside a 15.5% increase in net fees and commissions. These results underscore the Bank's ability to sustain strong business activity while maintaining a strategic focus on diversifying its income streams and enhancing overall revenue quality."

Credit Ratings

Gulf Bank's financial strength and operating profile were affirmed by leading rating agencies. Fitch Ratings assigned a Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of 'A' with a Stable Outlook, while Moody's rated long-term deposits at 'A3' with a Stable Outlook. Capital Intelligence Ratings affirmed a Long-Term Foreign Currency rating of 'A+' with a Stable Outlook, further highlighting the Bank's sound risk profile and prudent management practices.

Appreciation

Mr. Al-Bahar concluded his remarks by saying: "As we progress through 2026, we will continue to closely monitor local and regional developments and respond appropriately, while maintaining our focus on executing the Bank's strategic priorities with discipline. We remain hopeful for a swift resolution of the current situation and reaffirm our wishes for the continued safety and security of Kuwait."

Key Financial indicators for the first quarter 2026:

1. First Quarter 2026 net profit of KD 9.4 million, inline with last year.
2. First Quarter 2026 operating income of KD 45.1 million, up 2.6% year on year.
3. Net fees and commissions increased 15.5% year on year.
4. Net loans and advances grew by 5.6% year-to-date to reach KD 6.2 billion.
5. Non-performing loan ratio as of 31 March 2026 was 1.3%, with a solid non-performance loan coverage ratio of 312% including total provisions and collaterals.
6. Capital ratios as of 31 March 2026, Tier 1 ratio was 13.7% and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 15.7%.

Kuwait seen able to absorb UAE oil quota share

UAE exit from OPEC prompts questions over market impact

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: After the official announcement of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about its withdrawal from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and OPEC+, effective May 1, questions were raised regarding its impact on the Kuwaiti and global oil sectors and if the Kuwaiti oil sector is prepared to compensate for the share of the UAE, which is around 3.4 million barrels per day.

In an exclusive statement to the newspaper, former Minister and former Board Member of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Yahya Al-Sumait confirmed that the withdrawal of UAE from OPEC and OPEC+ two days ago will not cause a major shock to the global oil markets.

He explained that the quota of UAE -- 3.4 million barrels per day -- can be divided among member states, including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

He also ruled out the possibility of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil following the lead of the UAE, stating that the decision to leave OPEC is complex for Kuwait.

Despite Kuwait being a founding and active member of the organization and a main player in stabilizing oil prices, he believes that leaving OPEC or the OPEC+ without careful planning and analysis is an ineffective and risky move with negative consequences.

He indicated that Kuwait could wait at least a year. "If the withdrawal of UAE from OPEC and the OPEC+ proves successful, Kuwait could follow suit, but such a step requires extremely careful consideration," he asserted.

Asked if the Kuwaiti oil sector is prepared to increase the quota of Kuwait after the withdrawal of UAE, Al-Sumait stressed that efforts are being intensified to increase the oil production capacity of Kuwait.

He indicated that the quota of the UAE will inevitably be distributed among the member states.

He also stressed the importance of expanding onshore and offshore exploration operations and the necessity of bringing the three offshore fields online as quickly as possible to increase the oil production of Kuwait.

He is hoping that the production capacity of Kuwait will reach five million barrels per day, instead of the four million planned by KPC for 2035.

He called on OPEC to manage the issue of

increasing the quotas of member states after the withdrawal of UAE, without favoring any party, as mass withdrawal from OPEC or the OPEC+ could cause major disruption to the global oil market.

Meanwhile, an oil sector source confirmed to the newspaper that the Kuwaiti oil sector has the capacity to increase the share of the country in the OPEC+.

The source pointed out that previous indicators hinted on the withdrawal of the UAE, as it had planned to raise its production capacity to five million barrels per day by 2027.

The source was quick to add that its sudden exit will not be a major shock, especially since several countries like Qatar, Indonesia and others had earlier withdrawn from OPEC.

Regarding the timing of the withdrawal decision, the source pointed out that "the UAE played it smart, as all global indicators predict the rise in oil prices following resolution of the Strait of Hormuz crisis."

Since the UAE currently possesses a massive oil reserve accumulated since the beginning of the war, it wants to profit from selling oil without being bound by the OPEC or OPEC+ quota."

Oil expert Hajjaj Boukhadour affirmed that the withdrawal of the UAE is not a transition from the framework to the vacuum, but a move from the constraints of the quota to make its own decisions.

"From a price set by the group to a price dictated by power, UAE no longer views oil as a resource confined under the collective ceiling but a temporal asset: every barrel postponed today may be depleted tomorrow, pressured by energy shifts."

"When capacity expands and quotas shrink, discipline becomes a cost, not a safety net, and remaining in control becomes a forfeiture of a return that is unexpected," he elaborated.

He asserted that the market will not collapse all at once, indicating that geographical tensions and the Strait of Hormuz crisis could stabilize prices in the short term.

He said "the deeper impact lies not in the immediate price but in breaking discipline."

If the UAE gradually increases its production, the fear will diminish, and the market will shift from managed scarcity to bargaining abundance. At that point, the question will no longer be, 'How much does OPEC produce?' but, 'Who defines the price? Is it an organization that imposes restrictions or a power that is liberated?'

Iran faces two-week window before storage fills

US blockade pushes Iran oil output toward cuts

DUBAI, April 30, (AP): Even as Iran squeezes world energy supplies with its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, its own oil industry is increasingly being threatened by an American blockade.

With no way to export the oil it is pumping out and diminishing room to store it at home, Iran may be forced to dramatically reduce or cease production from some of its wells, perhaps beginning in as little as two weeks, experts say.

The situation likely isn't as dire as U.S. President Donald Trump recently described, colorfully suggesting pipelines could start exploding within days. But once shut down, production from the aging wells may not be restarted so easily, if at all, undermining Iran's future oil output. Iran appears to have begun dialing back production already, analysts say, to avert outright shutdowns.

The pressure is building as the U.S. Treasury Department ratchets up sanctions on Iranian oil shipments already at sea.

The U.S. military has seized at least two tankers off Asia believed to be carrying Iranian oil.

With its oil trade constrained, Iran is seeing less hard currency flow back into an economy mauled by weeks of war, months of unrest and decades of international sanctions.

But with fewer tankers shipping Iranian oil, the effects of the Strait of Hormuz shutdown are only being magnified, leading to shortages of jet fuel and rising gasoline prices around the world.

Iran's leaders "are really resisting" shutting down oil wells because of how painful that would be long-term, said Miad Maleki, a former sanctions expert at the U.S. Treasury who is now a senior fellow at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

"They've been under sanctions, they've been isolated for 47 years now. Those oil wells are not maintained well. Their machinery is not maintained well," Maleki said. Once shut off, he added, the wells won't easily "snap back after a few months."

Iran had been pumping over 3 million barrels of crude oil a day before the war, with a little more than half going toward its domestic market.

But since the American blockade began on April 13, ships have been filled with oil and unable to get out.

"It looks like there's been a significant slowdown in production," said Antoine Half, the co-founder and chief analyst at Kayros, an environmental intelligence company that tracks emissions and energy supply chains.

He pointed to signs that storage is not filling as fast as usual at Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export terminal in the Persian Gulf.

Iran is likely storing some of its oil in tankers positioned around Kharg Island, Half noted.

Kpler, a firm monitoring commodities markets, said it believes Iran has enough capacity left to store about two weeks worth of oil production, even after reducing output.

"While the immediate revenue impact is limited, operational constraints are now forcing production cuts and setting up a delayed but significant financial squeeze," wrote Homayoun Falakshahi, an analyst at Kpler.

Wood Mackenzie, another oil analysis firm, estimates Iran will run out of storage capacity in about three weeks.

"If the blockade persists, cuts become inevitable," wrote Alexandre Araman of Wood Mackenzie.

Shutdowns of more than a month "risk long-term damage" to Iran's oil reservoirs, he wrote, adding that recovering older fields "remains uncertain."

From the moment it first struck oil in 1908, Iran's oil industry has been entangled in the region's politics.

A move to nationalize Iran's oil fields and wrest control from the British sparked the CIA-backed 1953 coup that cemented Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's rule.

That also lit a long fuse to Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled the shah.

During the revolution, oil workers went on strike and brought

production down from 6 million barrels a day to around 1.5 million.

Iran's oil industry never recovered and faced decades of international sanctions, during which its infrastructure aged and faltered.

In his first term, Trump exerted a "maximum pressure" campaign, hiking sanctions to severely cut Iran's oil exports.

Forced to store oil in tankers at sea, the Iranian government lost tens of billions of dollars in revenues. Still, the pressure failed to push Tehran into reaching a nuclear deal with the U.S.

Now Iran faces a combination of hiked sanctions and the blockade. Trump on Tuesday claimed that Iran was "in a 'State of Collapse.'"

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent piled on, writing on X, "Iran's creaking oil industry is starting to shut in production thanks to the U.S. BLOCKADE. Pumping will soon collapse. GASOLINE SHORTAGES IN IRAN NEXT!"

There have been no immediate signs of any gasoline shortages in Iran. However, Iran does seem to be acknowledging some of the pain indirectly.

A segment on state TV, which is run by hard-liners, included journalists discussing the possibility of an oil storage crisis.

One noted that if empty tankers get blocked from returning to Iran, "we won't be able to export."

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad on Monday praised oil terminal staff for their "continuous perseverance."

Maleki, the analyst from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said that if the blockade continues and production slows further or halts, oil workers could potentially lose their jobs - which could cause new unrest.

"In 1979 when the oil industry was disrupted, in the 1980s war with Iraq ... you can go and look at to see how effective they were in really pressuring the regime," he said.

"It's really going to affect some of the most strategic provinces in Iran and the most strategic industry."

Kuwait Finance House holds Q1 2026 earnings webcast

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held the earnings webcast for highlighting the Group's financial performance and results during Q12026. The webcast was attended by KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled AlShamlan, Group Chief Financial Officer, Abdulkarim Al-Samdan, and Group Chief Strategy Officer and Acting Group Chief International Banking Officer, Eng. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem.

KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled AlShamlan commenced the meeting by shedding light on the Bank's financial performance for Q12026. He said:

"KFH reported this quarter a net profit of KD 176.5 million, reflecting a growth of 5% compared to Q1 2025. The earnings per share (EPS) reached 9.59 fils representing an increase of 5% compared to the same period last year. Net financing income reached KD 332 million, 4.1% increase compared to the same period last year. Total operating income for Q1 2026 increased to KD 496.4 million, supported by growth across all core business activities, representing an increase of 6.0% compared to the same period last year. Our cost-to-income ratio reached 31.4% during the first quarter of 2026, compared to 34% for the same period of the previous year, showcasing our commitment to operational excellence. The net operating income for this quarter stands at KD 340.6 million, reflecting an increase of 10.3% compared to the same period last year."

He added: "The growth in financial indicators during the first quarter of this year reflects the Group's sustained ability to achieve balanced growth amid the rapidly evolving and challenging operating environment at regional and global levels."

AlShamlan pointed out that KFH also held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meetings on March 30th, 2026, where shareholders reaffirmed their confidence and endorsed the Board of Directors for the next 3-year term (2026 to 2028).

"In Q1 2026, KFH continued to strengthen its financial position, with total assets growing to KD 43.6 billion, a 1.9% increase from year-end 2025. Our capital adequacy ratio stands at 19.23%, exceeding regulatory requirements, which underscores our robust capital base. We have diversified our funding sources particularly in infrastructure and productive sectors. This reflects our dedication to driving sustainable growth and maximizing shareholder value," he explained.

AlShamlan emphasized that KFH remains the largest listed company on Boursa Kuwait with a market capitalization of approximately KD 14.4 billion. We are proud to be recognized as the only Kuwaiti bank listed among the top five in S&P's "Top 20 Middle East and Africa Banks." "Our commitment to empowering the local economy is evident as we provide efficient financing solutions that support the corporate sector while delivering financial services to the retail and SME sectors. This dual focus not only drives commercial growth but also reinforces our economic responsibility," he said.

"At KFH, we recognize the importance of our role in the community, and we are dedicated to making a positive impact. This quarter, we contributed KD 2 million to a national debt-relief initiative, bringing our total contributions towards debt relief to approximately KD 61 million. Our efforts in Corporate Social Responsibility were recognized with the "World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR" award from Global Finance, highlighting our leadership in sustainable practices," he added.

He added that KFH's operational efficiency remains a cornerstone of our strategy. "Our commitment to enhancing customer experience through competitive digital solutions has resulted in increased market share. We have invested in technology, ensuring seamless service continuity and high efficiency in delivering all banking services."

