



## 4.4 tremor shakes southwest Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced on Tuesday that the Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN) recorded a 4.4-magnitude earthquake on the Richter scale in the

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## Students' sick leave gets digital upgrade

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi announced the launching of an electronic service for student sick leave in line with the commitment of the State to expand digital integration and streamline government procedures.

This initiative is aligned with the latest technological systems and enhances the efficiency of services provided to citizens and residents.

In a statement on the official page of the ministry on the 'X' platform, Al-Awadhi explained that the new service enables the electronic issuance of medical certificates

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HH the Amir poses with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the newly appointed Ambassador of Kuwait to the Czech Republic.

### Amir swears in envoy to Czech Republic

His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber

Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who presented to His Highness the newly appointed Ambassador of Kuwait to the Czech Republic Talal Al-Shatti.

The ambassador took the constitutional oath before His Highness on the occasion of assuming his new post. (KUNA)



HH the Amir receives GCC Secretary General.

### Amir receives GCC Sec Gen

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi. (KUNA)

# Kuwait busts house of highs; 4 arrested

Rehab care core national priority: Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Under the supervision of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) in the Criminal Security Sector at the ministry carried out a preemptive operation that led

to the arrest of four citizens proven to be involved in the cultivation and trafficking of marijuana.

The arrest happened after meticulous surveillance and monitoring measures were taken, along with the issuance of a warrant to arrest the suspects.

According to the ministry, the anti-narcotics officers raided the residence of one of the suspects, where they discovered a fully equipped marijuana

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Ahmed Al-Jarallah receives UK Ambassador Qudsi Rasheed, with Media and Communications Officer at the British Embassy Yara El Sabbagh and in the presence of Arab Times Managing Editor Marlon Aquino Malinao, in a meeting highlighting Kuwait-UK media cooperation.

Ambassador Rasheed impressed by historic photo archive

## Al-Jarallah hosts UK envoy in landmark visit

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers, Ahmed Al-Jarallah, warmly welcomed Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed at his office on Tuesday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Media and Communications Officer at the British Embassy Yara El Sabbagh accompanied the Ambassador.

During the meeting, Al-Jarallah lauded the long-standing relations between Kuwait and the United Kingdom, particularly the strong partnership that defined these relations for decades.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Rasheed thanked his host for the hospitable reception and ac-



UK Ambassador Qudsi Rasheed during a tour of Arab Times, viewing historical archives.

knowledged the significant influence of the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers in the media landscape.

He also affirmed that the British Embassy remains committed to enhancing collaboration with the Kuwaiti press in a way that serves the interests of both nations.

Towards the end of the visit, Ambassador Rasheed looked at a number of historical photographs displayed in the office of Al-Jarallah. These photos, some dating back more than 50 years, chronicle his interviews with various international and Arab leaders, leaving a lasting impression on the visiting diplomat.

Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao was also present at the meeting.

## UAE thwarts fresh Iranian missile and drone barrage

ABU DHABI, May 5, (Agencies): The UAE Ministry of Defense announced Tuesday that its air defense systems are currently intercepting incoming missiles and drones launched from Iran.

In a statement posted on X, the ministry said that sounds heard in several areas across the country are the result of air defense systems engaging ballistic and cruise missiles as

well as unmanned aerial vehicles.

On Monday, Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a phone call with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, condemning the Iranian attacks that targeted the UAE earlier in the day.

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## Kuwait boosts coordination on labor rights and policies

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Human Rights Department, held a joint coordination meeting Tuesday with the Public Authority for Manpower to review labor rights developments and enhance institutional coordination.

In a statement to KUNA, the Ministry said the meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign



KUNA photo Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah during a joint coordination meeting Tuesday with the Public Authority for Manpower.

### Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## Dealing with Iran is like handling a bag of coal

THOSE dealing with the Iranians, especially politically, should count their fingers every time they shake hands, as they practice deception.

It is said that former Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq stated, "Whoever deals with America is like the one who handles coal; all they get is blackened hands and face."

Although this statement is not entirely accurate, it applies to the current Tehran regime, which changes its positions every hour.

Every Iranian statement is riddled with ambiguity that only magicians can decipher, because they are creatures of the same nature.

The reality differs from official Iranian statements, as events prove that the regime is dying after losing its leader.

Daily developments confirm this fact, due to which mediators caution against dealing with Iran, comparing it to handling a bag of coal.

On this basis, Omani and Qatari mediators withdrew from the negotiations.

The Pakistani mediator is observing the repeated stalling tactics by Iranian officials. The statements from the foreign minister contradict those of the speaker of parliament, while the president accuses the latter of lying. Also,

the statements of the Revolutionary Guard are being regarded as embarrassing for everyone.

Those following current developments say the situation reflects a period of confusion. In this context, the US President Donald Trump was right when he said, "We don't know who we are dealing with right now."

For centuries, Iranians have dealt with crises using a strategy of stalling, with the hope that the other side will eventually lose patience. I have written about this Iranian approach several times.

Today, the situation is placing immense pressure on the international community due to the continued disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, which is affecting the global economy, as well as ongoing aggression against the Gulf states, most recently the attack on the United Arab Emirates.

This confirms that diplomatic solutions with the Iranian regime are nothing but a waste of time.

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### Day by Day

ARABIAN Gulf states must demand compensation for the damages caused by Iran, Iraqi militias, the Houthi group in Yemen, and other Iranian proxies as a result of attacks they have suffered in the recent war and even before.

They must also demand that Iran and its proxies cease their interference in this sensitive and important region of the world.

Iran and its proxies have inflicted immense harm on the people of the region. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

### Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Tuesday mourned the passing of Sheikh Abdullah Mohammad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the age of 80.

The funeral will take place later Tuesday after Asr (afternoon) prayers. (KUNA)



8 Gulf Bank holds its first quarter 2026 earnings webcast



9 ABK - UAE becomes first Kuwaiti and GCC Bank to obtain ADREC license as real estate escrow agent in Abu Dhabi



10 KFH opens new horizons of innovation for employees



### Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:35    Asr ..... 15:20  
 Sunrise .. 05:02    Maghrib .. 18:27  
 Zohr ..... 11:45    Isha ..... 19:52



KUNA photo  
 Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets the Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. The Foreign Minister delivered the letter during an official visit to Ankara.

## Kuwait-Turkiye explore ways to strengthen ties

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a written letter to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addressing bilateral relations and regional developments.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the letter focused on the longstanding ties between Kuwait and Turkiye and explored ways to further strengthen and expand cooperation across various fields for the benefit of both friendly peoples.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah delivered the letter during an official visit to Ankara.



Crown Prince Diwan photo  
 His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who presented to His Highness the newly appointed Ambassador of Kuwait to the Czech Republic Talal Al-Shatti.

## Crown Prince receives FM, new envoy to Czech Republic

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Tuesday, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who presented to His Highness the newly appointed Ambassador of Kuwait to the Czech Republic Talal Al-Shatti.

Head of the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officials attended the meeting.

## Amiri Diwan receives China, India, Cuba envoys



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah talks to the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Yang Xin.



Amiri Diwan photos  
 Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah talks to the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi.

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah on Tuesday received three ambassadors of Cuba, China and India in separate meetings.

He first received Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Kuwait Alain Perez Torres, where both sides discussed the friendly relations between Kuwait and Cuba and ways to strengthen and develop bilateral cooperation in the interest of both countries.

He also received Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to

Kuwait Yang Xin, where they reviewed strategic partnership between both countries - which has seen significant progress in developmental, economic, and vital projects - and discussed ways to expand cooperation in line with the aspirations of both friendly nations.

Additionally, Sheikh Hamad received Ambassador of India to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi, where they discussed the historical ties and distinguished bilateral relations between both sides, along with opportunities to further expand cooperation across various fields to broader horizons.

## 'Diplomatic push ushers in peace'

FM left no stone unturned

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait continues through a comprehensive diplomatic drive led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen the pillars of national security and mobilize regional and international support in response to the ongoing crisis, amid the Iranian attacks that have targeted the country's sovereignty and vital facilities since late February.

This underscores the ability of Kuwaiti diplomacy to act effectively across multiple tracks to safeguard the stability of the State and the region.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah launched this diplomatic effort on February 28 through a series of foreign tours that included several Gulf and Arab capitals, namely Riyadh, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Manama and Muscat, in addition to Cairo and Amman.

During these visits, he conveyed messages from the political leadership calling for strengthening unity and addressing the repercussions of military escalation and missile attacks that targeted energy and water facilities in the country.

At the beginning of March, the Foreign Minister participated in the extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which affirmed in its final statement its rejection of any infringement on Kuwait's security.

On March 4, Kuwait addressed two identical letters to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the UN Security Council regarding the Iranian attacks, affirming its right to self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Mid-March witnessed an intensified pace of diplomatic activity, with Kuwait participating on March 18 in an expanded consultative ministerial meeting with Arab and Islamic countries in Riyadh to enhance coordination on protecting regional security and rejecting all forms of escalation.

### Security

This was followed on March 30 by Sheikh Jarrah chairing Kuwait's delegation at the joint ministerial meeting that brought together GCC countries, Jordan and the Russian Federation to discuss the repercussions of the Iranian attacks and their impact on international peace and security.

This coincided with the reception of the Special Envoy of the Chinese Government, Zhai Jun, to discuss mechanisms to de-escalate tensions and ensure the stability of maritime corridors.

With the onset of April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intensified its international contacts; on April 2, Sheikh Jarrah held telephone talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on ways to deter violations affecting national sovereignty.

Whereas the Ministry summoned Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Toufanchi for the third time since Iran launched its attacks on the Kuwaiti territory on February 28 and handed him a memo of protest over the continued Iranian aggressions on the State of Kuwait.

This came in the aftermath of the heinous aggression on fuel depots at Kuwait International Airport in a blatant breach of international humanitarian law on the basis that the airport is a civilian facility.

Subsequently, Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Al-Daihani reaffirmed Kuwait's condemnation of aggression as a violation of sovereignty, territorial integrity and airspace, breaching international law, the UN Charter and good neighborliness, and un-

dermining global peace and security.

He also called on Iran to halt these aggressions, holding it fully responsible for the impacts of this aggression, underlining Kuwait's absolute, complete, and inherent right to defend itself as per Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

During the same period the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Charge d'Affaires of the Iraqi embassy in Kuwait,

Zaid Shanshol, and handed him an official protest note over the storming and acts of vandalism targeting the Consulate General of the State of Kuwait in Basra.

The Ministry deemed "blatant" the aggression on the consulate's premises, which constitutes a breach of international law and the United Nations Charter, especially the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

It also reaffirmed Kuwait's strong rejection of these acts, calling on the Iraqi government to take swift measures against those responsible for them and making sure such actions do not take place again in the future.

Furthermore, the Ministry stressed Kuwait's full and inherent right to defend its interests, and to take all necessary and lawful measures to counter threats that endanger its diplomatic missions' safety according to international law.

Over the past two months, Kuwaiti diplomatic activity reached its peak with the reception of the UK's Defense Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, and British Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Justice Lord David Lammy, as well as the European Union's Special Envoy Luigi Di Maio, to discuss joint security cooperation.

The Foreign Minister also conducted dozens of calls with his counterparts in Arab, Islamic, European and African countries.

The period also witnessed a visit by Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty to Kuwait, during which he affirmed his country's full support for Kuwait.

Moreover, Sheikh Jarrah continued his diplomatic efforts with a visit to Amman on April 26, where he discussed repercussions of Iranian aggression with King Abdullah II and met Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on maritime security mechanisms.

During his subsequent visit to Ankara, the Foreign Minister met President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, delivering a written message from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on bilateral ties, regional developments and enhancing cooperation across fields.

He also held talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, reviewing close relations, regional developments and ongoing diplomatic efforts, stressing importance of reaching a comprehensive, sustainable settlement that would enhance security and stability across the region.

Kuwait has affirmed, across international forums and joint ministerial meetings, most recently those of the League of Arab States, that its security remains a top priority, while continuing diplomatic efforts to safeguard sovereignty and preserve national and regional stability.



Al-Seyassah photo  
 British Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed (second right), with Issa Dashti and Ahmed Behbehani.

## 100-year-old cemetery in Sharq holds remains of many Britons

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: British Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed visited the old cemetery in Sharq on Monday, affirming this is a valuable opportunity to learn about the significant aspect of the shared history between the two countries.

In a press statement during the visit, Rasheed disclosed that the cemetery was established more than 100 years ago in an area that was then located on the outskirts of Kuwait City, before becoming part of the modern city center.

He stated that it contains the remains of several British citizens who made notable contributions to Kuwait during that historical period, whether in the political sphere or through their work in the oil sector, particularly during the 1950s.

He added that among the most prominent figures buried at the cemetery is Captain William Shakespeare, who served as the second British Political Agent in Kuwait from 1909 to 1915, succeeding Captain Stuart Knox. He was keen to see Shakespeare's grave and learn more about that period in the history of bilateral relations.

He emphasized that these historical milestones reflect the depth of the ties between the two countries. He stated that he also learned about the personal friendship between Shakespeare and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, known as 'Mubarak the Great', and how this relationship embodied the close ties between the British side and the ruling family in

Kuwait, as well as the broader relationship with Kuwaiti society.

He pointed out that these close ties did not end with that era but continued throughout the development of Kuwait -- from the period of independence to the present day, reflecting the enduring historical partnership between the two nations.

He stressed that the United Kingdom and Kuwait share a common history, deep-rooted bonds, and mutual interests. "We continue to work together. I believe that under the current circumstances, understanding this shared history, what it represents for us today, and what it can mean for the future of our relationship is of utmost importance," he added.

### Era

He concluded by affirming that British-Kuwaiti relations remain strong and resilient, and that revisiting these historical roots helps reinforce them and drive greater cooperation in the future.

On the other hand, Kuwaiti-British relations researcher Issa Dashti stated that the first Christian cemetery in Kuwait (the Old Christian Cemetery), located in Sharq contains the graves of several Christians who have lived in Kuwait since the early 20th century.

He revealed that the cemetery includes the graves of several prominent historical figures, such as the memorial tomb of British Political Agent William Henry Shakespeare and the grave of Dr. Millary, a doctor at the American Hospital.

He said the cemetery was estab-

lished in 1913 by British Political Agent William Shakespeare, after two Christians in Kuwait passed away and there was no Christian cemetery available for their burial. "The land was granted to him by the seventh ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, and the British government of India provided 1,000 rupees to construct a mud wall around the cemetery. The cemetery still retains its original form, along with a large portion of its original wall," he added.

He shared that "the William Shakespeare memorial was erected after his death at the Battle of Jarab in 1915. As Zahra Freeth recounted to me orally, based on the accounts of her parents, Colonel Harold Dickson and Violet Dickson (Umm Saud), after Shakespeare's death, his blood-stained hat and shirt were sent to Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, the ruler of Kuwait, who then handed them over to the British Political Agent in Kuwait to be buried in the Christian Cemetery. British Political Agent William Geary buried these items and placed a locally made clay stone as a marker for the memorial grave. Later, British Political Agent Colonel Harold Dickson commissioned a memorial headstone for Captain Shakespeare's grave made of fired clay to commemorate the 15th anniversary of his death. He also planted a memorial tree on that occasion, another to honor British soldiers who died in Kuwait, and a third tree later to commemorate the death of his friend, Dr. Millary, who passed away in 1952. All of these trees still stand in the cemetery today."

## Campaign to save water & power soon

By Mohammad Ghanem  
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy will launch the national campaign for rationalizing electricity and water consumption, 'Wafir' (Save), at the Government Communication Center on Monday, under the patronage and in the presence of Minister Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem.

This is part of the preparations of the ministry for the summer season.

On the other hand, the ministry is waiting for the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to approve its recommendation about the tender for the construction and maintenance of a pumping station and its facilities in Mutlaa Residential City.

This approval is required to proceed with signing the contract with the winning contractor, paving the way for the commencement of the project and the completion of the water delivery system for residents in the city.

Reliable sources stated that the supply of water to the city is dependent on the completion of the pumping station project, with a budget of KD29.8 million, as well as the feeder lines and all related infrastructure, including water towers.

Sources clarified that supplying water to the city requires the full operation of the system, which the ministry is keen on completing in order to ease the burdens of the residents.



Dr Al-Mukhaizeem

## Weakened Iran, Mideast headed for better future

"IN life, a person's circumstances fluctuate between hardship and ease, between crisis and relief. Nations go through similar cycles, but neither hardship nor prosperity lasts forever," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, Kuwait experienced an economic boom, followed by the Souk Al-Manakh stock market crisis and a subsequent recession. Then came the liberation of Kuwait, followed by a period of relative prosperity.

"The United States experienced the Great Depression in the 1930s, marked by high unemployment. However, after entering World War II on the side of the Allies against Nazi Germany, the country saw an economic recovery and boom.

"After the war ended in 1945, industries such as automotive manufacturing and film flourished.

"After its defeat in World War II, Japan renounced the use of military force and focused on industry and scientific advancement until it became one of the world's major economic powers.

"The Soviet Union was once a superpower, but it disintegrated in the early 1990s into several independent republics. Germany, which had once occupied much of Europe, was defeated and divided into West and East Germany, then regained its economic strength after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

"Vietnam was devastated after the fall of Saigon in 1975 at the end of the war, but it later recovered and emerged to become an Asian Tiger.

"Britain was once a superpower that occupied many countries, but it later declined and became so isolated that people in Scotland called for independence.

"In Africa, Rwanda was an underdeveloped country that later progressed. Ethiopia was in dire straits, but its internal situation improved.

"Venezuela was stable, with natural resources such as oil and precious metals, rivers, and a strong tourism sector. However, its internal situation deteriorated due to mismanagement.

"Europe was relatively backward in the Middle Ages and experienced major wars among its nations, followed by a long period of peace and integration.

"Some Arab countries were monarchies and witnessed a renaissance in various fields, but later coups took place, and their situation worsened. We used to praise the stability of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, but circumstances have changed, some disagreements have emerged, and the GCC was no longer as cohesive as before. At the time, I said this decline might not last long due to changing circumstances. Indeed, harmony has returned, and bridges have been rebuilt between the GCC countries and Qatar.

"Therefore, it is very likely that our Arab world will change for the better, God willing.

"The principle that nothing lasts forever also applies to Kuwait. We were loving brothers, united in our homeland, until forged nationalities appeared, violence spread throughout society, our internal situation deteriorated, and many MPs became instruments of destruction rather than construction.

"Thanks be to God, an Amiri decree was issued for dissolving the National Assembly for a period of time.

"In conclusion, if an Arab country is currently experiencing instability, it will eventually come to an end, and vice versa.

"The principle of the business cycle suggests that countries fluctuate between recession and recovery, and so on.

"Iran had been pursuing unfriendly policies toward the Gulf states and was overconfident in its military capabilities until the recent war following February 28, which undermined and weakened its military strength and disrupted its internal structure.

"Iran has since turned inward, and most of its official statements against the United States are for local consumption, aimed at maintaining popular support.

"The Iranian people aspire to be free of the current regime, which has deprived them of dignity, freedom, and the most basic necessities for a decent life, and has robbed them of everything. According to a foreign analysis, the Middle East will be in a better position in the future."

### Also:

"One of our fellow X users posted a comment about an oil tanker carrying a shipment of Kuwaiti oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz, which is currently closed by a dual Iranian-American blockade. Ships can only pass through the Strait with Iran's approval, as Iran controls its entrance, while the United States tightens its grip on Iranian tankers carrying Iranian oil." Kuwaiti journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The situation has become a tug-of-war between the two sides. We should not be pessimistic, because after every crisis comes relief.

"Returning to the comment, the citizen expressed disapproval of a Kuwaiti oil shipment being exported to Pakistan, claiming that the shipment was free, implying that Pakistan does not deserve it. Whether these claims are accurate or not, I believe the comment is misplaced.

"Pakistan is currently undertaking an important international and humanitarian role amid the tensions between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other. The Gulf states are paying the price for a war in which they have no part.

"Kuwait's relationship with Pakistan is longstanding, as Kuwaiti merchant ships used to sail to and dock in Karachi, India, at that time, served as a gateway for Kuwaiti trade, where Kuwaiti merchants would travel to offer their pearl harvest to Indian traders.

"In return, Kuwaiti merchants would bring back goods needed in the local market, such as tea, sugar, fabrics, and spices. Kuwaiti traders also exchanged quantities of gold with their Indian counterparts, including gold merchants and jewelers.

"We must understand the extent of Kuwait's historical connection to India and Pakistan. I have many accounts of the annual visits made by Kuwaiti and Gulf sheikhs and merchants to Bombay in India and Karachi in Pakistan.

"We knew India and Pakistan before we became familiar with many Arab countries. The closest Arab country to us was Iraq, particularly Basra and sometimes Baghdad. Traveling to Baghdad at that time was like traveling to Paris, London, or America.

"We should not forget or turn our backs on our old friends, because loyalty is a valuable quality.

"Therefore, it does not matter even if the news about the free oil shipment to Pakistan is true. The two countries have a deep-rooted friendship.

"Pakistan was one of the thirty countries that participated in the liberation of Kuwait, sending its army, which is considered one of the strongest and most disciplined. We should strengthen our friendships with powerful nations.

"A shipment of oil, perhaps worth only a few thousand or millions, is not a loss for Kuwait, especially given the current global instability.

"We need friends, and oil is one of the most effective tools in both peace and war."

"I would like to submit a proposal aimed at addressing the crisis of democracy in many countries by establishing oversight of elections to ensure they achieve their intended purpose of elevating the most qualified candidates. If this objective is not met, then the crisis will be inherent in democratic countries," Kuwaiti writer **Zaid Al-Jalawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Therefore, there should be an oversight body for elections after the results are announced. This body would verify whether the substantive conditions and the intended purpose of the election have been fulfilled, rather than limiting its role to disqualifying candidates who fail to meet formal eligibility requirements on ethical grounds.

"Current oversight is often confined to procedural compliance, which does not protect the electoral process from manipulation.

