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In this photo provided by Egypt's presidency media office, Arab leaders pose during the emergency Arab summit at Egypt's new administrative capital, just outside Cairo, Tuesday, March 4, 2025.

Arab Summit adopts Egypt's plan for Gaza reconstruction

'Displacement of Palestinians a crime against humanity'

- Call for full Israeli pullout from Lebanon
- Israel's attacks on Syria slammed at summit

CAIRO, March 5, (KUNA): Arab leaders adopted, at their extraordinary summit in Cairo Tuesday, Egypt's plan for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip without displacing its people and underlined the need for upholding the ceasefire and allowing unimpeded access to humanitarian aid.

Speaking at the closing session, Egyptian President and Summit Chairman Abdel-fattah El-Sisi stated that the participating Arab leaders and delegations has approved the final statement including Egypt's plan for the comprehensive recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

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The representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah during the Extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo, Tuesday.

'Kuwait committed to defending Palestinian rights'

KUWAIT CITY, March 5, (KUNA): The representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivered Kuwait's speech during the Extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo on Tuesday.

His Highness the Crown Prince stressed the need for the summit to formulate a unified Arab position against any attempts to displace Palestinians, highlighting a number of steps.

1. Raising the Arab voice, rejecting any attempts to displace the Palestinian people, and refusing to blame countries of the region, namely Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia of any consequences for calls of displacement.

2. Formulate plan for the reconstruction of Gaza and compensate the Palestinian people for the damage caused in addition to holding the Israeli occupation responsible for rebuilding what its forces destroyed.

3. Holding the Israeli occupation accountable through international law, international humanitarian law, General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions, Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court, and the International Court of Justice.

4. Pursuing the two-state solution in a concrete and realistic way at the international conference for the implementation of the two-state solution in June.

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Experts push for multi-storey solutions

Kuwait's 2.3 mln cars push parking crisis to new heights

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The parking crisis in Kuwait is worsening due to the increasing number of cars.

The latest statistics from the Ministry of Interior revealed that there are 2,374,339 licensed vehicles in the country – 1,188,624 owned by citizens; 552,009 owned by expatriates; 455,192 company vehicles; 132,263 owned by Gulf nationals and 26,316

owned by non-Kuwaitis.

Experts agree that it is necessary to resolve the crisis of cars parked randomly around private and government buildings and mosques, as this leads to visual pollution. They suggested the establishment of multi-storey parking lots in various areas to help solve this crisis.

Eng. Alia Al Farsi, a member of the Municipal Council and a transportation engineering consultant, explained that the park-

ing crisis extends to all types of land use and is widespread in investment housing areas.

She submitted a proposal to the Municipal Council to solve this crisis in investment housing areas, and it is currently under technical study by the Construction Works Regulation Committee in Kuwait Municipality.

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Employment falls

Kuwait non-oil sector growth slows to 51.6 in February '25

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for Kuwait's non-oil private sector fell to 51.6 in February 2025, down from 53.4 in January, marking the weakest performance since last September, although it still indicates

growth, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The survey, published by S&P Global, revealed a strong but slow increase in output and new orders.

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Day by Day

THERE is a pen that liberates, a pen that decides, a pen that justifies, and a pen that tries to push things through.

There is the pen of a prince, the pen of a hired hand, and the pen of a prisoner.

There is also a pen that provokes, a pen that frightens, and a pen that plays a tune.

There is a pen that surprises, a pen that refreshes, and one that neither cheers nor delights.

Among the types of pens, some are obvious, some are overpowering, and some others are pure.

There is a pen that evolves, a pen that is complicated, a pen that entertains, a pen that is obscure, a pen that brings light, and a pen that spreads evil.

The pens are many, but the ink is one. So, be careful in choosing your type of pen.

Choose what suits you.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait Justice Minister, Tajikistan envoy discuss boosting cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, March 5, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait on Wednesday discussed boosting and developing judicial and legal cooperation with Tajikistan Ambassador to the country, Zubaydullo

Zubaydov.

The Ministry, in a statement, mentioned that both sides affirmed the depth of long-lasting relations, and underlined importance of furthering those relations across all fields.



Ministry of Justice photo
Kuwait's Minister of Justice during a meeting with the Ambassador of Tajikistan.



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

When Abdullah bin Hudhafah saved the Muslim prisoners

Caesar ordered for a Muslim prisoner to be brought before him.

Caesar was impressed by Abdullah's intelligence, cleverness, and strong faith.

Abdullah rejected Caesar's offer to grant him half of the kingdom and share in the rule.

Though starving, he refused to eat pork.

The beautiful woman said, "I do not know if he is a human or a stone."

Caesar grew angry with him and ordered that he be thrown into boiling oil.

He was hung on the archers' crossbow, so they could shoot arrows around him.

3

Misused iftar offers under Kuwait radar

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Ministry of Social Affairs has warned about restaurants and eateries that use promotional tactics during Ramadan, especially those soliciting donations under the guise of providing iftar meals to those who are fasting.

Sources from the ministry disclosed that donation campaign slogans; such as 'Contribute and share the reward with us' or 'Donate and share the iftar of a fasting person', are in violation of the rules and regulations on fundraising activities.

Sources confirmed to the newspaper that the ministry's teams are closely monitoring restaurants, which announced the availability of iftar meals for fasting people with the possibility of distributing them; as this is considered a violation of the rules and regulations.

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Ramadan Timings

Iftar Thursday 17:51
Imsak Friday 04:48

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The 32nd Crown Prince's Football Cup launches in Kuwait on Thursday for the 2024-2025 season with the participation of 16 sporting clubs.

The single elimination knockout will begin with Kuwait sporting club and Tadamun facing off in Sabah Al-Salem stadium, followed by a game between Sulaibkhat and Khaitan teams.

This edition includes for the first time the participation of Al-Jazeera sporting club.

The Kuwaiti Crown Prince Cup took place for the first time during the 1993-1994 season with Kuwait as the crowned champion.

Al-Qadsiya, Al-Arabi and Kuwait sporting clubs are considered the teams with the most wins, each with nine titles. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Two Lebanese brothers were injured on Wednesday in Israeli airstrikes targeting a car in the southern Lebanese town of Ras Naqoura, state media reported.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported that Israeli drones carried out multiple airstrikes on the vehicle near a landfill site south of a position of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. The brothers, who were collecting scrap metal at the time of the strike, were wounded and taken to the hospital. (Xinhua)



2 Dar Jaber Diwan receives Ramadan well-wishers



4 Sheikh Duajj and Sheikh Faisal host warm Ramadan gathering in Jabriya

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:51 Asr 15:20
 Sunrise .. 06:10 Maghrib .. 17:50
 Zohr 12:00 Isha 19:06

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-50 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times with a chance for rising dust.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	17	13
Kuwait Airport	21	14
Abdaly	19	11
Bubyan	16	14
Jahra	19	14
Failaka Island	19	16
Salmiyah	15	14



KUNA photo
 Kuwait Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi being briefed by engineers on the progress of work at the Kuwait pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan.

Info. Min. visits Kuwait's pavilion at Expo '25 Osaka for inspection

TOKYO, March 5, (KUNA): Kuwait Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi visited Kuwait pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, on Tuesday to inspect the preparations for the global event which will open on April 13.

The minister expressed hope the par-

icipation in the Expo will succeed in reflecting the cultural and civilizational identity of Kuwait and provide the visitors with a unique experience. During the inspection tour, Al-Mutairi was accompanied by Kuwait Ambassador to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan and Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information and Culture Salem Al-Watyan.

Dar Jaber Diwan receives Ramadan well-wishers



Jail for doctor receiving salary while abroad for over 15 years

By Jaber Al-Hamoud/Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Criminal Court sentenced a Kuwaiti mental health doctor in absentia to five years in prison and fined him KD1 million for receiving full salary even if he has been abroad for over 15 years.

According to the Legal Department at the Ministry of Health, the doctor has been absent from work for 15 years as he is outside the country; yet he has been receiving his full salary in collusion with another employee in the ministry.

As a result, a report was filed at the Public Prosecution and the Criminal Investigations Department in the Inte-

rior Ministry conducted investigations. An inquiry into the doctor's entry and exit from the country led to the discovery that he has been residing in another country for 15 years. The necessary measures were taken against him.

Man held with drugs: A young man was arrested in Jahra for the possession of synthetic cannabinoids.

While patrolling in Jahra, police officers noticed the young man who was acting suspiciously. Upon investigation, they discovered small bags containing the narcotics in his possession. Subsequently, he was handed over to the concerned authority for the necessary legal action.

Other Voices

Religion for the benefit of all

By Ahmad alsarraf

IN a recent article by colleague Dr. Khaled Montaser, he mentioned that the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church is currently facing a serious health crisis and he wondered about the reason behind the widespread global concern surrounding this issue.

Dr. Montaser explained that the reason for the global concern lies in the enlightened positions Pope Francis took, which mark his character. The Pope has worked to bring the Church closer to contemporary issues, such as advocating for the rights of immigrants and refugees, emphasizing the need to protect their rights, and warning against the rise of hatred and racism toward them.

He also implemented several important reforms within the Church. He has taken a strong stance against financial corruption, increased transparency, and, for the first time in history, appointed women to senior positions within the Church.

He has shown a strong commitment to environmental preservation, and criticized excessive capitalist consumption and greed.

The Pope advocated for interfaith dialogue and worked to strengthen relations with Muslims and Jews. In 2019, he signed the Human Fraternity Document with Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb of Al-Azhar Mosque in Abu Dhabi, which calls for peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance. He also urged the Church to focus on mercy rather than punishment and to prioritize forgiveness over harsh penalties, even on issues such as divorce and abortion.

Furthermore, the Pope has been vocal in criticizing greed-driven capitalism, and denounced the global economic system for exacerbating the divide between the rich and the poor.

He called for a simplification of the clergy's lifestyle, and urged priests and bishops to embrace modesty and humility and reject extravagance within the Vatican.

Dr. Montaser shared a story from



alsarraf

April 2018 during the Pope's visit to his parish in Italy. A 10-year-old boy named Emmanuel approached the Pope with tearful eyes and asked if his atheist father, who had baptized him and his siblings as Christians, would find a place in Heaven (i.e., Paradise). The Pope responded with deep sympathy, explaining that God has a father's heart, and that the boy's father had done good deeds by baptizing him and his siblings.

"How could God abandon a good person who raised his children well, and keep him far from Him?" the Pope asked.

This incident attracted huge media attention at the time, as the Pope's compassionate nature and his humane approach to dealing with various issues. This is the kind of empathy and understanding we desperately need in our societies, where extremism and fanaticism have become dominant forces.

We hear nothing from the scholars, especially the occupant of the red chair, but reprimands, intimidation, warnings, and a long list of prohibitions, precautions, and dangers, threatening that anyone who commits such acts will surely find their place in Hell!

Of course, the problem is not with the occupant of the red chair or others like him, who are seeking fame, money, and influence. They are well aware that nothing attracts followers and generates wealth like extremism, spreading hate speech, adopting sectarian attitudes, and filling people's hearts with fear of Hell's torment.

The problem lies with the media that has provided platforms for them, and with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs that has allowed them to spread their extremist ideology and issue religious opinions.