He added that KFH strengthened its position in the international market, successfully issuing USD 1 billion in senior unsecured Sukuk under our USD 4 billion Sukuk program. This issuance reinforces the Bank's financing capacity, enabling it to support infrastructure projects and facilitate clients' regional and international expansion.

"As we move forward, despite recent geopolitical challenges KFH will continue to focus on strategic priorities: enhancing asset quality, improving financial performance, advancing our digital infrastructure, and elevating the customer experience all within a solid risk management framework. We are committed to maintaining our strong financial position while seizing market opportunities to drive future growth. Our strong financial performance in Q12026 reflects the effectiveness of our strategies and our ability to navigate challenges in the evolving banking and regional landscape," AlShamlan concluded.

Abdulkarim Al-Samdan, Group Chief Financial Officer:

Group Chief Financial Officer, Abdulkarim Al-Samdan stated that KFH Group's financial performance for the first quarter of 2026 demonstrated strong



Khaled AlShamlan

■ KFH enhances efficiency, expands market share



Abdulkarim Al-Samdan

■ We maintain high asset quality, robust capital and liquidity



Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

■ We remain committed to expanding our footprint in key markets and deepening operational integration

growth in core banking activities, highlighting the key financial performance indicators

Regarding Q1 2026 financial highlights, he said: "For the quarter ended 31 March 2026, KFH reported net profit attributable to shareholders of KD 176.5 million, up 5.0% year-on-year, equivalent to 9.59 fils earnings per share for the quarter, compared with 9.13 fils adjusted for the bonus shares issuance."

At the operating level, Net financing income was KD 332.0 million, up 4.1% year-on-year. Net operating income increased to KD 340.6 million, up 10.3% year-on-year. The reported Cost-to-income improved to 31.4%, from 34.0% in the same period last year.

On the balance sheet, Total assets stood at KD 43.6 billion, Net financing receivables at KD 21.8 billion, and Total deposits at KD 21.4 billion. Relative to year-end 2025, both assets and deposits increased by 1.9%, while net financing receivables were broadly stable.

Al-Samdan added: "The main positive contributions were higher net financing income and higher fees and commissions."

Net financing income increased by KD 13.1 million year-on-year, and fees and commissions income increased by KD 8.7 million. Together, these two items added KD 21.8 million in incremental income.

Operating expenses also declined by KD 3.5 million, or 2.2%, providing further support to earnings and resulting in a positive operating leverage for the quarter. Other income was broadly stable.

Al-Samdan noted that Q1 2025 included a KD 23.8 million gain on the sale of Ahli Bank Oman (ABO). That created a higher comparison base and should therefore be taken into account when assessing the year-on-year performance.

Turning to the core income, Al-Samdan said that the total operating income reached KD 496.4 million, up 6% year-on-year. Within that, net financing income remained the largest component, representing 66.9% of the total operating income in Q1 2026.

Net financing income reached KD 332.0 million, up 4.1% year-on-year, despite a more challenging margin environment.

He added that net fees and commissions income increased to KD 58.5 million, up 17.5% year-on-year from KD 49.8 million.

This reflects stronger customer activity and better contributions from cards, trade finance, and capital markets activity.

Taken together, Al-Samdan emphasized that the income mix in Q1 2026 reflected higher core banking income, continued fee growth, elevated FX income, lower investment income and stable other income.

Turning to cost and operating leverage, total operating expenses for the quarter were KD 155.7 million, down 2.2% year-on-year, contributing to the improvement in the reported cost-to-income ratio to 31.4%.

Al-Samdan emphasized that the cost outcome reflects continued expense discipline across the Group, while preserving investment in controls, technology, and selected capabilities. The result was positive operating leverage despite inflationary pressure in Turkey.

Al-Samdan also addressed asset quality and provisioning, where the Group NPF ratio stood at 1.90%, with provision coverage of 237.9%.

He also added: the Group's consolidated provision balance remained KD 526.2 million above the CBK IFRS 9 ECL. That provides a material buffer and is consistent with a conservative provisioning stance.

Al-Samdan emphasized that Group management continues to review overlays, sector exposures, and stress assumptions regularly, particularly in light of macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainty.

He also touched on capital and liquidity. At quarter-end, the group's capital adequacy ratio was 19.23%.

Al-Mukhaizeem shared insights into Kuwait's economic landscape and KFH's strategic progress in the first quarter.

He said: "With the ongoing regional tensions, and market volatility, KFH maintained its position as Kuwait's largest listed company representing 28.6% of total market capitalization, reflecting the strength of our fundamentals and sustained investor confidence."

He added that the global economy enters 2026 with a higher degree of volatility, with the IMF projecting growth of 3.1% and inflation of 4.4%. Rising geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions, and higher energy and logistics costs are weighing on the outlook. While markets remain broadly orderly, global financial stability risks are elevated.

"Kuwait's economy, like others in the GCC, is facing pressure from regional tensions, reflected in shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, and higher transport and insurance costs. The impact includes the risk of production disruption and capacity utilization constraints. Kuwait is navigating geopolitical volatility within a long-term fiscal vision, supported by balanced public financial management and continued structural reforms," he explained.

Al-Mukhaizeem said that the Central Bank of Kuwait maintained a prudent monetary stance in Q1 2026, keeping the discount rate unchanged at 3.50% to preserve monetary and financial stability. Inflation moderated to 2.4% in 2025 and eased further to less than 2.1% in March 2026, it is one of the lowest levels since mid-2020. However, it is expected to rise mainly due to higher import costs and other factors. The CBK introduced supportive measures to reinforce banking sector resilience, including easing liquidity requirements, and increasing lending capacity to support stability, credit growth, and broader economic activity.

"KFH delivered solid performance in Q1 2026, supported by a strong balance sheet, disciplined risk management, and a diversified business model. This reflects the resilience of our core business and our ability to sustain quality growth in a complex operating environment," he added.

Meanwhile, he explained that KFH continued advancing its digital transformation in Q1 2026 by expanding data-driven tools to improve decision-making, customer journeys, and personalization. "We also strengthened digital onboarding and expanded mobile and online banking capabilities to deliver greater accessibility, speed, and convenience and 24/7 availability of digital services, positioning KFH at the forefront of digital innovation in Islamic finance and supporting a more scalable operating model. Even during the recent geopolitical disruptions, all digital services remained fully available to clients."

"KFH continues to strengthen its regional presence by deepening operational and service integration across core markets, including Turkey, Bahrain, Egypt & UK, offering seamless communication channels for customers. The Group is enhancing services and platforms through investments in banking technology and digital solutions, while supporting sustainable growth through Sharia-compliant financing for major projects," he added.

"Looking ahead, KFH remains focused on sustaining a strong financial position, prudent risk management, and sustainable growth. We support Kuwait's development through project and infrastructure financing, and regional integration. Our diversified model positions us well for resilience and long-term opportunity," Al-Mukhaizeem said.

He added: "Amid the current regional tensions, KFH continues to operate from a position of strength, supported by a resilient business model, disciplined execution within its business continuity framework, and clear strategic priorities. We remain focused on preserving resilience, delivering sustainable growth, and creating long-term value."

Kids club, dining, and wellness define new staycation offering

Waldorf Astoria Kuwait enhances family staycations with added privileges

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Waldorf Astoria Kuwait invites families to experience a staycation that brings together refined comfort, thoughtful experiences, and quality time in an elegant yet welcoming setting.

Designed with both parents and younger guests in mind, the experience unfolds with ease; from unhurried mornings overlooking the Kuwait skyline to relaxed afternoons by the pool and engaging moments at the Kids Club. Every detail is considered, allowing families to settle in and enjoy their time together at their own pace.

Rooms and suites offer a harmonious blend of contemporary design and understated luxury, complemented by carefully considered touches for families, including in-room play tents and baby cribs. The result is a stay that feels both elevated and comfortably familiar.

Guests' younger companions are warmly welcomed by Oscar the Bear, the hotel's beloved mascot, who brings a playful and engaging touch to the experience. Building on this, the hotel introduces a specially curated children's kit inspired by Oscar, featuring illustrated storybooks, coloring books, and creative sticker sets, designed to accompany children throughout their stay, enriching their experience with moments of imagination and interaction. This is complemented by thoughtfully crafted celebration experiences for special occasions, offering families the opportunity to celebrate their most special moments.

As part of the experiences tailored for younger guests, children can enjoy interactive cooking and mocktail making sessions led by the hotel's culinary team and bartenders. These hands-on activities offer a fun and engaging way for young guests to discover new skills while creating memorable moments.

Dining remains an essential part of the experience, with a selection of distinctive venues catering to a variety of tastes. Guests can enjoy international cuisine at AVA, Japanese dining at ROKA, and the signature Afternoon Tea at Peacock Alley, while younger guests are equally welcomed with a dedicated Kids Corner during breakfast and thoughtfully prepared children's menus across all outlets.

Moments of relaxation and play come together seamlessly across the



Saleh Al Bataineh



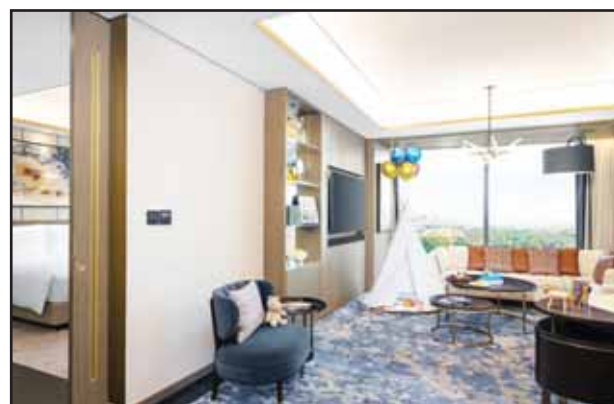
Mascot



Pool



Food display



Connecting rooms



Accessible room

hotel's leisure spaces. The outdoor pool at Oxio offers a calm retreat framed by greenery and private cabanas, while the Kids Club provides a safe and engaging environment where children can explore, create, and connect through a thoughtfully curated calendar of daily activities, including arts and crafts, puzzle challenges, board games, team-based activities, and face painting, all available throughout the day.

For those seeking to maintain their wellness routine or unwind, guests can also enjoy access to the hotel's fully equipped fitness center and spa facilities, offering a range of experiences tailored for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Adding a distinctive dimension to the stay, Waldorf Astoria Kuwait has partnered with Exzootic Zoo, the first interactive indoor wildlife destination at The Avenues Mall. Designed for children aged 4 to 16, the experience invites families to explore a series of immersive environments, from desert landscapes to rainforests and marine life, through guided, hands-on encounters that spark curiosity and discovery.

This collaboration offers hotel guests exclusive privileges on Exzootic Zoo experiences, seamlessly extending their stay with an opportunity to complement relaxation with meaningful exploration.

Commenting on the offering, Saleh Al Bataineh, General Manager of Wal-

dorf Astoria Kuwait, said: "We set out to craft a family experience that feels effortless for parents while remaining engaging and memorable for children. Rooted in the spirit of Kuwait and thoughtfully connected to the experiences surrounding the hotel, the stay offers a natural sense of discovery while preserving the comfort and refined quality our guests expect."

With its balance of understated luxury, attentive service, and experiences that resonate across generations, Waldorf Astoria Kuwait offers a family staycation that feels both refined and genuinely enjoyable – where time spent together becomes the most memorable part of the stay.

About Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Re-

sorts
Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts is an award-winning portfolio of 36 iconic properties, each embodying a distinct sense of place through sincerely elegant service, one-of-a-kind experiences, and culinary mastery in landmark destinations around the world. Waldorf Astoria New York is now open, marking a defining moment for the brand, reintroducing a legend while ushering in a new era of luxury. Inspired by their timeless environments, Waldorf Astoria hotels deliver an effortless experience seamlessly, creating a true sense of place for guests through stunning architecture, the famous Peacock Alley, refined art collections, Michelin-starred dining and

elevated in-room amenities. In addition to the brand's world-class hotel offerings, Waldorf Astoria boasts a global residential portfolio that provides the comfort of a private home combined with unsurpassed amenities and high-touch service. Waldorf Astoria is part of Hilton, a leading global hospitality company. Experience an unforgettable stay at Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts by booking at waldorfastoria.com or through the industry-leading Hilton Honors app. Hilton Honors members who book directly through preferred Hilton channels have access to instant benefits. Learn more about Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts at stories.hilton.com/waldorfastoria, and follow the brand on X and Instagram.