"The Constitutional Court could be granted discretionary authority, similar to that exercised by lower courts when cases are brought challenging whether the purpose of the election has been achieved.

The Court would review challenges to results in any electoral constituency to determine whether the intended purpose of the election was indeed not fulfilled. If so, it could issue a ruling either nullifying the results and ordering a recount or referring the matter to the head of state to appoint replacements for members whose seats are revoked. Such rulings could be based on factors including the influence of tribal or sectarian affiliations, or personal interests, on the electoral outcome.

"This avoids the repeated dissolution of parliament and limits it to specific reasons related to the inability to cooperate between parliament and the government. This mechanism helps in guiding voter behavior and reduces pressure on them to act based on narrow considerations that do not serve the public interest. It also improves the conduct of candidates by preventing them from resorting to methods that are incompatible with Islam, the constitution, and the law in order to achieve electoral gains that conflict with the public interest."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Ahmad Al-Dawas

## Call to optimize emergency response time

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah held a meeting with Director of the Farwaniya Emergency Police Department Colonel Mishari Shujaa Al-Otaibi at his office on Monday.

The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation between various security departments in the governorate, as well as strategies for raising security readiness, optimizing emergency response times to ensure continuous community stability, and to better serve the local population.

The Governor lauded the important contributions of the department to the broader security framework, stressing that integrated efforts among agencies are crucial for maintaining public safety.

Al-Otaibi voiced his gratitude for the support of the Governor and reaffirmed the commitment of the department in improving field performance and security efficiency to address the needs of the community.

Farwaniya Governorate photo  
Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah during the meeting with Director of the Farwaniya Emergency Police Department Colonel Mishari Shujaa Al-Otaibi at his office.

## Royal's appeal set for June 15

'Massive embezzlement'

**KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The Court of Cassation has adjourned to June 15 the appeal of Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled in a case involving the special expenditures of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, while allowing him the opportunity to repay the amounts owed to both ministries, reports Al-Anba daily.**

Sheikh Talal had appealed the ruling issued by the Ministers' Court in January 2026, which sentenced him to 14 years in prison, ordered him to repay approximately KD 10 million, and imposed a fine of around KD 20 million on charges related to embezzlement of funds from the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior's expenditures and money laundering.

He also appealed a ruling by the Ministers' Court that sentenced him to seven years in prison in a case involving the expenditures of one of the two ministries. The ruling also ordered him to refund KD 500,000, imposed a KD 1 million fine, and dismissed him from his position.

He further appealed another ruling by the same court, which sentenced him to seven years in prison with hard labor, ordered him to repay approximately KD 9 million, imposed fines totaling around KD 19 million, and confiscated vehicles linked to the case.

It is worth noting that the court had previously ordered Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled's release on bail and imposed a travel ban on him.

**Dates tampered with:** The Ministry of Interior announced that the Public Security Sector, in coordination with the Commercial Control Department and the Consumer Protection Department, arrested two expatriates in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area for selling used tires as new after allegedly tampering with their expiry dates, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an official statement, the ministry revealed that 1,200 tires of various sizes were seized during the operation.

The ministry stressed that the crime constitutes commercial fraud and consumer deception, in addition to posing a serious threat to road safety due to the poor condition of the tires and their unsuitability for driving.

A case was registered for possession and sale of used tires in violation of Article 16, Clause 5 of Ministerial Resolution No. 216/2024.

The suspects were detained and referred to the competent authorities to complete legal procedures against them, including deportation.

**17 liquor bottles seized:** The Head of the Public Security Sector, Major General Hamad Al-Munaifi, ordered the confiscation of 17 bottles of imported liquor and the referral of an Arab suspect to the Drug Control General Department, reports Al-Anba daily.

The directive came after the Farwaniya Security Command reported that a patrol team had arrested an Arab expatriate in possession of 17 bottles of imported alcoholic beverages. The suspect reportedly confessed to regularly trading and delivering alcohol to customers.

### Grave corruption

## Livestock Co-op Society directors board broken

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthel Al-Huwaila confirmed the dissolution of the Board of Directors of the Livestock Cooperative Society due to grave financial and administrative violations, which were investigated in accordance with the legal and regulatory frameworks.

Al-Huwaila explained that the decision entails that the Ministry of Social Affairs is keen on protecting the shareholders' funds, promoting transparency and integrity, and addressing shortcomings or violations that may affect cooperative work. She warned that the ministry will not hesitate to take the necessary measures against those proven to have committed violations.

She added that the decision included the appointment of an interim board to manage the affairs and operations of the cooperative during the transitional period.

She stated that the main objectives of this move are to ensure the continuity of services and safeguard the interests of shareholders until a new board is elected as per Article 35 of the Cooperative Societies Law.

She indicated that the erring board members – each according to the violations they committed – were referred to the Public Prosecution for investigation and other legal measures in order to guarantee accountability for those behind the negligence or abuse of authority.

In addition, the ministry affirmed its continuous monitoring of the performance of cooperative societies and its commitment to strengthen governance and oversight mechanisms. This is aimed at achieving efficient management, protecting public funds, and boosting shareholder confidence in the cooperative sector.

It revealed that the next phase will include more developmental and regulatory measures to ensure full compliance with the laws and regulations governing cooperative work in the country.

Farwaniya Governorate photo  
Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with his guests.

## Pledge to 'empower' cooperative societies

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah held a meeting with a delegation from Sabah Al-Nasser Cooperative Society in his office on Tuesday.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the cooperative Abdullah Fahad Al-Daihani led the delegation, consisting of Treasurer Mutlaq Muteb Al-Mutairi and Head of the Financial and Administrative Committee Mutlaq Abdulhadi Al-Mutairi.

They talked about topics of mutual interest like ways to intensify social work initiatives at the cooperative sector in the governorate, advancing cooperative efforts and refining service quality for Sabah Al-Nasser residents to support community goals.

Sheikh Athbi Nasser reaffirmed his dedication to empower cooperative societies as vital community development partners, considering their essential role in addressing local needs.

On the other hand, Al-Daihani expressed deep appreciation and gratitude to the Governor for the warm reception, applauding his commitment to strengthen institutional partnerships and raise local community service standards.

## 3 lanes on 5th Ring Road toward Jahra shut till 16th

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The Ministry of Public Works, in cooperation with the General Traffic Department, announced a temporary partial closure of three lanes on the Fifth Ring Road towards Jahra, opposite Qurtuba, for approximately 500 meters, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Public Works explained that three lanes will remain open to traffic, as will the exit to King Faisal Expressway. The service road parallel to the Fifth Ring Road for traffic coming from Surra and Damascus Street/Qurtuba Street will also remain open towards Jahra.

The closure will begin on Monday at 12:00 midnight and will continue until May 16, to allow for the completion of maintenance work in the area.



Zaid Al-Jalawi



Al-Huwaila




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# Co-ops roll out rules for Kuwaiti farmers corner

New framework aims to boost local produce

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The boards of directors of cooperative societies have started announcing the regulations and requirements for utilizing the Kuwaiti Farmers Corner, in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 347/2025.**

This step is intended to regulate the mechanism for marketing local agricultural products in cooperative societies, support Kuwaiti farmers, and strengthen the presence of national products in the markets.

The regulations state that applicants should be Kuwaiti citizens who own agricultural land. They must submit the latest agricultural census, not exceeding three months, covering the

varieties they plan to supply. This requirement ensures that the products offered are connected to actual local farms and that the supply process is organized based on clear criteria.

Farms must supply agricultural products with automated invoices. Each product should bear a label containing essential information like the barcode, farm name, country of origin, weight and variety name.

Farmers should fully adhere to quality and hygiene standards, as well as the approved requirements for product display.

Moreover, the Financial, Administrative and Cooperative Affairs Sector at the Ministry of Social Affairs has started implementing the decision through a set of regulatory measures.

These measures include preparing the standardized form for inspectors and distributing it to the relevant entities, as well as contacting the chairpersons of cooperative society boards

of directors to allocate spaces for the Kuwaiti Farmers Corner, in accordance with the decision.

A specialized employee from the procurement department in each cooperative society must be assigned to act as liaison officer for coordination and follow-up, and to handle inquiries or challenges that may arise during implementation. This is aimed at easing supply procedures and regulating the relationship between the cooperatives and farmers.

In addition, the field teams of the ministry, in coordination with the cooperative societies and the administrative and financial inspectors, continue to monitor the implementation of the decision in line with the approved frameworks.

This move supports local agricultural products and reinforces the role of cooperative societies in marketing national produce within a regulatory and supervisory system.

## Sheikh Al-Athbi backs integrated efforts

### Farwaniya Governor, Health City chief review service enhancement initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met with Chairman of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Health City Faisal Al-Baidan at the headquarters of the governorate on Monday.

During the meeting, they discussed the implementation of environmental and community initiatives to improve services and the quality of life in the governorate.

They also reviewed several initiatives and projects aimed at promoting environmental sustainability, along with support for community programs for the benefit of those residing in the governorate, in line with the vision of the country to achieve sustainable development.

The Governor affirmed his commitment to support national initiatives and commended the role of the relevant authorities in fostering collaboration and integrated efforts to better serve the citizens and residents.

Meanwhile, Al-Baidan expressed his appreciation for the commitment of the Governor, and then confirmed



Farwaniya Governorate photo

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah meets with West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Health City Chairman Faisal Al-Baidan, discussing initiatives to enhance public services and support community development in the governorate.

the continuation of coordinated efforts in implementing initiatives in the interest of the governorate and its residents.

## Kuwait-funded charity school opens in Yemen

ADEN, May 5, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Sheikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society inaugurated Monday the Late Abdulrahman Al-Aujan Primary School in the Hadhramaut Governorate in eastern Yemen, as part of the "Kuwait By You" campaign.

Undersecretary of Hadhramaut Governorate Jamaan Barba'a expressed in a speech during the opening ceremony his deep appreciation for the pioneering developmental role played by Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people.

He praised the effective and continuous Kuwaiti support through sustainable projects that serve various vital sectors, foremost among them the education sector.

For his part, Executive Director of (Estijabah Foundation) Tareq Lukman, the implemented organization of the Project, explained that the school consists of 18 classrooms, administrative offices, and service and recreational facilities.

He noted that it has been equipped with a solar energy system, an activities hall, and sports fields for football, volleyball, and basketball.



KUNA photo

Officials cut the ribbon at the inauguration of a Kuwait-funded school project in Yemen, marking the opening of new educational facilities supported by Kuwaiti charitable initiatives.

Aid campaign spans Asia and Yemen

## Al-Salam Charity launches first ten days of Dhul Hijjah projects

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): Al-Salam Humanitarian and Charitable Society announced on Tuesday the implementation of several humanitarian and development projects under the first ten days of Dhul Hijjah campaign in Kyrgyzstan, Yemen and Indonesia, alongside local and international sacrificial projects.

Director General Hamad Al-Oun told KUNA the society

regularly launches seasonal initiatives with the end of Dhul Qa'dah and start of Hajj season, reflecting commitment to maximizing charitable impact during the blessed days.

He added the Dhul Hijjah campaign includes five projects such as eye surgeries restoring sight for 1,000 patients in Yemen and Indonesia, housing for widows and orphans in Yemen, and Eid clothing and support for orphans in Yemen and Kyrgyzstan.

He affirmed the society continues implementing humanitarian projects during religious seasons, facilitating donations through multiple channels including its website, headquarters and various payment methods.



Al-Oun

## Public Works ministry reshuffle

### Al-Mashaan appoints Nadia Al-Omar to head Railway Projects Implementation

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan issued a decision appointing Nadia Al-Omar, Head of the Roads Design Section in the Roads Design Department, to also serve as Director of the Railway Projects Implementation Department in the General Directorate of Major Construction Projects in the Technical Affairs Sector, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The appointment was made based on a nomination from the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works.

Meanwhile, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) approved the Ministry of Public Works' request for a seventh extension of the contract for the development, operation, and maintenance of the Jahra Main Pumping Station and its associated sewage network.

The contract with Al-Kharafi Construction Company was extended for sev-



Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works

en months, effective April 20, at a value of KD 284,000.

The approval was granted due to the urgent need to ensure continued operation and maintenance of the station, which serves as a critical component of the sewage system in Jahra and surrounding areas.

Strong labor growth driven by reforms

## GCC workforce surges 34 pct to 37.1m by 2025: Statistical Centre

MUSCAT, May 5, (KUNA): The Statistical Centre for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said Monday that workforce grew by 34.1 percent between 2021 and 2025, reaching around 37.1 million workers.

In a report on structural transformations in Gulf labor markets, the center said the workforce expanded by about 9.4 million workers, rising from 27.7 million in 2021 to 37.1 million in 2025.

It added that the average annual growth rate reached 7.6 percent during the period, indicating steady expansion in labor markets driven by policies enhancing efficiency, private sector roles and economic participation.

The report noted expatriate labor recorded an average annual growth rate of 9.1 percent, compared to 4.4 percent for national workers, highlighting dominance of male expatriates comprising about 66.5 percent of workforce.

The center stressed the importance of continuing efforts to increase national workforce participation, enhance productivity and develop

professional skills in line with requirements of ongoing digital and technological transformation.

Sector-wise, services accounted for the largest workforce share at 38.8 percent, followed by construction at 19.8 percent and households at 17.4 percent, while trade and industry combined represented 22.3 percent.

Unemployment rates in GCC countries remained low compared to global averages, standing at 2.5 percent in 2025 versus around 5.2 percent worldwide, according to estimates by the International Labour Organization.

The center affirmed that positive structural transformations in GCC labor markets are expected to continue, driven by economic diversification projects and national programs enhancing human capital efficiency and sustaining growth.

The Center, headquartered in Oman, serves as the official body for data, statistics, and information related to GCC countries, while supporting national statistical centers and planning agencies.

## MoE sets in-person hours for adult education high schools

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The Ministry of Education approved on Monday the school hours for in-person learning for high school students in adult education and literacy schools, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the ministry said

the decision comes as part of its commitment to providing a suitable learning environment and ensuring school discipline.

It called on students to adhere to the specified times and to cooperate with school administrations to ensure the success of the educational process.



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## FMs pledge continued strategic cooperation and stability

# Kuwait, Turkey review bilateral relations



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo  
Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Monday with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan during his official visit to the Turkish capital, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

In a statement, the ministry said the meeting reviewed the close bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and peoples, emphasizing the importance of continuing to strengthen cooperation frameworks and maintaining coordination and consultation across various fields and levels to further advance relations.

The two sides also discussed the latest regional developments and ongoing diplomatic efforts to address them, underlining the need for such efforts to lead to a comprehensive and sustainable settlement that enhances security and stability in the region.



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the Prime Minister Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

# KFAED inks MoU with Human Security Fund

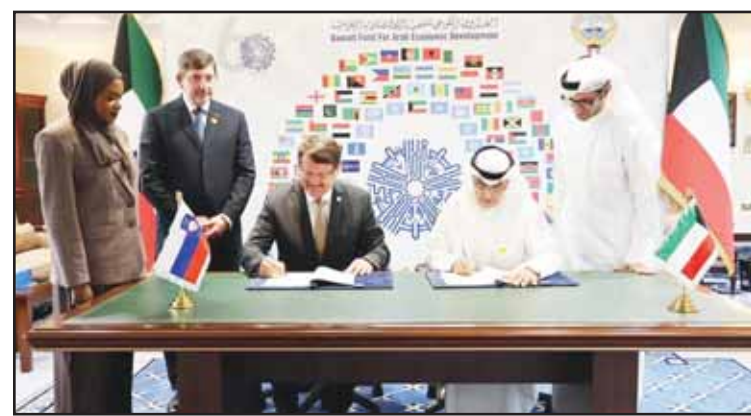
## Deal boosts joint development cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed a strategic memorandum of understanding on Tuesday with the Human Security Enhancement Fund to establish a structured framework for enhanced development cooperation.

In a statement, the Kuwait Fund said the agreement seeks to strengthen cooperation by focusing on specific areas aligned with the strategic objectives of both parties.

The memorandum provides for activating mechanisms for the exchange of information and expertise to maximize the use of available knowledge and resources, alongside holding regular consultations to coordinate field operations and activities in partner countries in line with respective priorities and guidelines.

Areas of cooperation include identifying and assessing eligible projects and programs for joint support, as well as exchanging publications and technical studies of a general nature, it added.



KFAED photo

Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Waleed Al-Bahar, and Director of the Human Security Fund, Ambassador Thomas Lorinich, during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.

stability and development world-

The MoU was signed by Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund Waleed Al-Bahar and Director of the Human Security Enhancement Fund, Ambassador Thomas Lorinich.

The Human Security Enhancement Fund, established in 1998 by the Government of Slovenia and based in Ljubljana, focuses on demining, risk education, and victim assistance to support stability and sustainable development.

wide.

The MoU was signed by Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund Waleed Al-Bahar and Director of the Human Security Enhancement Fund, Ambassador Thomas Lorinich.

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Continued from Page 1

## Dealing with

While Zia-ul-Haq may have made that statement about the United States, current events indicate that Washington is more pragmatic in its approach of dealing with Iran.

What Zia-ul-Haq said applies to Tehran more than ever. Iran is embarrassing Pakistani mediators, just as it embarrassed others before them.

Over the past 23 years, mediation efforts led by the Sultanate of Oman culminated in the 2015 signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal.

Despite its numerous flaws, former US President Barack Obama signed the agreement after two years of negotiations. The negotiating team believed that talks could drag on for decades without any result, and that the Iranian leadership was indifferent to the suffering of its people. As a result, the Obama administration reluctantly signed the agreement.

However, months later, Iran began violating the agreement by increasing uranium enrichment to 60 percent, which confirmed its pursuit to develop nuclear weapons.

This is why, when the current US president withdrew from the agreement in 2018 during his first term, he aimed to curb the activities of a terrorist regime that threatens not only the region but the world.

Today, some Arabs are seen as defending the Iranian perspective. This is like searching for water in a mirage, claiming that Iranian lies mislead those who are shortsighted. The international community doesn't take the opinions of television analysts at face value, as it deals with facts.

Over the past 60 days, Iran has repeatedly fallen into the traps it had set. Therefore, if there are any rational voices left in Iran, they should take the latest threat from the American president seriously.

## Kuwait busts

farm being operated through the use of advanced technology. The search resulted in the confiscation of 70 marijuana plants, around one kilogram of harvested marijuana ready for sale, firearm and ammunition, underscoring the seriousness of the suspects' criminal activity beyond narcotics.

During interrogation, the suspects confessed to all charges. They and the seized items were referred to the concerned authorities.

As a deterrent measure, the ministry confirmed that this incident is classified as a 'serious crime' under the new Anti-Narcotics Law, which stipulates severe penalties for cultivating narcotics with intent to traffic, including life imprisonment and death penalty.

The law also imposes exorbitant fines on those convicted, ranging from KD100,000 to KD2 million, or the equivalent value of the seized drugs, whichever is higher.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to combat drugs and to strictly enforce the law in order to protect society from drug smugglers and traffickers.

A security source revealed that the operation was carried out under the field supervision of Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs Major General Hamed Al-Dawwas, DCGD Director Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard, and his assistant, Brigadier General Sheikh Hamad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.

The source indicated that the marijuana farm was discovered inside a house in Sabah Al-Ahmad, indicating that the accused divided the narcotic substance among them and then sold their share to users.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah said on Tuesday that it was imperative to provide proper healthcare to patients at rehabilitation centers nationwide, citing the matter as a core national concern.

As he toured one of these facilities, alongside Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, the Kuwaiti in-

terior minister said that treatment for drug addiction was a meticulous process that needs to be addressed with "professionalism and cooperation," according to a statement by his ministry.

He went on to praise the competence and dedication of Kuwait's healthcare staff at numerous facilities across the country, saying the quality of services provided there meets internationally recognized standards, added the statement.

The Kuwaiti interior minister's visit comes as part of efforts to bolster cooperation between the health and interior ministries in a bid to provide a "comprehensive system" for proper drug rehabilitation, it underlined.

## 4.4 tremor

southwestern part of the country.

In a press statement, KISR said that the earthquake, which struck the Al-Manaqish area, occurred at 1:27 p.m. Kuwait local time.

The statement noted that the network detected the earthquake at a depth of five kilometers underground.

## Kuwait boosts

Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Minister Plenipotentiary Tahani Al-Nasser, and Manpower Authority Director General Rabab Al-Osaimi.

The meeting aimed to strengthen coordination among national entities and integrate roles in developing labor-related policies and legislation, ensuring balance between workers' and employers' rights while advancing Kuwait's labor protection framework.

Participants reviewed the relevant international legal framework, affirming Kuwait's commitment to international labor standards, including International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions and key human rights treaties.

They discussed the labor file from an international perspective, noting its impact on Kuwait's global standing and relations with labor-sending countries, underscoring the need for consistent national coordination and unified official discourse.

The meeting also reviewed cooperation with international organizations, notably the ILO, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN-Habitat, in supporting national efforts, capacity-building and policy development.

Al-Osaimi said discussions covered legislative proposals, international observations and their application in Kuwait, as well as bilateral cooperation with labor-sending countries, including regulation of contracts and efforts to combat human trafficking.

The meeting also addressed opening new channels for domestic worker recruitment to diversify options and improve service quality.

Al-Osaimi stressed that international cooperation underpins bilateral relations, supports compliance with global standards and positively reflects on labor market regulation and worker protection.

She affirmed continued efforts to develop labor policies and ensure a stable work environment safeguarding both workers and employers, reflecting Kuwait's commitment to international humanitarian standards.

She underscored the importance of sustained coordination with the Foreign Ministry and expanded cooperation with international partners to advance the labor market system and ensure smooth implementation of bilateral agreements.

The meeting marked the first of its kind bringing together Foreign Ministry sectors of human rights and legal affairs with the Manpower Authority, reflecting commitment to strengthened institutional coordination on labor rights.

## Students' sick

directly from government health facilities, eliminating the need for paper-based transactions. He said the certificate is automatically sent from the electronic system of the concerned clinic to the Ministry of Education. He disclosed that parents will receive a notification on the approval of the certificate through the 'Sahel' application, thereby, simplifying procedures and saving time and effort. He stressed that this step eases the process for applicants, replacing the previous system that involved multiple entities and traditional procedures.