In this special month, we hope for the establishment of a Ministry for Religious Affairs that focuses on religion for the benefit of all, rather than serving the interests of a specific group.

We are truly in dire need of following the example of our brothers in Saudi Arabia when it comes to religious reforms. We are truly tired of the growing extremism, and our hearts long for the sound of merciful words and tolerant thinking!

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Photos by Rizk Taufiq

THE sons of HH the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah hosted a gathering at Dar Jaber Diwaniya in Zahraa to receive Ramadan greetings.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, other royal family members, social fig-

ures, ambassadors, members of diplomatic missions and citizens attended the event.

Sheikhs Mubarak, Dr. Salem, Ali Al-Jaber and their brothers warmly welcomed the guests; extending Ramadan greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti people and all residents of Kuwait.

They offered prayers for the holy month to bring goodness, blessings and prosperity to Kuwait, its leadership and people, the Arab and Islamic nations and the rest of the world.

FIU – European firm to help Kuwait meet FATF demands

Contract with FTA to cost 6.1 mln euros

KUWAIT CITY, March 5 : Kuwait's Financial Investigations Unit (FIU) is in the final stages of completing procedures to contract directly with Financial Transparency Advisors (FTA) – an advisory firm based in Vienna, Austria, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The firm will provide expert advice and technical assistance to support Kuwait's ongoing efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, particularly during

the follow-up process conducted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the International Cooperation Review Team.

The daily obtained a copy of the letter affirming that the State Audit Bureau (SAB) has reviewed the direct contracting documents and raised no objections to proceeding with the contract with FTA for a total amount of 6.1 million euros within a period of 19 months; set to conclude on March 31, 2026.

SAB emphasized the need for FIU to ensure that the prices offered by the firm are appropriate and in line with the market rates for such services.

The bureau also highlighted the importance of continuing to train and qualify national staff

to carry out the necessary tasks related to this research, so as not to further burden public funds with additional expenses related to special contracts for this issue.

In its most recent report – last October, FATF noted "serious shortcomings" in Kuwait's efforts to combat money laundering, despite the country having an adequate legal and regulatory frameworks.

FATF pointed out failures in addressing money laundering and terrorism financing; although it acknowledged that regulatory bodies like the Central Bank, Capital Markets Authority and the Insurance Unit have a good understanding of the associated risks.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



When Abdullah bin Hudhafah saved the Muslim prisoners

CALIPH Omar bin Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) sent an army to fight the Romans. Among the soldiers was a young man from the Companions, Abdullah bin Hudhafah (may Allah be pleased with him). The conflict between the Muslims and Romans raged for a long time.

Caesar was amazed by the unwavering determination of the Muslims and their fearlessness in the face of death. He ordered one of the Muslim prisoners to be brought before him.

Abdullah bin Hudhafah was brought to Caesar, dragged in chains, his hands and feet shackled.

Caesar spoke to him and was impressed by his intelligence and demeanor. He offered Abdullah the chance to convert to Christianity, and promised him freedom.

Abdullah bin Hudhafah firmly rejected the offer.

Caesar said to Abdullah, "Become a Christian, and I will give you half of my kingdom."

Abdullah replied, "No!"

Caesar then offered, "Become a Christian, and I will give you half of my kingdom and share in the rule with you."

Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) responded, "No. By Allah, if you gave me your kingdom, the kingdom of your fathers, and the kingdom of the entire world on the condition that I renounce my religion at the blink of an eye, I would not do it."

Caesar got angry and said, "Then I will kill you!", and Abdullah replied, "Kill me."

Caesar then ordered his soldiers to drag Abdullah and hang him on a wooden plank to make him a target for the archers, who were commanded to shoot arrows around him. Caesar offered him Christianity once again, but Abdullah refused and chose

Caesar ordered for a Muslim prisoner to be brought before him.

Caesar was impressed by Abdullah's intelligence, cleverness, and strong faith.

Abdullah rejected Caesar's offer to grant him half of the kingdom and share in the rule.

Though starving, he refused to eat pork.

The beautiful woman said, "I do not know if he is a human or a stone."

Caesar grew angry with him and ordered that he be thrown into boiling oil.

He was hung on the archers' crossbow, so they could shoot arrows around him.

death.

Abdullah was deprived of food and water, to the extent that he was near death from thirst and hunger. Then, they brought him wine and pork.

Abdullah said, "By God, I know that I am being forced, and I understand that this is permissible in such a situation, but I do not want the infidels to gloat over me."

When Caesar learned of this, he ordered that good food be brought for Abdullah. He also commanded that a beautiful woman be presented to him, hoping to tempt him into fornication.

The most beautiful of women went to Abdullah, but he did not pay attention to her. Seeing

his indifference, she left angrily and said, "You took me to a man whom I do not know whether he is a human or a stone. By God, he does not know whether I am a female or a male!"

When Caesar despaired of him, he ordered a copper pot filled with boiling oil to be brought. He made Abdullah stand in front of the pot, then brought one of the Muslim prisoners who was bound in chains and threw him into the boiling oil. The man screamed loudly and died, and his bones floated on the surface of the oil while Abdullah watched. Caesar turned to him again and offered him Christianity, but Abdullah refused.

Caesar, filled with anger, ordered that Abdullah be thrown into the pot of boiling oil. As Abdullah was dragged toward the pot and felt the intense heat of the fire, his eyes teared up, and he cried. At that moment, Caesar was pleased and repeated his offer, "Will you become a Christian? I will give you power and wealth."

Abdullah replied firmly: "No."

Caesar asked him, "Then, what made you cry?"

Abdullah replied, "I swear, I cry because I have only one soul to be thrown into this pot. I wish I had as many souls as the hairs on my head, so I could sacrifice them all for the sake of Allah."

Caesar, in his frustration, said, "Kiss my head, and I will release you."

Abdullah responded, "I agree but under one condition that you release all the Muslim prisoners."

Caesar agreed to Abdullah's request. When Abdullah and the freed prisoners returned to Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), they told him of what had happened.

Omar replied, "Every Muslim must kiss the head of Abdullah bin Hudhafah. I will be the first to do so."

Life teaches us that there are three types of people: those who are like oxygen and are essential for survival; those who are like medicine and are needed only sometimes; and those who are like diseases and we never want to be around them... I pray to God to protect us from them and their harm.

●●●●

Bernard Shaw once said, "A woman is a man's shadow; she should follow him, not lead him." Meanwhile, the philosopher George Berkeley said, "Get married and you will regret it, don't get married and you will regret that too."

●●●●

Tolstoy advised, "Never get married, my friend, until your love for women has subsided, so you can see her true character and image."

●●●●

Indeed, Ramadan brings us together. There is no month like it in any other religion, a month in which souls are comforted and minds are at ease.

●●●●

Mawaed Al-Rahman is not important. Consider allocating its budget to pay the debts of those imprisoned for financial reasons. These individuals deserve to receive a portion of the collected zakat, especially those in prison due to bounced checks. The state has become like a debt collector on behalf of traders. Islam teaches that the one who lends money to someone they know cannot repay is the one to be held accountable for wasting their own resources.

Deportation for four beggars

Hunt launched as thief flees on foot in police chase

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Four expatriates were arrested for begging in Farwaniya and Jahra Governorates.

A security source revealed that detectives caught four expatriates -- two of whom are Arabs -- in the act of begging in the aforementioned governorates. He affirmed these expatriates were immediately referred to the concerned authority to take the necessary action against them, including deportation.

The source also confirmed that the necessary legal measures were taken against the sponsors of the four expatriates.

□ □ □

Hunt launched for thief: Officers from the Jahra Investigations Department visited Jahra Hospital to take the statement of an injured individual who helped expedite the arrest of a thief who fled on foot, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source reported that while a highway security patrol was on duty near Abdally Cooperative Society, they noticed a suspicious van. Upon checking the vehicle's details, they discovered it is wanted by law in connection with a theft case filed at Waha Police Station.

The officers instructed the driver to pull over, but he refused and sped off in an attempt to escape. The vehicle subsequently collided with another car. After the crash, the driver fled on foot, leaving behind the damaged vehicle with his injured companion inside.

The traffic police then discovered that the front and rear license plates on the vehicle did not match, and further inspection revealed two mo-

torcycles in the trunk, which were likely stolen. The injured individual denied any involvement in the theft of the vehicle or knowledge of the stolen motorcycles. However, he provided investigators with crucial information about his companion; including his name, telephone number and address. The fugitive's name was then circulated to aid in his capture. He will face charges related to theft, property damage, fleeing from law enforcement, and causing an accident resulting in injury.

□ □ □

Cash stolen from car: A Kuwaiti citizen reported to a police station in Hawally Governorate that his bag containing official documents and money were stolen from his car while parked at a cooperative society's parking lot, reports Al-Anba daily.

A case of burglary was registered, and forensic personnel were called in to collect fingerprints and identify the perpetrator.

Expat couple facing 15 years jail for drug peddling caught

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The General Department of Execution of Judgments has successfully apprehended a male and female expatriate who had been sentenced to 15 years in prison for drug trafficking, reports Al-Anba daily. The individuals were transferred to the central prison -- men's and women's sections -- to begin serving their sentences.

According to a security source, Criminal Execution Investigations officers tracked down the two expatriates after their final conviction was issued last week. Once their residence was iden-

tified, authorities swiftly moved in and arrested them without resistance.

The source further explained that all final rulings are handed over to the General Department of Execution for enforcement. If convicted individuals are present in court at the time of sentencing, they are taken into custody immediately. However, if a ruling is issued in absentia, law enforcement is tasked with locating and arresting them.

In a separate case, Capital Investigations officers arrested a citizen in his thirties with a criminal record involving multiple theft and drug-re-

lated charges. The arrest followed a well-planned ambush in the Capital Governorate.

A security source reported that a rise in car thefts from coastal parking lots and commercial markets prompted authorities to launch an investigation. The pattern of thefts indicated a single perpetrator, leading officers to identify the suspect -- a repeat offender with a history of similar crimes. After monitoring his movements, authorities arrested him in possession of stolen goods, which were subsequently turned over to the relevant authorities along with the suspect.



Drugs seized by security men.

Police arrest 3 for carrying drugs, consuming alcohol

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Authorities have arrested three individuals in separate locations for possession of drugs and alcohol, with all suspects referred to the General Department for Combating Narcotics, reports Al-Anba daily.

In Jahra, backup patrol officers detained a citizen with a criminal record after finding him using drugs inside his vehicle. According to a security source, officers conducting a routine patrol in a cooperative parking lot noticed a suspiciously parked car. Upon approaching the vehicle, they discovered the driver -- a man in his thirties -- under the influence of drugs. A precautionary search of the car led to the discovery of narcotics and drug paraphernalia, prompting his immediate arrest.

In a separate incident, rescue police apprehended another citizen, born in 1992, in Ahmadi. He was found in possession of a drug-laced cigarette, a piece of hashish, rolling papers, and additional drug paraphernalia. His suspicious behavior led officers to detain and transfer him to the relevant authorities.

Meanwhile, a Gulf national was arrested on the Fourth Ring Road after exhibiting erratic driving behavior. Upon investigation, officers determined he was under the influence of alcohol. A search of his vehicle revealed an emptied water bottle that had previously contained imported alcohol. He was promptly referred to the appropriate authorities.