Lebanese film 'LUMINA AM 91N' clinches 'Best of Asia' award

The Mrad map: Charting a course to global acclaim

"I dedicate this achievement to my country, Lebanon, and to the Lebanese film industry."
— Dr. Angela Mrad

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: In a new achievement that reinforces the presence of Arab film productions on the global level, the Lebanese film "LUMINA AM 91N," directed and written by Dr. Angela Mrad, won the "Best of Asia" award at the fifth edition of the World Film Festival held in Barcelona, Spain.

This accolade confirms the film's growing trajectory on the international stage, where it has continued to make a significant impact since its premiere.

The film has received critical acclaim, reflecting the director's forward-looking vision as well as its strong visual treatment.

A moment of pride

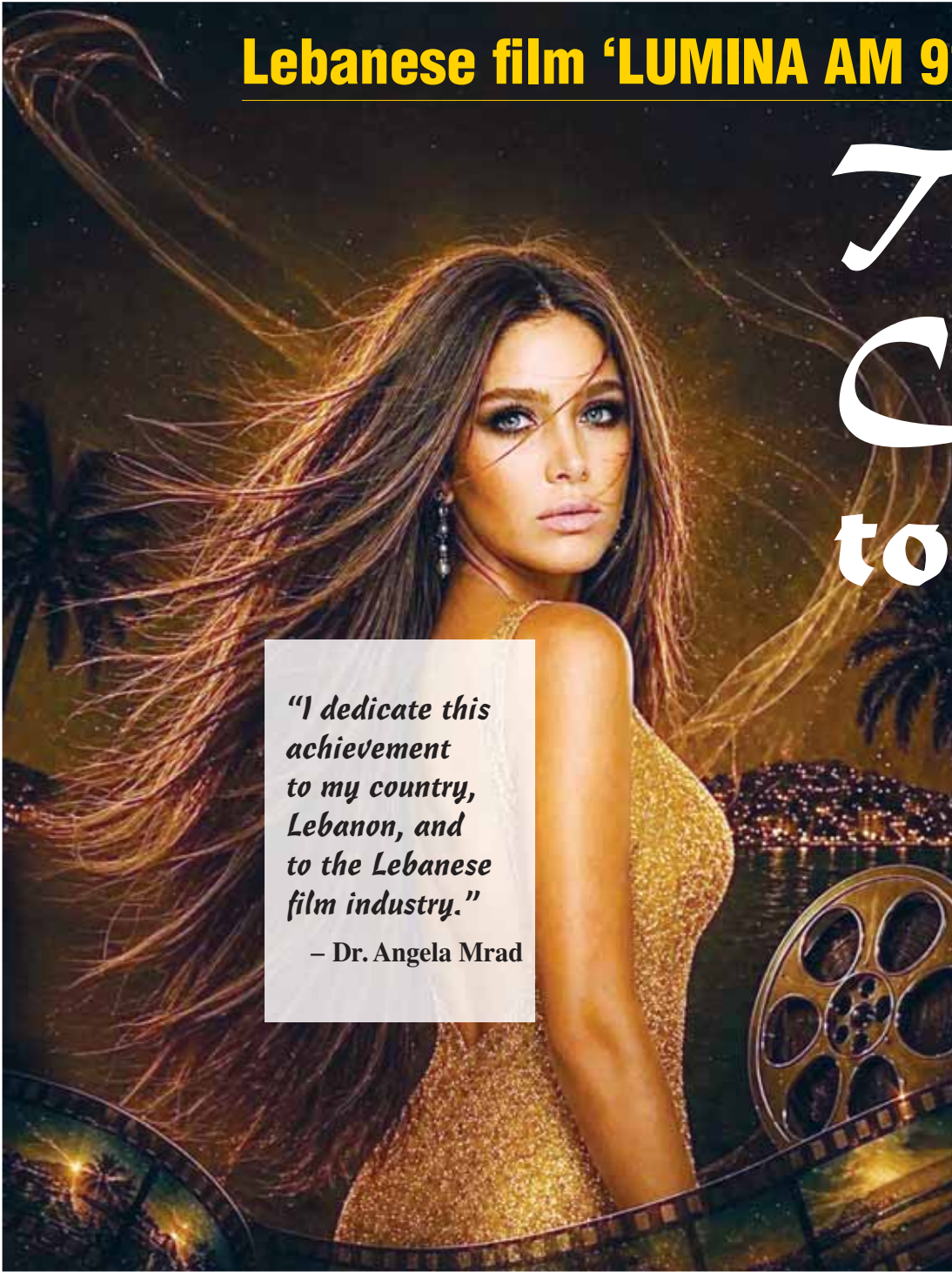
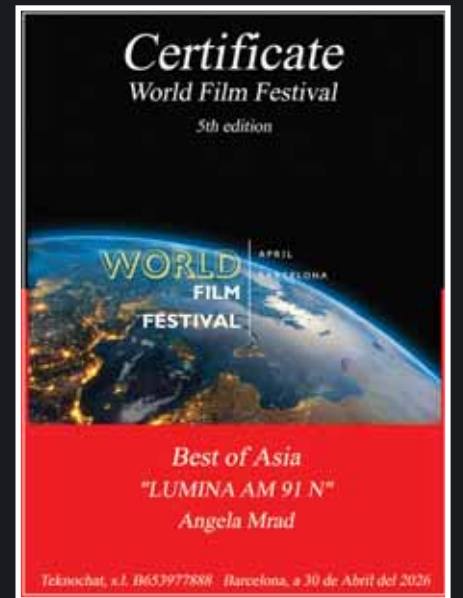
Director Dr. Angela Mrad expressed her pride in this victory, affirming that the award represents a significant milestone in her career.

Dr. Mrad stated, "I dedicate this achievement to my country, Lebanon, and to the Lebanese film industry." This statement underscores her commitment to supporting a local cinematic identity and presenting it to a global audience.

This achievement reflects growing confidence in Lebanese cinema and its ability to produce compelling narratives that can compete and resonate beyond the region, especially with the increasing international interest in Arab films.

Global Presence

The win of "LUMINA AM 91N" is seen as a significant addition to the film's journey. This recognition will contribute to its global reach and open new horizons for future participation in international festivals, with expectations of further critical and popular acclaim.



Variety

LOS ANGELES: Prosecutors said Wednesday that singer D4vd killed 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez by stabbing her multiple times then dismembered her body using chain saws in his garage.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office shared what they said the evidence in the case would show in a court filing that provided the first detailed allegations of the killing and efforts to cut apart Rivas Hernandez's body and get rid of evidence.



D4vd

The court filing said D4vd, whose legal name is David Burke, met Rivas Hernandez when she was 11, began abusing her when she was 13 and he was 18, and killed her when she threatened to reveal their inappropriate relationship. (AP)

SALT LAKE CITY: Attorneys for Taylor Frankie Paul, a reality TV star from "The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives," and the father of her 2-year-old son will present dueling petitions for protective orders against each other Thursday in a case that could determine who gets custody of their child.

Both Paul and her former partner, Dakota Mortensen, have asked a Utah court to turn short-term protective orders into long-term arrangements as the two have accused each other of domestic violence.

Third District Court Commissioner Russell Minas said at an April 7 hearing that he had "concerns going both ways" about the competing allegations. For now, Paul cannot spend unsupervised time with her son because of a history of volatile behavior directed at Mortensen while kids were present, Minas ruled.

Paul and Mortensen, whose tumultuous relationship was featured heavily on the show, have been ordered to stay at least 100 feet (30 meters) away from each other until the hearing Thursday afternoon. Both were expected in person after attending the previous hearing virtually, a court spokesperson said. (AP)

NEW YORK: The leaders of major media companies around the world, including The Associated Press, are calling on Israel's government to lift a ban keeping foreign journalists from being able to independently enter and report from Gaza, a barrier that's been in place since the war's start in 2023 and continues even as a ceasefire has been in place for more than six months.

"Being on the ground is essential. It allows journalists to question official accounts on all sides, to speak directly with civilians and report back what they witness firsthand," said the statement from the executives, released Thursday. "That is why news organizations send their reporters into the field, often at great personal risk."

From the BBC to CNN to MS NOW, from Reuters to German news agency dpa to The Washington Post, the top editors of more than two dozen organizations said the Israeli government has so far not responded to their efforts to discuss the situation. (AP)

Film

Couture sequel dressed to impress, not disturb

'The Devil Wears Prada 2' loses the strut

Fashion trends are notoriously fickle but some things, like Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci, never go out of style.

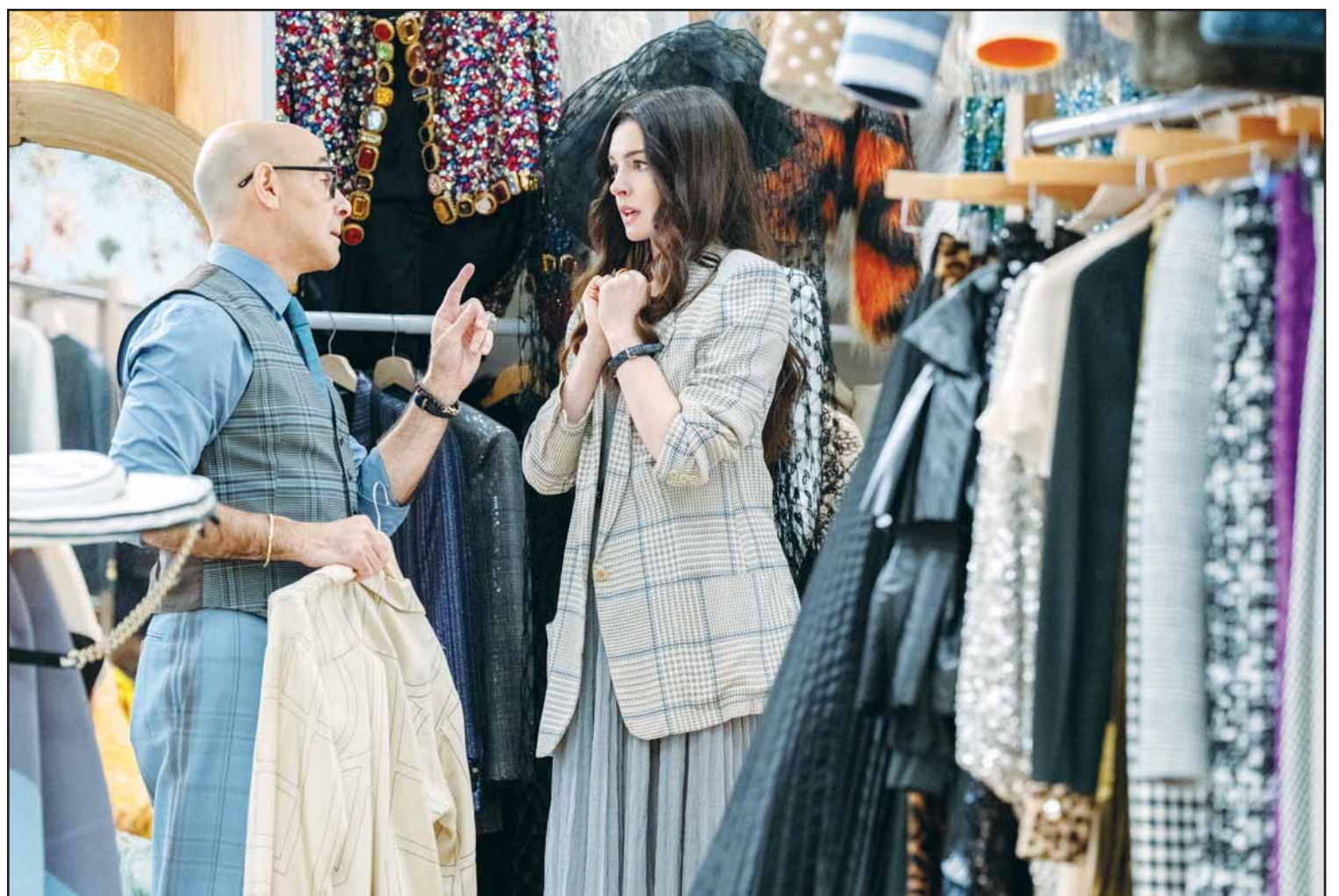
So you can see why making "The Devil Wears Prada 2," two decades after the original, was hard to resist. The cast, led by Anne Hathaway, have hardly aged. The then-little-known Emily Blunt has turned into a star. Throw in some stiletto heels and a few T.J. Maxx quips and the thing practically writes itself.