He affirmed that this project reflects the level of digital integration between the ministries of Health and Education, along with the 'Sahel' application, thus, improving government performance and the quality of services.

He considers this initiative a significant advancement in the digital transformation process and a proof of the readiness of the technological infrastructure of the country to deliver smart and interconnected government services.

## UAE thwarts

In a statement, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Sheikh Jarrah denounced the Iranian attacks as "heinous," reaffirming Kuwait's full solidarity with the UAE and its support for all measures taken to safeguard its security, stability, and sovereignty.

U.S. military leaders said Tuesday that a ceasefire with Iran remains in effect a day after Tehran was blamed for new attacks in the Strait of Hormuz and against the United Arab Emirates.

The fragile truce, reached nearly a month ago, appeared to be holding as U.S. forces pressed ahead with efforts to reopen the vital waterway for global energy. On Monday, the U.S. said it sank six small Iranian boats that had threatened commercial ships.

So far, only two merchant ships are known to have passed through a new U.S.-guarded route, with hundreds more bottled up in the Persian Gulf. It's unclear whether continued U.S. military action will reassure shippers without reigniting the conflict that began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb. 28.

Iran's effective closure of the strait, through which major oil and gas supplies passed before the war, along with fertilizer and other petroleum-derived products, has sent fuel prices skyrocketing and rattled the global economy. Breaking Iran's grip would deny its main source of leverage as U.S. President Donald Trump demands a major rollback of its disputed nuclear program.

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Gen. Dan Caine, the U.S. military's top officer, told a news conference Tuesday that Iran's renewed aggression hadn't reached the threshold of what Caine called "major combat operations." He said Tuesday marked a "quieter" day in the strait.

"No, the ceasefire is not over," Hegseth said, affirming Caine's assessment. They spoke before the latest attacks on the UAE.

Iran has said the new effort does violate the ceasefire. Iran's parliament speaker and chief negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, accused the U.S. of undermining regional security. In a post on X, he signaled that Iran has yet to fully respond to the U.S. attempt to reopen the waterway.

"We know full well that the continuation of the status quo is intolerable for America; while we have not even begun yet," he said. His statement did not mention negotiations with the U.S. that are now in the form of passing messages via Pakistan.

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'Presidential cycle starts deceptively slow'

## Vance gets chance to woo Iowa voters ahead of '28 in campaign stop with Nunn

DES MOINES, Iowa, May 5, (AP): US Vice President JD Vance will visit Iowa on Tuesday, marking his first visit since taking office to the state where Republicans in less than two years will cast the first votes to pick their party's next presidential nominee.

Vance, who is seen as one of the GOP's strongest potential candidates for president in 2028, is making the trip to campaign on behalf of Republican Rep. Zach Nunn, who faces a competitive race to keep his Des Moines-area seat in the November midterms.

But the visit offers Vance an opportunity to test his reception before Iowa's voters, whose leadoff caucuses give them an outsized role in determining the next presidential nominee. Campaigning for a local congressman in his role as the sitting vice president gives him an opening chance to make an impression on Iowa Republicans, seasoned evaluators of those who seek the nation's

highest office before the campaign begins in earnest.

Vance's appearance comes days after Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who is also considered a possible 2028 candidate, spoke to a group of evangelical Christians who are influential in Iowa's GOP contest.

Des Moines-based Jimmy Centers, a Republican political consultant, said the 2028 contest is "light-years away," but said the Republicans who hear Vance speak on Tuesday will be evaluating how he might measure up in an election for the White House.

"I certainly think, as of right now, Vice President Vance would probably be a straw-poll winner of Iowa Republicans for 2028. But I don't think anyone is saying, 'We won't consider anybody else,'" Centers said.

Vance, who has not said whether he will run for the presidency in 2028, is scheduled to appear with Nunn at a manufacturing facility in Des Moines. His office did not com-



US Vice President JD Vance walks with the Press before boarding Air Force Two on April 10, at Joint Base Andrews, Md., for expected departure to Pakistan, for talks on Iran. (AP)

ment on the trip's impact on Vance's political future.

The vice president's visit follows a trip President Donald Trump made

in January to tout the administration's tax cuts, part of a string of stops they're making this year on economic issues ahead of the mid-

term elections that will determine control of Congress.

But Vance's visit comes at a time when his own political prospects - and the message he's expected to deliver on the economy - have been complicated by the war in Iran.

The vice president, who has long been skeptical of foreign military interventions, has seemed a reluctant defender of the nine-week-old war for which Trump has struggled to find an off-ramp. Iowans, like much of the rest of the country, are grappling with higher gas prices because of the conflict. But the state's farmers are also feeling the pinch of high fertilizer costs from the war and have been hurt by the tariffs Trump has imposed.

While Iowa's farmers have steadfastly supported the president, they have been looking to the White House for assurances that the current troubles won't last.

Vance's visit to Iowa was originally scheduled for last week, but

the timing shifted because the House moved to pass a sweeping farm bill that Nunn was due to vote on.

The vice president also had been slated to appear last week at an Iowa State University event with Turning Point USA, but the organization said it was not able to reschedule the event with the university until sometime in the fall.

Kim Schmetz, a longtime Iowa GOP activist, said the presidential cycle starts "deceptively slow."

Republican figures testing the waters often drop by the Westside Conservative Club, which Schmetz hosts, but he said it's still too far out from the caucuses, which are typically held in January of the presidential election year.

He said Trump's Make America Great Again political movement "is very alive and going here" in Iowa, which would benefit Vance - as well as Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also thought to be another potential candidate.

## Southern state Republicans look to capitalize on Supreme Court ruling weakening Voting Rights Act

MONTGOMERY, Ala., May 5, (AP): Lawmakers in several southern states are meeting this week to consider plans that could upend their congressional primaries and redraw US House districts ahead of the November elections, as Republicans move quickly to capitalize on a US Supreme Court ruling that weakened a key provision of the Voting Rights Act.

A special legislative session responding to the court ruling began Monday in Alabama and is to start Tuesday in Tennessee. Louisiana lawmakers, who already are in session, also are looking at how to redraw their congressional districts. The Supreme Court on Monday essentially gave them a green light to proceed by approving a request to expedite the court's formal judgment.

Civil rights activists have countered with rallies, protests and lawsuits challenging the new redistricting efforts. Several hundred protesters gathered outside the Alabama Statehouse on Monday, carrying signs declaring "No new map" and "We fight back! Black Voters Matter."

Last week's Supreme Court decision striking down a majority-Black congressional district in Louisiana has unleashed "a wave of nefarious



Randall Williams protests outside the Alabama state house during a special session of the Alabama Legislature on May 4 in Montgomery, Ala. (AP)

actions" across states that threatens to disenfranchise Black voters, Alannah Odoms, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, said Monday.

Trump on Sunday encouraged more states to join in redistricting, saying in a social media post that Republicans could gain 20 House seats.

comply with the Voting Rights Act. The ruling significantly altered a decades-old understanding of the law and provided grounds for Republicans in various states to try to eliminate majority-Black districts that have elected Democrats to Congress.

As Republicans forge ahead, US House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries touted a redistricting effort in his home state of New York. But that isn't expected to result in a new map until 2028. To adopt new districts, New York lawmakers must pass a constitutional amendment twice in two years, and voters would also have to approve it.

Legislative voting districts typically are redrawn only once a decade, after a census, to account for population changes. But Trump urged Texas Republicans last year to redraw U.S. House districts to give the party an advantage. Democrats in California responded by doing the same, and then other states joined in.

On Monday, Florida became the eighth state to enact new House districts ahead of midterm elections, as Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis announced he had signed a redrawn map passed by lawmakers last week that could help Republicans win as many as four additional House seats.

The high court's ruling said Louisiana relied too heavily on race when creating a second Black majority House district as it attempted to

### America

**Civil rights groups sue to stop Texas law:** A group of civil rights organizations on Monday filed a new lawsuit seeking to stop parts of the law that would let Texas police arrest people suspected of illegally crossing the US-Mexico border.



Paxton

The law can go into effect next week after a federal appeals court lifted a lower court ruling that had kept it paused for years.

Attorney General Ken Paxton's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The lawsuit is the latest effort to stop the 2023 law, passed by the Legislature in response to record border crossings that GOP state leaders argued amounted to an invasion. (AP)

**California probes Trump administration's deal:** California is investigating one of the Trump administration's deals to end an offshore wind project.

Golden State Wind was a floating offshore wind project proposed off California's central coast. The California Energy Commission said Monday it issued an administrative subpoena to Golden State Wind.

The commission said it is seeking documents and information about the company's recent agreement with the Department of Interior to accept a payout in exchange for voluntarily abandoning its offshore wind lease. (AP)

**'Giuliani breathing on his own':** Former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani is breathing on his own after being hospitalized with pneumonia and placed on a ventilator, his spokesperson said Monday. Giuliani, 81, remains in critical but stable condition at a Florida hospital and is being monitored as a precautionary measure, spokesperson Ted Goodman said.

Goodman said Giuliani's condition was exacerbated by restrictive airway disease attributed to his exposure to dust and toxins from the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center. (AP)

### Zelenskyy slams Moscow 'utter cynicism'

## Russian air attacks kill 5 in Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, May 5, (AP): Russian drone and missile strikes targeting Ukraine's power grid during the night killed at least five people and wounded 39 others, Ukrainian authorities said Tuesday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rebuked Moscow for what he said was its "utter cynicism" in launching the attacks after Russia announced a unilateral truce over two days later this week while it marks the 81st anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

"Russia could cease fire at any moment, and this would stop the war and our responses," Zelenskyy said in a post on X. "Peace is needed, and real steps are needed to achieve it. Ukraine will act in kind."

The truce proposal follows a familiar pattern of Russia declaring short unilateral ceasefires during the war timed to various holidays - most recently Orthodox Easter - that don't produce any tangible results amid deep mistrust between Moscow and Kyiv more than four years after Russia launched an all-out invasion of its



In this photo, provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency services personnel work to extinguish a fire at a vehicle following a Russian drone attack in Kyiv region, Ukraine on May 5. (AP)

neighbor.

The Russian Defense Ministry declared a unilateral ceasefire in Ukraine for Friday and Saturday, but said that it would strike back at the country if it tries to disrupt the festivities on Victory Day, which Russia marks annually on May 9.

Zelenskyy replied that Ukraine would observe a truce beginning at

12 a.m. on Wednesday and would respond in kind to Russia's actions from that moment on. He didn't put an end date on the truce.

Russian forces fired 11 Iskander-M ballistic missiles and 164 strike drones at Ukraine overnight from Monday to Tuesday, including a jet-powered Shahed drone variant, the Ukrainian Air Force said.



From left: European Council President Antonio Costa, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen participate in a media conference during the EU-Armenia summit at the Presidential Palace in Yerevan, Armenia on May 5. (AP)

## Armenia hosts historic EU summit as country charts course away from Russia

YEREVAN, Armenia, May 5, (AP): Armenia hosts its first bilateral summit with the European Union on Tuesday, a landmark diplomatic moment for the Caucasus Mountains nation that has formally declared its ambition to join the bloc and is cautiously loosening its ties with long-time ally Russia.

The EU-Armenia summit in Yerevan follows the eighth gathering of the European Political Community, or EPC, which brought dozens of European leaders to the Armenian capital on Monday to address European defense issues and the Iran war.

Meanwhile, Tuesday's bilateral meeting saw Armenia and the EU sign a connectivity partnership to strengthen economic ties and deepen security cooperation.

The two events underscore how Armenia is seeking to turn westward and shed Russia's influence. Armenia's relations with Moscow, its longtime sponsor and ally, have grown increasingly strained since 2023, when neighboring Azerbaijan fully reclaimed the Karabakh region and ended the decadeslong rule by ethnic Armenian separatists.

Armenian authorities accused Russian peacekeepers who were

deployed to the region of failing to stop Azerbaijan's onslaught. Moscow, busy with the war in Ukraine, rejected the accusations, arguing that its troops didn't have a mandate to intervene.

The war was "a belated demonstration that Russia is dangerously unreliable as a partner," Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Center in Yerevan, told The Associated Press.

Since then, the government of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pursued closer ties with the West, a move welcomed by the 27-nation EU.

The opening ceremony of the EU-Armenia summit on Tuesday saw European Council President Antonio Costa walk the red carpet side by side with Pashinyan and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, while a military band played in front of Armenian and EU flags.

In her opening statement, von der Leyen said that Europe was ready to aid Armenia in becoming a regional hub for global trade routes, including the building of physical infrastructure.

"We're ready to invest in the local energy production and the energy links across the Black Sea, and we

are ready to connect your booming digital scene to Europe's digital market and turn Armenia's position at the heart of this region into a motor of growth," she said.

The new EU-Armenia connectivity partnership will focus on strengthening transportation, energy and digital links. Meanwhile, EU investments in Armenia are expected to reach 2.5 billion euros (\$2.9 billion) under its global gateway infrastructure program, both sides said in a joint statement.

"Today's EU-Armenia summit sends a clear signal of the EU's firm commitment to deepen our relations with Armenia, and to strengthen cooperation across many new areas," Costa said. "Bringing Armenia and its people closer to the European Union."

The EU, rather than the United States, has stepped into the vacuum left by Russia, Giragosian said.

"EU engagement is much more prudent and much more productive than the U.S. becoming involved, simply because European engagement is less provocative to Russia over the longer term," he said.

In 2025, Armenia's parliament passed a law formally declaring the country's intention to seek EU membership.

### Europe

**Car-ramping accident kills 2 in Germany:** A driver plowed into people in a busy shopping area in the center of the German city of Leipzig on Monday afternoon, leaving two people dead, authorities said.

An additional three people were seriously injured in what officials believe was a deliberate rampage, Mayor Burkhard Jung said.

He described it as "a terrible tragedy." An unspecified number of people sustained less serious injuries.

The driver, a 33-year-old German citizen, was detained in the car. Police said he was a German-born resident of the Leipzig area.

Prosecutors said he is under investigation on suspicion of murder and attempted murder. There was no immediate word on a possible motive.

Police chief Ren Demmler said the man drove from the Augustusplatz, a major square, along the Grimmaische Strasse into the city's central pedestrianized shopping area. He stressed that there was no longer any danger. (AP)

**Austria expels 3 Russian Embassy staff:** Austria expelled three Russian Embassy employees who were suspected of espionage by using antennas on Russian diplomatic buildings, the Foreign Ministry said Monday.

The ministry confirmed a report aired Sunday by the Austrian public broadcaster ORF, which said

Austrian authorities suspected the three diplomats of engaging in spying activities using antennas on the roofs of the Russian Embassy in Vienna and a diplomatic compound in the Donaustadt district.

The installations allowed Russia to intercept data transmitted by international organizations based in Vienna via satellite internet, ORF reported.

Austria hosts several UN agencies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

"Espionage is a security problem for Austria. In this government, we have changed course and are taking decisive action against it," Austria's Foreign Minister Beate Meinl-Reisinger said in a statement. (AP)

**European lawmaker sentenced in fraud case:** A Czech court on Monday convicted a former associate of populist Prime Minister Andrej Babiš of fraud and handed her a three-year suspended sentence and a fine.

Babiš was also a defendant alongside Jana Nagyová in the \$2 million fraud case involving European Union subsidies but could not be sentenced because lawmakers in the lower house of Parliament rejected in March a motion to lift his immunity from prosecution.

The populist billionaire began his third term as prime minister in December. He has said that the case was "clearly politically motivated." The rejection of the motion means that he can only stand trial after his term ends in 2029. (AP)



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, this aerial drone photo taken in the early hours of May 5, 2026, rescuers work on site after an explosion at a fireworks plant in Guandu Town of Liuyang, central China's Hunan Province. (AP)

## Explosion at fireworks plant in China kills 26, injures dozens: state media

BEIJING, May 5, (AP) — An explosion at a fireworks plant in a central Chinese province killed at least 26 people and injured 61 others, state media reported Tuesday, prompting the halting of all firework manufacturing near the site.

The blast occurred at a fireworks plant in the city of Changsha in Hunan province on Monday afternoon, China's official news agency Xinhua said.

State media China Daily said that the plant was operated by the Huasheng Fireworks Manufacturing and Display Co. in the Changsha-administered, county-level city of Liuyang, a prominent fireworks powerhouse in the country.

Changsha mayor Chen Bozhong said at a media briefing that a search and rescue operation at the scene largely has been completed, but verification of the casualties and identification of the victims was still underway.

Chen said that the local government expressed condolences for the victims and apologized to society, including the families and injured people.

"We feel extremely pained and deeply remorseful," he said.

Ding Weiming, the Changsha Emergency Management Bureau's party secretary, said that the site had a large amount of products or semifinished products catching fire, causing continuous, sporadic blasts.

Large quantities of gunpowder stored in the warehouse area also threatened the safety of rescue teams, while the collapse of walls, columns and the roof in the factory area created ruins, with people trapped and routes blocked, he said.

All fireworks and firecracker manufacturers in Liuyang have been ordered to halt production, local media reported said.

Aerial footage from state broadcaster CCTV on Tuesday showed white smoke billowing in certain areas of the site, with facilities collapsed or damaged.

Hundreds of rescuers were deployed to the scene and residents in danger zones were evacuated by authorities, citing high risks from two black powder warehouses near the explosion site, the Xinhua report said.

Authorities were investigating the cause of the blast and police have detained the person in charge of the company, Xinhua said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged "all-out efforts" to search for people who are still unaccounted for and to save the injured. He called on authorities to investigate the cause swiftly and pursue serious accountability, the report said. Xi also ordered effective risk screening and hazard control in key industries and the strengthening of public safety management.

To prevent other accidents during the operation, rescuers adopted measures such as spraying and humidification to eliminate potential hazards.

They also deployed several robots to help with the search and rescue operation.

Liuyang has a long history of fireworks production. The Guinness World Records organization said that the first accurately documented firework, the Chinese firecracker, was attributed to Li Tian, a monk who lived near Liuyang during China's Tang dynasty dating to around 618 to 907 C.E.

## 50,000 people rally in Tokyo against revising Constitution

## Japan defense chief visits Philippines to deepen security ties, witness combat drill

MANILA, Philippines, May 5, (Agencies) — Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi traveled to the Philippines on Tuesday to witness an international combat drill and conduct talks with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr intended to broaden defense ties between the nations, officials said.

Koizumi's meeting in the capital Manila with Marcos and Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. may include discussion of a possible transfer of used Japanese destroyers to the Philippines.

The Philippines and Japan, both treaty allies of the United States, signed a pact in 2024 allowing their forces to stage large-scale combat drills. The Reciprocal Access Agreement paved the way for Japan to deploy 1,400 military personnel to become regular participants in the exercises called Balikatan.

US, Filipino and other allied forces annually take part in Balikatan, the Tagalog word for shoulder-to-shoulder, to brace for security contingencies and deter China's increasing assertiveness in the region.

Koizumi will be among representatives from 16 countries, including India and Australia, who are expect-

ed to travel Wednesday to the north-western Philippine town of Paoy to witness a key Balikatan exercise in which Philippine, US, Japanese and Canadian firepower will be used in a mock attack on a ship about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the coast.

Japanese forces will fire two volleys of Type 88 missiles to help sink the decommissioned World War II-era Philippine navy warship, Philippine Marine Corps Col. Dennis Hernandez told The Associated Press, adding that Marcos plans to watch the live-fire maneuvers via video in Manila.

Before reaching the Philippines, Koizumi visited the Indonesian capital Jakarta and signed a defense cooperation agreement Monday with Indonesian Defense Secretary Sjafie Sjamsoeddin.

"As Japan faces the most severe and complex security environment in the postwar era, it is important to establish a multilayered network of allies and like-minded countries, while expanding it and strengthening the deterrence," Koizumi said in a recent news conference in Tokyo.

Japan has bolstered its offensive capability with long-range missiles to attack enemy targets from a dis-



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (left), greets Japan's Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi at the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila, Philippines on May 5. (AP)

tance, a major break from its post-World War II principle limiting the use of force to self-defense.

Japan scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports on April 21, another major change in its postwar pacifist policy as Japan seeks to build up its arms industry in response to growing Chinese aggression in the

region. The Philippines shares that concern following a spike in territorial spats with Beijing in the South China Sea.

Lifting the ban allows Japan to consider the transfer to the Philippines of up to six used Japanese destroyers of the Abukuma-class, which can be utilized for patrols

and detecting aerial, sea surface and undersea threats, Hernandez said, noting the issue could come up in Koizumi's talks with Philippine officials. The details of the potential exchange have not been disclosed.

While allies led by the US and Australia welcomed Japan's updated policy, China criticized the change.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said last month that the global community, including China, will "resolutely resist Japan's reckless moves toward a new type of militarism."

### Also:

**TOKYO:** "Firmly oppose arbitrary revision of the Constitution!" "No to war!" "Safeguard the pacifist Constitution!" On Sunday, around 50,000 people gathered at Tokyo Rinkai Disaster Prevention Park, chanting slogans and holding banners against the government's push for constitutional revision and military expansion, the largest turnout in recent years.

Sunday marks Japan's Constitution Memorial Day, commemorating the day the country's current Constitution took effect in 1947.

Widely known as the pacifist Constitution, the supreme law's Article 9

renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. It also stipulates that Japan will never maintain land, sea, and air forces or other war potential, and that the right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

At this year's rally, held as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi accelerates efforts to revise the Constitution, public unease was more visible than ever.

**Tomoko Tamura**, chair of the Japanese Communist Party, said in her speech that the Takaichi administration's push to revise the Constitution and attempts to add the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) into it could fundamentally weaken restrictions on overseas dispatches of SDF.

"The Constitution is a constraint imposed by the people to prevent the state from waging war again," she said. "Yet the authorities are now stoking crises and promoting military expansion, which is absolutely unacceptable."