PAM receives 418 complaints since Jan

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Domestic Labor Organization and Recruitment Department at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has confirmed receiving 418 complaints since the beginning of this year, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is in addition to the suspension of 14 licenses, reinstatement of 31 licenses after meeting the conditions and addressing violations, and the processing of three requests for li-

cence cancellations and seven license renewals.

Furthermore, the authority stated that a total of 475 domestic labor recruitment offices are now registered under it.

In another development, PAM announced that it is open to visitors from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm; and is also available to address inquiries through hotline number 103 during this period.



Event attended by dignitaries, ambassadors, and citizens in a celebration of Kuwaiti tradition and unity.

Dignitaries and citizens unite in a heartfelt exchange of greetings and goodwill

Sheikh Duaij and Sheikh Faisal host warm Ramadan gathering in Jabriya

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Sheikh Duaij Khalifa Al-Malik and his brother Sheikh Faisal welcomed well-wishers during the holy month of Ramadan to their diwaniya

in Jabriya. Present at the event were His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, dignitaries, ambassadors, diplomats, citizens and expatriates.

In a warm and friendly atmosphere, Sheikh Duaij and Sheikh Faisal extended Ramadan greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber

Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid, the Kuwaitis, expatriates, and the Arab and Islamic nations. Sheikh Duaij said exchanging Rama-

dan greetings in diwaniyas is a cherished Kuwaiti tradition that fosters communication and solidarity among family, friends and society.



Photos by Samer Shiqr

Guests from all walks of life come together to share in the spirit of Ramadan and Kuwaiti tradition.

Reforms aim to improve academic readiness and reduce failure rates

Higher Education unveils new regulations for foreign scholarships

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Ministry of Higher Education has unveiled its plan to amend the foreign scholarship regulations, as per a comprehensive study on the outputs of the scholarship program over the past years and the amended regulations will be implemented in the current academic year (2025/2026).

Undersecretary of the ministry Lamia Al-Malham disclosed that the most important changes include replacing the preparatory English language stage with a requirement that the student obtain a score of at least 5.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). "The student will be granted a full calendar year from the date of announcing the acceptance results to meet this condition," she added.

Al-Malham stated that the decision was made after analyzing the reasons behind the students' academic failure, such as failure to acquire the required English language skills at the end of the language program.

Other changes to the scholarship regulations are the condition that students accepted in the excellence scholarship program maintain a grade point average of at least 2.67 on a four-point scale, and that scholarship

applicants who did not previously obtain a scholarship or grant in the country must obtain a bachelor's degree.

Al-Malham explained these changes aim to raise the quality of education, improve student performance, reduce linguistic obstacles and lessen the academic failure rate among students. She urged those who intend to study abroad to prepare early to pass the approved English language tests.

Kuwait's Audit Bureau seeks transparency in media deals

Ministry urged to standardize procedures

By Mohammad Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The State Audit Bureau (SAB) has asked the Ministry of Information to study the mechanism for purchasing and renting programs, artistic works and the executive producer, calling for the development of a unified and comprehensive regulation that includes all decisions and conditions regarding these operations.

Sources explained to the newspaper that this step aims to enhance

transparency, fully benefit from the budget allocated to this sector, and achieve the highest level of efficiency in managing media contracts.

Sources said SAB asked the ministry to prepare a unified and comprehensive regulation that includes all decisions on purchasing and renting operations in order to ensure the clarity of procedures and the integrity of contract implementation, as well as to avoid any discrepancy or difference in the standards followed.

Sources added this procedure is in light of the ministry's purchase of a number of drama series and programs to be shown on Kuwait TV during the holy month of Ramadan. Sources said SAB stressed the need to verify the suitability of the prices that were adopted to evaluate the purchase of artistic

works and to make sure that the assessment is carried out according to accurate standards that reflect the actual cost of production and artistic quality.

Sources indicated that SAB stressed the importance of the declarations of the contracted companies being an integral part of the contract documents to guarantee clarity of obligations and rights between the contracting parties, as this contributes to raising the efficiency of government contracts and avoiding loopholes that may affect the quality of media content or the efficiency of financial contracts.

Sources confirmed that all works contracted for Ramadan shows have obtained the necessary approvals from the competent authorities, including the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) and the Distinguished Works Purchasing Committee at the ministry.

KD 10,000 fine for unlisted beneficiaries

MoCI mandates beneficiary disclosure

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has affirmed that all commercial register owners are required to identify the actual beneficiary through the commercial register portal, in accordance with Ministerial Decision No. 16/2025, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry warned violators of the potential penalties, which include fines ranging from KD 1,000 to KD 10,000.

It urged commercial register holders to promptly disclose and identify the actual beneficiary to avoid financial penalties.

Al-Hai steps up as Director General

Energy Minister issues decision to restructure leadership of PAAAFR

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Mahmud Abdul Aziz Mahmoud Boushehri issued a decision to terminate the services of Nasser Taqi as director general of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), reports Al-Jarida daily.

In the same decision, Salem Al-

Hai, the incumbent Director of the Marine Control Department in the Fish Resources Sector, was appointed to take on the additional role of PAAAFR Director General, while continuing his current responsibilities.

After his appointment, Al-Hai issued administrative decisions as follows: relieve Director of the Planning and Studies Department in the

Director General Sector Ahmad Al-Mutairi

from his duties as Director of the Information Systems Department; and transfer Senior Geospatial Specialist in the Horticulture Unit of the Agricultural Nurseries Research Department within the Plant Resources Affairs Sector Marwa Al-Taher to the Information Systems Department in place of Al-Mutairi.

Continued from Page 1

Arab Summit

President El-Sisi welcomed the outcome of the summit, expecting that the summit would help achieve interests, defend security and boost joint Arab action to meet Arab peoples' aspirations.

In their final statement, the Arab leaders called for full financial, material, and political support for the Egyptian plan and urged international donors to contribute to it while ensuring parallel efforts to establish a permanent political framework for a just resolution to the Palestinian issue.

They voiced unequivocal rejection of displacement of Palestinians, whether within or beyond their land, under any pretext or justification, saying such plans blatantly violate international law and are crimes against humanity amounting to ethnic cleansing.

They condemned policies of starvation and scorched-earth tactics aimed at forcing Palestinians from their land and emphasize Israel's obligation as an occupying power to abide by international legal rulings prohibiting demographic changes in the Palestinian territories.

The Arab leaders warned that any attempt to forcibly displace Palestinians or annex occupied land will plunge the region into new conflicts, destabilize the region, and broaden the scope of hostilities. They stressed that this would pose a direct threat to the foundations of Middle East peace and eliminate prospects for coexistence.

They acknowledged the crucial role of Jordan and Egypt in countering the threats of displacement and the eradication of the Palestinian cause.

They also urged full implementation of the ceasefire agreement, including its second and third phases, and ensuring all parties, particularly Israel, adhere to their commitments which includes a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, including the Philadelphia Corridor, and guaranteeing the immediate and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid across the territory.

They also expressed backing to Palestine's decision to form an interim Gaza administration under the Palestinian government, composed of Gaza-based technocrats, as a transitional step towards reinstating the Palestinian Authority in Gaza.

They called on the UN Security Council to deploy international peacekeeping forces in the West Bank and Gaza.

'Kuwait committed

5. Urge all UN member states that have not yet recognized Palestine to do so, and support Palestine in obtaining full membership status in the UN.

6. Unite Palestinian ranks and the administration of the Gaza Strip, and strengthen the Palestinian government's capabilities, in addition to unifying Arab ranks to protect Arab national security.

7. Strengthen financial and political support for the United Nations relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and reject any attempts to reduce its role.

His Highness reaffirmed Kuwait's position that a lasting, comprehensive, and just peace is the only way forward through what has been agreed upon in accordance with international resolutions, leading to establishing an independent Palestinian State on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Earlier, Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attended an 'iftar' banquet, hosted by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

The banquet was held on Tuesday evening in honor of leaders of the Arab countries participating in the Extraordinary Arab Summit in Egypt's New Administrative Capital, Cairo Governorate.

Following the summit, His Highness the Crown Prince departed Cairo, where he was seen off by Egypt's Minister of Civil Aviation Dr. Sameh Al-Hafni, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, Assistant Foreign Minister Ambassador Bader Al-Tunaib, and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Talal Al-Mutairi.

His Highness the Crown Prince returned to Kuwait on Tuesday after leading the country's delegation to the summit. He was accompanied by Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and senior officials from the Crown Prince's Diwan.

Upon his return, His Highness the Crown Prince sent a message of gratitude to President El-Sisi, thanking him for the warm reception and hospitality extended to the Kuwaiti delegation.

Kuwait's 2.3 mln

Her proposal aims to encourage investors to establish parking lots in investment housing, as most investment housing buildings are located in and outside the Capital, leading to random parking around the buildings. This random parking leads to visual pollution and obstructs the movement of cars and pedestrians.

The proposal aims to eliminate the parking crisis through optimal urban planning for parking lots in investment housing, finding a way out of the randomness of parking cars. This will raise the standard of living for those living around the residential buildings by eliminating parking in dirt yards, roads and sidewalks; thereby, adding value to the buildings, creating a sense of responsibility among individuals, and raising the level of traffic safety in investment housing areas.

The proposal encourages the construction of multi-storey parking areas in investment housing buildings and complexes, in accordance with the terms and conditions set by the Municipality. In the absence of reliance on public transportation like trains, metros and buses; it is necessary to establish multi-storey parking lots in compliance with the engineering regulations that take all aspects into account.

The problem also affects private housing areas, where cars and garbage containers accumulate due to the absence of appropriate urban organization.

Bader Al-Hammadi, Vice President of the Traffic Safety Association and security expert, believes that the parking crisis can be solved through several axes, including the use of multi-storey parking lots in places where traffic congestion is common, especially in front of government agencies.

He recommended providing means of transportation with specific technologies to transport citizens and expatriates to government agencies via public transportation and implement the subway idea with the speedy completion of railways to prevent excessive use of cars.

Misused iftar

Sources said the ministry has asked its Commerce and Industry counterpart to take legal measures against these restaurants, such as withdrawal of the license if the violation is repeated.

Sources also revealed that more than 80 kiosks for collecting clothes near some mosques and residential areas have been removed, in coordination with Kuwait Municipality.

Kuwait non-oil

Employment fell for the first time in six months, and despite a sharp rise in input costs, selling prices fell. Overall business conditions in Kuwait's non-oil private sector continued to improve in February, although the pace of expansion slowed from the peaks seen at the end of 2024.

The renewed decline in employment and purchasing activity painted a less favorable picture. Firms reduced output prices for the second time in three months, despite a sharp increase in input costs.

Output continued to rise strongly, extending the current expansion phase that began in February 2023. However, the growth slowed for the third consecutive month, reaching its slowest pace since October.