Yet time has worn on "The Devil Wears Prada 2," a fitfully functional sequel that doesn't fit its cast nearly as snugly as the 2006 original did. Nostalgia, haute couture and the sheer appeal of Streep and Tucci will be enough for some to celebrate this 20-year reunion. The actors all don their old roles seamlessly. But the trouble with "The Devil Wears Prada 2" isn't its winning cast. It's that everything else has changed. The sequel, which returns director David Frankel and screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna, valiantly tries to catch up to the times, but the result is enough to make you wish they had said "That's all" after the first one.

"The Devil Wears Prada," Lauren Weisberger's 2003 novel, was born out of an earlier media age when the New York magazine was a midtown dream of power, cachet and free-flowing expense reports. Weisberger, who had worked as a personal assistant to Vogue editor Anna Wintour, famously based her Runway magazine editor-in-chief Miranda Priestly (Streep) on her former boss.

But the sequel takes place in a very different media ecosystem. In the opening scenes of the new film, Andrea Sachs (Hathaway) receives an award for her investigative journalism for a newspaper called The Vanguard only to, moments before her speech, find out that she and her colleagues have been laid off. If Chanel-styled escapism is part of the promise of "The Devil Wears Prada," reporters will likely find it soberly realistic. There is, for better and worse, an awful lot of Hathaway preaching about the power of journalism here.

Things at Runway aren't much better, either. The magazine is more digital than glossy now; going viral matters more than shaping fashion trends. After the magazine unwittingly



This image released by 20th Century Studios shows Stanley Tucci, left, and Anne Hathaway in a scene from 'The Devil Wears Prada 2.'

publishes a laudatory profile of a label soon after revealed to be a sweatshop, Runway chair Irv Ravitz (Tibor Feldman), in PR crisis mode, hires Andrea to run the features department.

To it takes quite a bit of narrative cross stitching to, 20 years later, make Miranda Andrea's boss again. At their reunion, an overexcited Andy is met by a typically cool Miranda, who characteristically doesn't even remember her. Their task of reviving the reputation of Runway gets significantly more difficult when Irv's tech bro son (B.J. Novak) takes over ownership. Further corporate jeopardy follows when other players - including Blunt's Emily Charlton, now a Dior

executive, and her wealthy boyfriend, Benji Barnes (Justin Theroux) - join the mix.

The second "Devil Wears Prada" plays out a bit like a fashion world "Succession," with better clothes and a lot less cursing. While these shifting power dynamics make for some dramatic reversals, they don't get near the pure enjoyment of the novice assistant-tyrannical boss relationship that defined the original.

That might be the real rub of "The Devil Wears Prada 2": Mid-life career changes aren't nearly as compelling or relatable as a newbie assistant thrown into the high-fashion fire. All we really want is to see Meryl Streep say

cutting things to Anne Hathaway, with a few zingers from a well-tailored Tucci on the side.

The sequel delivers a little of that, but it mostly tries to cover its narrative issues with trips to the Hamptons and Milan, and a long list of cameos, from Karl-Anthony Towns (go Knicks) to Kara Swisher. There's also Kenneth Branagh as Miranda's violin-playing husband, Lucy Liu as a sought-after interview and Patrick Brammall as an Aussie developer and Andrea's love interest. (Pour one out for Adrian Grenier's sous chef, who doesn't return in the sequel.)

The first "The Devil Wears Prada" was about having career ambitions

while not entirely sacrificing your personal life, too. In the sequel, the struggle is for maintaining a standard of quality, in journalism and taste, when those things are going increasingly out of fashion.

What else has gone by the wayside? The cruel boss. "The Devil Wears Prada" might have very well had Miranda, in the intervening years, be canceled and have to claw back her seat of power. Instead, she has two assistants. One, played by Simone Ashley, is a sharp-elbowed heir to Blunt's character. The other, played by Caleb Hearon, is smiley and chipper. Andy has an assistant (Helen J. Shen) too, but they get along terrifically. (AP)



This image released by Neon shows Adam Scott in a scene from 'Hokum.' (AP)

'Hokum' dangles nightmares, not answers

LOS ANGELES, April 30, (AP): The first few minutes of "Hokum" might make you think you're in the wrong movie. I certainly did. If you know anything about Damian McCarthy's new horror movie, out Friday, it's probably that it involves Adam Scott and a haunted Irish hotel. The setting is green and damp, a little chilly and full of antiquities that toe the line between charming and creepy. So why is the opening image that of an expansive desert sitting beneath a bright blue sky? And why is the first character you see a Spanish conquistador (Austin Amelio), in armor, with a little boy by his side and a map in his hand?

It's an easy answer, but that doesn't make it an especially satisfying choice. You see, Scott's character, Ohm Bauman, is a novelist, a rather famous one, who is finishing his conquistador trilogy. The book, or at least how to finish it, looms over him on a trip to scatter his long-deceased

parents' ashes near the hotel in Ireland where they had their honeymoon. There is a kind of logical payoff to the conquistador story, but the disparate images of that setting haunts (and not in a good way) an otherwise very scary and very aesthetically coherent movie.

The conquistador isn't the only problem with "Hokum," the title of which may very well be a catch-all defense against anyone crying about story issues - it's all just nonsense anyway! It's just the most glaring, and doesn't exactly help ease anyone into this journey with Ohm who is, how to say this delicately, an impossible jerk. Truly, Ohm is the kind of guy who is guaranteed to ruin anyone's day, especially kindly service industry professionals who have no choice but to be civil. He is entitled, dismissive and will go out of his way to say something cruel and condescending when nothing at all would have sufficed.

Culture & Heritage

Local workers sustain Egypt's archaeological legacy

Unsung hands preserve Luxor's ancient temples

LUXOR, Egypt, April 30, (Xinhua): At the ancient Temple of Montu in Luxor, Egyptian workers brush sand from stone faces buried for thousands of years and move massive stone blocks back into place using traditional tools and techniques passed down through generations.

While foreign archaeologists often attract attention, the daily preservation of Luxor's temples depends largely on local specialists whose skills have helped protect some of Egypt's most important historical sites.

Dressed in traditional Jalabiyas, workers kneel in the dust, using small brushes to clear sand from stone carvings buried for nearly 3,000 years. Nearby, others use simple tools, similar to those used in ancient times, to lift heavy blocks back into position.

Among them is Ali Farouk, 56, head of archaeological excavation workers in Upper Egypt. Known locally as a fixture of the temples, Farouk has spent 45 years working at nearly every major site in the region, from Karnak Temple to smaller hidden shrines.

Farouk, who also works with Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, does not hold a university degree in Egyptology. Still, he has become a key reference for archaeological missions, taking part in the discovery of hundreds of rare pharaonic tombs alongside Egyptian and foreign researchers.

"A book can tell a student where a wall might be, but it cannot tell you how that stone feels," Farouk told Xinhua. "After 45 years, I can hear the stone. I know if it is fragile or strong just by touching it."

He said more than 300 foreign archaeological missions and 50 Egyptian missions are carrying out excavation and restoration work across Egypt, employing thousands of local workers.

"These skilled workers, mainly from Upper Egypt, are the backbone of the industry, and their expertise is needed everywhere," Farouk said. "We do not just work here in Luxor. Our teams travel across Egypt, from the pyramids in the north to the deepest sites in the south, wherever the earth hides a secret."



Egyptian workers work in archaeological site on the West Bank of Luxor, Egypt on April 28, 2026. (Xinhua photos)

Farouk said the exact number of such workers is unclear because most are hired on a daily basis and there is

no formal union representing them. Despite the informal nature of the work, he said the income provides a

decent living for those who master the trade. For Farouk, who is from nearby

Qena province, the work is also a family legacy. He started in archaeological excavations as a teenager, and six

of his brothers work in the same field. He said the profession was passed down from his grandfather, who worked with early European missions clearing sand from Luxor Temple.

To preserve those skills, Farouk opened a training school in his home village of Quft, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Luxor, where he teaches relatives and younger workers excavation techniques.

That expertise now supports the Egyptian-Chinese joint mission at the Temple of Montu, a project linking two of the world's oldest civilizations.

Gao Wei, a Chinese archaeologist with the mission, said the team relies on about 50 to 60 Egyptian workers each year, including specialists from Quft who are widely known for their field skills.

"The Quft workmen are key technical personnel for any foreign archaeological mission in Egypt," Gao told Xinhua. "They have rich experience and know the local soil and stratigraphy inside out. We need their expertise to identify the outlines of mud-brick structures, which are not easily recognizable in the soil. Without their hard work, the archaeological work here would come to a standstill."

The partnership has grown beyond work, with Chinese experts and Egyptian workers often sharing breakfast at the site and building what Gao described as genuine friendship.

For Mahmoud Aly, 38, the job offers both stability and pride. He learned the trade from his father and has spent the past three years working with the Chinese team at the Temple of Montu, clearing sand, moving bricks and helping with restoration.

"Working with the Chinese experts taught me new things, such as using digital tools to document every tiny find," Aly told Xinhua while cleaning a piece of pottery.

In return, he said, Egyptian workers teach the Chinese team how to move heavy limestone without causing damage.

"When the team discovers something, I feel proud to be part of the hands that brought it back to light," Aly said with a smile.

Culture



People visit a photo exhibition highlighting the achievements of Chinese modernization in Vladivostok, Russia, April 27, 2026. (Xinhua)

Reflections in pixels of progress

Photo exhibition in Russia's Far East showcases Chinese modernization

VLADIVOSTOK, April 30, (Xinhua): In front of a wall of historical photographs, Oleg Kozhemyako, governor of Russia's Primorsky Krai in the Russian Far East, paused for a long moment.

His eyes lingered on images depicting China's First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957).

"China's persistent efforts and commitment to its fine traditions and development path have brought about extraordinary development," he said.

The remarks came at a photo exhibition titled "A Shared Future, A Long Road Ahead -- Achievements of Chinese Modernization," held on Monday in Vladivostok, capital of Primorsky Krai. The event attracted more than 300 participants from various walks of life.

Inside the exhibition hall, 30 carefully selected Xinhua photographs trace China's transformation across decades -- from early industrial foundations to advances in science, technology, culture and youth exchanges.

Vyacheslav Kozhukhov, deputy mayor of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, was struck by the visual contrast between tradition and modern life.

Among the images that impressed

him most was a scene of children playing in the snow at Beijing's Temple of Heaven Park.

"This is a well-planned, systematic process of economic development," he said. "It has been implemented clearly and consistently, and it has delivered remarkable results."

Another photograph that attracted a lot of attention showed the first Jiefang (Liberation) truck rolling off the assembly line at Changchun First Automobile Works in 1956 -- a landmark factory built with Soviet assistance, symbolizing early industrial cooperation.

Yevgeny Vlasov, vice-rector for International Relations at Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU), noted that Russia and China have long learned from and supported each other throughout their shared history.

"Russia-China relations are now at their highest level in history. They are the warmest and friendliest ties, and bilateral cooperation enjoys broad prospects. Every year our relations grow stronger," Vlasov told Xinhua.

Innokentiy Kichkin, a postgraduate student at FEFU, expressed deep admiration for the remarkable achieve-

ments of the Chinese people and their tremendous efforts. He said Chinese modernization has delivered impressive results, adding that "the Chinese people share a common goal of national rejuvenation, and they have achieved it."

Denis Druzhin, a trader engaged in Russia-China commerce, highlighted China's rapid progress in fields such as new energy, green development and artificial intelligence, all featured in the exhibition.

"Chinese modernization brings opportunities to Russia, drives economic growth and improves the lives of people in both countries," he said.

Daria Mishukova, a Russian scholar specializing in East Asian studies, said the Chinese people are good at taking steady and practical steps, which is a key reason for the success of Chinese modernization. She also expressed optimism about the future of Russia-China relations, saying cooperation between the two sides will continue to grow stronger.

The exhibition was co-organized by the Consulate General of China in Vladivostok and Xinhua News Agency's Eurasia Bureau.

Theater

Olivier winner reprises Eva Perón in 2027 revival

Zegler brings Evita to Broadway

NEW YORK, April 30, (AP) — Fresh off her triumphant turn in London as Eva Perón, Rachel Zegler is taking her Argentine first lady to Broadway.

The revival — directed by Jamie Lloyd — will play at a Shubert theater to be announced in the spring of 2027, producers said Wednesday. The musical is about the caustic intersection of politics and showbiz.

"Performing Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's brilliant show in London was a dream come true, but being able to partner once again with Jamie to bring 'Evita' to Broadway is a once in a lifetime opportunity," Zegler said in a statement. "I can't wait to perform for my home, New York City."

Zegler won the Olivier Award as best actress in a musical earlier this month. She received lots of attention for performing the song "Don't Cry For Me, Argentina" on an exterior balcony, attracting large crowds to the street every night while theatergoers inside watched on screens. Lloyd did something similar with his revival of "Sunset Boulevard"



Rachel Zegler reacts upon arrival at the Olivier Awards in London, England. (AP)

— placing the actor Tom Francis outside the theater each night.