**Mizuho Fukushima**, leader of Japan's Social Democratic Party, also pointed out that the Takaichi administration is "hollowing out the pacifist Constitution bit by bit."

## Modi party wins control of India's West Bengal in key state election

NEW DELHI, May 5, (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party has wrested control of the opposition stronghold of West Bengal in a key state election.

The Election Commission of India released partial results Monday showing the Bharatiya Janata Party won at least 124 seats in the 294-member West Bengal assembly and was leading in 83 others.

Modi's party has never governed West Bengal and had tried for years to dislodge the All India Trinamool Congress government led by state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. She is one of Modi's most prominent critics and has held power in the politically influential state since 2011.

Opposition parties have sharply criticized the polls in West Bengal after the Election Commission removed millions of voters from electoral rolls. Governments were ousted in two other states and Modi's party retained power in another that held elections in April.



Confetti is sprayed as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, (center), arrives at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters to celebrate victory in the recently held state assembly elections in New Delhi, India on May 4. (AP)

India has more than 1.4 billion people in 28 states and eight federal territories, and elections are staggered with several states and territories voting each year.

## Argentina's President Milei restores journalists' access to presidency after ban sparks backlash

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, May 5, (AP) — Argentina's President Javier Milei restored journalists' access to his government headquarters Monday, more than a week after the decision to block credentialed reporters from the building - accompanied by a volley of online insults - triggered backlash from lawmakers and press freedom advocates.

Most journalists said they could enter the Casa Rosada - or the Pink House, Argentina's equivalent of the White House - for the first time since April 23. But authorities denied entry to two credentialed TV channels without explanation and introduced new restrictions on reporters' physical movement within the Casa Rosada, shuttering corridors and installing frosted glass on windows.

Last month's closure of the press room used for decades by reporters with credentials to cover the president added to a list of attacks and reprisals against news organizations by Milei, whose hostility toward the press mirrors the aggressive approach of his ally and powerful



Argentina's President Javier Milei, (left), and his sister, General Secretary of the Presidency Karina Milei, arrive to Congress to attend a session in which Chief of Staff Manuel Adorni will present his report to the Chamber of Deputies in Buenos Aires, Argentina on April 29. (AP)

backer, US President Donald Trump.

Journalists and their advocates rebuked the move as an attack on press freedom in Argentina. Condemnation poured in from business

chambers, the Catholic Church and politicians across the spectrum.

Milei's Cabinet chief Manuel Adorni fired back at critics in a rare news conference on Monday

in which he said he aimed "not to welcome anyone, but to restore the (press) room's operations."

"We are fully in favor of press freedom ... but we will not in any way allow acts endangering national security to be committed behind its back," he told reporters.

Authorities justified the restrictions for the roughly 60 members of the Casa Rosada press corps as a necessary security measure after they accused a local TV channel of espionage for using smart glasses to film parts of the headquarters without authorization.

The channel, Todo Noticias, insists it received official permission to capture the footage and that the images of corridors and meeting spaces aired in the TV segment have long been accessible to the public.

When asked why colleagues from Todo Noticias and Channel 13, another leading network, were still blocked from the Casa Rosada on Monday, Adorni said that he wasn't aware of the issue and that, "in principle, there shouldn't be any limitations."

## Afghanistan says cross-border attacks by Pakistan hit civilian areas, killed 3

KABUL, Afghanistan, May 5, (AP) — Afghanistan accused Pakistan of carrying out cross-border attacks into its territory on Monday that hit civilian areas, killing at least three people and wounding 14, as tension between the two neighbors remain high despite recent peace talks.

Afghan deputy government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said on X that the attacks also destroyed two schools, two mosques and a health center in the eastern Afghan province of Kunar.

Pakistan's Information Ministry rejected the allegation in a post on X, saying that Fitrat's accusations follow recent cross-border firing from Afghan territory into Pakistan. Those attacks, in March and April, killed nine women and children in Bajaur, a district in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

It said Bajaur attacks "exposed the Afghan regime's reckless and shameful actions." The ministry also argued that images circulated with the latest Afghan claim show



Local residents look at a damaged area of a police station after an overnight deadly bombing in the Bannu district of northwestern Pakistan on April 3. (AP)

damage "inconsistent with artillery impact," citing intact roofs and localized breakage as indicators of possible staged destruction.

Pakistan and Afghanistan had been embroiled in months of dead-

ly fighting that killed hundreds of people since late February, when Afghanistan launched a cross-border attack on Pakistan in retaliation for Pakistani airstrikes inside Afghanistan.

### Lat/Am

**Explosion traps 12 in Colombian coal mine:** At least twelve miners are trapped inside a coal mine in central Colombia, officials said Monday night, following an explosion that authorities attributed to the accumulation of gases.

Jorge Emilio Rey, the governor of Colombia's Cundinamarca province said on social platform X, that there were 15 miners inside the mine when the explosion occurred Monday afternoon, but added that three miners were able to escape from the mine "on their own." One of them was taken to a hospital.

The mine is located in Sutatausa, a municipality about 46 miles (74 km) outside capital Bogota and 8,200 feet (2,500 meters) above sea level. (AP)

**US strikes on drug boat kills 2 in Caribbean:** The US military said it launched another strike on a boat accused of ferrying drugs in the Caribbean Sea, killing two people Monday.

The Trump administration's campaign of blowing up alleged drug-trafficking vessels in Latin American waters has persisted since early September and killed at least 188 people in total. Other strikes have taken place in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Despite the Iran war, the series of strikes have ramped up again in recent weeks, showing that the administration's aggressive measures to stop what it calls "narcoterrorism" in the Western Hemisphere are not letting up. The military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs. (AP)

### Africa

**130 Nigerians seek repatriation:** Nigeria will repatriate 130 Nigerians living in South Africa after a new wave of anti-immigration protests in that country, according to the foreign minister, who summoned South Africa's top representative there on Monday to express concern.

Nigeria's foreign minister, Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, described the repatriation effort as voluntary and said more people were expected to sign up.

Odumegwu-Ojukwu was meeting with South Africa's acting high commissioner to convey the Nigerian government's "profound concern." (AP)

**Mali's Goita takes over defense ministry:** Mali's junta leader and the country's president has assumed the duties of defense minister, authorities said Monday, after the incumbent was killed in sweeping, coordinated attacks by separatist and jihadi forces that stunned the West African nation.

According to a presidential decree announced on state television, Assimi Goita will remain president while also taking on the new role. Former armed forces chief of staff Gen. Oumar Diarra will assist him as deputy defense minister.

The announcement comes after Defense Minister Gen. Sadio Camara was killed on April 25, in a suicide bombing that targeted his home in Kati, a garrison town near the capital, Bamako. (AP)

## Kuwait oil price surges to \$119.43

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil rose by USD 7.11 to reach USD 119.43 per barrel (pb) in Monday's trading, compared to USD 112.32 pb in last Thursday's trading, according to the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on

Tuesday.

In global markets, Brent crude rose by USD 6.27 to reach USD 114.44 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate increased by USD 4.48 to reach USD 106.42 pb.

# Business

## Gulf Bank holds its first quarter 2026 earnings webcast

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Gulf Bank held its first quarter 2026 earnings webcast on Monday 4th May 2026, to present and discuss the Bank's financial performance. The webcast was organized by EFG Hermes and presented by Sami Mahfouz, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, and Mr. David Challinor, Chief Financial Officer of Gulf Bank. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Dalal AlDousari, Deputy General Manager of Investor Relations at Gulf Bank.

### Operating Environment

Mr. Sami Mahfouz, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, commenced the webcast with key updates regarding the operating environment and Gulf Bank's overall position during the first quarter of 2026. Mr. Mahfouz stated: "As we all know, we have been operating in an exceptionally challenging environment, as Kuwait and the whole region have been facing hostile security developments and heightened regional tensions since late February 2026. While these conditions have weighed on market sentiment and affected parts of the local and regional economic landscape, the State's institutional strength, and the timely and adequate policy response, have supported the stability of economic activity."

Mr. Mahfouz added "During the first quarter of this year, key sovereign indicators remained robust as Kuwait's credit ratings were reaffirmed by leading credit rating agencies, reflecting the country's strong financial position and external resilience. Kuwait continues to benefit from funding flexibility supported by domestic market depth and access to international capital markets."

He added: "Operationally, Gulf Bank swiftly activated its business continuity and risk management protocols in line with established frameworks and directives from the Central Bank of Kuwait. This ensured the uninterrupted operation of our systems and the continued delivery of services across all channels. We also 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 clients, designed to meet the evolving needs of businesses across various sectors."



Sami Mahfouz



David Challinor



Dalal AlDousari

**Mahfouz:** The Bank continues to make measured progress on its Sharia-compliant conversion process in line with the regulatory framework.

■ Kuwait continues to benefit from funding flexibility supported by domestic market depth and access to international capital markets

■ Kuwait policy response has supported the stability of economic activity during an exceptionally challenging environment.

■ We continued to advance our digital capabilities, enhancing the accessibility, security, and efficiency of our services.

**Challinor:** Gulf Bank's net loans and advances grew by nearly 6% in a single quarter, the strongest growth in several years.

■ Total operating expenses grew only 1% year on year, which reflected our ongoing cost discipline.

■ Corporate portfolio asset quality continues to demonstrate sustained strength and resilience.

■ The retail growth in the system remains very slow and subdued, increasing by only 0.1% year to date as per CBK data.

### Margins

Commenting on net interest margin, Mr. David Challinor, Chief Financial Officer of Gulf Bank stated: "The margin contracted 9 basis points in Q1 and now it's sitting at 1.82%. The contraction which was expected was primarily driven by the full quarter impact of the benchmark rate cuts that happened in December. Now, we did see cost of funds fall during the quarter, but it wasn't enough to offset the income yield drop. We've seen deposit pricing in the local market continue to be relatively sticky in response to recent rate cuts, and the geopolitical events exacerbated this dynamic. In terms of outlook, at the beginning of the year we didn't provide any margin guidance for the full year 2026 due to many moving parts

and uncertainty around benchmark rate movements. Although we did indicate that in the short term we would expect a contraction, and that's what we saw. Now the key driver of the margin is movements in benchmark rates."

### Loan Growth

In regard to loan growth, Mr. Challinor noted: "We had an exceptionally strong start to the year in terms of loan growth. Net loans and advances grew by 326 million, which was almost 6% growth in just one quarter, and the highest growth for a number of years. And when we look at total customer loan growth year to date, which excludes lending to banks, our growth was 5.3% for the quarter, versus the market, which was 1.9% to the end

of March. And for the corporate segment we grew 9% versus the market, which was 2.8%. This is testament to our very strong corporate franchise. However, the retail growth in the system remains very slow and subdued, increasing by only 0.1% year to date as per CBK data, and this reflects a very challenging and competitive environment in retail. In terms of outlook, on the Q4 call we guided high single digit loan growth for the full year 2026. And we would expect this to be achieved with the possibility of potential upside."

### Cost of Risk

On Cost of Risk, Mr. Challinor, remarked: "Credit costs totaled 9.4 million in Q1 2026, reflecting a decline of 0.7 million, or 7%, compared to the same period last year. This was primarily attributable to the sustained strength and resilience of the corporate portfolio's asset quality. And a similar theme has continued, which is that almost all the credit costs relate to retail. And we've mentioned before that the retail credit costs have remained elevated for a prolonged period, but we could expect some normalization to occur as our underwriting amendments coupled with enhancements to the collections process, both work to deliver positive results. Now in terms of outlook, at the beginning of the year we gave guidance for the full year cost of risk to be in the 50 to 60 basis point range. At Q1, we were 61 basis points so we would expect, at this stage, for the guidance to still hold."

### Operating Expense

On operating expense Mr. Challinor mentioned: "Operating expenses grew only 1% year on year, and we achieved a positive JAWs ratio of 1.2% in Q1 2026 which reflected our ongoing cost discipline in relation to our business-as-usual cost base. And our cost-to-income ratio was 51.9% in Q1 26 versus last year Q1 25 which was 52.6% so there has been a reduction there. Now clearly, we are advancing several strategic projects such as the Islamic conversion and potential merger. And we've indicated before that the year 2026 will bear the majority of these costs. In terms of guidance, we previously said the absolute cost growth for the full year could be around the mid-to-high single-digit range and that estimate still holds."

### Conversion to Sharia compliance and potential Merger

About the updates on the Islamic banking conversion and the merger, Mr. Sami Mahfouz, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank noted: "On the Sharia-compliant conversion, the Bank continues to make measured progress in line with the regulatory framework following the Central Bank of Kuwait's preliminary approval. As for the potential merger with Warba Bank, the evaluation process is ongoing, with due diligence activities nearing final stages, under the guidance of independent advisors and the oversight of both Boards and relevant regulatory authorities. The process is progressing in an orderly manner, and any material updates will be communicated in line with disclosure requirements."

### CBK regulatory guidelines

Regarding the expectations on the time frame for easing CBK regulatory guidelines, Mr. Mahfouz mentioned: "We thank the proactivity of the Central Bank of Kuwait in terms of enacting that easing which is similar to the playbook of Covid. At that time, the Central Bank of Kuwait was very patient and disciplined when things stabilized and reverting to old ratios and naturally, we would expect the same approach this time. That said, the situation remains fluid as we speak while we hope we reach an end to the hostilities around the region. We expect the Central Bank of Kuwait to apply the same approach and achieve the return to the original ratios in ordinary fashion."

Reinforcing a strategic partnership spanning over 15 years

## Markaz delivers joint seminar on MREF with InvestGB

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The real estate investment team at Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" delivered a joint seminar with Gulf Capital Investment Company "InvestGB", the investment arm of Gulf Bank, providing the latest updates on the Markaz Real Estate Fund (MREF). The seminar forms part of a series of periodic engagements with InvestGB's relationship and wealth teams, aimed at enforcing specialized investment knowledge of the Fund and enabling wealth managers to more effectively articulate its strategy and value proposition, ultimately enhancing the quality of client service.

The seminar included a comprehensive review of the fund's performance and developments, in addition to highlighting its investment direction and growth opportunities within the real estate sector. Particular focus was placed on income-generating assets and disciplined risk management across different market cycles.

This initiative underscores the strength of the strategic partnership between "Markaz" and InvestGB, which extends a relationship with Gulf Bank spanning over 15 years. InvestGB serves as the primary distributor of the Markaz Real Estate Fund. This collaboration has contributed to expanding the fund's investor base and strengthening its presence in the market, supported by continuous communication, effective knowledge sharing, and ongoing alignment in investment strategies, all of which support the delivery of sustainable long-term performance.

In this context, Ms. Deena AlRefai, Executive Vice President - Wealth Management and Business Development at Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz", said: "Our longstanding partnership with InvestGB is built on continuous collaboration and knowledge sharing, which serves as a key pillar in developing investment solutions that meet evolving investor expectations. Over the years, this collaboration has enabled us to deliver an income-generating real estate investment opportunity characterized by stability and sustainability. Through our regular sessions to share insights and align on MREF's strategy, we remain committed to strengthening alignment between our teams and deepening understanding of the strategy and value of the Markaz Real Estate Fund."

Mr. Tareq AlSaleh, Managing Director of Wealth Management at InvestGB, added: "Hosting the 'Markaz' team and engaging directly with our wealth managers reflects the strength of this strategic partnership. The ongoing training programs and insights provided by 'Markaz' enhance our teams' readiness and ability to effectively represent the Markaz Real Estate Fund and deliver added value to our clients. We look forward to continu-



Markaz delivers joint seminar on MREF with InvestGB.



ing this successful collaboration and building on its positive outcomes in the future." The Markaz Real Estate Fund continues to focus on investing in income-generating assets in Kuwait, while main-

taining a diversified portfolio and a disciplined investment strategy that supports sustainable returns for investors and reinforces its position as a trusted investment solution.

Featuring premium cashback benefits

## Warba Bank launches dual-chip card for private banking clients

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Warba Bank announced the launch of its "Dual Chip Contactless World Elite Mastercard," a banking solution designed for Private Banking customers. The new card features two independent EMV chips - one for debit and one for credit - integrated into a single card, supported by dual-side NFC technology for contactless payments.

The solution addresses technical integration challenges by allowing customers to select which account to use for contactless transactions based on the side of the card tapped. This dual-chip structure ensures compliance with international security standards while providing enhanced flexibility for high-net-worth users.

### Innovation Driven by Customer Insight:

Mr. Ahmad Faisal Al-Qatami, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Warba Bank, said the launch reflects the bank's philosophy of segment-specific innovation.

"We do not believe in one-size-fits-all solutions; instead, we design products that align with the specific behaviors and expectations of our customer segments," Al-Qatami said. He added that the bank's internal research showed Private Banking customers continue to prefer the reliability of a physical card that integrates modern digital capabilities.

### Premium Benefits and Rewards:

The card belongs to the World Elite Mastercard category, providing premium perks including unlimited lounge access for the cardholder and a guest, alongside 24/7 global concierge services for luxury travel and exclusive event bookings.

The bank said the card features a competitive cashback program, among the highest in the GCC, offering up to 10% on international transactions and 5% locally. When used as a credit card, the program allows for a monthly cap of 1,000 KWD, reaching a total of 12,000 KWD annually.

### Advanced Security and Digital Integration:

Sherif Elbagoury, Director (Cards Department) Retail Banking Group at Warba Bank, noted that the card provides enhanced security through two independent EMV chips, separate PINs, and distinct CVV codes.

The card experience is integrated



Ahmad Al-Qatami

### Al-Qatami:

■ **Dual-Chip Innovation:** A dual-chip card for Private Banking customers, integrating separate debit and credit functionalities into a single card.

■ **Competitive Cash-back:** Up to 10% cash-back on transactions, with a monthly cap of KWD 1,000 and up to KWD 12,000 annually for credit card usage.

■ **Customer-Focused Design:** Tailored to the needs of premium customer segments.

■ **Data-Informed Development:** Based on ongoing internal research and analysis of customer behavior to improve the banking experience.

■ **Strategic Growth:** Supporting the bank's strategy to strengthen its traditional and digital banking services and reinforce its position in the Islamic banking sector.

with the Warba Bank mobile application, allowing customers to monitor transactions in real-time and activate or deactivate chips independently. The solution reflects the bank's focus on innovation in premium banking, combining digital capabilities with the reliability of a physical card.

General index slips 0.25%

## Boursa Kuwait ends session lower

KUWAIT CITY, May 5, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Tuesday's trading session in negative territory, with its general index falling 22.30 points, or 0.25 percent, to 8,870.99 points.

Market activity saw 600.8 million shares change hands across 30,780 cash transactions, generating a total value of KD 113.5 million (about USD 371 million).

The main market index declined by 14.90 points, or 0.17 percent, to settle at 8,576.17 points. Trading volume reached 380.3 million shares through 18,845 transactions, with a total value of KD 52.2 million (approximately USD 170.6

million).

Similarly, the premier market index dropped 25.05 points, or 0.27 percent, closing at 9,394.05 points. A total of 220.4 million shares were traded in 11,935 deals, valued at KD 61.3 million (around USD 200.3 million).

In contrast, the Main 50 Index recorded gains, rising 13.20 points, or 0.14 percent, to 9,413.23 points. The index saw 300.2 million shares traded through 14,206 transactions, with a total value of KD 41.5 million (approximately USD 135.6 million).



Dual Chip Contactless World Elite Mastercard

# ABK – UAE becomes first Kuwaiti and GCC Bank to obtain ADREC license as real estate escrow agent in Abu Dhabi

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Strengthening its role as a trusted financial partner, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait – United Arab Emirates (ABK – UAE) has announced its official appointment by the Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre (ADREC) to act as an Escrow Account Agent in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. With this appointment, the Bank becomes the first Kuwaiti and GCC bank to obtain this license, reinforcing the alignment between the Bank's strategic direction and the Abu Dhabi Government's vision to provide a secure and well-regulated investment environment.

This appointment reflects the continued trust placed in ABK – UAE, driven by its disciplined governance framework, regulatory compliance, and continuous efforts to enhance its competitive position while diversifying its offerings and products for all customer segments in the UAE market at the highest service standards.

The license further underscores the Bank's strong commitment to expanding its footprint in the rapidly growing real estate sector in the region. The service enables real estate developers to collect payments from buyers of off-plan units or project financiers and deposit them into designated, regulated escrow accounts at the Bank, thereby safeguarding the interests of all parties and enhancing investor confidence in the real estate sector.

On this occasion, Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer of ABK, stated, "Our partnership with ADREC is a testament to the commitment of ABK – UAE to operating in line with



Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer of ABK



Omar Wahby, Chief Executive Officer of ABK – UAE



Osama Al Hamadani, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of Wholesale at ABK – UAE



UAE's regulatory framework and contributing responsibly to the market's development. We are proud to contribute to strengthening the real estate sector, which represents a key pillar of the local economy, by providing world-class real estate escrow services aimed primarily at facilitating the flow of regional investments into the country."

He added, "Our appointment as an escrow account agent aligns with our strategy to provide specialized banking solutions that support the UAE's economic vision and further strengthen our presence within the UAE banking sector."

He explained that this follows its appointment to provide the same service in the Emirate of Dubai in late 2024, as well as the launch of its mortgage loan product and the establishment of its Corporate Service Desk in the UAE, which offers multiple advantages to serve companies operating in the country. He noted that these steps position ABK among the licensed escrow account agents supporting the UAE's dynamic real estate sector.

On his part, Engineer Sul-

tan Al Memari, Acting Executive Director of ADREC, said, "The licensing of ABK – UAE as the first GCC bank to act as an escrow account agent in Abu Dhabi signals the increasing participation of regional institutions in the market. The expansion of licensed escrow agents is carefully managed to ensure that all entities meet the standards required to support off-plan developments and safeguard project funds. This supports broader regional and international participation, while maintaining a stable and well-managed transaction environment."

From his side, Omar Wahby, Chief Executive Officer of ABK – UAE, said, "The introduction of escrow agent services in Abu Dhabi comes as part of our commitment to developing financial solutions that support urban development and meet investors' aspirations, serving as a fundamental pillar in safeguarding the rights of all parties involved in real estate transactions."