Kuwait Airways Company
Job Vacancies Announcement

Kuwait Airways Company announces the Vacancies for the job listed below in accordance with the following specific requirements and specifications:

Required Job	Qualifications	Required Experience
Engineering Instructor (I)	B.Sc. in Engineering course (preferably in Aeronautics or Aircraft Maintenance) or Diploma in Aeronautical Engineering with Part-66 AME B1 or B2 License. Completion of training course (Train the Trainer). Qualified and have teaching experience on at least Three of the following aircraft types: A320 (CFM56 / CFM LEAP-1A), A330 (TRENT 700), A330 (TRENT 7000), A340 (TRENT 500), B777 (GE90), B8-747 (GE GEnx), B737 NG (CFM56), G650 (RRD BR 725)	(6) years' experience in teaching of type courses preferably in Part-147 environment. (3) years maintenance experience gained in civil aviation environment.
Engineering Instructor (II)	B.Sc. in Engineering course (preferably in Aeronautics or Aircraft Maintenance) or Diploma in Aeronautical Engineering with Part-66 AME B1 or B2 License. Completion of training course (Train the Trainer). Qualified and have teaching experience on at least Two of the following aircraft types: A320 (CFM56 / CFM LEAP-1A), A330 (TRENT 700), A330 (TRENT 7000), A340 (TRENT 500), B777 (GE90)B8-747 (GE GEnx), B737 NG (CFM56), G650 (RRD BR 725)	(4) years' experience in teaching of type courses preferably in Part-147 environment. (3) years maintenance experience gained in civil aviation environment.
Sr. Expert Banks	B.Sc. in Accounting or equivalent.	16 Years accounting or Banking experience
Expert, Banks	B.Sc. in Accounting or equivalent.	14 Years accounting experience.

General Terms:

- Priority for Kuwaitis who meet the requirements.
- The applicant is required to be proficient in Arabic and English (Reading & Writing & Speaking) and proficient in computer applications.
- A minimum of 70% is required to pass the English language test.
- The applicant must successfully pass a set of tests with specified success rates to qualify for a personal interview.
- Applicants shall be subject to the necessary conditions for appointment in accordance with the rules and regulations at Kuwait Airways.
- Compliance with Cabinet Resolution No. 914 issued on 2010/06/29, which includes: (Retired persons are only permitted to apply in the narrowest of limits. For the categories of pilots and flight engineers, they shall be requested, as needed, to ensure continued safe operations).
- Bachelor's degrees that are not recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait will not be considered.
- Diploma degrees that are not recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait will not be considered.
- Applicants must demonstrate good conduct and behavior and must not have been convicted in any case prejudicial to honor or honesty.
- Applicants will be subject to personal interviews and the necessary tests, and in the event of equal ratings, comparison between them will be made according to the following standards of Civil Service Commission Resolution No. (4) of 2001 and in their order:
 - Holding a grade of (90%) or higher for the qualification.
 - Whomever graduated first.
 - Age seniority.
 - Married applicants are preferred over single status applicants.
- Submission and receipt of the application do not imply acceptance. Any application that fails to meet the specified conditions will not be considered, and the company reserves the right to decline or not respond to the applicant.

How to apply:

- Applications shall be submitted on the website: careers.kuwaitairways.com. This shall be within 15 days from the date of publishing this announcement.

Documents to be attached to the website:

- CV.
- Educational Qualification and professional certificates approved, and equivalency approved by the official authorities in the State of Kuwait.
- Copy of Civil ID, Passport, Nationality and Birth Certificate.
- To whom it may concern certificate from The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and Career Progression.
- Experience Certificates

- Applications that do not meet the requirements or incomplete applications shall be excluded, and this exclusion is considered an official apology without the need to notify the applicant.

Kuwait Airways
6 March 2025



INTERNATIONAL



Students arriving for classes walk past damage from the roof that was sheered off by high winds at Plano West High School on March 4 in Plano, Texas. (AP)

Powerful US storms kill two people

Powerful storms killed two people in Mississippi, tore the roofs off an apartment building and a nursing home in a small town in Oklahoma and threatened more communities across the nation Tuesday with wide-ranging weather.

The large storm system also brought blinding dust storms to the

Southwest, blizzards with whiteout conditions to the Midwest and fears of wildfires elsewhere.

In Irving, Texas, a tornado with winds up to 110 mph (177 kph) struck, while another touched down in the 16,000-resident city of Ada, Oklahoma, according to preliminary information from the National

Weather Service. There were also two tornadoes in Louisiana's northern Caddo Parish and at least five in eastern Oklahoma.

High winds forced some changes to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which moved up and shortened the two biggest parades to wrap them up before the bad weather moved in. (AP)

Florida lawmakers begin legislative session

DeSantis and Trump priorities hold sway

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., March 5, (AP) — As Florida lawmakers officially kicked off their 2025 legislative session Tuesday, the political aspirations of two of the state's best-known residents — Gov. Ron DeSantis and President Donald Trump — were driving the conversation amid the pomp and ceremony.

As DeSantis approaches the end of his second term, the popular Republican governor has been talking up one potential heir to succeed him: his wife, Casey DeSantis. At the same time, DeSantis has sparred with some of Trump's allies in the Legislature, working to lay the groundwork for his own political future while the president's supporters in Tallahassee try to follow through on the campaign promises of the man DeSantis dared to challenge for the party nomination.

Addressing a joint session of the Legislature on Tuesday, DeSantis touted the laws he signed last month to crackdown on illegal immigration in the state, which lawmakers passed after huddling in three special sessions that sparked a bitter feud between the governor and legislative leaders as they battled over whose ideas would better deliver on Trump's vision.

But speaking to a House chamber packed with lawmakers, DeSantis congratulated the legislative leaders on the immigration measures.

"No state has done more and no state did it sooner than we did in the free state of Florida," DeSantis said. "We can and we must continue to lead."



Florida Gov Ron DeSantis shakes hands with lawmakers as he enters the house chamber to address a joint session, on the opening day of the 2025 legislative session, on March 4, at the state capitol in Tallahassee, Fla. (AP)

Heading into the regular session, DeSantis has called on lawmakers to consider a proposal to eliminate the state's property taxes, to roll back gun restrictions that a bipartisan coalition passed in the wake of the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland and to significantly restructure the citizens' ballot initiative process. In November, Florida voters used the ballot process to propose legalizing recreational marijuana and expanding abortion rights, though the measure fell short of the 60% needed

to pass. "We saw how that constitutional amendment process was perverted," DeSantis said, alleging there was fraud in the petitions used to get the measures on the ballot. "We need to clean up this out-of-control amendment process."

Republican Senate President Ben Albritton has raised questions about the governor's call to undo changes made after the school shooting, saying law enforcement officers tell him the state's red flag law is working.

US president address to Congress showed country's stark partisan divide

Zelensky wants peace, ready to accept minerals deal after WH blowup: Trump

WASHINGTON, March 5, (AP) — US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky had written to him to say he appreciates US support for his country in its war with Russia and is ready to sign a deal that could ensure future American support.

In a speech to Congress following last week's disastrous meeting at the White House, Trump said Zelensky had told him that Ukraine is ready to negotiate a peace deal with Russia as soon as possible and would accept a critical minerals agreement with the US to facilitate that.

Trump's remarks came after Vice President JD Vance, who was a major player in the breakdown between the president and Zelensky on Friday, struck a new nerve with allies by offering skeptical comments about a potential international security force for postwar Ukraine proposed by Britain and France.

"Earlier today, I received an important letter from President Zelensky of Ukraine," Trump said. Quoting from the letter, Trump said Zelensky told him that "Ukraine is ready to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible to bring lasting peace closer.

Nobody wants peace more than the Ukrainians."

"My team and I stand ready to work under President Trump's strong leadership to get a peace that lasts," Trump quoted Zelensky as writing. "We do really value how much America has done to help Ukraine maintain its sovereignty and independence."

Trump added that Zelensky said he was ready to sign the minerals deal "at any time that is convenient for you."

Although Trump said he "appreciated" getting the letter, he did not say if it would affect his policy toward Ukraine, which on Monday was dominated by his decision to pause military aid to the country.

Earlier Tuesday, Vance said the minerals deal would be a more practical deterrent against Russian President Vladimir Putin than a peacekeeping force for postwar Ukraine that includes "some random country."

In an interview with Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity, Vance said the economic pact with Kyiv sought by Trump "is a way better security guarantee than 20,000 troops from some random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years."

The Trump administration has been



US House Speaker Mike Johnson, (right), and Vice President JD Vance, (left), listen as President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress at the Capitol in Washington on March 4. (AP)

making the case that tightening US-Ukraine economic ties through an agreement that gives the US access to valuable mineral deposits in Ukraine will give Russia pause about taking malign action against Ukraine in the future.

both countries' partnership with the US military in conflict zones over the past 25 years.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron are leading the call for a post-conflict peacekeeping force in Ukraine to prevent Russia from invading again if Moscow and Kyiv reach a truce to put a stop to Russia's invasion, launched in February 2022.

French troops deployed to Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. And British troops have served alongside American forces in Afghanistan and Iraq and in a US-led coalition against the Islamic State group.

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage told broadcaster GB News that "JD Vance is wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong."

"For 20 years in Afghanistan, pro rata our size against America's, we spent the same amount of money, we put the same number of men and women in, and we suffered the same losses," Farage added. "We stood by America all through those 20 years putting in exactly the same contribution. And, all right, they may be six times bigger, but we did our bit."

Vance on Tuesday took to social media to try to head off the criticism by noting that he didn't name any countries in the TV interview. He also applauded Britain and France for fighting "bravely alongside the US over the last 20 years, and beyond."

Later, during an appearance on Capitol Hill, Vance underscored to reporters that "the British and the French have offered to step up in a big way."

French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu, in France's parliament, noted the move by Vance. "Thankfully, the American vice president corrected his comments," Lecornu said.

But in London, Liberal Democrat defense spokeswoman Helen Maguire, a former Royal Military Police officer who served in Iraq, called for the U.K. ambassador in Washington to ask Vance to apologize.

Trump was speaking to a house divided. Republicans stood and cheered. For Democrats, it was silence, with occasional shouts of protest, with the only applause when he announced that Ukraine wanted to restart peace negotiations. He inflated the scale of his victory in November, the margin of which was actually among the smallest in American history.

Slovak president swears in new minister in reshuffle to stabilize government

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia, March 5, (AP) — Slovakia's President Peter Pellegrini swore in a new minister of tourism and sports on Wednesday in a reshuffle aimed to stabilize the government.

The appointment of Rudolf Huliak came two weeks after the three parties in the governing coalition agreed on a move to increase the power of the Smer (Direction) party of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico.

Under the agreement, the coalition's two junior partners — the Hlas (Voice) party and the ultranationalist and pro-Russian Slovak National Party — gave up control of one ministry each to Smer.

With the addition of the ministries overseeing investments, regional development and information, and tourism and sports, Smer now controls nine ministries, Hlas six and the Slovak National Party two.

The deal was a result of a recent crisis in the coalition that risked its parliamentary majority.

The coalition had 79 seats in the 150-seat parliament known as the National Council before four Hlas lawmakers and three others, including Huliak, in the Slovak National Party parted with their parliamentary factions. The lawmakers did not join the opposition but have demanded posts in the government, parliament and state institutions in exchange for their loyalty.

That has made it difficult for the government to advance its agenda.

Huliak is not a member of the Slovak National Party but heads a fringe, far-right National Coalition party.

Pellegrini's predecessor, Zuzana Čaputová, refused to accept Huliak's nomination for the post of environment minister after the 2023 parliamentary election. Čaputová said she would not appoint as minister someone who doesn't believe in the threat of climate change.