"Evita" began as a rock opera concept album and transferred to Broad-

way in 1979, starring Patti LuPone and Mandy Patinkin. It was revived in 2012 starring Elena Roger and Ricky Martin, nominated for a best revival Tony.

Travel



A passenger ferry on the Xiamen-Kinmen tourist route is docked at Wutong Ferry Terminal in Xiamen, southeast China's Fujian Province. (VCG)

Shanghai opens Kinmen, Matsu tour

Shanghai residents can apply for group and individual tours to Kinmen and Matsu starting April 29, the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism said Wednesday.

Residents who intend to visit Kinmen

and Matsu may register with qualified travel agencies in Shanghai and east China's Fujian Province, and apply to the local exit-entry administration authorities for travel endorsements.

Earlier this month, the Chinese

mainland rolled out a package of 10 policies and measures -- spanning inter-party communication, infrastructure, travel, trade and culture -- aimed at boosting exchanges and cooperation with Taiwan. (Xinhua)

HEALTH/SCIENCE

Push for raw milk intensifies across US, despite illness outbreaks and scientists' warnings

WASHINGTON, April 30, (AP) — Backers of raw milk are pushing to make the potentially dangerous product more widely available and easier to obtain, even as a new outbreak - one of at least five in the past year - sickens US children.

More than three dozen bills supporting raw milk have been introduced in statehouses across the nation, The Associated Press found. A growing number of states are making it legal to sell. Dairy farmers say they can barely keep it in stock, even though prices can exceed \$10 or \$20 a gallon.

Top government officials and internet influencers are helping drive this momentum. US Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. downed shots of raw milk at the White House last May and previously promised to halt "aggressive suppression" of the product. On social media, posts about raw milk have surged in recent months, often touting unproven claims about its health benefits.

All of this alarms public health officials, who have long warned that unpasteurized milk can harbor risky germs. The current outbreak - tied to raw milk cheddar cheese from California-based Raw Farm - has sickened nine people with E. coli, half of them children younger than 5. One victim developed a serious complication that

can impair kidney function for life.

Petra Anne Levin, a biology professor at Washington University in St. Louis, said she doesn't understand the products' appeal.

"If you wouldn't lick a cow's underbelly, why would you drink raw milk?" she said. "There's a reason pasteurization is around."

Pasteurization kills germs by heating the milk, commonly to at least 161 degrees Fahrenheit (71.7 degrees Celsius) for at least 15 seconds. Experts say it has no significant impact on milk's nutritional quality and has saved millions of people from foodborne illness.

But some consumers would rather drink their milk raw despite the risk. Recognizing this trend, advocates and critics alike are increasingly calling for federal regulation of the product.

"People want access," said Mary McGonigle-Martin, co-chair of Stop Foodborne Illness, a consumer advocacy group. "Public health has lost the battle on raw milk."

Bills favoring raw milk have been introduced in the current legislative session in 18 states, including those controlled by Democrats and Republicans.

AP searched legislation in all 50 states using the bill-tracking software Plural and analyzed bills for whether

they expand or streamline access to unpasteurized milk or products made from it. More than 40 bills introduced as of late April would make it easier to buy, sell or consume raw milk.

Some would allow raw milk to be sold for human consumption for the first time. A bill in New Jersey's Senate, for example, would create a raw milk permitting program.

"You can buy cigarettes. You can buy alcohol. You can buy quote-unquote legalized marijuana," said state Sen. Michael Testa, a Republican sponsor. "Why shouldn't someone be able to consume raw milk?"

If the bill becomes law, New Jersey would join more than three dozen states in allowing raw milk sales. Wider access will probably mean more outbreaks, said Donald Schaffner, a Rutgers University food science professor.

Other bills seek to manage, guide or expand already legal sales. A bill advancing in the Iowa House would make it easier for farmers to sell unpasteurized products by offering them at farm stores alongside foods like meat.

Its sponsor, Republican state Rep. Chad Ingels, said he was initially opposed to legalizing raw milk because of safety concerns.

"But it's law now, and I'm very pro-local foods," said Ingels, who expects

the current bill to pass. "I just thought it made sense to allow those farm businesses to sell all their products in one location."

Two bills in Missouri would allow unpasteurized dairy products to be sold in grocery stores, farmers' markets or similar places as long as they include a label warning of the potential for harmful bacteria and herds are tested.

"We just want to make it more accessible, so that way, people have freedom of choice," said Republican state Rep. Bryant Wolfin, who sponsored one of the bills.

The legislation specifically invokes the Raw Milk Institute, defining "retail raw milk or cream" as being produced on dairy farms that in one bill meet standards set by the California-based organization, and in the other "have obtained listed status" from the institute.

The organization, headed by Raw Farm owner Mark McAfee, says its mission is to improve the safety and quality of raw milk, which is how Wolfin sees it. But Schaffner said the organization focuses on raw milk advocacy rather than managing risk. He pointed out that McAfee's farm has been linked to numerous outbreaks.

It's unclear how many raw milk bills will pass in statehouses this year. But there is also legislation being considered on a national level.



A receive jar collects raw milk from cows before it is eventually pasteurized at Ronnybrook Farm in Ancramdale, NY, on April 22. (AP)

Meeting did not produce binding commitments

Countries end Colombia fossil fuel summit with focus on next steps and financing

SANTA MARTA, Colombia, April 30, (AP) — A first-of-its-kind international conference on moving away from fossil fuels wrapped up in Colombia Wednesday with a clear message: the global conversation has shifted from whether to phase out oil, gas and coal to how to do it, with financing emerging as one of the biggest obstacles.

Officials, climate advocates and financial experts from 56 countries gathered in the Caribbean coastal city of Santa Marta for several days of talks aimed at tackling one of the most politically sensitive issues in climate policy - transitioning away from fossil fuel production, the main driver of global warming.

The meeting did not produce binding commitments, but participants said it delivered a set of initial outcomes, including plans for continued cooperation between countries, the creation of working groups on issues such as financing and labor transitions, and momentum toward future negotiations aimed at coordinating a global phase-out of fossil fuels.

Former Irish President Mary Robinson, now a prominent advocate on climate justice, said the discussions in Santa Marta felt markedly different from traditional UN climate talks, with a more open and collaborative tone among participants.

"COPs are more formal, negotiators have their lines and they will not cross them and it's so different here."

she said, adding that participants "have felt more human together."

Robinson said one of the central challenges discussed was the financial constraints facing developing countries, many of which lack the resources to transition away from fossil fuels.

"Many of them are in bad need of debt relief to even begin a transition," she said, warning that those countries are "trapped in debt" and over-dependent on fossil fuels with few viable alternatives.

At UN climate talks, countries have traditionally focused on cutting emissions - how much pollution each nation produces - rather than directly addressing fossil fuel production.

Participants said the Santa Marta meeting marked a shift toward tackling the underlying drivers of climate change, including how to wind down fossil fuel supply while managing economic and social impacts.

"This conference is actually the first time in 30 years of climate negotiations where countries are gathering to talk about how to ensure a fossil fuel phase-out," said Tzeporah Berman, founder and chair of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative.

The discussions included coordination between producers and consumers, labor transitions and the broader economic consequences of moving away from fossil fuels.

Financing consistently emerged as the most immediate and difficult barrier to moving away from fossil fuels.



Philip Nugent, director general for EU, international and marine affairs, (from left), Colombia's Environmental Minister Irene Vélez Torres, Stientje van Veldhoven, minister of climate policy and green growth of the Netherlands, and Maina Talia, minister of home affairs, climate change and environment of Tuvalu, pose at the end of a conference aimed at transitioning away from fossil fuels on April 29 in Santa Marta, Colombia. (AP)

would like to stop expanding fossil fuel production, but they're being forced into new oil and gas and coal projects just to feed their debt," Berman said.

Countries in the Global South face high borrowing costs and limited access to capital, even as renewable energy becomes cheaper than fossil fuels.

"The financing is key, this is an investment issue," said Nick Robins, senior director for finance and private sector at the World Resources Institute. "What we're hearing is that they

Brazil, one key thing that was talked about were the challenges of the fiscal debate.

"We need for finance ministers to help us on finding solutions on how to deal with the fiscal challenges of transition," she said.

Robins added that macroeconomic responses to crises could unintentionally slow progress.

"A traditional response to inflation could actually be hampering the clean energy revolution," he said.

Participants described the gathering as the beginning of a new kind of alliance, bringing together major economies and some of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations.

"For the first time, you're bringing these groups together as a shared community with a shared goal," Robins said.

The conference also drew a wide range of participants beyond national governments, including Indigenous groups, civil society, youth and subnational authorities.

Like many other countries, the United States was not invited to the meeting, which organizers described as a space for countries aligned around moving away from fossil fuels. However, an official from California attended separately.

"It's been really wonderful to see how many different stakeholders have been engaged here," said Sarah Izant, deputy secretary for climate policy at

the California Environmental Protection Agency.

She said clear policy signals will be critical to attracting investment.

"The importance of having policy and regulatory certainty can help to unlock private capital," Izant said.

Vance Culbert, a senior policy adviser at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, said in a statement when the conference ended that it signaled growing momentum behind efforts to move beyond broad climate commitments.

"Santa Marta has delivered something valuable: a genuine demonstration that climate action remains a priority, and real appetite for specific solutions," he said, adding that the process could help "give the transition away from fossil fuels a more coherent and powerful grounding."

Patricia Suárez, an adviser to the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon, said it was too early to assess the outcomes of the conference, with questions remaining over whether Indigenous proposals will be reflected in final documents.

She also raised concerns about participation in newly announced initiatives, including a scientific advisory panel, and whether Indigenous knowledge systems will be meaningfully included.

"How are Indigenous peoples going to participate in that space?" she said.

Reports warn of accelerating warming

Europe faces intensifying climate extremes

GENEVA, April 30, (Xinhua) — Multiple reports released on Wednesday paint a stark picture of accelerating climate extremes, with Europe warming faster than any other continent. The findings underscore that climate change has become an urgent reality reshaping ecosystems, economies and human health across Europe, calling for ambitious actions.

"Since 1980, Europe has been warming twice as fast as the global average, making it the fastest warming continent on Earth," Celeste Saulo, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said while presenting the European State of the Climate Report 2025.

Europe suffered record or near-record climate extremes in 2025, with heatwaves, wildfires, marine heat and ice loss intensifying across the continent, the EU-funded Copernicus Climate Change Service and the WMO said in the report.

According to the report, at least 95 percent of Europe recorded annual temperatures above average, with prolonged heat spreading from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Circle. Europe experienced its second-most severe heatwave on record, while sub-Arctic Fennoscandia endured a 21-day heatwave in July -- the longest and most severe ever recorded in the region. Temperatures near and within the Arctic Circle reached or exceeded 30 degrees Celsius.



People cross a sidewalk blocked by trees after a snowfall, in Moscow, Russia on April 27. (AP)

The findings align with broader Copernicus data showing that 2025 was the third-warmest year on record globally.

Hot and dry conditions fuelled Europe's worst wildfire year on record. Wildfire data in the report showed that about 1.034 million hectares of land, an area larger than Cyprus, were burned in 2025. Wildfire emissions in Europe also reached their highest level on record, with Spain accounting for around half of the continent's total fire

emissions.

Numerous extreme events in 2025 - including drought, wildfires, and land and marine heatwaves - placed mounting pressure on biodiversity in marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Shrinking and shifting habitats, disrupted seasonal cycles and changing precipitation patterns have further intensified stress on nature.

The report highlighted concrete examples of climate change impacts on sensitive ecosystems, such as marine heatwaves damaging seagrass meadows in the Mediterranean Sea and wildfires affecting peatlands, underscoring the growing links between climate and biodiversity loss.

Separate findings from the Global Forest Watch platform showed that climate change-linked forest loss was also significant in Europe in 2025. In France, tree cover loss due to fire reached a record high in 2025 - seven times higher than in 2024. In Spain and Portugal, around 60 percent of all 2025 tree cover loss was caused by wildfires.

Extreme heat also takes a measurable toll on human health and productivity. A joint report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the WMO has warned that extreme heat is disrupting global agrifood systems, threatening over one billion people. It estimated annual losses of around 500 billion working hours worldwide due to heat stress.

Nanoplastics absorbed by crops, posing potential health risks: study

SYDNEY, April 30, (Xinhua) — Microplastics and nanoplastics present in agricultural soils can enter crop tissues and stunt plant growth, raising concerns about food safety and human exposure, an Australian study reveals.