He noted that this service acts as a safeguard connecting developers and buyers, transforming the buying and sell-

ing process into a structured, secure experience aligned with the highest regulatory standards in the market.

He added, "We believe that customers seek a trusted partner who protects their savings and ensures a worry-free property ownership journey. Through this service, ABK – UAE will provide the technical, technological, and financial support required to meet all customer needs and requirements, in line with the highest standards of transparency in the market."

In addition, Osama Al Hamadani, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of Wholesale at ABK – UAE, stated, "This appointment reflects the continued success we are achieving in the UAE, the strong capabilities of our team, and our dedication to introducing new products and services that keep pace with market developments and meet the expectations of both individual and corporate clients."

Al Hamadani added that, through this appointment, the Bank will offer real estate developers a comprehensive range of benefits, including structured escrow adminis-

tration, monitoring of cash flows and reporting, efficient audit coordination, controlled disbursement mechanism, and adherence to established regulatory standards.

He further highlighted the provision of a robust regulatory framework for developers and off-plan buyers, ensuring that financial disbursements are strictly linked to approved project expenses. He also revealed that the next phase will focus on launching of digital solutions for managing escrow accounts.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Wealth Management.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK – Egypt's network of 46 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai

International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk\_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

The Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT) launched the Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre (ADREC) to accelerate growth across the real estate ecosystem in the emirate. ADREC unifies and strengthens the real estate sector in Abu Dhabi through a comprehensive regulatory framework to further enhance the efficiency of real estate and strengthen oversight, as well as increase transparency and support for residents, investors, real estate companies and professionals. ADREC's strategy is centred around four key pillars: Real Estate Strategy, Real Estate Promotion, Real Estate Regulation, and Real Estate Transactions Management.

www.adrec.gov.ae

## The Conversation

Oil, trade at risk

## Iran conflict pushes GCC toward economic unity

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

By Firmsk Rahim  
UMass Boston

Arab Gulf countries, battered economically and physically by the war with Iran, were keen to put on a united front at a key regional meeting on April 28, 2026. Gathering in the Saudi city Jeddah, representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council warned the Iranian government in Tehran that an attack on any one of its six members would be taken as an attack on all. Rejecting Iran's claims to control of the Strait of Hormuz, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani later described the summit as embodying "the unified Gulf stance" over the conflict.

The show of togetherness may seem at odds with other recent developments that have seen members of the GCC split over policy and vision for the region - not least the United Arab Emirates' decision to quit the oil cartel OPEC.

But to followers of Gulf politics, like myself, the scene felt familiar. Time and again, Iran has accomplished what no outside mediator could: It has pushed divided Gulf Arab states together. When tensions rise, the monarchies of the GCC - Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman - tend to stand united, at least publicly.

The modern Gulf security environment was profoundly shaped by the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

Iran shares a narrow and strategically vital waterway with the Gulf states but has long differed in identity and outlook. Specifically, Iran's Shiite revolutionary model contrasts with the Sunni-led monarchies across the region.

Before 1979, when Iran was ruled by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Saudi Arabia, the largest of the Sunni Arab Gulf states, were regarded by Washington as "twin pillars," protecting American interests in the Middle East. Their relationship was cooperative, but not close.

Then the emergence of the Islamic Republic after the revolution in 1979 introduced a new kind of regional actor - one defined not only by state power but also by Shiite ideological ambition.

Gulf monarchies' concern over both external security and internal stability was reinforced by the 1979 Grand Mosque seizure in Saudi Arabia, when Islamist militants seized Islam's holiest site. The event, alongside Iran's revolution, exposed the vulnerability of Gulf regimes to religiously driven

upheaval.

In response to this revolution ideology, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE established the GCC in 1981. Although officially framed as a platform for economic and political cooperation, the organization also reflected shared security concerns and Arab identity.

But unity had limits. Member states did not all view threats to their respective regimes in the same way.

Saudi Arabia worried about U.S. pressure for reforms; Kuwait feared neighboring Iraq; Bahrain was concerned about Iran's influence over its own Shiite population; and the UAE worried about both Iran and its own large foreign workforce. Meanwhile, Oman and Qatar followed a more independent or balanced approach.

These differences would shape the trajectory of the GCC, and Arab Gulf states' relationship with Tehran.

The eight-year Iran-Iraq War, which began in 1980, brought to the fore fears of Iran's influence across the region. While Oman declared neutrality, other GCC states supported Iraq by funneling billions of dollars to the regime of Saddam Hussein.

This revealed an early pattern: Gulf states could coordinate politically, but avoided acting as a single strategic bloc. The GCC broadly favored Iraq as a counterweight to Iran, but there was no unified strategy or formal policy.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 reshaped the region's security structure again. In early 1991, the move prompted a U.S.-led coalition, including Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, to expel Iraqi forces. Saudi Arabia's role was especially significant: It not only hosted coalition forces but also actively participated militarily - marking one of the first major episodes in which a GCC state was directly involved in the defense of another member.

During - and especially after - the Gulf War, GCC states deepened their reliance on the United States, agreeing to host U.S. military bases and expanding long-term defense cooperation.

This external security umbrella provided a measure of stability, but it also introduced new differences. While Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and Bahrain aligned more closely with Washington's strategic framework, others - notably Oman and Qatar - maintained a more flexible approach. As a result, the appearance of unity coexisted with growing variation in national strategies.

This pattern has continued in recent years, significantly through diplomatic moves to normalize ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords. While the UAE and Bahrain

moved quickly to formalize ties with Israel, others remained more cautious.

When it comes to combating Iranian influence, GCC states have long played different roles.

Oman has consistently acted as a mediator, maintaining open channels with Tehran and facilitating quiet diplomacy - including back-channel talks between Iran and Western states.

Qatar also kept communication open, partly because of shared economic interests with Iran - particularly the management of the North Field/South Pars gas reserve.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE, by contrast, have generally taken a more cautious and at times confrontational stance toward Iran. Both view Iran as a regional competitor and a source of security concerns, particularly due to Tehran's missile program and its support for ideologically opposed non-state actors.

This contrasting approach to Iran across the GCC allows different states to engage Tehran through multiple channels, but it also makes it harder to form a consistent, unified GCC strategy.

The 2003 Iraq War marked a turning point in the GCC-Iran dynamic. The removal of Iraq as a regional counterweight allowed Iran to expand its influence.

And this development sharpened divisions within the GCC. Saudi Arabia and the UAE increasingly viewed Iran as a direct strategic threat requiring containment. Qatar and Oman, however, emphasized dialogue and mediation.

These differences became more visible during the Qatar diplomatic crisis of 2017. The dispute centered around Qatar's support for Islamist political groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, considered a terrorist organization by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain severed diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed a full air, land and sea blockade in June 2017. The three nations accused Qatar of supporting extremist groups and maintaining close ties with Iran. Isolated, Qatar relied on Iran for airspace, trade routes and supplies, strengthening the relationship between the countries. The blockade eventually ended in January 2021, when the parties signed a declaration restoring diplomatic and trade relations at a GCC summit in Saudi Arabia.

The series of events that began with the Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Iranian-backed Hamas in Israel shook up GCC relations with Tehran.

In June 2025, in response to the U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran, Tehran struck a U.S. base in Qatar - the first such attack on a GCC state by Tehran.

## Shareholders meet in Abu Dhabi, elect new board

## Dhaman hits a record \$3.4 bln coverage, maintains A+ rating

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: The Shareholders' Council of the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation "Dhaman", chaired by the head of the Lebanese Republic's delegation, elected a new Board of Directors for the Corporation for the next three years during its 53rd meeting in the UAE. The Council also approved the meeting's agenda items, the auditors' report for the FY ending on December 31, 2025, the balance sheet and the income and expenditure statement.

Addressing the session on behalf of the Board members, the Corporation's Chairman, Dr. Naif bin Abdulrahman Al-Shammari, said that this year's meeting came at a significant moment that witnessed essential changes in the Corporation's work environment, in which geopolitical transformations, economic, trade and investment pressures and restrictions, high levels of risk and technological changes were intertwined. He noted that Dhaman's achievements during 2025 take on great significance that goes beyond numbers and reflects its institutional preparedness not only to deal with reality, but also to seek to effectively reshape it.

Dr. Al-Shammari added that "Dhaman" responded to those challenges proactively and resiliently during 2025. As for insurance activity, the Corporation achieved 16% growth, boosting its operations to roughly \$3.4 billion by the end of the year and cumulative value to over \$35.4 billion since its establishment. This, in fact, mirrors the confidence of its partners and demonstrates Dhaman's ability to provide impactful solutions when it matters most.

He added that the financial performance went beyond expectations, with net profit rising by 17.5% to hit roughly \$25 million, revenues surpassing \$37 million and the Corporation maintaining its A+ credit rating from S&P with a stable outlook. He considered that operational growth, balance sheet strength and static rating are the direct result of an integrated system of governance and risk management driven by genuine institutional maturity.

The Board Chairman underlined that "Dhaman" promoted its support for its member countries by deepening its investment in research, information, and consulting services, expanding its training and capacity-building programs, and advancing its analytical tools, providing genuine support for member countries' decision-makers. In parallel, it enhanced its network of alliances with regional and international insurance, reinsurance, finance, and investment institutions, thus broadening the scope of beneficiaries and opening up avenues for partnership with the private sector and financial institutions.

Considering the institutional structure, Dr. Al-Shammari revealed that the Board of Directors amended several provisions of the founding agreement with a view to broadening the scope of the Corporation's operations and keeping abreast of developments in insurance, finance and investment markets as per the ap-



- Renewed confidence in Dr. Naif Al-Shammari as Chairman of the Board of Directors for a third consecutive term in recognition of the record results achieved in the previous two terms
- Dr. Naif Al-Shammari: A fresh strategy and a review of the founding agreement aim at expanding operations and keeping pace with market developments
- Maintaining the high credit rating and scaling up efforts to improve the investment climate, research, consulting, training and external relations.

proved institutional frameworks.

He noted that Dhaman launched an ambitious and well-defined strategy for the period 2026-2031, which goes beyond mere numerical growth; it is designed to solidify Dhaman's footprint and influence in its member countries' development journey as part of the accumulated institutional work and accomplishments during 2025. He elaborated that this strategy is based on five integrated pillars: foresight to monitor and predict geopolitical and technological shifts; institutional development and governance, acceleration of digital transformation and innovation; diversification of services with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as a key driver of development; financial sustainability through robust investment performance and increasing self-reliance while maintaining its credit rating; and maximizing developmental impact through integrated insurance, research, consulting, and training activities.

The Board Chairman had expressed his thanks to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, his Crown Prince, and the wise UAE government for their generous patronage of the Corporation's meetings, as well as to His Excellency Mr. Mohammed bin Hadi Al-Husseini, Minister of State for Financial Affairs in the United Arab Emirates, and all the relevant agencies and institutions for providing the facilities for the Council's meeting within the framework of the joint annual meetings of Arab financial bodies.

Bank launches innovation center, building on its pioneering sector-wide innovation challenge

# KFH opens new horizons of innovation for employees

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: As part of its commitment to a creativity-driven workplace, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched the Innovation Center. This comprehensive internal platform enables employees to submit innovative proposals year-round, creating a self-renewing cycle that enhances financial services and solutions, operational processes, and customer experience.

KFH Group Chief Technology and Digital Transformation Officer, **Meshaal Al-Munaikh** said that this initiative extends the success of the Innovation Challenge, a competition organized by the Bank at the Group level for nine consecutive years. As the first of its kind in Kuwait's bank-



Meshaal Al-Munaikh

The initiative aligns with the Bank's strategy to adopt cutting-edge technology solutions and accelerate digital transformation

ing sector, the program has proven that KFH employees possess the creative capabilities to drive tangible improvements in operational efficiency and customer experience, all while adhering to the highest professional and regulatory standards.

### Partners in creating change

AlMunaikh added: "The Innovation Center reaffirms KFH's commitment to nurturing creativity through a dedicated platform that channels employee ingenuity into all business areas. Aligned with KFH's digital transformation strategy, this initiative invests in staff by broadening the pathways for sharing ideas. Valuing these contributions deepens employees' sense of

ownership and boosts morale, empowering them as active partners in KFH's continued growth and evolution."

### Strengthening the culture of innovation

AlMunaikh noted that the Innovation Center aims to reinforce a culture of collaboration and expertise-sharing among employees, opening avenues for transforming new ideas into high-impact projects. "Submissions are assessed through a structured framework based on precise criteria, including viability and feasibility, as well as expected impact on growth. This approach strengthens the Bank's competitiveness and reaffirms innovation as a strategic pillar, consolidating its leadership in the Islamic banking industry," he added.

## A 14-year-old program showcasing inspiring acts of giving and commitment

'I am NBK': Continuing to recognize competencies, celebrate achievements, & foster an inspiring work environment for staffs



Left: Emad Al-Ablani with Treasury Group officials. Right: Ali Fardan, CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait – Bahrain, during the honoring of one of the distinguished female employees.



Abdullah Al-Salem Branch Team



Salah Al-Fulaij with a group of honored female employees within the 'I am NBK' program.

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: National Bank of Kuwait continues to cultivate a culture of appreciation and professional excellence within an exceptional work environment through its "I am NBK" program; a leading initiative that reflects its ongoing commitment to investing in human capital and celebrating the contributions of its employees, including those across its International Banking Group.

"I am NBK" is a symbol of innovation in the Kuwaiti banking sector, fostering genuine teamwork and celebrating exceptional employee contributions. The program embodies NBK's core values, which include growth, collaboration, and reliability, contributing to a corporate culture built on sustainable excellence and continuous growth.

Since its launch in 2012, this initiative has played a pivotal role in fostering a culture of recognition and engagement within the Bank. It highlights employees who have gone the extra mile and set inspiring examples of dedication and commitment, thereby enhancing workplace interaction and strengthening the sense of belonging to the NBK family.

The program has awarded over 3,500 employees across various departments and locations within the Bank's International Banking Group, recognizing their outstanding performance and significant contributions to promoting a culture of excellence and teamwork within the Bank.

Additionally, "I am NBK" embodies the deeply rooted values upon which the Bank is founded. Its role extends beyond simply recognizing



Recognition of one of the outstanding employees at the National Bank of Kuwait branch in Singapore.

**Sarah Nasrallah:** "I am NBK" is a landmark in developing the work environment and strengthening corporate loyalty.  
 ■ The program has boosted employee productivity and reinforced the importance of teamwork and a collaborative spirit.  
 ■ It has awarded more than 3,500 employees across various departments since its launch.  
 ■ Investing in human capital is a strategic priority and a fundamental pillar for sustaining NBK's success.

outstanding performance; it reflects NBK's profound appreciation for the dedication and continuous efforts of its employees, which contribute to strengthening NBK's position as a leading Kuwaiti banking brand with a presence spanning four continents.

On this occasion, Sarah Nasrallah, AVP - Head of Employee Relations, Group Human Resources, said: "I

am NBK has been a pivotal milestone in the development of the work environment within the Bank. It has tangibly contributed to increasing employee productivity and boosting morale, while also enhancing levels of trust and belonging, as well as reinforcing our staff's trust that they are a central element and an integral

part of the NBK family".

"The program", Nasrallah added, "has successfully fostered a positive and motivating work environment where our employees feel valued and empowered, which has directly impacted the quality of their performance, enhanced their ability to innovate, and enabled them to deliver advanced banking solutions that meet our customers' aspirations and keep pace with the evolving banking sector".

Moreover, Nasrallah continued, "We are committed to continuously strengthening an integrated work system based on respect, cooperation, and mutual trust. This system empowers our employees to express their ideas and develop their skills, thereby fostering creativity and excellence and making NBK an attractive workplace for talented and ambitious individuals".

Finally, Nasrallah emphasized that investing in human capital is a strategic priority for NBK, considering them the cornerstone of the Bank's continued success and its true wealth, also noting that NBK is committed to continuously developing and upskilling its employees, recognizing their essential role in achieving sustainable growth and enhancing the Bank's competitiveness and leadership.

In line with its approach to building a supportive internal culture that contributes to maintaining outstanding performance across all Group levels, NBK will continue to work on establishing sustainable corporate practices that reflect its focus on human capital and foster a positive work environment.

## Scott Bessent warns easy money mindset hurts financial stability

WASHINGTON, May 5, (AP): Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent wince at the allure of easy money - whether it's lottery tickets, buy now, pay later loans or the promise of a crypto windfall - warning that the get-rich-quick mindset often leads Americans farther from financial stability, not closer to it.

"There are a lot of young people, mostly young men, going to blue-collar construction jobs, playing the lottery. It drives me crazy," Bessent said in an interview, giving an example of why he has prioritized meeting with community bankers, retirees and schoolchildren to talk about how to budget, save and manage debt.

"The best thing you can do is not play the lottery," he said - rather, people should invest and "then watch it grow."

Bessent spoke to The Associated Press about the basics of building a workable budget and saving for the future at the tail end of Financial Literacy Month, an initiative the billionaire hedge fund manager has made a priority since joining President Donald Trump's administration, driven by a childhood marred by poverty.

Former Treasury Secretaries Hank Paulson and Tim Geithner were known for helping navigate the U.S. out of the global financial crisis. Steven Mnuchin made his mark designing and promoting the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, and Janet Yellen was the only person to also head the Federal Reserve and the Council of Economic Advisers. But Bessent's passion for promoting financial literacy is what he hopes, in part, defines his legacy.

His push to boost budgeting skills comes as Americans grapple with the cost of housing, groceries, energy and everyday items and are skeptical about the Republican administration's performance on the issue. The latest AP-NORC poll data shows Trump's approval rating on the economy dropped from 38% in March to 30% in April.

The nation is enmeshed in record levels of debt, which surpassed \$39 trillion in March, and critics wonder how Bessent can persuade Americans to save for their futures when the government itself is drowning in debt.

"The Trump administration in particular has a problematic record on cutting taxes without offsets and growing spending," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Bessent, 63, made his money through a long career in hedge funds, including working with George Soros, a financier and philanthropist whom Trump and other Republicans have vilified. Bessent was famously involved in the Soros firm's 1992 currency speculation against the British pound tied to Black Wednesday, which generated massive profits. Bessent later launched his own hedge fund called the Key Square Group.

But he often talks about his humble beginnings in rural South Carolina, not far from Myrtle Beach, where at the age of 9 he got his first jobs as a busboy at a cafeteria and hustling to set up chairs and umbrellas on the beach. His father, a real estate developer, had lost generations of Bessent family wealth by overleveraging his obligations.

Bessent wanted to attend the U.S. Naval Academy in 1979 but was barred as an openly gay applicant. That also shut the door to joining the foreign service.

He went to Yale University, where his former professor David Darst recalled teaching him about new financial instruments in capital markets. Darst described Bessent as a "guy who's working at the highest levels, but he's interested in people learning the ABCs of finance."

In 2025, Bessent became the nation's first openly gay treasury secretary. "I sit here knowing that President Trump chose me because he believes I'm the best candidate, not because of my sexual preference, not because treasury secretaries with green eyes do better," Bessent said at his confirmation hearing.

After reaching public office, one of Bessent's first actions was

relaunching Financial Literacy Month at the agency.

"Wall Street has grown wealthier than ever before, and it can continue to grow and do well," Bessent has peppered into various speeches over the past year, insisting that his work in the Trump administration is "focused on Main Street."

During a roundtable with community financial institutions at the department - one of several such events Bessent hosted last month - he listened to bankers express concerns about the surge in sophisticated fraud schemes targeting customers and their efforts to get high schoolers interested in saving.

"It could be as simple as a 14-year-old starting a savings account and watching interest compound at 4% a year," said Thomas Fraser, CEO of First Mutual Holding Co. in Lakewood, Ohio, who attended that roundtable.

Bessent is not a newcomer to preaching financial literacy. Geoff Canada, president of Harlem Children's Zone, has known Bessent for 30 years and said the treasury secretary has mentored one of the program's scholars for more than a decade. Canada said Bessent has a "deep understanding that financial literacy is essential for fostering real social and economic mobility for America's children."

He said Bessent "has championed this issue long before joining the administration, and I know it remains a top priority."

A conversation with Bessent about financial literacy inevitably turns to Trump Accounts - the financial vehicle meant to give \$1,000 to babies born during the Trump administration. That money is then invested in the stock market by private firms, and the children can access the money when they turn 18.

Bessent said he thinks it will encourage a generation of young people to care more about investing as it shows them "the power of compounding, because that money is locked up for 18 years."

But Bessent said people of all ages and income brackets could be better at managing their money. "There's a narrative that doctors are famously terrible at finance," Bessent said.

Critics of the treasury secretary's approach argue that the problem is less about Americans not knowing how to invest and more about people not having enough spare income to do so, as the cost of living has steadily increased and the war in Iran has driven energy prices higher.

"You cannot preach penny-pinching while making it harder for Americans to pay their grocery, utility and healthcare bills," said Emily DiVito, senior adviser for economic policy at the left-leaning Groundwork Collaborative. "If Secretary Bessent is serious about advancing financial literacy, he should focus on lowering the cost of living for working families."

Bessent's desire to see Americans invest wisely comes as the U.S. debt has reached record levels - and the trajectory of those increases is a cause for concern for budgeting experts.

The U.S. national debt hit \$37 trillion in August and then \$38 trillion just two months later. Now, it's at \$39 trillion and has surpassed the size of the economy.

Budget advocate MacGuineas warned that the long-term trend of borrowing more and paying more in interest will force Americans to face tougher fiscal tradeoffs ahead.

She praised Bessent for having the goal to cut deficits in half and bring them down to 3% of gross domestic product but said "it's going to take a combination of spending reductions, revenue increases and economic growth" to get there.

The Treasury argues that the federal deficit decreased during Trump's first year back in office and that the provisions in Republicans' tax cuts law have put money back in Americans' pockets.

"It's hard to disagree with the fact that we need more financial literacy in this country," MacGuineas said. "The bigger picture, of course, is that we should also probably give a financial literacy class to our lawmakers."