She also cited Huliak's advocacy of violence against environmentalists as a reason not to swear him in. Huliak, the mayor of Ocová town in central Slovakia, and expressed pro-Russian views.

Fico has yet to announce his plans with the Investments, Regional Development and Information Ministry.

Fico's government has faced vocal protests against its pro-Russian and other policies.



Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center on Feb 21, in Oxon Hill, Md. (AP)



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, (front center), hosts the European leaders' summit to discuss Ukraine, at Lancaster House, London on March 2. Front row from left: Finland's President Alexander Stubb, France's President Emmanuel Macron, Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Center row from left, Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Antonio Costa, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Romania's Interim President Iliu Bolojan. Back row from left: NATO secretary General Mark Rutte, Netherlands' Prime Minister Dick Schoof, Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, Czech Republic's Prime Minister Petr Fiala, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan. (AP)

French President Macron to discuss nuclear deterrence with European allies

PARIS, March 5, (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron says that he's ready to start discussions on nuclear deterrence with European allies.

Macron has hinted that France could help to protect other nations after U.S. President Donald Trump raised questions both about the trans-Atlantic alliance and the defense of Ukraine.

While Macron's offering has been on the table for several years, it has gained urgency after Trump's remarks raised concerns among European NATO allies, which have for decades counted on the powerful U.S. deterrent.

Nuclear deterrence is a strategy based on the idea that the destructive force of nuclear weapons would prevent other nations' hostile actions, particularly nuclear attacks.

During the Cold War, the US nuclear umbrella was aimed at ensuring that allies, especially NATO members, would be protected by American nuclear forces in case of a threat. That's one of the reasons why many nations

across the world haven't pursued their own nuclear arsenals.

France is the only nuclear power in the European Union. The United Kingdom, which is no longer an EU member but is working on restoring closer ties with the 27-nation bloc and closer to NATO, also has nuclear weapons.

In the wake of Trump's push for Europe to carry the defense burden, German election winner Friedrich Merz recently called for a discussion on "nuclear sharing" with France.

EU leaders are set to address the issue during a special summit in Brussels on Thursday, focusing on support for Ukraine and European defense. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer won't be attending the summit. The only non-EU guest is Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

France's nuclear deterrence is strictly conceived as defensive. It is meant to protect the country's "vital interests."

Although France is a NATO member, it independently maintains its nu-

clear forces, cooperating with the alliance's broader deterrence strategy.

Since a 2020 keynote speech, Macron has said that France's "vital interests" have a "European dimension" — comments that he reiterated in recent days.

"What may be new today ... is the somewhat urgent nature of these comments and how they are perceived abroad," said Emmanuelle Maitre, senior research fellow at France's Foundation for Strategic Research.

"Obviously, faced with the feeling of abandonment felt by NATO countries, there's some kind of logical search for what might enable them to keep some form of deterrence mission within Europe," Maitre said.

Nuclear deterrence involves maintaining ambiguity about which circumstances would lead to the use of nuclear weapons, in order to prevent a potential aggressor from calculating risks — which is why France wouldn't provide details over how it would help in defending other European countries.

Greenland defiant leader says island 'is ours' as Trump vows to acquire territory

NUUK, Greenland, March 5, (AP) — Greenland's prime minister declared Wednesday that "Greenland is ours" and cannot be taken or bought in defiance of a message from U.S. President Donald Trump, who said his administration supported the Arctic island's right of self-determination — but added that the United States will acquire the territory "one way or another."

Greenlandic Prime Minister Múte Bourup Egede said the island's citizens are neither American nor Danish because they are Greenlandic. The United States needs to understand that, he wrote in a post in Greenlandic and Danish on Facebook Wednesday.

The future of Greenland will be decided by its people, he wrote.



A woman walks with her dogs on a beach in Nuuk, Greenland on March 4. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

Residents prepare for first cyclone in 51 years to hit Australian coast near Brisbane

MELBOURNE, Australia, March 5, (AP): Residents were stacking sandbags to protect low-lying properties Wednesday ahead of a tropical cyclone forecast to become the first in 51 years to hit the Australian east coast near Brisbane, the nation's third-most populous city.

Tropical Cyclone Alfred is forecast to cross the coast between the Queensland state capital Brisbane and the tourist city of Gold Coast to the south late Thursday or early Friday, Bureau of Meteorology manager Matt Collopy said. Brisbane and Gold Coast are a continuous urban sprawl. Their centers are 80 kilometers (50 miles) apart.

Alfred was over the Pacific Ocean 400 kilometers (250 miles) east of Brisbane and tracking west Wednesday with sustained winds near the center of 95 kph (59 mph) with gusts to 130 kph (81 mph).

"That is destructive winds," Collopy said. It was expected to maintain that strength until reaching land.

"Large swells and powerful waves have been observed along the Queensland coast for several days now with severe coastal erosion and inundation happening," Collopy told reporters in Brisbane. "This will continue and likely get worse as the system approaches and makes landfall."

Heavy rain and life-threatening flooding were expected in the days ahead, he said.

"The wave, wind, rainfall and particularly the storm surge present significant risks," Collopy added.

Cyclones are common in Queensland's tropical north but are rare in the state's temperate and densely populated southeast corner that borders New South Wales state.

Cyclone Zoe crossed the coast at the southern end of Gold Coast on the New South Wales border in March 1974, causing extensive flooding.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government was providing the Queensland government with 250,000 sandbags in addition to 80,000 the military had already delivered.

"This is a rare event, to have a tropical cyclone in an area that is not classified as part of the tropics, here in southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales," Albanese told reporters in Brisbane.

"That is why this preparatory work is so important," Albanese added.

Brisbane Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner said modeling showed that up to 20,000 homes in his city of more than 3 million people could experience some level of flooding.



Waves crash onto rocks as people look on at the Spit, on the Seaway on the Gold Coast, Australia on March 3, as Cyclone Alfred builds off the east coast. (AP)

N.Korea appears close to completing its 1st airborne early warning aircraft

SEOUL, South Korea, March 5, (AP): North Korea appears close to completing its first airborne early warning aircraft, satellite imagery showed, an asset that experts say will sharply bolster the country's air force power when it's deployed.

North Korea's nuclear and missile programs pose a significant security threat to South Korea, the US and others. But its aerial surveillance capability is far behind those of its rivals, while most of its fighter jets and other military aircraft are aging.

38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, reported Tuesday that recent commercial satellite imag-

ery showed an Ilyushin IL-76 aircraft parked at a Pyongyang airport, with a large radome mounted on top of the fuselage. A radome refers to a structure that encircles a radar system.

It called the aircraft's near-completion "a significant upgrade for an air force that has not seen new airborne capabilities in years."

The website said the radome has a distinctive triangle design on top, similar to what is seen on some Chinese airborne early warning aircraft, but not used on U.S. or Russian aircraft. "This could indicate support or influence from China, although the triangle alone is not conclusive proof," the website said.

China still preferred a peaceful solution to Taiwan issue: Li

China to increase its defense budget 7.2% this year

TAIPEI, Taiwan, March 5, (AP): China said Wednesday it will increase its defense budget 7.2% this year, as it continues its campaign to build a larger, more modern military to assert its territorial claims and challenge the US defense lead in Asia.

China's military spending remains the second largest behind the US and it already has the world's largest navy.

The budget, which adds up to about \$245 billion, was announced at the National People's Congress, the annual meeting of China's legislature. The Pentagon and many experts say China's total spending on defense may be 40% higher or more because of items included under other budgets.

The boost is the same percentage as last year, far below the double-digit percentage increases of previous years and reflecting an overall slowdown in the economy. The nation's leaders have set a target of around 5% growth for this year.

Tensions with the US, Taiwan, Japan and neighbors who have overlapping claims to the crucial South China Sea are seen as driving spending on increasingly high-tech military technologies. Those include stealth fighters, the country's three - soon to be four - aircraft carriers, and a broad expansion of its nuclear arsenal.

China generally ascribes the budget increases to exercises and maintenance and improving the lives of its 2 million service members.

The People's Liberation Army - the



Military wait to attend the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China on March 5. (AP)

military branch of the ruling Communist Party - has build bases on artificial islands in the South China Sea but its main objective is asserting Chinese control over Taiwan, a self-governing democracy Beijing claims as its own territory that has close ties to the US.

China sent a relatively small military contingent near Taiwan on Wednesday, just days after sending dozens of aircraft. Such missions are intended to demoralize and wear down Taiwan's defenses, which have been bolstered by upgraded US F-16s, tanks and missiles, along with domestically developed armaments.

In his comments at the Congress, Premier Li Qiang told the nearly 3,000 party loyalists that China still preferred a peaceful solution to the Taiwan issue, but "resolutely opposes" those pushing for Taiwan's formal independence and their foreign supporters.

"We will firmly advance the cause of China's reunification and work with our fellow Chinese in Taiwan to realize the glorious cause of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," Li said.

Taiwan's defense minister this week said the island is planning to boost military spending in the face of

the "rapidly changing international situation and the escalating threats from adversaries."

Faced with slower growth, China will likely prioritize key strategic goals over social and economic reforms, said Antonia Hmaid, a senior analyst with the Mercator Institute for China Studies.

"Those resources are more important to the CCP's goals of advancing a techno-industrial agenda and modernizing the military," Hmaid said, using an acronym for the governing Chinese Communist Party.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who oversees the armed forces, has attempted to force through major reforms and removed senior military leaders including two former defense ministers and the head of the missile corps.

Whether that will reduce the armed forces' influence remains unclear though, and the official Xinhua News Agency ran an item after Wednesday's announcement praising the government for keeping defense spending at below 1.5% of GDP for the last decade and criticizing the US for not cutting its spending.

"China's development strengthens the world's forces for peace, and the country will never seek hegemony or engage in expansionism no matter what stage of development it reaches," Xinhua said, using standard Chinese terms defining its stance as purely defensive in nature.



This undated photo provided on Sept 13, 2024, by the North Korean government shows its leader Kim Jong Un, (center), on an inspecting visit at what they say is an institute of nuclear weapons and a facility for nuclear materials at an undisclosed location in North Korea. (AP)

'Cooperation talks with Putin'

Myanmar's junta chief visits Russia

MOSCOW, March 5, (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin was holding talks on Tuesday with the head of Myanmar's military government, who seeks to cement cooperation with Moscow as he faces isolation and sanctions from the West.

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing was on his fourth trip to Russia since his army seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Western nations have imposed economic and political sanctions in response to the takeover and the violent repression of opposition, which has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and given rise to an armed conflict widely seen as civil war.

At the start of the Kremlin talks, Putin noted growing bilateral trade and close cooperation in the international arena, and thanked the Myanmar leader for sending six baby elephants to Moscow.

Russia, along with China, is a major supporter and arms supplier to Myanmar. Russian-made fighter jets are used in attacks on territory under control of ethnic minority groups, many of them allies with pro-democracy resistance forces.

Russia defends Myanmar's military government in international forums, and the ruling generals generally sup-



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Myanmar's Military leader Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing shake hands after a signing ceremony following their meeting at the Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow, Russia on March 5. (AP)

port Moscow's foreign policy agenda. The countries have held joint military drills and signed a pact on developing nuclear power.