Using wheat and tomato plants, the team found that microplastics reduced plant growth and chlorophyll content, with fiber-shaped plastics originating from synthetic textiles causing the most damage, according to a statement released by Australia's Griffith University.

The study, which examined how plastic particles behave under realistic farming conditions, suggested potentially serious implications for food production, it said.



Ziajahromi

The team found that plants can trap larger microplastic particles in their root systems, limiting their movement in soil but potentially leading to local accumulation around roots.

More significantly, nanoplastics were absorbed into plant tissues and transported within the plant, including its leaves, particularly in tomatoes, said Shima Ziajahromi from Griffith's Australian Rivers Institute, who led the study.

Mixtures of micro- and nanoplastics showed greater toxicity than single particles, suggesting additive or synergistic effects, according to the findings published in the journal Environmental Science and Pollution Research.

"These findings demonstrate that agricultural soil is not just a sink for plastics, but a pathway into the food systems, meaning they could end up on our plates," she said, highlighting the need for stronger controls on plastic contamination in agriculture.



A SpaceX Falcon9 rocket, with the Crew Dragon capsule attached, lifts off from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Complex 39-A on Nov. 15, 2020, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

SpaceX's Falcon Heavy launches Viasat communications sat

SpaceX's heavy-lift rocket Falcon Heavy on Wednesday launched a communications satellite for US company Viasat into orbit, aiming to provide broadband services over the Asia-Pacific region.

The rocket lifted off at 10:13 am Eastern Time from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in the US state of Florida.

Later, SpaceX confirmed the separation of the Falcon Heavy's side boosters. The two side boosters successfully landed on SpaceX's Landing Zones 2 and 40 -- two distinct pads at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.

Following launch, the satellite "ViaSat-3 F3" will spend several months traveling to geostationary

orbit before arriving at its reserved orbital slot.

Falcon Heavy is composed of three reusable Falcon 9 nine-engine cores whose 27 Merlin engines together generate more than 5 million pounds of thrust at liftoff. It can lift nearly 64 metric tonnes to orbit, according to SpaceX. (Xinhua)



Officials and conservationists release Royal Turtles into the wild in Preah Sihanouk province, Cambodia, on April 29. (Xinhua)

Cambodia releases 20 Royal Turtles into natural habitat

PHNOM PENH, April 30, (Xinhua) — Twenty nearly-extinct Royal Turtles were freed into their natural habitat in the Sre Ambel River in southwest Preah Sihanouk province in Cambodia on Wednesday, a conservationist group said.

The turtles were released by Cambodia's General Directorate of Fisheries in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and other organizations, according to a joint press release.

The Royal Turtle, also known as Southern River Terrapins (Batagur affinis), remains one of the world's most threatened freshwater turtles and is listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List as Critically Endangered.

In Cambodia, the recovery effort has focused on protecting nests, raising young turtles until they have a better chance of surviving in the wild, monitoring released animals, and protecting the river system from illegal fishing, sand dredging and habitat loss.

"Over the past decade, the program has returned more than 200 turtles to the wild," the press release said.

Sultans batting crumbles against pace and spin

Kingsmen eliminate Multan from PSL playoffs as fans gradually return to stadiums

LAHORE, Pakistan, April 30, (AP): Hyderabad Kingsmen continued their remarkable turnaround in the Pakistan Super League with a thumping eight-wicket win over Multan Sultans in the playoffs as fans gradually started to return to stadiums.

Hyderabad, led by Marnus Labuschagne of Australia, started its debut season in Pakistan's premier domestic T20 event with four straight losses before winning five of its last six league games to qualify for the playoffs.

Hyderabad will take on three-time champion Islamabad United on Friday for a spot in Sunday's final against 2017 champion Peshawar Zalmi, led by Babar Azam.

Peshawar routed Islamabad by 70 runs in the qualifier at Karachi on the back of Babar's second century this season.

A day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

approved the return of fans to stadiums for the remaining four PSL games, ticket distribution hit a snag at Karachi before National Bank Stadium got a sizable crowd midway through the second half of the qualifier.

The Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore also didn't pack to its capacity, but still thousands of fans came to watch the game for the first time this season.

Hyderabad pace trio of Akif Javed, Mohammad Ali and Hunain Shah claimed six wickets between them while Saim Ayub and Glenn Maxwell also picked up a wicket each as Multan got restricted at 159-9. Pakistan test captain Shan Masood made an unbeaten 69, but rest of the Multan batting crumbled against pace and spin.

Hyderabad cruised to 162-2 in 15.2 overs with opening batter Maaz Sadaqat scoring unbeaten 64 off 33 balls and wicketkeeper-batter

Usman Khan hitting eight fours and three sixes in his aggressive 64 off 35 balls.

Pakistan's biggest sports spectacle had started behind closed doors last month 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.

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.



Hyderabad Kingsmen Mohammad Ali, center, celebrates after taking wicket during the Pakistan Super League first eliminator cricket match between Multan Sultans and Hyderabad Kingsmen at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP)

Hyderabad too hot for Mumbai

Head and Klaasen hit aggressive half-centuries



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Heinrich Klaasen plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Sunrisers Hyderabad in Mumbai, India. (AP)

MUMBAI, India, April 30, (AP): Aggressive half-centuries from Travis Head and Heinrich Klaasen propelled Sunrisers Hyderabad to a six-wicket win over struggling Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League.

Head set up Hyderabad's whirlwind chase of 249-4 in 18.4 with 76 runs off 30 balls before Klaasen finished off the game with 65 not out off 30 balls with seven fours and four sixes.

They overshadowed Ryan Rickelton's unbeaten 123 off 55 balls that had earlier led Mumbai to 243-5 as the South African left-handed opener smashed Mumbai's fastest-ever century in the IPL off 44 balls.

"Knowing our lineup and the pitch, I thought it was chasable," Hyderabad captain Pat Cummins said. "When the pitch is good, they (Head and Sharma) have so many different shots. Glad I am not bowling to them. They are super aggressive. They have a fearless attitude."

Hyderabad's left-handed opening pair of Head and Abhishek Sharma (45) provided a blazing start of 129 in only 8.4 overs before Mumbai grabbed three wickets in space of four runs in the middle

overs through spinner Allah Ghazanfar (2-51) and captain Hardik Pandya (1-39).

Mumbai fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah (0-54) returned wicketless for the sixth game this season as Hyderabad's explosive top-order didn't spare the world's best white-ball bowler. Bumrah has so far picked up just two wickets in eight games and his inability to get early wickets has seen Mumbai struggling to defend even big totals this season.

Despite wickets falling around him, Klaasen didn't hold back and shared an 80-run stand with Nitish Kumar Reddy, who made 21. Then, Salil Arora (30 not out) plundered three sixes and two fours as Hyderabad notched its fifth straight win.

Earlier, Pandya became the first captain in the last 22 games at Wankhede to field first after winning the toss.

His decision was vindicated by Mumbai's new set of openers Rickelton and Will Jacks (46), who combined in an electrifying opening stand of 93 runs in 43 balls with Rohit Sharma still not match fit and Quinton de Kock ruled out because of a wrist injury.

Both batters matched each other before Jacks, who hit five fours and three sixes, got a faint out-

side edge to Reddy's first ball as he went for a big shot to a length ball.

Suryakumar Yadav's (5) below-par season continued as he yet again fell cheaply when he top-edged bowler Eshan Malinga (1-29) to fine leg. But Rickelton turned around his batting form and raised his half-century off 23 balls with five fours and four sixes.

Pandya made a quickfire 31 off 15 balls and Rickelton kept accelerating before raising his record-breaking century for Mumbai with his aggressive power-hitting.

Fast bowler Praful Hinge, playing in his first IPL season, was expensive in his two spells and finished with 2-54 while Harsh Dubey (0-50) was also expensive in his three overs.

"I won't put my bowlers under the bus," Mumbai skipper Pandya said. "As an overall unit, we have not been able to do what MI stands for. We have passionate owners and support staff, hopefully we will figure out something."

Hyderabad moved one place up to No. 3 on the points table with 12 points while Mumbai, which has lost four of its five home games at Wankhede Stadium this season, is at No. 9 with just two wins from eight games.

Sabastian awarded \$61,000 and a car by the president

Kenya gives a hero's welcome to marathon record breaker Sawe

NAIROBI, Kenya, April 30, (AP): Marathon record-breaker Sabastian Sawe received a hero's welcome in Kenya, complete with a water cannon salute on Wednesday for the aircraft he was aboard.

On Thursday, he was awarded \$61,000 and a car by the president.

Sawe, the first person to officially break the two-hour barrier in an marathon, was welcomed home by his parents and Sports Minister Salim Mvurya, who hailed the runner's accomplishment at the London Marathon as "a win for Kenya."

President William Ruto held a more formal welcoming ceremony Thursday, where he described Sawe's win as "a defining moment in the history of human endurance."

Sawe gave President Ruto an autographed Adidas Adizero shoe worn during Sunday's marathon. He also autographed a photo of the moment he broke the world record.

Sawe made history on Sunday when he won in a time of 1 hour, 59 minutes, 30 seconds. He bettered the previous men's world record by 65 seconds.

On arrival Wednesday at Nai-



Kenyan marathon record-breaker Sabastian Sawe, left, presents the shoes he ran with, to President William Ruto, right, at State House in Nairobi, Kenya. (AP)

robi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Sawe told The Associated Press he was proud to have "made a great achievement in life" and was planning to "try and lower the record further."

He was adorned with a traditional wreath made from twigs to symbol-

ize victory.

Traditional dancers sang his praises as he then climbed into a luxury government vehicle as part of the "heroic welcome" hailed by the sports minister.

Sawe's parents told The AP they knew their son was destined for

greatness even as a child. His mother recounted how he sprinted during bath time.

"He would run too fast. So, I would say to myself, this boy will shine for me one day," Emily Sawe said.

His father recounted some tension watching Sunday's marathon because of the television lacked a clear signal.

"The moment my son pulled in front, I walked out and didn't see him finish the race. I watched the replay afterwards. I was so happy, extremely happy. We screamed so much that now it is hard to swallow anything," Simion Kiplagat Sawe said.

Sabastian Sawe was introduced to professional running by his uncle, Abraham Chepkirwok, who ran the 800 meters for Uganda at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Sawe won the Valencia Marathon in 2024, clocking 2:02:05. He went into Sunday's race in London as the defending champion.

His father says Sawe is disciplined and determined. "Even now, he still says that record was not enough; he wants to lower it further."

Schalke a win away from comeback

Champs League spots still up for grabs in Bundesliga drama

BERLIN, April 30, (AP): Four teams are vying to join Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League next season and a host more are fighting for survival in the Bundesliga.

Last-placed Heidenheim could be relegated this weekend, possibly replaced by second-division leader Schalke, which can seal promotion.

There are no games on Friday as it's May Day, traditionally a day of demonstrations and worker protests accompanied by a heavy police presence across Germany. May Day falls on a Saturday next year, when there will be no matches at all over the whole weekend because of the anticipated security requirements.

Saturday's and Sunday's games are unaffected this year. The Women's Bundesliga is also unaffected, with Union Berlin visiting Hamburger SV on Friday. Bayern sealed the women's title as it did the men's already.

Heidenheim faces a daunting trip to Bayern on Saturday. Heidenheim boosted its hopes of avoiding the drop with wins over Union Berlin and St. Pauli this month. But a win at Bayern would be a major surprise, even if the already crowned league champion is likely to field a B team before its Champions League semifinal second leg against Paris Saint Germain next week. PSG won a pulsating first leg 5-4 on Tuesday.

Heidenheim would be relegated by a defeat in Munich if St. Pauli, currently in the relegation playoff place, beats Mainz at home on Sunday.

Schalke can clinch promotion on Saturday with a win at home over struggling Fortuna Düsseldorf.

Hoffenheim welcomes Stuttgart and Bayer Leverkusen hosts Leipzig for duels with Champions League qualification at stake on Saturday. Third-placed Leipzig is the best-positioned of the four teams after five straight wins for 62 points, followed by Stuttgart and Hoffenheim on 57. Leverkusen is seven points behind Leipzig with three round rounds to play.

Union Berlin hosts Cologne on Sat-



Bara Sapoko Ndiaye, left, and Mainz's Kaishu Sano fight for the ball during a Bundesliga soccer match between Mainz and Bayern in Mainz, Germany. (AP)

urday with both teams just outside the relegation zone. Union is looking for its first points since Marie-Louise Eta was appointed coach.