## America in focus: Inflation jumps, gas soars

In the past week, many Americans remained laser focused on the economy, inflation and how those forces could impact their lives. But it is almost impossible not to notice that trips to the grocery store or gas station are more painful than they were last year.

Here's a snapshot of some of the latest economic data and news and what it potentially means for you.

A key inflation measure jumped in March as gas prices soared, the latest sign that the Iran war is pushing up the cost of living and delaying any interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve.

An inflation gauge monitored by the Fed rose 0.7% in March from February, up sharply from the previous month, the Commerce Department said Thursday. Compared with a year ago, prices rose 3.5%, the biggest increase in almost three years.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core inflation rose 0.3% in March from February, and it was 3.2% higher than a year earlier. The annual figure is above February's reading of 3%.

Gasoline prices rocketed higher, setting new multi-year highs for four consecutive days starting Tuesday. The average price for gallon of regular gasoline had the largest overnight gain since the war began on Friday, hitting \$4.39, prices continued to climb Saturday.

The U.S. economy accelerated at the start of 2026, expanding at a modest

2% pace from January through March after recovering from last fall's 43-day federal government shutdown. But the outlook is clouded by the Iran war.

The Commerce Department reported Thursday that gross domestic product - the nation's output of goods and services - rebounded from a lackluster 0.5% expansion the last three months of 2025. The federal government's spending and investment grew at a 9.3% annual rate in the first quarter, adding more than half a percentage point to growth after lopping off 1.16 percentage points in fourth-quarter 2025.

U.S. consumer confidence rose modestly in April despite growing anxiety over soaring energy prices brought on by the war in Iran.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index inched up to 92.8 in April from 92.2 in March.

Though the gauge measuring American consumers' confidence has ticked up the past two months, the reading remains mired near its lowest level since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respondents' comments about prices, oil, gas and the war increased in April as the national average for a gallon of gas in the U.S. rose 30 cents in just the past week to \$4.43.

The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate rose this week, pushing up borrowing costs for prospective homebuyers in the midst of the spring homebuying season. (AP)

# From Beyoncé to Osaka, fashion steps out of frame

# Features

# Met Gala stars redefine 'Fashion is Art'

tional Portrait Gallery. Event sponsor Lauren Sánchez Bezos arrived in a form-fitting Schiaparelli gown, which she told Vogue was influenced by John Singer Sargent's 1884 painting "Madame X."

When guests were not wearing art, they were making references to it. Head of Editorial Content for US Vogue Chloe Malie wore an apricot orange Colleen Allen dress inspired by Sir Frederic Leighton's "Flaming June" painting. Actor and author Lena Dunham collaborated with Valentino designer Alessandro Michele for her red feathered dress to depict his interpretation of "Judith Slaying Holofernes." As a child, Dunham told Vogue, she would visit the Met museum on Sundays and admire the paintings in the Renaissance section.

"One of my favorite painters from that era is Artemisia Gentileschi, who was one of the only women painting professionally in that moment," she told Vogue. "So I sent some of the images to Alessandro, and because he's a genius, instead of dressing me like her, he said, 'You are actually the blood spatter as ... Judith cuts the neck off a man.'"

Stars also celebrated the dress code with their accessories. Actor and fashion muse Gwendoline Christie playfully covered her face on the carpet with a mask of her own face while pop star Katy Perry opened and closed her fencing-like mask on the carpet to smile at the cameras.

Venus Williams was not the only guest to break the fourth wall with an artistic reference to herself. It was a trend of the night, with gala host committee members Amy Sherard in a Thom Browne look inspired by her own work of art and singer Sabrina Carpenter wearing a Dior dress designed with film strips from the 1954 movie "Sabrina."

Some guests brought out their artistic side as they transformed their dresses into works of art. TikTok followers watched along as Jessica Kayll, who designs colorful silk robes, finished painting her dress in the days leading up to the gala. Kayll painted her own take on the famous Monet water lily scene right on top her dress for the gala.

While her "The Devil Wears Prada 2" castmates kept it classic in black, Anne Hathaway made a statement in her custom Michael Kors Grecian-inspired strapless dress, which was hand-painted with a dove of peace.



Eileen Gu. (AP)



Dree Hemingway. (AP)

"She is the goddess of peace," Kors told Vogue.

Madonna makes any carpet her stage. A group of women circled around her in colorful dresses as they held onto sheer fabric wrapped around her pirate ship headpiece on the carpet.

Janelle Monáe also knows how to stand out. The performer delivered a message with her sculptural art piece that featured cords overtaken by moss wrapped around her form with moving animatronic butterflies.

"Remember what made you human," Monáe told The Associated Press. "Nature is talking to us."

Rather than wear art, models showed off their toned bodies as part of "Costume Art" exhibit's theme celebrating artistic representations of the body. Supermodels Gigi Hadid and Irina Shayk both wore revealing looks on the carpet. (AP)

Bad Bunny went full costume, carrying a cane and dressing up as an older version of himself with gray hair and special effects makeup to add years to his face. The artist joked with Vogue that it took 53 years to finish the look. Supermodel Heidi Klum, known for taking her Halloween costume to new heights, brought that same dedication to the Met Gala as she arrived as a draped statue.

Instead of opting for a body-hugging gown, Kim Kardashian wore a bright orange metallic body plate from the '60s designed by Allen Jones.

The physical form was modeled throughout the night with body parts draped over gowns or overlaid on garments in printed form in a trompe l'oeil. Theatre producer and performer Jordan Roth had a 3D figure looming behind him as part of his velvet Wun getup while other celebrities had carefully placed sculpted hands attached to their gowns.

For her first Met Gala, Chase Infiniti donned a colorful sequined Thom Browne gown with the female form embellished with sequins on the front and back of her dress.

In typical fashion, singer and fashion powerhouse Rihanna shut down the carpet as the final guest to arrive, much earlier than in years past. Dressed in a metallic jewel-encrusted cocoon-like dress, Rihanna emerged onto the carpet with her partner ASAP Rocky. "I feel like a pearl out of an oyster," Rihanna said to reporters on the carpet. (AP)



Naomi Osaka. (AP)



Rihanna. (AP)



Anna Wintour. (AP)



Emma Chamberlain. (AP)



María Zardoya. (AP)



Nicole Kidman. (AP)

Met Gala guests from Beyoncé and Naomi Osaka to Emma Chamberlain did not play it safe this year for the Met Gala, delivering custom works of art in honor of the dress code "Fashion is art."

Beyoncé left the cowboy hat at home and dazzled in a custom Olivier Rousteing sculptural skeleton dress with a cream and dust blue feathered train fitted with a diamond crown for "Queen Bey." The Grammy winner and her husband Jay-Z and daughter Blue Ivy stopped to pose together on the Metropolitan Museum of Art steps.

Osaka stunned in an edgy Robert Wun white sculptural fitted dress featuring exaggerated shoulders and adorned with red feathers and a matching headpiece. To complete her show-stopping look, Osaka wore two-toned red gloves. A similar look by Wun sits inside the Met's Costume Institute exhibit, "Costume Art."

On the carpet, Osaka opened her dress and removed her headpiece for a grand reveal un-

Beyoncé arrives at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute benefit gala celebrating the opening of the 'Costume Art' exhibition on Monday, May 4, 2026, in New York. (AP)



## Travel

## New visas, 'Altyn Visa' target investors and talent

## Factsheet on Kazakhstan's new migration reform: building a regional hub for global talent, investment and innovation

ASTANA, May 5: Kazakhstan is launching a major overhaul of its migration policy aimed at attracting highly qualified professionals, foreign investors, entrepreneurs and global talent. Under a new decree signed by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on April 25, 2026, the country is shifting from a traditional permit-and-quota migration model toward a more flexible, incentive-based system designed to strengthen competitiveness for international talent and capital.

The reform is part of Kazakhstan's broader economic modernisation agenda and reflects efforts to make the country a regional hub for investment, innovation and skilled migration across Eurasia. It combines visa liberalisation, tax incentives, digitalisation and service reforms aimed at making relocation, investment and long-term residence in Kazakhstan significantly easier for foreign nationals.

The Government of Kazakhstan has been tasked with implementing the reforms by 31 December 2026.

Shift to an Incentive-Based Migration Model

**The presidential decree identifies four strategic priorities:**

- Transitioning from a permit-and-quota-based migration system to a more incentive-driven framework.

- Creating a competitive long-term residency regime for foreign nationals contributing to Kazakhstan's economy.

- Simplifying and digitalising immigration procedures.

- Positioning Kazakhstan as a regional hub for foreign investors, skilled professionals and global talent.

**New Visa Framework**  
Kazakhstan will streamline and modernise visa categories by introducing clearer pathways for investors and professionals:

- Business Visa
- For investors
- Entrepreneurs
- Members of boards of directors
- Individuals recruited to work in public administration systems
- Skilled Worker Visa
- For professionals with qualifying job offers
- Scientists
- Medical professionals
- Cultural and arts figures
- Graduates of leading international universities
- Specialists in high-demand professions identified by the government
- Temporary Worker Visa
- For foreign professionals working on specific investment projects approved by the government

**"Altyn Visa" (Golden Visa) Programme**

A central feature of the reform is the introduction of the "Altyn Visa", designed to encourage long-term relocation and investment in Kazakhstan.

**Eligibility includes:**

- Participants in the tax residency programme of the Astana International Financial Centre
- Business visa holders after one month of residence
- Skilled worker visa holders after six months of residence
- IT specialists after just one month
- Temporary worker visa holders after one year of residence
- Benefits for Altyn Visa Holders
- Exemption from personal income tax
- Exemption from property tax
- Exemption from land tax
- Exemption from universal declaration of income and assets

- Equal access to government and financial services on par with citizens of Kazakhstan
- Faster pathways to long-term residence

**Digitalisation of Immigration Services**

**Kazakhstan is significantly expanding digital migration infrastructure through:**

- Creation of the QazETA unified digital platform for foreign nationals
- Introduction of an e-Residency module allowing remote applications
- A "one-stop-shop" system for immigration processing
- Reduced bureaucracy and faster onboarding for foreign residents



Astana skyline blends modern architecture with open green spaces, showcasing Kazakhstan's dynamic growth and urban vision.

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- Introduction of a digital resident ID for accessing public and financial services

**Investment Opportunities Through e-Residency**

The new e-Residency Invest programme will allow digital residents to:

- Invest remotely in projects across Kazakhstan
- Access opportunities through the Astana International Financial Centre
- Conduct investments through partner financial institutions

This is designed to lower barriers for foreign investors seeking exposure to Kazakhstan's economy without immediate physical relocation.

Improving International Accessibility

**To improve quality of life for international residents:**

- Astana and Almaty will introduce zones with mandatory English-language services
- This will include medical institutions, schools, public service centres, police services, utilities and municipal services.

These reforms are intended to improve ease of living for foreign professionals and their families.

**Supporting Kazakhstan's Innovation Ecosystem**

- Almaty will launch the Almaty AI Hub to support artificial intelligence development.
- The initiative complements Kazakhstan's broader push to build a

regional technology ecosystem and attract global digital talent.

**Changes to the Astana International Financial Centre**

To enhance competitiveness for international investors:

- The minimum stay requirement for obtaining tax residency will be reduced from 90 days to 30 days
- Financial regulators will develop a more attractive financial regime for new residents
- Special payment cards may be introduced through regulatory sandbox mechanisms

**Why This Reform Matters**

- Signals Kazakhstan's transition toward a more globally competitive migration model focused on attracting human capital rather than restricting entry through quota mechanisms.
- Supports Kazakhstan's broader goals of technological modernisation, economic diversification and innovation-driven growth.
- Strengthens Kazakhstan's appeal as a destination for globally mobile investors, entrepreneurs, scientists, IT specialists and skilled professionals.
- Reinforces Kazakhstan's ambition to become a regional gateway between Europe, Asia and the Middle East for business, finance and talent.
- Aligns migration policy with wider national priorities in digitalisation, financial development and investment attraction.

## Cultural Heritage

## Lizhuang showcases Ming and Qing dynasty heritage

## China's old towns see culture &amp; learning boom on May Day

BEIJING, May 5, (Xinhua): On my rail journey from Chengdu to Yibin, carriages were filled with children and teenagers, their laughter filling the air, free from schoolbooks.

After an hour and a half, I arrived at Yibin Station and went to Lizhuang ancient town. I was struck by the cultural richness and economic vitality of this small town.

On the banks of the Yangtze, China's longest river, Lizhuang has well-preserved the architecture from the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), including intricate wood carvings, curved tiled roofs, and stone streets.

Lizhuang has a deep wartime legacy, when it became a sanctuary for over 10,000 displaced students and scholars. Local villagers opened their homes, halls and temples, sheltering these refugees and safeguarding China's cultural heritage.

As I wandered through a courtyard repurposed as an education museum, I came upon a family that had driven from Chengdu. The parents said Lizhuang was the first stop on their five-day May Day holiday, a choice to immerse their children in history.

"We hope this trip ignites in them a deep appreciation for history and patriotism," said Liu Dan, the mother. "It's crucial for them to understand that education is a beacon that can alter destiny, even in dark times."

The town's museums showcase its connections with prestigious universities such as Tongji, Tsinghua and Fudan. Nine of the 81 academicians elected by the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1948 had ties to Lizhuang.

Speaking with Liu's 15-year-old daughter, I saw her eyes bright with understanding. "This visit opened my eyes," she said. "We learned great universities can change a



This drone photo shows tourists visiting Huishan ancient town in Wuxi City, east China's Jiangsu Province May 3, 2026. (Xinhua)

place and its people. Scholars' knowledge even solved the local 'salt poisoning' crisis and improved people's lives."

"It motivates us to study harder," she continued firmly. "By getting into a good university and choosing the right path, we can serve our country meaningfully." She told me her dream is to study law at a top Chinese university.

As I stood, perched looking down on the street, I saw tourists dining in a restaurant in an ancestral hall that served the town's famous thinly sliced white meat with savory sauce. Nearby, children in Hanfu twirled and laughed, their silk sleeves flowing as they enjoyed a professional

photo session arranged by their parents.

At Lizhuang ancient town, a scene of history, culture, and vitality unfolds. This is why parents and kids come here for holidays. They can tour, experience, learn and spend.

Traveling to ancient towns is becoming increasingly popular among city dwellers during holidays, with examples such as Wuzhen in east China's Zhejiang Province and Beijing WTown in Beijing. But as Chinese people's demands grow, the market's future depends on meeting needs for deep cultural resonance and emotional satisfaction.

Shao Yong, a professor with

Tongji University's College of Architecture and Urban Planning, said urban and rural renewal and rural revitalization require a profound understanding of their living nature and cultural connotations, through which local villages can transition from simply being saved to truly flourishing.

China will promote the in-depth integration of culture and tourism, uphold the principle of "shaping tourism through culture and highlighting culture via tourism," and advance the construction of a strong tourism country, according to the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) for economic and social development.

## Lifestyle

## Friends find the competition unique

## Snail races turn Taiwanese town into symbol of slow life movement

FENGLIN, Taiwan, May 5, (AP): The Taiwanese town of Fenglin has grown a reputation as a place where life moves slowly and people can catch their breath.

Rather than push against this rhythm, the town of around 10,000 has chosen to embrace it and make it part of its identity. Enter the snails.

Fenglin has been putting on snail races as a way to celebrate its focus on a slower, sustainable lifestyle that values healthcare, longevity and community connections while bringing in more tourists in the wake of a strong earthquake in 2024 that dampened travel in surrounding areas.

"The earthquake two years ago had a relatively big impact on tourism because people are worried an earthquake may happen again," said Hsu Lu, a 32-year-old resident. "Many people have left Hualien because of earthquakes," Hsu said, referring to the surrounding county and the site of frequent quakes.

Snails are one way to bring tourists back, even if slowly. Fenglin has associated itself with snails since 2014, when it joined the Cittaslow international network of small cities focused on quality of life and locally sourced foods. Cittaslow's symbol is a snail carrying an assortment of buildings on its back.

The designation of a slow city seemed to fit Fenglin, whose population has shrunk threefold over the past few decades. Today, it is also an example of Taiwan's "super-aged" society, with more than 20% of its residents older than 65.

To help reinvigorate local tourism after the April 2024 earthquake, which killed 19 people and injured more than 1,100, Fenglin residents decided to host a snail race the following month, said organizer Cheng Jen-shou.

"We thought that our event could attract people, and that would be a small help," he said.

This year, the town held the third edition of the race over the May Day holiday.

Several dozen enthusiastic residents and tourists attended the event, which featured six snail races spaced out over two days. The winners from each race competed in the final, but not before posing in front of their audiences while slowly being pulled on a piece of plywood across a green carpet as their fans cheered them on.

Li Cheng-wen, a 70-year-old retiree from Fenglin, brought several snails to the race. He caught them in his vegetable garden snacking on his leafy greens, and instead of killing them as some farmers do, he decided to raise them as pets, he said. He feeds them slices of bananas, papaya and vegetable leaves and showers them daily.

"As to the criteria for choosing snails for the race, I usually select those that are very active and pleasing to the eye," Li said.

Kevin Hong and Tiara Lin also brought a slightly snail to the race. The couple traveled all the way from the southern city of Kaohsiung, about a five-hour drive away, together with their 2-year-old daughter, Murphy, and their giant African snail, Aquaman.

The couple had signed up Aquaman for a previous race in 2024, but just as they were headed for Fenglin, Lin went into labor. Now the whole family returned to cheer on Aquaman.

Despite being larger than most of its homegrown competitors - which had been picked out from local gardens or the side of the road - Aquaman was rather slow.

Once the race started, it and nine other snails were placed near the center of a round table covered with a thin vinyl sheet. The first to reach the edge of the table was crowned the winner.



People cheer during a snail race in Fenglin town, Hualien County, eastern Taiwan, Saturday, May 2, 2026. (AP)

## Book

## Visitors explore language and culture

## Chinese pavilion draws strong interest at Tunis Book Fair

TUNIS, May 5 (Xinhua): The 40th Tunis International Book Fair concluded Sunday in Tunis, drawing steady crowds to the Chinese pavilion, where books in Chinese, Arabic, and French covered topics ranging from society and politics to culture.

Since the fair opened on April 23, the pavilion has attracted sustained interest from visitors exploring language-learning materials, children's stories, and academic works.

Among them was Kalthoum, who was seen carefully leafing through a Chinese textbook. She said she recently rekindled her interest in the language after more than a decade.

"The last time I encountered the Chinese language was in middle school, more than 10 years ago. I still love this language," she said.

Hela Maarouf, a master's student in international relations, focused on works dealing with political theory and China's development. She said she

was interested in China's social progress and its role in global affairs, describing openness as a defining feature of the country.

"Understanding China's development through reading is indispensable," she said, adding that she hopes to visit China one day.

Although China and Tunisia are separated by vast distances, Chinese books allow local readers to engage with the country, said Samah Abdelkader, who manages the pavilion. She said several hundred books were sold, including children's titles, language textbooks, and academic works.

She said she was especially moved when she saw parents guiding children toward bilingual books.

"Learning begins in early childhood. Doesn't this perfectly demonstrate the appeal of the Chinese language?" she said.

Yacine Jbeli, head of the Tunisian institute "Modern China and the Foundation of a New

World," said the pavilion encouraged visitors to explore Chinese civilization.

He said the wide range of books offered a broad view of China and noted the strong turnout among young visitors.

"This delights me greatly, as it indicates that our vibrant demographic is turning its gaze toward China," he said.

The Confucius Institute at Carthage University also contributed to the fair with cultural performances and interactive activities.

Nourin Riden, a student at the institute, wore traditional Hanfu attire and wrote "Ping An Xi Le" ("Peace and Joy") in Chinese calligraphy, drawing interest from visitors who later tried calligraphy themselves.

"Each stroke requires patience. It's a process of cultivating the mind and body," she said. "I hope everyone can discover its charm through this experience."

### 'This is an amazing development'

## Astronomers believe they've detected atmosphere around icy world beyond Pluto

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., May 5, (AP) - A new study suggests that a tiny, icy world beyond Pluto harbors a thin, delicate atmosphere that may have been created by volcanic eruptions or a comet strike.

Just 300 miles (500 kilometers) or so across, this mini Pluto is thought to be the solar system's smallest object yet with a clearly detected global atmosphere bound by gravity, said lead researcher Ko Arimatsu of the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan.

"This is an amazing development, but it sorely needs independent verification. The implications are profound if verified," said Southwest Research Institute's Alan Stern, the lead scientist behind NASA's New Horizons mission to Pluto and beyond. He was not involved in the study.

The finding offers fresh insight into our solar system's farthest, coldest objects in a region known as the Kuiper Belt. Researchers used three telescopes in Japan to observe the object in 2024 as it passed in front of a background star, briefly dimming the starlight.

"It changes our view of small worlds in the solar system, not only beyond Neptune," Arimatsu said in an email. Finding an atmosphere around such a small object was "genuinely surprising," he added, and challenges "the conventional view that atmospheres are limited to large planets,

dwarf planets and some large moons."