The countries signed agreements to outline cooperation around Moscow building nuclear power plants in Myanmar and recognize academic qualifications.

Ming Aung Hlaing emphasized his

military government's support for Russia's military action in Ukraine.

"Russia is a key backer of the Myanmar military," said Morgan Michaels, a Singapore-based analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "In addition to diplomatic and symbolic support, it plays a vital role in enhancing and sustaining the regime's warfighting capacity."

Army surrounds South Sudan vice president's home as allies arrested

JUBA, South Sudan, March 5, (Agencies): South Sudanese soldiers surrounded Vice President Riek Machar's home in the capital on Wednesday and several of his allies were arrested after an armed group allied to him overran an army base in the country's north.

Machar, whose political rivalry with President Salva Kiir has in the past exploded into civil war, said last month that the firing of several of his allies from posts in the government threatened the 2018 peace deal between him and Kiir that ended a five-year civil war in which more than 400,000 people were killed.

Deputy army chief Gen. Gabriel Duop Lam, also loyal to Machar, was detained Tuesday over the fighting in the north, while Machar ally and Petroleum Minister Puot Kang Chol

was arrested Wednesday alongside his bodyguards and family. No reason was given for the arrests.

Neither Machar nor his SPLM-IO party have commented about the fighting, but Water Minister Pal Mai Deng, who is also the party's spokesperson, said Lam's detention "puts the entire peace agreement at risk."

Western envoys last week urged leaders to de-escalate the tension.

Ter Manyang Gatwich, Executive Director of the Center for Peace and Advocacy, has called for the immediate release of those detained to avert further escalation of violence and further bloodshed from degenerating into what he called a "full-scale war."

South Sudan is yet to fully implement the 2018 peace agreement and elections that were scheduled for last year were postponed by two years due to a lack of funds.

Meanwhile, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) said Tuesday it faces a critical funding shortfall of 412 million US dollars to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of millions in crisis-hit South Sudan in 2025.

Peruvian ex-prez Castillo on trial

LIMA, Peru, March 5, (AP): Former Peruvian president Pedro Castillo went on trial Tuesday charged with rebellion, grave abuse of authority

and perturbing public tranquility in a case that has polarized the South American nation.

The charges stem from a failed effort by Castillo to declare a state of emergency and dissolve Peru's Congress as legislators prepared an impeachment vote against him in December 2022.

Castillo failed to get the military's support for his move, and was swiftly deposed by Congress and arrested after prosecutors accused him of trying to promote a coup. But the removal of Castillo, Peru's first Indigenous president, sparked large protests in the south of the country, in which at least 49 people were killed in the weeks following the president's ouster.

18 killed, 42 wounded in Pakistan military base attack launched by suicide bombers

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, March 5, (AP): A city in northwestern Pakistan was preparing for funeral prayers and observing a day of mourning Wednesday after a twin suicide bombing that targeted a military base the evening before killed 18 people, including five soldiers.

A militant group linked with the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing in Bannu on Tuesday evening, which also left 42 wounded, some of them critically.

It was the latest in a spate of violence, including suicide bombings, that has hit the country in recent days.

The attack unfolded with two suicide bombers first blowing themselves up first to breach the wall surrounding the base. Most of the local residents were breaking their day-long fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan or praying at a nearby mosque.

The powerful blasts tore through walls and ripped off roofs and also severely damaged the mosque. After the explosions, other attackers stormed the compound and set off a firefight with the troops.

A statement from the army's media department on Wednesday said five soldiers and 16 militants were



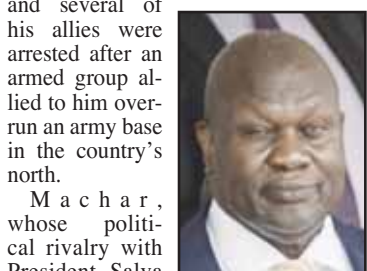
A police officer examines the damaged vehicles at the site of Tuesday's suicide bombing, in Bannu, in northwestern Pakistan on March 5. (AP)

killed. It said the suicide bombers "rammed two explosive-laden vehicles into the perimeter wall" at the base.

Gunshots could still be heard early Wednesday as security forces combed through the area, looking to clear it of any militants involved in the attack. At the scene of the bombings, a mechanical digger was

clearing away rubble where homes used to stand, and debris-covered prayer mats lay crumpled on the mosque floor.

A day of mourning was being observed, said Bannu community elder Alam Khan, and joint funeral prayers were to be held for the victims at a sports complex in the area.



Machar



Castillo



Merchants wait for customers at the Virunga market in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo on Feb 27, one month after Rwanda-backed M23 rebels captured the city. (AP)

Germany suspends new financial aid to Rwanda

Germany's development ministry said Tuesday it will suspend new financial commitments to Rwanda over that country's alleged support of the M23 rebels in neighboring eastern Congo.

The ministry said Tuesday that, "in consultation with partners," it will

further restrict bilateral cooperation with Rwanda.

It said that it will review existing development cooperation with Kigali, suspend high-level participation in development events organized by the Rwandan government and seek "an appropriate reaction"

regarding multilateral programs.

Germany said Rwanda was informed of the decision in advance in a conversation in which the position of the European Union and expectations of Rwanda - particularly withdrawal of its troops and an end to support for M23 - were again underlined. (AP)

US dollar settles at KD 0.308

KUWAIT CITY, March 5, (KUNA): The US dollar exchange rate against the Kuwaiti dinar settled at KD 0.308 on Wednesday and the euro rose by 1.26 percent to reach KD 0.327, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said.

The CBK added in its online daily bulletin that

the exchange rate of the pound sterling moved up by 0.63 percent to KD 0.394, also the Swiss franc by 0.63 percent settling at 0.346 and the Japanese yen firmed lower than KD 0.002.

Exchange rates declared by the CBK reflect average prices and not rates of actual transactions.

Business

Campaign celebrates 'presence' in face of adversity

Zain's 2025 Ramadan video focuses on love, resilience, and hope

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: With its renown pioneering spirit, Zain Group unveiled a daring Ramadan video (TVC) for 2025 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJuGsTvNvZA>), the first to be filmed on location across Gaza, Lebanon, and other affected regions, reminding the global community that the Zain brand is there with them, and for them, at all times.

Airing on local TV channels in the Gulf, and showcased on Zain Group's YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn and X social media channels, the commercial brings together authentic imagery with a captivating narrative of perseverance but also defiance.

Within a few days of launch, the TVC witnessed over 6 million views with tens of thousands of comments and support of the video concept. The campaign is accompanied by a hashtag, encouraging audiences to share their own stories of being present for their land.

The video concept

The concept of the video captures the unyielding spirit of those who remain firm in the face of adversity. The impactful TVC delivers a strong message: "The people of the land are, and always will be, present, standing firm in their love and devotion to their land, no matter the challenges they face."

Using a play on the word "attendance", the TVC reinforces that true "presence" is not just about showing up somewhere and claiming it, it is about 'belonging, resisting, and rebuilding'.

Adding to the emotional depth of the campaign is the voice of renowned artist Majed Al Mohandes, whose brilliant performance transforms the soundtrack into an anthem of resilience and



- TVC going viral on all major Social Media channels with over 6 million views within a few days
- Triggering conversations and touching hearts on controversial topics
- Filmed on location across Gaza, Lebanon, and other affected regions



Zain 2025 Ramadan TVC.

hope.

The film also features Maria from Gaza, the little girl who became famous for her powerful speech to U.S. President Donald Trump, firmly stating that she will not leave her home and asking him if he would leave the States and live somewhere else.

Another important inclusion is Renad, the young chef from Gaza who became known for her cooking on social media during the relentless bombings.

These young people's presence is a testament to the determination of the region's people, no

matter their age.

One powerful visual in the commercial is a flagpole showing multiple symbolic elements: the Lebanese cedar tree, representing strength and endurance; Gaza's keys, a symbol of the right of return; and Syria's oud string instrument, reflecting resilience through art. The flagpole carries a flag that reads a declaration of the power of strong, peaceful souls capable of restoring nations.

As the video unfolds, it reveals a crystal-clear statement: "Whoever tries to take over the

land and reshape it by building rivieras, will fail. This land is not for sale and its people will always rise from the rubble to reclaim and rebuild it with love and hope."

The TVC's original idea was generated by Zain Group's branding team and produced by Joy Productions in Kuwait. It was directed by Samir Abboud from Lebanon and features artist Majed Al Mohandes; the girls vocals were by Maryam Shehab; Lyrics by Heba Hamada; Music Composition by Ehab Abdulwahed; Music Arrangement by

Michel Fadel; and the Production House was VIP Films.

An annual ground-breaking Ramadan TVC

Every Ramadan, Zain seeks to present a new message in its TVCs that touches upon the most relevant issues in life, and this year was no different. In previous TVCs, Zain has addressed peace and tolerance, and highlighted the suffering of refugees, and the effects of disputes and conflicts on people regionally as well as a message of hope during the COVID crisis. The company has also partnered with global

entities including the United Nations to achieve its sustainability and humanitarian goals and communicated such in its Ramadan TVCs.

It is central to Zain that its commercials reflect the values of its brand, which is based on being a cornerstone of every community and country in which it serves, supporting perseverance and defiance against injustice. Zain views itself as a facilitator that enables people to enjoy aspects of their lives and sharing occasions with friends and family seamlessly.

Gulf Bank distributes Ramadan food packages to underprivileged families

Bank partners with City Hypermarket for Ramadan charity initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: As part of its Ramadan program "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together," Gulf Bank has distributed food packages to underprivileged families in Al-Jahra. This initiative was made possible through a partnership with City Hypermarket.

Every year, Gulf Bank remains dedicated to organizing meaningful initiatives and activities throughout the holy month

of Ramadan, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and community support."

The Bank praised its partnership with City Hypermarket in supporting individuals and families facing difficult circumstances. By distributing Ramadan food packages, they aim to alleviate the financial burden on families, particularly amid rising living costs. Each package contains a variety of essential food items, providing sustenance for several days.

This initiative is one of many charitable efforts Gulf Bank organizes during Ramadan, reflecting the Bank's long-standing commitment to the Kuwaiti community. For over 60 years, Gulf Bank has remained an integral part of Kuwait's economic and social development, consistently contributing to the well-being of society.

Gulf Bank continues to uphold its strong commit-

ment to sustainability across social, economic, and environmental levels through carefully curated initiatives that positively impact both the Bank and the community. These efforts support the Bank's 2025 strategy, align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and contribute to Kuwait Vision 2035.

Notably, in the days leading up to Ramadan, Gulf Bank distributed food packages to visitors at Lulu Hypermarket and Al-Shamiya Cooperative Society over two days.

Additionally, the Bank participated in the "Joy Land" initiative, which provided household essentials and Eid clothing to low-income families. This initiative aimed to enhance the quality of life for underprivileged families during Ramadan by addressing their basic needs and spreading joy.

'Reflecting strong client relationships'

HSBC Kuwait named top trade finance provider by Euromoney

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: HSBC Kuwait has been recognised as the market leader for trade finance in the country, securing the top position in Euromoney's Trade Finance Survey 2025.

HSBC ranked first globally in the survey, winning multiple first-place awards across different categories. These rankings reflect the votes of thousands of business customers who trust HSBC's expertise in delivering innovative and efficient trade finance solutions.