Leverkusen 18-year-old Montrell Culbreath scored in the 3-1 win in Leipzig when the sides last met in December, and he's likely to get another run out after appearing in each of Leverkusen's last eight games across all competitions.

Yan Diomande has become Leipzig's star with goal involvements in each of the team's last three games.

Continuing the theme of youngsters breaking through, Dortmund gave 18-year-old Italian forward Samuele Inacio his first start last weekend, when 16-year-old Mathis Albert became the youngest American to play in the Bundesliga. Dortmund visits Borussia Mönchengladbach on Sunday.

Bayern 18-year-old Bara Sapoko Ndiaye from Senegal made his first start against Mainz last weekend and will likely get another chance in mid-field against Heidenheim.

Union goalkeeper Frederik Rønnow is out for the rest of the season with a muscle injury from last weekend's defeat in Leipzig. Carl Klaus, who made his Bundesliga debut at age 32, can look forward to three more appearances.

L AFC beats Toluca in 1st leg of CONCACAF Champs Cup semis



Toluca midfielder Jesus Angulo (10) moves the ball past LAFC midfielder Mark Delgado (8) during the second half of the first leg of a CONCACAF Champions Cup semifinal soccer match in Los Angeles. (AP)

LOS ANGELES, April 30, (Agencies): Los Angeles FC (LAFC) defeated Toluca 2-1 in the first leg of the CONCACAF Champions Cup semifinal.

The aggregate winner will be decided on May 6 in Toluca.

Timothy Tillman gave LAFC a 1-0 lead in the 51st minute with his second goal in 17 games across all competitions this season. Tillman chested down Heung-Min's touch and sent it past a diving Luis Garcia.

LAFC appeared to take a 2-0 lead three minutes later when Jacob Shaffelburg redirected Sergi Palencia's cross at the back post, but it was called back for offsides after a lengthy review.

Toluca tied it at 1-1 in the 73rd on a bending shot from the top of the box by Jesús Ricardo Angulo for his 12th goal of the season.

LAFC goalkeeper Hugo Lloris kept the game scoreless in the first half with a double save. Lloris' reaction save denied Nicolás Castro's header from close range and it sent him to the ground to block Jesús Gallardo's rebound attempt at the near post.

LAFC was without forward Denis Bouanga, who has five goals in the tournament, and defender Eddie Segura due to yellow card accumulation.

□ □ □

Goalkeeper Carlos Miguel scored a

late own goal as Paraguay's Cerro Porteno salvaged a 1-1 home draw with Brazilian side Palmeiras in the Copa Libertadores group stage.

Colombian midfielder Jhon Arias gave Palmeiras the lead in Asuncion by firing in from close range after Allan's cross.

The visitors looked to be cruising until the 72nd minute when Juan Iturbe's long-range shot rebounded off the woodwork before ricocheting into the net off the outstretched Miguel.

Palmeiras dominated the final minutes but couldn't find a winner against a Cerro Porteno side that defended stubbornly but managed only two shots on target.

In Argentina, a second-half strike from Guido Carrillo handed Estudiantes a 1-1 home draw with reigning champion Flamengo.

The Brazilian club opened the scoring through Luiz Araujo, who swept in from eight yards after a fine run and cross from Bruno Henrique.

Estudiantes drew level when Carrillo bundled in from the goal line after Facundo Farias met Eric Meza's cross from the right with a lunging header.

Elsewhere in the Copa Libertadores on Wednesday, Universidad Católica won 2-1 at Barcelona SC. Mirassol cruised to a 2-0 home win over Always Ready and Platense prevailed 2-1 at home to Santa Fe.

SPORTS

Rockets, Pistons dig deep to prolong playoff fight

Cavaliers take slim lead over Raptors



Cleveland Cavaliers center Jarrett Allen goes to the basket against Toronto Raptors forward RJ Barrett during the first half in Game 5 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in Cleveland. (AP)



Houston Rockets guard Amen Thompson, left, drives by Los Angeles Lakers guard Luke Kennard during the second half in Game 5 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in Los Angeles. (AP)

LOS ANGELES, April 30, (AP): Jabari Smith Jr. scored 22 points, Tari Eason added 18 and the Houston Rockets avoided playoff elimination for the second straight game with a 99-93 victory over the Lakers in Game 5 on Wednesday night, trimming Los Angeles' lead in the first-round series to 3-2.

Alperen Sengun had 14 points, nine rebounds and eight assists for the fifth-seeded Rockets, who sent the series back to Houston for Game 6 on Friday night with a gritty performance to overcome Austin Reaves' return to the Lakers.

Houston has won two straight even without top scorer Kevin Durant, who has missed four of the series' five games with injuries.

No team has ever recovered from a 0-3 deficit to win an NBA playoff series, but the Rockets are halfway. Only four of the 159 teams to start a series down 0-3 have ever even forced a Game 7.

LeBron James scored 17 of his 25 points in the second half and added seven assists, but Los Angeles lost its second straight after stealing Game 3 with an improbable rally in the final seconds of regulation.

James' teams have never blown a 2-0 series lead in his entire 23-year NBA

career.

Reaves had 22 points and six assists in his return from a nine-game injury absence for the Lakers, but they committed 15 mostly atrocious turnovers in their worst performance of the series and only their second loss in 16 home games since February.

Deandre Ayton had 18 points and 17 rebounds for Los Angeles, which is still without Luka Doncic. The NBA scoring champion doesn't appear to be close to a return from a strained hamstring.

Strained oblique muscles had sidelined Reaves since April 2, but he had 11 points and six assists in the first half of Game 5. Yet the Rockets coolly carried an advantage into the second half and led 87-74 with 5:55 to play.

Los Angeles awoke for a late 11-1 run and trimmed Houston's lead to 88-85 on a driving layup by James, but Reed Sheppard hit a jumper before ripping the ball away from James for a dunk with 2:20 to play.

Ayton's putback dunk made it 96-93 after James and Reaves both missed open 3-pointers. Thompson hit one of two free throws, and James badly missed another 3-point attempt that allowed Houston to ice it.

Pistons 116, Magic 109

In Detroit, Cade Cunningham scored a franchise playoff-record 45 points, including a step-back jumper with 32 seconds left, and the top-seeded Detroit

Pistons beat the eighth-seeded Orlando Magic in Game 5 of their first-round series to stave off elimination.

Orlando leads the series 3-2 and will get a second chance to advance at home on Friday night.

The Magic fell to 0-10 in franchise history on the road in a Game 5.

Detroit never trailed and went ahead by 15 early in the final quarter. The Magic made one more run, pulling within three points on Paolo Banchero's sixth 3-pointer with 1:09 left. Banchero matched Cunningham with 45 points, also a playoff career-high - and missed 7 of 12 free throws.

Cavaliers 125, Raptors 120

In Cleveland, Dennis Schroder scored 11 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter, Evan Mobley hit a pair of pivotal 3-pointers in the final period and finished with 23 points, and Cleveland rallied for a victory over Toronto in Game 5 of their first-round series.

Cleveland leads the series 3-2. Game 6 is Friday night in Toronto.

James Harden scored 23 points and Donovan Mitchell added 19 for the Cavaliers.

RJ Barrett led Toronto with 25 points while Ja'Kobe Walter added 20 and Jamal Shaeed had 18 off the bench. All-star forward Brandon Ingram left the game in the second quarter with right heel inflammation.

Arsenal hosts Fulham, City visits Everton

Wrexham aims to keep alive EPL dream by securing playoff spot

LONDON, April 30, (AP): For Wrexham's growing global fan-base it's set to be another heart-stopping end to the season.

This time, a place in the Premier League is at stake.

"I think a defibrillator is the traditional fifth season gift? Would make sense for this show," Ryan Reynolds, the Hollywood celebrity who is a co-owner of the club, wrote on X in a nod to the "Welcome to Wrexham" series that has documented the team's unprecedented journey up English soccer's league pyramid.

The final step is the biggest one, though.

On Saturday, Wrexham heads into the final round of regular-season games in the second-tier Championship aiming to secure a place in the playoffs that will determine the last promotion spot to the Premier League.

The top two teams go up automatically - one of them is Coventry, which will finish first - and the teams finishing third to sixth will advance to the playoffs. With one match left, Wrexham is in sixth place.

That last playoff spot is a three-way contest between Wrexham, Hull (in seventh place, behind Wrexham on goal difference) and Derby (in eighth place, one point further back).

Wrexham has the toughest game - at home to fourth-place



Wrexham's Josh Windass gets away from Oxford United's Yunus Konak before scoring their first goal during the EFL Championship soccer match between Oxford United and Wrexham in Oxford, England. (AP)

Middlesbrough, which needs to win to stand a chance of finishing in second spot.

Hull hosts ninth-placed Norwich and Derby is at home to 15th-placed Sheffield United.

Wrexham is already assured of the highest finish in its 162-year history - its previous best was 15th in the second tier in the 1978-79 season - but still possible is a fourth straight promotion that would be beyond the owners' wildest dreams.

Three promotions in a row had

never been done before in English soccer. So Wrexham, a club on so many people's lips owing to its remarkable rise since being bought by Reynolds and Rob Mac (formerly McElhenney) in 2021, is well ahead of schedule.

"At the start of the season," Wrexham midfielder Ollie Rathbone said, "everyone would have taken this scenario."

All 12 of the matches in the Championship's last round kick off at the same time.

It's also a huge, if not decisive,

round in the Premier League for both the title race and battle to avoid relegation.

Arsenal - seeking to be English champion for the first time since 2004 - leads by three points from second-placed Manchester City, which has a game in hand. Arsenal hosts Fulham on Saturday and City visits Everton on Monday night.

At the other end of the standings, third-from-last Tottenham - a top-flight team since 1978 - is in the relegation zone with four games left. Its next match is at Aston Villa on Sunday. Tottenham is two points behind West Ham, which visits Brentford on Saturday, and five points behind Nottingham Forest, which visits Chelsea on Monday.

Also notable is Manchester United's home game against rival Liverpool on Sunday. They are in third and fourth place, respectively, and both are bidding to tie up Champions League qualification.

It remains to be seen for how long Liverpool winger Mohamed Salah, who is leaving the club at the end of the season after nine years, will be sidelined after sustaining a hamstring injury last weekend.

Man City hopes Rodri is available to return from a muscle injury after missing the team's last two games.

Ex-Hawks official sentenced over fraud

ATLANTA, April 30, (AP): Authorities announced Wednesday that former Atlanta Hawks finance executive Lester T. Jones Jr. was sentenced to three years and five months in prison for embezzling approximately \$3.7 million from the team through fraudulent expense reimbursement requests and misuse of corporate credit cards.

Federal prosecutors said in a court filing in November that Jones, a former Hawks accounting executive, used the money to pay for travel, luxury apparel, jewelry, car expenses and tickets to concerts and sporting events.

Jones pleaded guilty to wire fraud in December. Jones, 46, worked in the Hawks' accounting and finance department from March 2016 through June 2025. In his role as senior vice president for finance, beginning in August 2021, he was responsible for the company's corporate credit card account with American Express and administered the electronic expense reimbursement program.

"Jones turned his dream job as a high-ranking executive for the Atlanta Hawks into an opportunity to steal the team's funds, purchasing luxury apparel, jewelry, watches, and trips for himself," U.S. Attorney Theodore S. Hertzberg said in a statement released by the Department of Justice.

"But, for Jones and others who abuse their employers' trust to embezzle substantial funds, the gravy train's final destination is federal prison."

The Hawks had no comment Wednesday on Jones' sentencing.

Marlo Graham, an Atlanta-based special agent, said Jones' case "underscores the significant damage that can be caused by insider threats within an organization."

"Jones abused his authority and access to embezzle millions, but schemes like this are not immune from detection," Graham said in a statement.

Best of the Rest

Mainoo signs five-year contract: Manchester United midfielder Kobbie Mainoo signed a five-year contract on Thursday to June 2031.

The England international's future was in doubt a few months ago when he was struggling to hold down a first team place under former coach Ruben Amorim. But Mainoo has been a pivotal figure in United's resurgence in the second half of the season and was recalled by England ahead of the World Cup.

"I am determined to step up and play my role in helping Manchester United to regularly fight for major trophies in the years ahead," the 21-year-old Mainoo said.

Born in Stockport, near Manchester, Mainoo was first associated with United at the age of six and progressed through its famed academy.

Despite playing a leading role in the England team that advanced to the final of the 2024 European Championship and being considered one of the top talents of his generation, Mainoo lost his place under Amorim. But when Amorim was fired in January, Mainoo was reinstated by interim coach Michael Carrick and has been a mainstay ever since. (AP)

Lens cannot afford slip-ups in decisive stretch

Luis Enrique weighs PSG rotation in Ligue 1 before Bayern return as Hakimi ruled out

PARIS, April 30, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique faces a difficult strategic dilemma.