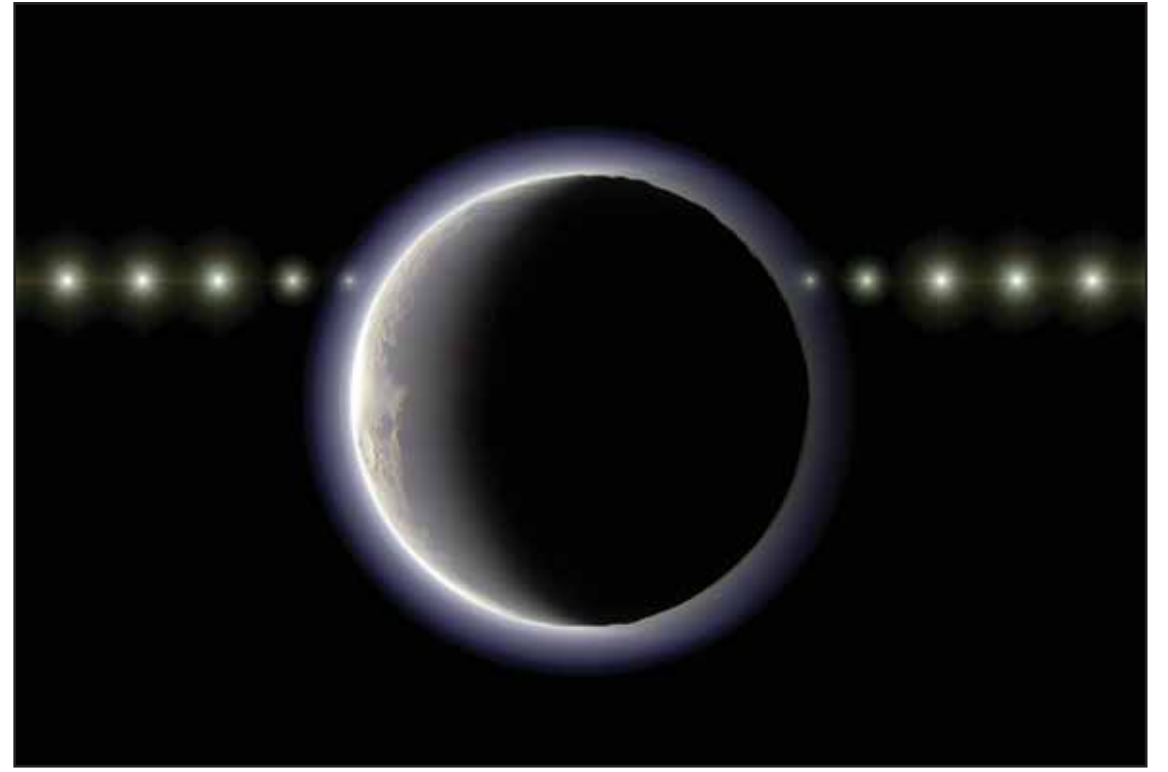
This so-called minor planet - formally known as (612533) 2002 XV93 - is considered a plutino, circling the sun twice in the time it takes Neptune to complete three solar orbits. At the time of the study, it was more than 3.4 billion miles (5.5 billion kilometers) away, farther than even Pluto, the only other object in the Kuiper Belt with an observed atmosphere.

This cosmic iceball's atmosphere is believed to be 5 million to 10 million times thinner than Earth's protective atmosphere, according to the study appearing Monday in the journal *Nature Astronomy*.

It's 50 to 100 times thinner than even Pluto's tenuous atmosphere. The likeliest atmospheric chemicals are methane, nitrogen or carbon monoxide, any of which could reproduce the observed dimming as the object passed before the star, according to Arimatsu.

Further observations, especially by NASA's Webb Space Telescope, could verify the makeup of the atmosphere, according to Arimatsu.

"That is why future monitoring is so important," he said. "If the atmosphere fades over the next several years, that would support an impact origin. If it persists, or varies seasonally, that would point more toward ongoing internal gas supply" from ice volcanoes.



This image provided by NAOJ shows artist's impression of the trans-Neptunian object (612533) 2002 XV93 occulting a background star. Observations of a stellar occultation in January 2024 revealed gradual fading and recovery of the starlight, providing evidence for a very thin atmosphere around the object. (AP)



A small forest dubbed the Nightingale's Forest is seen near the village of Plandiste, in the flat, farming region of Serbia on April 16. (AP)

## Bird-watching group uses crowdfunding to buy and preserve woodland habitat

PLANDISTE, Serbia, May 5, (AP) - The merry chirping of birds echoed through towering trees in a small woodland in northeastern Serbia. Down on the ground, animal tracks could be seen imprinted in the moist grass and moss.

The 5-acre (2-hectare) piece of land, dubbed the Nightingale's Forest, is a rare patch of thick greenery in the flat, farming region of Serbia. The Balkan country's Bird Protection and Study Society bought the land last year through crowdfunding to preserve the forest and set an example in environmental protection.

"This woodland was privately owned, and we saw it was put up for sale," society representative Uros Stojiljkovic told The Associated Press, adding that the trees probably would have been cut down if someone else had bought the land.

"The value of timber was higher than its (land) price," Stojiljkovic said. "We protected it this way."

The success of the crowdfunding initiative is seen as a sign of growing interest in nature protection among people in Serbia as the country faces environmental problems from air and river pollution and waste management to profit-driven construction threatening green areas, particularly in big cities.

Authorities have pledged to boost environmental care as part of the country's European Union membership bid, but protection



Common starlings are seen on a tree in a small forest dubbed the Nightingale's Forest near the village of Plandiste, in the flat, farming region of Serbia on April 16. (AP)

groups have warned little has been done in reality.

The Nightingale's Forest is home to a variety of bird and animal species who thrive on its moist habitat, Stojiljkovic explained. The new owners now plan to list the plants and animals there while preserving the woodland as it is.

The purchase price of 8,000 euros (\$9,500) was collected in less than a month and hundreds of people have continued to donate funds that will be used for field work or additional land purchases, said Natasa Jancic, who was involved in

the campaign.

"Individually, we can't do much, but as an active and stable community, we can achieve a lot," Jancic said.

Launched some 30 years ago as a small, expert-only group, the Bird Protection and Study Society has grown into a community of nature lovers, which is more proof of a mounting interest in the environment, Jancic said.

"We have many families who are members, many nature lovers who may not be that active in the field but they want to contribute somehow," Jancic added.

the Negev said.

The study, published in the journal *New Phytologist*, found that leaves can absorb minerals such as iron and phosphorus from airborne dust.

In Mediterranean field experiments simulating dust events, researchers found that plants exposed to dust showed higher levels of these nutrients.

The team explained that the slightly acidic surface of leaves helps break down dust particles, releasing absorbable nutrients.

By combining field data with global estimates, the researchers found that this process can make a meaningful contribution to plant nutrition.

In some regions, leaf-absorbed nutrients accounted for up to 17 percent of iron intake and 12 percent of phosphorus intake relative to soil sources.

During heavy dust events, airborne nutrient absorption can even match or exceed soil-derived amounts.

The findings suggested that this previously overlooked mechanism plays an important role in ecosystems, particularly in areas with poor soil, and may become even more significant as climate change alters dust patterns worldwide.

## 7.8m South Sudanese to face acute hunger during lean season: report

JUBA, May 5, (Xinhua) - About 7.8 million people in South Sudan are projected to face deteriorating food insecurity and acute hunger during the upcoming lean season, according to the latest United Nations-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report released.

The report indicated that these people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity between April and July, an increase from previous estimates, highlighting growing humanitarian needs across the country.

"The latest IPC analysis indicates a worsening food security situation across the country during the projected lean period, with 7.8 million people expected to face IPC Phase 3 and above," said Lily Albino Akol, South Sudan's deputy minister for agriculture and food security.

The report pointed to a worsening nutrition situation, with the number of acutely malnourished children rising to 2.2 million, alongside about 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women requiring treatment for acute malnutrition.

The most affected areas include counties such as Akobo, Fangak, Nasir, Nyirol, Ulang, and Urur, with some regions facing a credible risk of famine if urgent assistance is not delivered.

The report said the deteriorating conditions are driven by a combination of factors, including conflict and displacement, economic challenges, flooding, and restricted humanitarian



Rashika Alqadi holds her 11-year-old granddaughter Anfal Aljozoor at the family home in Qoz Nafisa, Sudan on April 22. (AP)

access.

An estimated 280,000 people have been displaced, disrupting livelihoods and limiting access to markets and essential services, the IPC said.

Humanitarian partners are scaling up life-saving interventions, although access constraints and funding shortfalls continue to hinder the response.

Felix Dzvurumi, head of program of the Food and Agriculture Organization South Sudan, said that while humanitarian assistance remains essential, it must be complemented by sustained investment in agriculture to address the root causes of food

insecurity.

Dzvurumi noted that improving domestic food production and strengthening agri-food systems are key to helping communities become self-reliant, adding that recent gains in crop production, livestock, and fisheries demonstrate the country's potential if supported by stable conditions, market access, and targeted investments.

Rising food prices, disease outbreaks, and damage to infrastructure have further compounded the crisis, eroding household purchasing power and worsening malnutrition, particularly among children.

## Facial recognition data a key to your identity - if stolen, you can't just change locks

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

□ □ □

By Jonathan S. Weissman  
Rochester Institute of Technology

A woman strolls into a grocery store, thinking about grabbing some apples. Before she even reaches the produce aisle, a security camera has scanned her face. Whether the system is checking for shoplifters or simply logging her arrival, her face has joined a digital ledger, a trace she can't easily erase. Retailers, banks, airports, stadiums and office buildings are doing the same.

But what if the woman's facial information is stolen or misused? If a cybercriminal steals her password, she can change it. If they acquire her credit card number, she can cancel the card. But she can't reset or revoke the appearance of her cheekbones.

Facial recognition systems don't keep actual images. They convert a face into a mathematical template that maps the positions and proportions of the face's features. When another camera scans a person later, the system checks their live face against these templates to confirm an identity.

In my work as a cybersecurity professor at Rochester Institute of Technology, I have found that even though templates are more secure than photos - which anyone online can capture and manipulate - templates, too, can be stolen. Once that happens, these digital keys create a lifelong vulnerability. If a facial recognition database is breached, the "locks" that a template opens - accessing a bank app, getting through security at an airport, entering an office building - can't be reset. A person's face is permanent, and so is the threat.

The threat isn't theoretical. Biometric data has been stolen in data breaches. In 2024, biometric data from a facial recognition system used at bars and clubs in Australia was hacked. And in 2019, biometric data from a pilot facial recognition system set up by US Customs and Border Protection was breached in an attack on a subcontractor's network. It's not clear whether anyone's stolen biometric data has been exploited, however.

All biometric identifiers carry risks. Fingerprints and iris scans, however, are typically used in controlled situations, such as unlocking a person's phone or allowing someone to enter a building. In these cases, a person has to deliberately look at a scanner. Cameras in public spaces, in contrast, can capture faces as people walk by, from a distance and without the people whose faces are scanned realizing it.

If a fingerprint or iris database is breached, a thief still needs to physically present that finger or eye, or a fake of it, to a scanner. However, someone could

match a stolen facial template against images from surveillance cameras or photos circulating online, making it easier to identify a person of interest or track someone's movements and activities.

There's also a big difference, technically and ethically, between keeping a face on a phone versus handing it over to a database. On modern Apple devices and many Android systems, biometric data used to unlock the devices is stored locally in a dedicated hardware chip and is not shared with the manufacturer or cloud services for authentication. As a result, a breach of corporate or cloud systems would not expose these device-level biometric templates.

Some street and security cameras in public are passive, just watching as people pass by, with no long-term records. But others may be following people's steps, linking faces to databases and creating a persistent digital trail. The risk rises when organizations use systems to track particular people across multiple databases. Airport systems could compare a traveler's face against passport or airline databases. Stadiums may compare faces against local security watch lists or law enforcement lists. The company that manages Madison Square Garden has used facial recognition to bar entry to lawyers at firms that represented people who sued the company.

Some large retail chains, such as Wegmans and Target, also use facial recognition systems in their theft prevention efforts. Every new capture adds another permanent record.

Many companies do not have expertise in cybersecurity and rely on third-party vendors to manage their data. If those centralized systems are breached - or the datasets are linked across platforms, vendors or data brokers - your face can become a sort of persistent identifier, which can be used to expose or track you. In some cases, when combined with other compromised data, your captured face can lower the barrier to impersonating you.

A face can function like a "primary key" - a unique and stable identifier that connects records. If one database links a facial template to an email address, and a data breach connects that email to financial or personal records, an identity thief with a stolen template could access all that information.

And combining a template with AI tools such as deepfakes or three-dimensional face models could, in some cases, allow a criminal to impersonate an individual in systems that require proof of a live face, slipping into a forged digital identity like slipping into a costume.

When criminals combine biometric templates with other leaked data, such as logins for social media profiles or home addresses, they can build "superprofiles" connected to many of a person's activities. Because the face acts as a permanent linking key, this level of identity theft is difficult to reverse. (AP)

## Over 1,100 suffocation cases reported in Iraq due to dust storms

BAGHDAD, May 5, (Xinhua) - At least 1,133 people suffered suffocation across several Iraqi provinces due to a recent wave of dust storms, Iraq's health ministry said Monday.

Ministry spokesperson Saif al-Badr told Xinhua that no fatalities were reported.

Al-Badr described the cases as "mild to moderate," noting that the majority of patients have already been discharged from hospitals and health centers after receiving medical treatment.

According to the official data, al-Muthanna province recorded the highest number of cases with 576, followed by Najaf with 300, and Baghdad with 200 cases.

Iraq is listed by the United Nations as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate breakdown. Dust storms have become increasingly frequent and intense in the country in recent years.

□ □ □

**Plants:** Researchers have discovered that plants can absorb essential nutrients directly from atmospheric dust, challenging the long-held belief that they rely solely on soil-based root uptake, Israel's Ben-Gurion University of

Bumrah endures seventh wicketless game this season

## Mumbai openers Sharma, Ricketon hand Lucknow sixth consecutive loss

MUMBAI, India, May 5, (AP): Mumbai Indians rode blistering 80s from fit-again Rohit Sharma and Ryan Rickelton to hand Lucknow Super Giants their sixth consecutive defeat in the Indian Premier League.

After missing the last five games due to a hamstring injury, Sharma smashed 84 off 44 balls while Rickelton hit eight sixes and six fours in his explosive 83 off 32 balls as Mumbai cruised to 229-4 in 18.4 overs for a six-wicket win.

Lucknow had posted its season-high total of 228-5 with Nicholas Pooran (63) finally scoring his first half-century of the campaign. But Mumbai came back strong in the final three overs and allowed Lucknow just one boundary.

"The way all the bowlers responded showed a lot of character," Mumbai stand-in captain Suryakumar Yadav said. "Everyone had that belief ... want to have a good start when chasing 220-225 (and) they (Sharma and Rickelton) were always in control."

Sharma's and Rickelton's explosive opening stand of 143 off 65 balls set the tone for Mumbai's third win of the season before both missed out on centuries. Rickelton was caught in the covers off fast bowler Mohsin Khan and Sharma fell to impact player Manimaran

Siddharth in the 14th over after a mistimed swipe over fine leg.

Earlier, Lucknow couldn't capitalize on a rollicking start for a team-record 90-1 in the powerplay.

Pooran, batting at No. 3, raised his fifty off only 16 balls. He came into the game with a top score of 22 this season and only four sixes in the last eight games. But he blazed eight sixes at Wankhede Stadium.

Corbin Bosch put the brakes on Lucknow's breezy start when he removed Pooran and Mitchell Marsh (44) in the ninth over to short-pitched deliveries.

"The way we started, we should have definitely got more runs," captain Rishabh Pant said. "Definitely we were 10-15 runs short ... on a wicket like this you can't blame the bowlers, they've been doing a great job."

Jasprit Bumrah (0-45) endured a seventh wicketless game this season and also bowled three no-balls, one of them costing him the wicket of Himmat Singh, who went on to an unbeaten 40.

Mumbai stayed in ninth place while Lucknow remained 10th and last.



Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants in Mumbai, India. (AP)

## Wu becomes snooker's second straight world champ from China



China's Wu Yize poses for the media with the trophy and wearing the Chinese national flag, after winning the World Snooker Championship defeating England's Shaun Murphy in Sheffield, England. (AP)

### Heartbreak for Murphy after last-frame decider defeat

LONDON, May 5 (AP): Wu Yize became snooker's second straight world champion from China after beating Shaun Murphy in a dramatic final-frame decider at the Crucible Theatre.

With his 18-17 victory, the 22-year-old Wu is the second-youngest winner of the worlds after Stephen Hendry at age 21 in 1990.

Wu follows in the footsteps of Zhao Xintong, who 12 months ago became the first-ever champion from Asia in a milestone moment for a game whose stronghold has always been in Britain.

"All of a sudden, the floodgates have opened," six-time world champion Steve Davis said of China getting back-to-back winners.

"The style in which they are playing is the benchmark for the European and British players to come."

Wu's unlikely victory - he'd never won a match at the Crucible before this year - came in the fourth final to go the distance, and the first since 2002.

Roars of "Wuuuuu" rang out around the storied venue after his title-clinch-

ing break of 85 in the decider, in which he pulled out a slew of attacking shots that have been his trademark over the past two weeks.

"At the beginning, I had a misunderstanding - I thought people were booing me," Wu said of the crowd through a translator, "but then the staff told me they were cheering me on."

He raised the trophy while having a flag of China draped around his shoulders.

Wu also beat Mark Allen in a decider in the semifinals - Allen missed a simple black off its spot for victory - and ousted four-time champion Mark Selby in the second round in his run to the title.

Murphy was trying to win his second world snooker title, 21 years after his first. He has lost four finals since his maiden victory in 2005, which also came as a 22-year-old.

"I hate being right," Murphy said. "Some time earlier in the season we had a great game out in China, which somehow I managed to win, and I came out afterwards and said he will be world champion one day."

"It's just a real shame it was today."

### We remain united in our desire to see meaningful progress: Players

## Top players criticize French Open prize money and unresolved welfare demands

PARIS, May 5, (AP): Top players including No. 1s Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka expressed "their deep disappointment" at the French Open prize money.

The players, most of them from the top 10 in the ATP and WTA, added their other demands have not been addressed by officials from the four Grand Slam tournaments, including better representation, health and pensions.

French Open organizers announced last month they were increasing overall prize money by about 10% for an overall pot of 61.7 million euros (\$72.1 million), with the total amount up 5.3 million euros from last year.

But the players' statement said "the underlying figures tell a very different story," claiming they will receive a smaller share of tournament revenues.

"Players' share of Roland Garros tournament revenue has declined from 15.5% in 2024 to 14.9% projected in 2026," the players said.

"According to tournament officials, Roland Garros generated 395 million euros in revenue in 2025, a 14% year-on-year increase, yet prize money rose by just 5.4%, reducing players' share of revenue to 14.3%.

"With estimated revenues of over 400 million euros for this year's tournament, prize money as a percentage of revenue will likely still be less than 15%, far short of the 22% that players have requested to bring the Grand Slams into line with the ATP and WTA Combined 1000 events."

French Open organizers did not

immediately respond to a request for comments.

The Australian Open this year increased the players' compensation by 16%, and the U.S. Open prize money last year went up by 20%.

The same group of players sent a letter a year ago to the heads of the four Grand Slams seeking more

prize money and a greater say in what they called "decisions that directly impact us." However, the communications firm that released the statement said it was issued in the name of the original signatories to the initial letter, later adding that Novak Djokovic had not signed the new statement.

The players said they remain "united in their desire to see meaningful progress, both in terms of fair financial distribution and in how the sport is governed."

They insisted they have not received any response to their proposals on welfare, including pension and long-term health, adding that no progress has been made "on fair and transparent player representation within Grand Slam decision-making."

"While other major international sports are modernizing governance, aligning stakeholders, and building long-term value, the Grand Slams remain resistant to change. The absence of player consultation and the continued lack of investment in player welfare reflect a system that does not adequately represent the interests of those who are central to the sport's success."

Play begins on May 24 at Roland Garros.



Jannik Sinner, of Italy, returns the ball to Alexander Zverev, of Germany, during their men's singles tennis final match at the Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

### V8 power could return

## Formula 1's electrical revolution losing spark

MIAMI, May 5, (AP): Four races into Formula 1's new era and the peak of electrical power's influence on the sport may already be in the rearview mirror.

The Miami Grand Prix was the first under changes which slightly limited the role of the electrical power which has redefined racing this year. The president of the governing body, the FIA, said in Miami he wants traditional V8 engines back in a few years' time.

F1 started the year with some of the biggest changes in its 76-year history, headlined by a 50-50 split in power between a traditional engine and the onboard battery pack.

There were only three Grand Prix races under those new rules before a package of tweaks was introduced which curbed the influence of the electrical power. They answered driver criticism by promoting pure driving skill over electrical recharging, especially in qualifying. Discussions on further changes for 2027 could continue that trend.

Sunday's race in Miami was one of the most wide-open in recent F1 history with drivers from four different teams leading before Kimi Antonelli took his third win of 2026 for Mercedes.

When FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem first proposed a return to big, noisy traditional engines last year, some F1 figures thought it was an election tactic, and it fizzled out in a meeting with manufacturers.

Now with Ben Sulayem in office for another term, and following a backlash to electrical power from some key drivers and fans, his push for V8 engines by 2030 or 2031 seems much more serious. The F1 world typically plans out new regulations years ahead of time.

"You get the sound, you get less complexity and then you've got the lighter weight, you hit all the boxes," Ben Sulayem said Saturday in Miami. "You will hear about it very soon and it will be with a very, very minor electrification, but the main one will be the engine."

F1 has used V6 engines with electrical hybrid power since 2014 and a big step up in the amount of electrical power for

this year has made it central to how drivers go racing. Timing the electrical boost and recharging is the key to tactical racing. Four-time champion Max Verstappen loathes it so much he's questioned his future in F1.

A return to bigger V8 engines would be a nostalgia trip for older drivers and fans, with a distinctive screaming engine noise. They're relatively rare in modern vehicles outside of expensive sports cars.

Using sustainably-sourced fuel, as F1 does already from this season, would be one concession to environmental goals.

There's a lot of politics behind the decisions on F1's future, from the White House to the racing paddock.

Electrical vehicles no longer seem as certain to dominate the roads in key F1 markets as they did when the FIA and teams began drawing up the regulations in the early 2020s.

The Trump administration has put tighter rules on the charger network that electric vehicles depend on, and the European Union is rethinking a planned ban on new internal combustion-powered cars from 2035.

"The political landscape has changed," the FIA's top F1 regulations official Nikolas Tombazis told reporters last week. "Back when we discussed the current regulations, the automotive companies, who were very involved, told us that they're never going to make another internal combustion engine again, a new one, that they were going to phase out and by whatever year they were going to be fully electrical. Obviously, this hasn't happened."