Samer AlAbed, CEO of HSBC in Kuwait, said: "Trade finance is the backbone of international business, enabling companies in Kuwait to trade globally with confidence. HSBC's global network and local expertise make cross-border trade seamless, helping businesses grow in an increasingly interconnected world. This recognition from Euromoney reflects our commitment to delivering secure, innovative, and technology-driven solutions that support our customers' success."

HSBC continues to leverage its global reach and local expertise to support businesses in Kuwait with tailored trade finance solutions. These include supply chain finance, working capital optimization, and sustainable finance options, ensuring customers can navigate challenges and seize new opportunities.



Samer AlAbed, CEO of HSBC Kuwait

Porus Buhariwala, Head of Global Trade Services in Kuwait, added: "This recognition is a testament to the strong relationships we have built with our clients in Kuwait. We are grateful for their trust and remain committed to providing best-in-class trade finance solutions that help them achieve their goals in a rapidly evolving business environment."

More information on the awarding bodies and awarding mechanism can be provided upon request. For more details on HSBC's trade finance services, visit: HSBC Trade Finance

Al-Roumi affirms stability goals

'OPEC+ to gradually increase oil production starting April'

KUWAIT CITY, March 5, (KUNA): Kuwait Oil Minister Tariq Al-Roumi has affirmed that the decision of eight oil-exporting countries within the OPEC Plus group to begin increasing their production starting next April is a decision aimed at ensuring the stability of the global oil market.

This came in a press statement by Minister Al-Roumi after his participation in the ministerial meeting of the eight OPEC Plus countries that are implementing voluntary production cuts, which was held yesterday via video conference, namely Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Sultanate of Oman, Russia, in addition to Kuwait.

Al-Roumi said a comprehensive assessment of the current oil

market conditions and prospects for their development during the coming months was reviewed, noting that it was decided to proceed with a gradual increase in production starting from the first of next April, in line with market data, in accordance with what was agreed upon during the meeting held last December.

He stressed that this decision reflects the commitment of the eight countries to adopt a proactive and responsible approach aimed at ensuring the stability of the global oil market.

The quota set for Kuwait is 2.413 million barrels per day, rising from April to 2.421 million barrels per day, then gradually increasing to reach 2.548 million barrels per day by September 2026.



Gulf Bank delivers essential food aid during Ramadan.



Brent and WTI crude prices dip amid market fluctuations

Kuwait oil price drops to \$73.19 per barrel

KUWAIT CITY, March 5, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil price dropped by USD 2.94 to reach USD 73.19 per barrel on Tuesday via a vis USD 76.13 pb on Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Wednesday.

In international markets, the Brent crude forwards dropped by 58 cents to settle at USD 71.04 pb, while those of the West Texas Intermediate crude edged down by 11 cents, reaching USD 68.26 a barrel.



Khaled AlShamlan and the executive management with the honorees.

'Human capital is our most valuable asset'

KFH honors its scholarship graduates and certified professionals

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has honored 60 employees who graduated from its scholarship program and those who obtained professional certifications during 2024.

Speaking at the ceremony held at Grand Hayatt Hotel for this occasion, KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled AlShamlan expressed his pleasure in honoring a new cohort of KFH's ambitious and distinguished employees who obtained accreditations and completed their undergraduate and graduate studies through KFH scholarship program.

He noted that this academic and professional achievement is a source of pride and a testament to employees' continuous commitment to developing their capabilities and enhancing their skills, ultimately improving work performance, service quality, and reinforcing KFH's leadership both locally and globally.

AlShamlan extended his heartfelt gratitude to the families of the honored employees, acknowledging their pivotal role in supporting and encouraging the employees' academic and professional pursuits.

He added: "At KFH, we believe that human capital is our most valuable assets. The success of any organization relies on the competence of its employees and their ability to innovate and improve on a constant basis. For that reason, KFH remains committed to supporting your professional journey and providing you with the necessary resources and programs that help you achieve the highest level of performance, excellence and service quality. You are the future of this esteemed



Khaled AlShamlan, KFH Group Chief Executive Officer.

AlShamlan: The success of any organization relies on the competence of its employees and their ability to innovate

institution. With your efforts and dedication, we will continue to achieve further success and maintain our leadership and excellence."

KFH Acting Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer– Ahmad Alhammad

Meanwhile, KFH Acting Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Ahmad Alhammad congratulated the honored employees on their achievement and extended his gratitude to their families for their unwavering support throughout their educational and professional learning journey.



Ahmad Alhammad, KFH Acting Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer.

Alhammad: We foster a supportive work environment that enables employees to achieve their ambitions and unleash their full potential

Alhammad pointed out that the development and education are integral to KFH's corporate culture. He emphasized that recognizing a distinguished group of ambitious employees reflects KFH's strong commitment to their professional and academic growth, considering them the true wealth of the institution.

He added: "Undoubtedly, the knowledge gained, and modern skills acquired through professional certifications and scholarship programs must be put into practice to boost productivity, improve service quality, enhance operational efficiency and foster innovation and overcome challenges. Equally important

is sharing this knowledge with their colleagues."

Alhammad explained that KFH enjoys an outstanding track record of achievements that focus on prioritizing its human capital. "In 2024, KFH provided approximately 116,000 training hours to around 4,000 employees," he added, "As part of the leadership development program, 26 managers participated in the group-wide Building Leadership Excellence program. Additionally, 19 employees were accepted into the scholarship program, and 39 employees graduated from Forssah program, a program dedicated to attracting top-tier recent graduates."

He also highlighted KFH's global recognition for its excellence in human resources, having won 13 international awards from Brandon Hall, the highest number of accolades received both locally and regionally.

Alhammad reiterated KFH's commitment to continuously supporting all employees by offering the best training and development programs in collaboration with renowned academic institutions, prestigious universities, and leading training centers worldwide.

He stated: "At KFH, we are dedicated to fostering a supportive work environment that enables employees to achieve their ambitions, refine their skills, and unleash their full potential. This adds significant value to the institution and contributes to achieving its objectives and strengthening its leading position in the industry."



Khaled AlShamlan and Ahmad Alhammad honoring employees.

On the sidelines of the Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit 2025

NBK recognized for excellence in Data-Driven Decision Making

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Further cementing its leadership in innovation, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was honored with the "Best use case of data driven decision making" award at the Ninth Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit 2025, recently held in Dubai.

The award recognizes NBK's successful implementation of self-service analytics through Tableau Data Management across the bank.

The Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit Awards are the first and largest independent accolades recognizing AI and analytics excellence in banking across the MENA region, evaluated by a panel of expert judges.

The award underscores NBK's continued leadership in the fast-evolving technology landscape, reflecting its strategic commitment to investing in data analysis and processing. This approach enables the Bank to gain deeper insights into customer needs and behavior while enhancing operational efficiency.

NBK's Data Office strategy is designed to empower the bank's various business sectors with data-driven decision-making, with self-service analytics serving as a core pillar of this approach.

The strategy also outlines a roadmap to enhance employee efficiency through cutting-edge programs and specialized workshops on advanced visual analytics, statistical analysis,



Sudhakar Nibhanupudi, Chief Data Officer at National Bank of Kuwait, receives the award on behalf of the bank.

forecasting reports, and the creation of high-performance dynamic data visualizations, alongside fostering design thinking.

The award is a testament to the Data Office team's efforts in advancing the bank's data

landscape and analytical tools. It underscores the success of NBK's strategy in fostering a digital culture and enhancing AI-driven data analysis and processing, enabling more precise predictions of customer behavior and



'Best use case of data driven decision making' Award.

■ Driven by the successful deployment of self-service analytics through Tableau Data Management across the bank

the banking and financial services sector across the GCC.

The summit spotlighted the transformative impact of generative AI on business processes, best practices in risk management, leveraging quantitative AI for future opportunities, and the role of AI and analytics in decision-making. It also addressed key topics such as regulatory compliance in banking, payment innovations, cloud-based solutions, and AI integration to enhance customer trust.

NBK's Data Center was designed and developed in line with the highest international standards, enabling the bank to analyze vast amounts of data to assess customer trends and needs. This capability empowers NBK to make swift, data-driven decisions that align with customer aspirations and expectations.

For more information on the Best use case of data driven decision making Award at the Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit, please visit: <https://mebankingai.com/ae/>

GCC sukuk issuance falls after record highs in 2024

Global sukuk issuance to decline in 2025 and 2026

By Moody's Ratings

Global long-term sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance volumes will decline this year from exceptionally high levels in 2024 as the two largest government issuers curb issuance activity, not withstanding still high financing needs in most jurisdictions.

■ Sukuk issuance volumes to decline in 2025 and 2026. We expect government and supranational sukuk issuance to drop by nearly 20% to around \$92 billion in 2025 and contract further to less than \$90 billion in 2026. Saudi Arabia (Aa3 stable) will lead the decline because the government is unlikely to repeat its large liability management operations, which nearly doubled its issuance of sukuk in 2024. By contrast, we expect issuance to increase in Indonesia (Baa2 stable) and Türkiye (B1 positive) because of higher sukuk refinancing needs.

■ Saudi Arabia drove near-record high sukuk issuance volumes in 2024. Sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance increased by nearly 20% in 2024, reaching \$110.5 billion, the second highest after the all-time high in 2020. We estimate that the stock of outstanding long-term sovereign and supranational sukuk exceeded \$500 billion in 2024. The big jump in issuance during 2024 was mainly because of the Saudi Arabian government's decision to issue long-dated sukuk to refinance some nearer-term sukuk maturities. Other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) governments and Türkiye also increased issuance, partly because of higher sukuk refinancing needs and to take advantage of strong demand for Shariah-compliant assets from Islamic banks in the GCC region. Indonesia's issuance also increased, reflecting fiscal deterioration, while Malaysia's (A3 stable) issuance volumes declined in line with its narrowing fiscal deficit.

■ Cross-border sukuk issuance stabilised in 2024, accounting for around 20% of total sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance. Despite an increase in the overall sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance volumes, sukuk issuance in the international capital markets fell slightly to \$20.4 billion in 2024 from \$20.8 billion in 2023. Larger than usual issuances from Indonesia and Bahrain (B2 stable) were not enough to offset the absence of nontraditional sovereign issuers such as Egypt (Caal positive) and Philippines (Baa2 stable), both of which debuted in the international sukuk market in 2023. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB, Aaa stable) remained the largest and most regular supranational sukuk issuer, accounting for 21% of all cross-border sukuk issuance in 2024.

Sukuk issuance volumes to decline in 2025 and 2026

Global sovereign long-term sukuk issuance volumes, which include all issuances by national governments and multilateral development banks (MDBs) with a tenor of more than one year, are set to decline from \$111 billion recorded in 2024, and are unlikely to return to this level for several years.