As he pursues back-to-back Champions League trophies, Luis Enrique must ensure he's also still fielding competitive teams in the closing stages of Ligue 1.

Brilliant on the European stage, PSG has been less dominant domestically and holds a six-point lead over second-placed Lens.

Both sides have four games left and Luis Enrique's team has to travel to Lens on May 13, postponed from April 11 due to PSG's involvement in the Champions League.

The reigning French champion hosts mid-table Lorient at the Parc des Princes on Saturday followed by next week's trip to Bayern, where it will defend a one-goal advantage after a thrilling 5-4 win over the Bundesliga champion midweek.

PSG's squad depth gives Luis Enrique plenty of options, but heavy rotation this month backfired in a 2-1 home defeat to Lyon as substitutes Illia Zabarnyi, Gonçalo Ramos and Lucas Beraldo underperformed.

Lens came back from two goals down but dropped important points in a 3-3 draw at Brest last week. The northern side has no room for mistakes when it travels south to Nice on Saturday.

Behind PSG and Lens, the fight for the Champions League places is intense.

Seven-time champion Lyon and fourth-placed Lille are level on points with the top three gaining direct entry to the Champions League, and the side in fourth entering qualifying. Lyon hosts in-from Rennes on Sunday while Lille takes on Le Havre.

Lagging four points behind Lyon, sixth-placed Marseille still hopes to secure Champions League football and travels to struggling Nantes on Saturday.

Elye Wahi: The 23-year-old Wahi is finding the form that once made him among Europe's most promising young strikers. Back in Ligue 1 with Nice on loan from Eintracht Frankfurt, Wahi has been scoring decisive goals for Nice, including last week's penalty that secured a 1-1 draw at his former club Marseille.

Sebastian Nanasi: The Swedish attacking midfielder grabbed the spotlight in Malmö before landing in Strasbourg during the 2024 summer. Looking to secure a spot at the World Cup, Nanasi has been in top form in the Conference League with decisive goals and assists.

PSG will be without defender Achraf Hakimi, who will also miss the return leg of the Champions League semifinal against Bayern because of a right thigh injury. He will be out of action for several weeks. PSG second-choice goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier has also been ruled out for weeks after injuring his right thigh during training while forward Gonçalo Ramos is suspended for the match against Lorient.

Toulouse coach Carles Martínez Novell is leaving at the end of the season. Toulouse announced the decision on Wednesday with the team sitting 10th in the standings. The Spanish coach arrived at Toulouse initially as an assistant coach, winning the French Cup in 2023, and was appointed permanent coach the following season. Martínez Novell led Toulouse to one of its greatest wins when the southern side upset Liverpool 3-2 in a Europa League game in November 2023.

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Cleveland Cavaliers center Evan Mobley reacts after making a three point basket during the second half in Game 5 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series against the Toronto Raptors in Cleveland. (AP)

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Sports

All to play for after Arsenal-Atlético stalemate

Teams exchange penalties

MADRID, April 30, (AP): Atletico Madrid and Arsenal exchanged penalties in a 1-1 draw in the first leg of the Champions League semifinals on Wednesday, a gritty encounter with plenty of intensity from start to finish even if it lacked the fireworks of a nine-goal thriller in Paris.

Viktor Gyökeres put Arsenal ahead at the Metropolitan stadium by converting a 44th-minute penalty kick. Julián Alvarez equalized for Atletico - also from the penalty spot - in the 56th.

Arsenal was awarded another pen-



Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann, left, and Arsenal's Martin Zubimendi battle for the ball during a Champions League semifinal, first leg, soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Arsenal in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

alty in the 78th after Eberechi Eze was brought down by David Hancko inside the area, but the call was overturned - several moments later - after a video review.

The second leg is in London next Tuesday, when both clubs will try to return to the final after a long absence and earn a chance to win the European title for the first time.

"Here you have to suffer. Many teams have suffered here, including some of the best in the world," Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta said. "We had some good moments in the match and moments where we had to suffer. The margins are very slim. We are in an incredible position - the semifinal of the Champions League. We have to play in front of our people - it's in our hands."

In the league phase of the competition, Arsenal routed Atletico 4-0 at the Emirates Stadium.

Atletico last made it to the Champions League final in 2016, when it lost to city rival Real Madrid.

"We tried," Atletico midfielder Koke Resurreccion said. "We started losing with that penalty, which was doubtful, but the team recovered and we could equalize with a penalty ourselves. We had the opportunities to win, but it will all be decided in the second leg. I think we played a good match."

Gyökeres broke the deadlock Wednesday from the penalty spot after he was brought down inside the area by Hancko, who was a bit late to the ball and slightly bumped the Arsenal striker from behind. The buildup came after Atletico lost possession in attack.

"Overall I think it was a tough game, we know it's a tough place to come, but it's only halftime," Gyökeres said. "We know when we play at home, with our fans, it's going to be different for sure and we just have



Atletico Madrid's Marcos Llorente, left, challenges Arsenal's Viktor Gyökeres during a Champions League semifinal, first leg, soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Arsenal in Madrid. (AP)

to do our job, be at our best, and for sure it's going to be a good game at home."

Arsenal last appeared in the final in 2006, when it lost to Barcelona.

Atletico's penalty came after a handball by Arsenal defender Ben White following a shot by Marcos Llorente. The call came after a video review. Alvarez converted the penalty with a firm shot for his

10th Champions League goal this season. He had to be replaced later in the second half with an apparent injury.

The penalty was Arsenal's first attempt on target, but both teams had exchanged a few early chances. Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya had made a nice save on a shot by Alvarez, and Martin Odegaard - who also was later substituted - had his

dangerous strike from inside the area blocked by Atletico defenders.

Alvarez led the Atletico attack early but the connection with Antoine Griezmann and Ademola Lookman didn't work well until the second half.

Alvarez almost curled in a free-kick strike after the break, and both Lookman and Griezmann had chances shortly afterward. Griez-

mann struck the post with a shot in the 63rd. Lookman, who had been doubtful to start because of a muscle injury, missed from close range later in the second half.

Many of the nearly 70,000 Atletico fans threw toilet paper from the stands before the match at the Metropolitan, creating a curtain of white paper.

Al-Nassr edges closer to Roshn League title



In this file photo, Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal.

RIYADH, April 30: Al-Nassr took another major step toward securing the Saudi Pro League title with a crucial 2-0 win over Al-Ahli in Round 30.

Coming just days after Al-Ahli's back-to-back AFC Champions League Elite triumph, the defeat dealt a significant blow to coach Matthias Jaissle's hopes of mounting a serious domestic title challenge.

Captain Cristiano Ronaldo broke the deadlock in the 76th minute, before Kingsley Coman sealed the victory with a late strike in the 90th minute.

The win lifts Al-Nassr to 79 points, opening an eight-point gap over second-placed Al-Hilal, albeit having played one game more. Al-Ahli sit third on 66 points.

Best of the Rest

Mainoo signs 5-year contract: Manchester United midfielder Kobbie Mainoo signed a five-year contract on Thursday to June 2031.

The England international's future was in doubt a few months ago when he was struggling to hold down a first team place under former coach Ruben Amorim. But Mainoo has been a pivotal figure in United's resurgence in the second half of the season and was recalled by England ahead of the World Cup.

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Despite playing a leading role in the England team that advanced to the final of the 2024 European Championship and being considered one of the top talents of his generation, Mainoo lost his place under Amorim. But when Amorim was fired in January, Mainoo was reinstated by interim coach Michael Carrick and has been a mainstay

ever since.

"Kobbie is one of the most naturally gifted young footballers in the world," United director of football Jason Wilcox said. "We are delighted that Kobbie has extended his stay here and have full confidence that he will develop into one of the best players in the world, ready to play a pivotal role in a Manchester United team challenging for the biggest honours." (AP)

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Dushanbe to host Judo Masters:

The International Judo Federation (IJF) announced on Thursday that the 2026 World Judo Masters will be held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from December 18 to 20.

The World Judo Masters ranks just below the world championships within the IJF competition system.

As part of the World Judo Tour, the invitation-only event brings together the top 36 athletes in each weight category, with no limit on entries per country.

The tournament carries significant world ranking value, with 1,800 points awarded to the gold medalist.

The 2026 edition will also count toward qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. (Xinhua)

Al-Arabi retains Iwuala, reshapes foreign roster

Kuwait Club awaits visas for Dammam camp, lines up Al-Nassr friendly

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 30: Al-Arabi SC is moving to reshape its foreign roster, with plans to part ways with Hamisi Fadiga, Zaid Qanbar, Nabil Marmouk and Kamil Al-Aswad, while keeping Nigerian winger Aiyanu Iwuala.

Despite receiving several offers, including one from a Gulf club, Iwuala remains a key part of the club's plans after delivering strong performances. He is still under contract for two more seasons.

The decision follows a season that fell short of expectations, prompting the club to target new foreign signings capable of making a greater impact and helping the team compete for titles.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club continues daily training at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium in preparation for hosting Cambodia's Svay Rieng on May 13 in the AFC Challenge League final.

Kuwait Club is planning a training camp in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, but is awaiting visa approvals for its foreign delegation before confirming departure. If the visas are delayed, the team will remain in Kuwait and continue local training, with a friendly match scheduled against Al-Nassr FC on Thursday.

The squad is now complete following the return of Arsène "Malik" Zola to training, alongside the arrival of Bahraini international Mohammed Marhoun.

Head coach Nebojša Jovović has urged players to stay focused during this crucial stage, stressing the importance of full readiness ahead of the continental final. He noted that reaching the final was no surprise despite the challenges caused by the suspension of sporting activity since late February, crediting the team's confidence and strong support from the club's management.

Jovović added that Kuwait Club are determined to maintain its momentum and push for a fourth Asian title.



Nigerian winger Aiyanu Iwuala

Espanyol hosts Real Madrid

Barca could wrap up title as drop battle continues

MADRID, April 30, (Xinhua): The 34th round of La Liga this weekend could see the title all but decided and another Champions League place confirmed.

FC Barcelona will be crowned champion if it wins away to Osasuna on Saturday and Real Madrid loses at Espanyol on Sunday night.

Barca travels to Pamplona without Lamine Yamal, though Raphinha and Marc Bernal could feature. Osasuna, ninth and pushing for Europe, will be without winger Victor Munoz, who has reportedly attracted interest from both Barcelona and Real Madrid but is out with a calf injury.

Espanyol hosts Real Madrid after a 0-0 home draw against second-from-bottom Levante, leaving the club winless in 2026 and sliding from European contention to 13th place, just five points above the relegation zone.

Madrid will be without Eder Militao, who has undergone tendon surgery and will miss the World Cup, while Arda Guler and Kylian Mbappe are sidelined with muscle problems. With the title almost out of reach, there is a sense that some players are prioritizing staying fit for the summer.

If the title is not settled this weekend, the next likely decider would be the Clásico between Barcelona and Real Madrid on May 10.

Villarreal hosts Levante on Saturday in a match with consequences at both ends of the table. A point for third-placed Villarreal would mathematically secure Champions League qualification, while a win could lift Levante, making the short trip north from Valencia, out of the bottom three.

Villarreal would also clinch a top-four finish if Real Betis fails to beat bottom side Oviedo, whose survival hopes were hit by last weekend's 2-1 home



Barcelona's Jules Kounde, right, heads the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Getafe and Barcelona in Getafe, Spain. (AP)

loss to Elche.

The round of matches begins on Friday night with Girona at home to Mallorca in a relegation six-pointer, with defeat potentially dragging Mallorca back into the bottom three.

Valencia can all but banish relegation fears with a home win over Atletico Madrid, whose coach Diego Simeone is expected to rest most of his regular starters ahead of Tuesday's Champions League semifinal second leg away to Arsenal following Wednesday's 1-1 draw in Madrid.

Alaves entertains Athletic Club in a Basque derby, with Alaves desperate for three points and hoping in-form striker Toni Martinez can extend his scoring streak. Athletic, not yet mathematically safe, will need to match Alaves' intensity in a packed Mendizorroza.

Elche's first away win of the season last weekend lifted it out of the drop zone before a visit to Celta Vigo, which remains seventh despite three straight defeats. Getafe, meanwhile, will look to bounce back from a tame loss to Barcelona against a Rayo Vallecano side with one eye on its Conference League semifinal against Strasbourg.

Sevilla closes the round at home to Real Sociedad on Monday, starting the match inside the relegation zone amid rising tension on and off the pitch.