Ben Sulayem said the FIA would need engine manufacturers' agreement to push for V8 engines for 2030, ahead of the agreed five-year schedule for the current cars, but would be more free to act without their agreement for 2031.

The F1 world has long appealed to automakers by promising innovation relevant to their road cars but now the FIA seems less keen for F1 cars to resemble daily drivers. The boom in F1's popularity around the world over the last decade could give it more leverage.



FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem, left, greets McLaren driver Lando Norris before a sprint auto race at the Miami Formula One Grand Prix in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

### Best of the Rest

**Hearts leaps in title race:** The three-team race in a Scottish league title chase for the ages now looks down to two after leader Heart of Midlothian rallied to beat Rangers 2-1.

Hearts is three points ahead of second-placed Celtic with three rounds left, chasing a first league title for 66 years as a big underdog against richer opponents.

Rangers was all but knocked out of the running, now seven points back.

Rangers can do Hearts a huge favor on Sunday at Celtic in a Glasgow derby between fierce rivals who have combined to win the league in each of the past 40 years.

Hearts took a big step toward a stunning and unheralded Scottish Premiership triumph with second-half goals from defender Stephen Kingsley and talismanic forward Lawrence Shankland. Rangers took a first-half lead on Dujon Sterling's deflected shot.

Shankland's decisive left-foot strike in the 71st minute - his 14th league goal this season - showed the kind of form that could see him lead Scotland's attack when the Tartan Army returns to the World Cup against Haiti on June 13 at the New England Patriots' stadium. (AP)

## SPORTS

# Wemby impresses but Wolves strike 1st against Spurs



Minnesota Timberwolves guard Bones Hyland (8) shoots while defended by San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) and guard Devin Vassell (24) during the second half in Game 1 of a second-round NBA playoffs basketball series in San Antonio. (AP)



Philadelphia 76ers' VJ Edgecombe, right, fouls New York Knicks' Jalen Brunson during the first half of Game 1 in a second-round NBA basketball playoffs series in New York. (AP)

## Knicks crush 76ers to keep up a historic postseason roll

**SAN ANTONIO, May 5, (AP): Anthony Edwards scored 18 points in his unexpected return from injury and the Minnesota Timberwolves overcame a huge game by Victor Wembanyama and held on to beat the San Antonio Spurs 104-102 in the opener of the Western Conference semifinals.**

Wembanyama had 11 points and 15 rebounds and set an NBA postseason record with 12 blocks. He's the third player to get a triple-double in the playoffs including blocks since the league began tracking blocks in 1973-74.

San Antonio cut the deficit to 104-102 on a steal by Devin Vassell and layup by Dylan Harper with 31 seconds remaining. Following a miss by Minnesota's Julius Randle, Julian Champagnie couldn't connect on a 3-pointer at the buzzer as San Antonio suffered only its second loss in its last 17 series openers at home.

Randle finished with 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Timberwolves. Harper scored 18 points and Champagnie and Stephon Castle had 17 each for the Spurs.

Edwards was expected to miss at least the first two games of the series after suffering a bone bruise and

hyperextending his left knee on April 25 during Game 4 of Minnesota's opening-round series against Denver. Instead, Edwards worked diligently to return with guards Donte DiVincenzo (torn right Achilles tendon) and Ayo Dosunmu (right calf soreness) out with injuries.

After draining a step-back 3-pointer early in the game, Edwards looked toward the Spurs bench and screamed: "I'm back! I'm back!"

He definitely was.

Edwards did not start, entering the game with 6:53 remaining in the first quarter and the Timberwolves trailing 11-8. He finished 8 for 13 in 25 minutes.

Game 2 is Wednesday in San Antonio.

Wembanyama had seven blocks in the first half. The NBA Defensive Player of the Year opened the game by blocking a pair of driving layups from Terrence Shannon Jr. on consecutive possessions. Two minutes later, he blocked Gobert's driving layup just under the rim.

Wembanyama missed Bones Hyland's floater with his left hand, but recovered in mid-air to swipe it with his right for his 10th block late in the third quarter.

**Knicks 137, 76ers 98**

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored 27 of his 35 points in the first half and the New York Knicks emphatically added to a historic postseason roll by overwhelming the

Philadelphia 76ers in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference semifinals.

The Knicks became the first team in NBA history to win three straight postseason games by at least 25 points, continuing a wave that began midway through the first round against Atlanta by shooting 63% from the field and leading by 40 points.

OG Anunoby added 18 points on 7-for-8 shooting, while Towns and Mikal Bridges both had 17, with Towns adding six rebounds and six assists in just 20 minutes.

After trailing 2-1 against Atlanta, the Knicks have won four straight games by a total of 135 points. They are the first team since detailed play-by-play began in 1996-97 to lead three straight playoff games by at least 30 points, according to Sportradar.

Brunson said the Knicks' focus and attention to detail have been better since they fell behind.

Game 2 is Wednesday night before the series shifts to Philadelphia - with Joel Embiid already pleading with 76ers fans not to sell their tickets to Knicks fans when it does.

But the 76ers didn't exactly give their fans much reason to want to keep them Monday.

Paul George scored 17 points for Philadelphia. Embiid shot just 3 for 11 for his 14 points and Tyrese Maxey had just 13, not making his first basket until five minutes into

the second quarter.

The 76ers had just one full day off after winning in Boston on Saturday night to complete the NBA's 14th comeback from a 3-1 deficit. But they looked more like the team that lost twice by 32 points in the first four games to fall into that deficit.

The Knicks had a much easier first round - and finished it with one of the easiest games in NBA playoff history. They crushed Atlanta 140-89 on Thursday in Game 6, setting a postseason record by building a 47-point half-time lead.

The Knicks scored eight straight points midway through the second quarter to extend a 10-point lead to 57-39, and Brunson scored their final 11 points, capped by a 3-pointer with 0.3 seconds remaining, to make it 74-51 at halftime.

Towns' 3-pointer made it 90-60 about five minutes into the second half and it was mostly reserves from there. Brunson played only 31 minutes, perhaps the only reason he didn't reach 40 points for a fourth straight playoff game against the 76ers.

He averaged 35.5 points in a first-round series against the 76ers in 2024 and closed it with three straight 40-point games, including a franchise playoff-record 47 in Game 4.

The 76ers still haven't figured out a way to stop him.

## Sevilla out of relegation zone after win

# Roma sweeps Fiorentina as Cremonese falters

ROME, May 5, (AP): Roma scored three times in a commanding first half on its way to a 4-0 win over Fiorentina that boosted its hopes of a top four finish and a Champions League place in Serie A.

The capital club moved into fifth place, just one point behind Juventus.

Gianluca Mancini headed home the opener from a corner kick after 13 minutes and Wesley added a second five minutes later to put Gian Piero Gasperini's side in the driving seat.

Mario Hermoso added the third after great set up work by Manu Kone, and Niccolò Pisilli completed the scoring early in the second half.

It was the first league defeat for Fiorentina in eight games. La Viola still need a point to guarantee their Serie A survival and remain in 16th, nine points clear of the relegation zone.

Cremonese relinquished a first-half lead in losing at home to Lazio 2-1, missing a chance to grab crucial points in its fight to avoid relegation.

Cremonese has won only one of its last 21 league matches. It remained third from bottom, four points adrift of safe and 17th-placed Lecce with three games to play.

The home side took the lead in the first half when Federico Bonazzoli's left-foot shot squirmed under the body of Lazio goalkeeper Edoardo Motta.

Gustav Isaksen brought Lazio level in the second half, and Tijjani Noslin curled in the winner two minutes into stoppage time.

Jamies Vardy made a substitute appearance for Cremonese after missing four games with a muscle strain but he made no difference.

Lazio moved into eighth, two points above Bologna and Sassuolo.



Roma's Paulo Dybala, right, kicks the ball ahead of Fiorentina's Manolo Simeoni during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Roma and Fiorentina in Rome. (AP)

A second half goal from Alexis Sánchez lifted Sevilla over Real Sociedad 1-0 and out of La Liga's relegation zone.

The 37-year-old Chilean scored five minutes after coming on as a halftime substitute.

Sevilla rose to one point above Alaves in the third relegation place.

Only three points separate Alaves in 18th and Valencia in 12th as the relegation dogfight looks destined to go to the wire.

Sevilla lost five of its previous six games

coming into the match but Monday's win gave it back-to-back home wins in the league for the first time since October 2024. The home side even had a late second from Lucien Agoumé ruled out after a video review.

The loss was a big blow to Sociedad, which is eyeing European football next season. A win would have taken it into joint sixth with Celta Vigo but instead it lingered in ninth, three behind Vigo and a point behind Getafe and Athletic Bilbao.

## Club to blend local talent with key signings

# Habib returns as head coach of Al-Sulaibikhat handball team

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/ArabTimes Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 5: Al-Sulaibikhat has appointed national coach Hussein Habib as head coach of its handball team for the upcoming season, according to handball director Hussein Siwan.

Siwan thanked former coach Walid Al-Salameen for his contributions during his time with the team, wishing him success in his next chapter.

Looking ahead, Siwan said the club is preparing for a new phase, with plans to reinforce the squad through a mix of local and professional signings. He noted that Habib has been granted full authority to select the players he believes will best fit his vision.

He stressed that the club's management is committed to providing the necessary environment and support for the new coaching staff, aiming to achieve results that match the ambitions of both the club and its supporters. He added that the next stage will require greater effort and unity from all members of the team.

Siwan explained that Habib was chosen after a careful evaluation of several candidates, citing his technical expertise,



Al-Sulaibikhat handball team's new coach Hussein Habib in action during a match.

strong understanding of local talent, and proven ability to build competitive teams. The club is currently working to strengthen key positions in coordination with the coaching staff to ensure balance and cohesion within the squad.

Habib is no stranger to Al-Sulaibikhat, having previously coached the team during the 2022-2023 season. His coaching résumé also includes stints with Al-Arabi, Al-Fahaheel, Burgan, and Al-Salmiya.

## Paul carries host hopes of ending drought

# Seixas set for historic Tour de France debut

PARIS, May 5, (AP): Cycling's rising star Paul Seixas will compete at the Tour de France in July, becoming one of the youngest riders ever to take part in the sport's showpiece race.

An entire nation will be hoping he can end a four-decade drought for French male cyclists.

The 19-year-old Frenchman, widely regarded as a potential great and France's best hope for a future Tour de France winner, announced his participation at cycling's showpiece race in a video released by his CMA



Second place France's Paul Seixas of the Decathlon team celebrates on the podium during the Belgian cycling classic and UCI World Tour race Liege Bastogne Liege, in Liege, Belgium. (AP)

CGM Decathlon team.

Seixas's precocity is rare. He has been in an impressive form this season, finishing runner-up to four-time Tour de France winner Tadej Pogacar at the Strade Bianche and Liege-Bastogne-Liege. He also became the youngest winner of the Flèche Wallonne.

"It's a childhood dream of mine, something I've often imagined, and now it's very close to becoming reality," said Seixas, a versatile rider with excellent climbing and time trialing skills. "I'm only 19, but as I've already said, age is neither a barrier nor an excuse."

It has been nearly 41 years since a Frenchman last won the Tour de France, when Bernard Hinault claimed the last of his five titles back in 1985. Pauline Ferrand-Prévôt won the women's Tour at her first attempt last year.

Over the past four decades, France has produced talented riders such as Thibaut Pinot, Romain Bardet, Warren Barguil or Julian Alaphilippe. All raised hopes but ultimately fell short, often facing rivals backed by stronger and better-funded teams.

That could change following Seixas' announcement, who has a strong team. Decathlon, a global sporting goods company, has joined forces with CMA CGM, one of the world's largest shipping firms, to invest in a French team with Tour-winning ambitions. The team said last year it aims to win the Tour de France within the next five years.

"We needed to take the time to carefully analyze all the data and also talk with Paul and those around him," said Dominique Serieys, the team's CEO. "He has had a remarkable start to the season and is already among the best riders in the world. And the best are meant to line up at the biggest race on the calendar: the Tour de France. With great humility and in a learning mindset, Paul will start in Barcelona with genuine ambitions to achieve the best possible result in the general classification."

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New York Knicks' Jalen Brunson, right, drives past Philadelphia 76ers' Kelly Oubre Jr. during the first half of Game 1 in a second-round NBA basketball playoffs series in New York. (AP) - See Page 15

# Sports

## Kuwaiti coach Al-Saeedi takes charge of Jordan University of Science & Technology volleyball team

By Khaled Al-Enezi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

AMMAN, May 5: Kuwaiti coach Salem Al-Saeedi has been appointed head coach of the Jordan University of Science and Technology volleyball team ahead of the Jordanian Universities League, becoming the first Kuwaiti to lead a university side in the country.

The move reflects the university's ambition to strengthen its technical staff with experienced leadership capable of elevating performance and enhancing competitiveness, especially with strong rivalry among participating teams.

Al-Saeedi expressed his pride in the opportunity, thanking the university's administration for their confidence. He described the role as a new challenge in his coaching journey and a chance to showcase the capabilities of Kuwaiti coaches on an international stage.

He noted that his immediate focus will be on improving players' physical and technical readiness, while building team chemistry to ensure strong performances and a seri-

ous push for the league title.

Al-Saeedi added that his vision extends beyond results, aiming to develop a cohesive and sustainable team that reflects the growing standard of volleyball in the region.

The Jordanian Universities League includes teams from several institutions, among them Applied Science University, Petra University, Al al-Bayt University, Philadelphia University, Princess Sumaya University, Mutah University, Middle East University, Al-Balqa Applied University, the University of Jordan, Al-Zaytoonah University, Yarmouk University, the Hashemite University, Irbid National University, the Islamic Sciences University, and the German Jordanian University.

As a former player, Al-Saeedi represented Al-Jahra Club's volleyball team, winning the Mubarak Al-Kabeer League title in 2000, along with the Martyr Fahad Al-Ahmad Cup and the Federation Cup in the same year. He also lifted the Federation Cup again in 2003 and had a professional spell with Yarmouk Club during the 1998-1999 season.



Al-Saeedi with the Jordan University of Science and Technology volleyball team.

## Man City stumbles at Everton with late draw

Arsenal gains upper hand

LIVERPOOL, England, May 5, (AP): Jérémy Doku scored a last-gasp equalizer for Manchester City to snatch a 3-3 draw at Everton and throw the Premier League title momentum back to leader Arsenal.

The draw ended a run of three consecutive wins for City and left it five points behind the London club.

City has a game in hand but the loss at Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium meant the title was now Arsenal's to lose. The Gunners have three games to play.

"It's painful now," Doku said. "There's a lot of games to go, everything can happen. We lost two points today but we will keep on fighting."

"We know that one point can still be important in the end."



Manchester City's Rayan Cherki, left, and Everton's Iliman Ndiaye fight for the ball during the Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Everton in Liverpool, England. (AP)

City has four games left and knew it needed a win to keep the pressure on Mikel Arteta's side. But although it dominated possession in the first half it struggled to create real chances and it wasn't until the 42nd minute that Doku found space in a crowded penalty box to curl in a peach of a strike and break the deadlock.

Everton, though, came out a different side in the second half and struck three times in 13 minutes.

City defender Marc Guéhi's short back pass was intercepted by substitute Thierno Barry, who slipped it past an incredulous Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Five minutes later, the City defense was all at sea again as Jake O'Brien rose at the near post to glance home a corner from James Garner.

Barry made it 3-1 in the 81st when a shot deflected into his path, giving him the simplest of finishes.

But just as City fans were beginning to stream out of the stadium, many returned when Erling Haaland stormed forward and clipped his 25th goal of the season over Jordan Pickford.

City threw everything forward and in the seventh minute of stoppage time Doku curled in a sublime strike with almost the last kick of the match.

It was a killer blow to Everton, which is still hopeful of securing a European place. A win would have lifted it within two points of seventh but instead it was 10th, tied on points with Fulham and Chelsea.

"We let ourselves down, we defended the second goal so poorly and that was the main reason (for the draw)," Everton coach David Moyes said.

"But at halftime we'd have taken this result because we were hugely outplayed in the first half. Getting a point against Manchester City's not a bad result but when you're 3-1



Everton's goalkeeper Jordan Pickford saves shot by Manchester City's Ruben Dias during the Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Everton in Liverpool, England. (AP)

up, you're thinking you're in with a great chance of winning."

Earlier, Chelsea slumped to a sixth straight Premier League defeat and saw its Champions League qualification hopes virtually disappear after losing to Nottingham Forest 3-1.

Taiwo Awoniyi scored two either side of earning a penalty converted by fellow striker Igor Jesus, inspiring a heavily rotated Forest to the brink of safety. Forest was six points above the relegation zone with three rounds left.

Joao Pedro's overhead kick in second-half stoppage time ended Chelsea's scoreless run in the league

stretching back almost two months but proved to be only a consolation.

On a humiliating day for the London club and interim coach Calum McFarlane, Cole Palmer had a penalty saved in a 14-minute period of first-half stoppage time - required after 18-year-old Chelsea winger Jesse Derry, making his first Premier League start, needed lengthy treatment following a clash of heads with Forest's Zach Abbott at a corner.

Both had to leave the field, Derry on a stretcher as Stamford Bridge fell quiet and his teammates looked concerned.

Reaching the FA Cup final last week has failed to rouse Chelsea's players, who were booed by their own fans at halftime and fulltime, amid their dreadful run of form in the league that has plunged the team to ninth place and out of contention for a top-five finish.

Sixth place could yet earn qualification for the Champions League, but only in the specific scenario of Aston Villa - currently in fifth place - finishing in that position and also winning the Europa League. Chelsea is four points behind sixth-placed Bournemouth.

Villa is 1-0 down to Forest after the first leg of Europa League semi-finals. The second leg is at Villa Park on Thursday, prompting Forest manager Vitor Pereira to field virtually a second-choice lineup that still had too much for Chelsea.

In-form playmaker Morgan Gibbs-White was one of Forest's top players starting on the bench. He came on, set up Awoniyi for the third goal in the 52nd minute, and then was forced off with a bandage around his head after a clash of heads with Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez, who also had to be substituted.

Bilbao hires Edin Terzic

## Mbappé defends commitment to rehab after out-of-town trip

MADRID, May 5, (AP): Kylian Mbappé responded to a fresh wave of criticism in Spain, insisting on Tuesday he remains fully committed to recovering from his latest injury.

The Real Madrid and France forward is sidelined by a left hamstring issue which is casting doubt about his availability for Sunday's clasico in Barcelona, the biggest match in Spanish soccer.

During his time off, Mbappé reportedly traveled to Italy with actress Ester Expósito last weekend, prompting criticism in Spanish media that he may not be taking his rehabilitation seriously. Madrid fans also questioned why the league's best striker was on holiday ahead of the clasico.

Mbappé denied any wrongdoing through a statement from his representatives sent to The Associated Press.

"Part of the criticism is based on an overinterpretation of elements related to a recovery period strictly supervised by the club, without reflecting the reality of Kylian's commitment and the work he puts in every day for the team," the statement read.

Unhappy Real Madrid supporters believe Mbappé is saving himself for the World Cup that begins in five weeks.

He also drew criticism earlier this season when he couldn't play because of a knee ailment.

Madrid has little to play for in the final stretch of the season. It has been eliminated in the Champions League and the Copa del Rey, and is virtually out of contention in La Liga as it trails Barcelona by 11 points with four rounds remaining. Barcelona could clinch on Sunday.

Madrid has yet to say whether Mbappé will be fit and available for the clasico. Spanish media say Mbappé went to Madrid's training center on a day off to continue his recovery.

Athletic Bilbao has hired German coach Edin Terzic for the next two seasons. "The German tactician" will be officially presented at the start of next season, Athletic said on Tuesday.

The 43-year-old Terzic coached Borussia Dortmund in two stints, winning the German Cup in 2021 and finishing second to Bayern Munich in a tight Bundesliga title race in 2023. He also led Dortmund to the Champions League final in 2024, when it lost to Real Madrid.

Terzic previously worked in Dortmund's youth academy and was an assistant coach at West Ham in England and Besiktas in Turkey. He left Dortmund at the end of the 2023-24 season.

Terzic will replace Ernesto Valverde, who will leave Athletic at the end of the season. Valverde has coached the most games in the history of the Basque Country club.

Harry hits new heights

## Bayern coach Kompany hails Kane's intelligence, leadership before PSG tie

BERLIN, May 5, (Xinhua): Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany said joining the German record champion team has taken Harry Kane to a new level ahead of Wednesday's UEFA Champions League semifinal second leg against Paris Saint-Germain.

The tie has drawn global attention following a wild 5-4 first leg, with the 32-year-old Kane contributing a goal and key assists. Kompany said the England captain's overall profile has risen significantly since his move from Tottenham in 2023.

Speaking on the club's social media channel, the 40-year-old said Kane's qualities were often reduced to goalscoring during his 14 years in England.

"People saw him as a goalscorer during his time playing there," Kompany said, adding that his finishing and leadership were always recognized.

"But we have seen other qualities too, such as football intelligence. We can appreciate that now. It was perhaps somewhat underestimated in England." The striker again underlined his all-around game in the first leg against PSG, setting up Bayern's fourth goal with a precise pass to Luis Diaz, who finished past Marquinhos late in the match.

Kane has scored 54 goals and provided 16 assists in all competitions this season, performances that have reportedly attracted interest from several top European clubs, including PSG and Premier League sides.

Bayern supervisory board member Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said the club plans to open talks to extend Kane's contract, which runs until 2027.

"We will take up talks right after the season," he



Munich's Harry Kane, right, and Jonathan Tah attend a training session in Munich, Germany ahead of the Champions League semifinal second leg soccer match between FC Bayern and PSG. (AP)

said, describing the move as a unanimous decision by the club's leadership.

German media reports say Kane and his family are settled in Munich and that the striker has not activated an exit clause this spring.

Kane became the Bundesliga's most expensive signing when he joined Bayern in 2023, and board member Uli Hoenes recently said the forward is worth up to 250 million euros and is "priceless" beyond his on-field contribution.