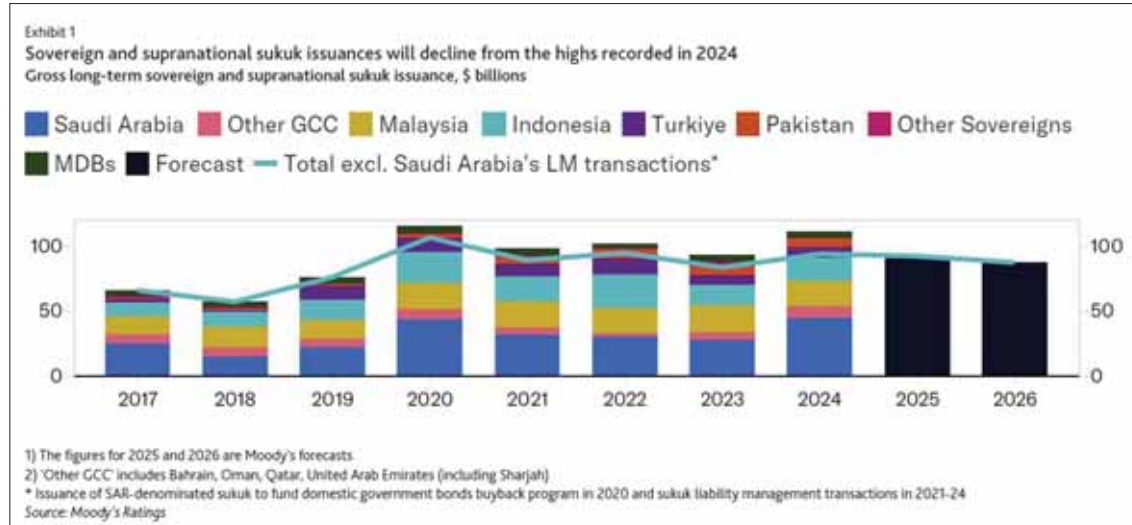
We expect issuance activity in the sovereign long-term sukuk market to decline by nearly 20% to \$92 billion in 2025 and further to \$87 billion in 2026 (Exhibit 1). A key driver of our forecast is our expectation that the government of Saudi Arabia will not execute additional large liability management exercise, which significantly boosted overall 2024 issuance volumes. This expectation reflects the government's very modest sukuk repayment schedule over the next couple of years, with only around \$4 billion of sukuk maturing in 2025 and no sukuk maturing in 2026. Consequently, global issuance volumes will fall in 2025 despite our assumption that oil prices will ease to an average of around \$75 a barrel (bbl) for the Brent crude benchmark in 2025 from \$80/bbl in 2024, underpinning a deterioration in the fiscal positions of the oil-producing sovereign sukuk issuers, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman (Ba1 positive).

Notwithstanding the expected deterioration in some oil producers' fiscal positions, the aggregate fiscal balance of the key sovereign sukuk issuers will remain broadly stable, albeit elevated, during the next two years. We expect the combined fiscal deficit, which is equivalent to the net financing need, will fall to \$159 billion in 2025 from an estimated \$168 billion in 2024, before increasing again slightly to \$164 billion in 2026.

Combined with a declining sukuk repayment schedule during 2025-26, broadly stable net financing needs of the key sukuk issuing governments support our view that global sovereign sukuk issuance volumes will contract in the next two years compared to the 2024 peak.

We expect country-specific factors to dampen issuance in 2025 and 2026, bringing back the trend of declining sovereign sukuk issuance that started in 2021, before it paused in 2024:

We expect Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit to increase slightly to an average of \$34 billion in 2025 and 2026 from an estimated \$30 billion in 2024, driven by lower oil prices and higher budgetary spending related to the government's economic diversification agenda. However, gross sukuk issuance volumes will drop considerably. In addition to our expectation that the liability management exercise will not be repeated in 2025, the government announced in its 2025 annual borrowing



plan that it will aim to finance most of its borrowing requirement outside the domestic sukuk market, which has been the source of most of the government's financing since the middle of 2017.

The share of domestic sukuk in the government's financing mix declined significantly during 2023-24, and the government has indicated that domestic sukuk will account for at most 25% of total financing during 2025, down from an average of 65% in 2019-24.

The government expects that in 2025 most of its financing will be met from international bond issuances and other external borrowing such as syndicated loans. Reducing reliance on domestic banks, which are the principal investors in the government's domestic Saudi riyal-denominated sukuk, probably reflects Saudi Arabia's desire to free up the local banks' lending capacity to be able to finance the country's large pipeline of economic diversification projects. Lower sovereign sukuk issuance over the next two years will also be driven by smaller sukuk repayment in 2025, and no repayments in 2026. The projected decline in the government's sukuk issuance means that in 2025 Saudi Arabia may lose its status as the largest long-term sovereign sukuk issuer, which it has held for seven of the past eight years.

Malaysia's fiscal consolidation efforts will probably lead to a further reduction in the government's net financing need during 2025, which will weigh on the sukuk issuance outlook. We expect that the government's fiscal deficit will decline to 3.8% of GDP (\$18.2 billion) in 2025 and 3.4% of GDP (\$17.6 billion) in 2026 from an estimated 4.3% of GDP (\$18.4 billion) in 2024. The introduction of the Public Finance and Fiscal Responsibility Act, which aims to cut the fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP or less in the next three years, will reinforce the trend decline in Malaysia's sovereign sukuk, although sukuk issuance will remain a major source of fiscal deficit financing, accounting for around 50% on average during the past five years.

We expect Indonesia's fiscal deficit to remain broadly stable as a share of GDP at around 2.6% in both 2025 and 2026, but increase in nominal terms to \$38.6 billion in 2025 and \$44 billion in 2026 from an estimated \$38.3 billion in 2024. This will support larger gross sukuk issuance, under the assumption that the government meets around 15% of its net financing need with sukuk issuances.

The increase in issuance in 2025 will also be supported by an increase in scheduled sukuk repayments to \$16 billion from \$12 billion in 2024, which we expect to be refinanced through new sukuk issuance. As a result, we forecast that the government will issue \$22 billion of sukuk in 2025 and \$19 billion in 2026, compared with \$18 billion in 2024 and \$16 billion in 2023.

In Türkiye, we expect sukuk issuance to increase gradually in the next two years, driven partly by the rise in scheduled sukuk repayments to \$3.9 billion in 2025 and \$7 billion in 2026, from \$3.5 billion in 2024. Increased sukuk issuance volumes will also be supported by more favourable investor sentiment toward Türkiye after the government's pivot to a more orthodox monetary policy framework since the 2023 elections. We forecast that the increasing share of sukuk in the government's total financing mix will broadly offset a narrowing of the fiscal deficit in 2025, reflecting the government's efforts to increase the share of Islamic finance to 15% of total banking assets in the short term.

Sovereign sukuk issuances in the GCC excluding Saudi Arabia will probably decline in 2025-26 compared to the record-high issuance of nearly \$10 billion in 2024. This is mainly because of smaller domestic sukuk refinancing needs in Qatar (Aa2 stable) and Oman. We expect the government of Oman to continue to retire its external debt, including the \$1.5 billion international sukuk that matures later this year. Sovereign sukuk issuance out of the United Arab Emirates (UAE, Aa2 stable) will remain supported by the government of 4 4 March 2025 Sovereign & Supranational: Sovereign sukuk issuance to decline in 2025 from exceptional highs of 2024 Sharjah (Ba1 stable), which is the most regular GCC sukuk issuer after Saudi Arabia, and the federal government, which launched its local-currency sukuk issuance programme in 2023

with the aim of developing the domestic sukuk market.

Among multilateral development banks (MDBs), we expect IsDB to continue to issue around \$4 billion to \$5 billion of sukuk each year. It will remain by far the largest and the most regular supranational issuer in the cross-border sukuk market.

Lower oil prices than we assume in our baseline fiscal projections for 2025 and 2026 would likely increase sukuk-issuing oil producers' government financing needs and lead to larger sovereign sukuk issuance volumes, as seen during 2020. Similarly, another large liability management exercise, like that undertaken by Saudi Arabia in 2024, could also increase sovereign sukuk issuance beyond what we currently project.

Another small boost to our issuance forecasts could come from new entrants into the global sovereign sukuk market. For example, the government of Algeria has recently introduced provisions to develop the legal and regulatory framework for the issuance of sovereign sukuk in its 2025 Finance Law. Egypt, which issued its first government sukuk in 2023, could also return to the cross-border sukuk market this year, taking advantage of improved market sentiment following the large UAE investment in 2024, which strengthened the government's external buffers. And in November 2024, the Ministry of Finance indicated that it may issue its first EGP-denominated sukuk in the first quarter of 2025. Separately, in November Nigeria's (Caal positive) finance minister suggested that his government may include a \$500 billion sukuk in its funding plan.

Shariah Standard 62 proposed in a draft form by the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) in late 2023 presents a medium-term risk for sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance trends. The standard, if implemented in the proposed form, would fundamentally change the risk profile and legal complexity of a typical sukuk issued by entities seeking to comply with the AAOIFI regulation. It would also limit demand for sukuk which does not comply with the new standard from investors which are regulated by the national authorities seeking to implement AAOIFI standards, such as in the UAE. We would therefore expect the implementation of the new Shariah standard to dampen cross-border sukuk issuance volumes as market participants take time to come up to speed with the new regulation and assess potential risks associated with new sukuk structures. Nevertheless, the timeline for the implementation and the final form of the new standard remain uncertain. We would also expect the national regulators to allow market participants enough time to adjust.

Saudi Arabia drove near-record high sukuk issuance volumes in 2024

Gross long-term sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance increased by 19% to a near-record high of \$111 billion in 2024 from \$93 billion in 2023. This increase was largely the result of exceptionally high issuance volumes from Saudi Arabia, which exceeded the previous record of 2020. We estimate that at the end of 2024, the stock of outstanding long-term sovereign and supranational sukuk exceeded \$500 billion.

In 2024, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Türkiye remained the four largest issuers of sovereign sukuk. Together, they account for 80% of total long-term gross sovereign sukuk issuance as well as 80% of total outstanding long-term sovereign sukuk as of the end of 2024.

At the end of 2024, Saudi Arabia's outstanding sukuk accounted for 67% of total general government debt, compared to 44% for Malaysia and 17% for Indonesia. Despite being one of the smaller sovereign issuers, the government of Sharjah has been one of the most regular participants in the sukuk market over the past decade, with sukuk and other Islamic finance instruments making up 60% of its total outstanding debt in 2024.

result of the government's domestic sukuk liability management operation. This exceeded \$17 billion and involved partial early redemptions of domestic sukuk maturing in 2024, 2025 and 2026, funded by issuance of new sukuk with longer maturities.

Qatar was the second-largest sovereign sukuk issuer in the GCC during 2024, with \$4.6 billion of domestic sukuk issuance, up from \$2.1 billion in 2023. The increase was driven by large \$3.5 billion domestic sukuk amortizations, which the government chose to roll over by issuing new sukuk. Similarly, Bahrain's long-term sovereign sukuk issuance increased to \$2.2 billion in 2024, from only \$1 billion in 2023, as the government rolled over \$2 billion of scheduled sukuk repayments. By contrast, Oman decided not to refinance its maturing \$2 billion international sukuk with new external sukuk issuances, in line with its strategy of using fiscal surpluses to pay down external debt. Instead, it only refinanced domestic sukuk maturities to support the development of domestic debt capital markets and supply treasury assets for Oman's Islamic banks.

The UAE federal government also increased its sovereign issuance, doubling it to \$0.9 billion in 2024 from \$0.4 billion in 2023. This is partly because the federal government ramped up its dirham-denominated treasury sukuk issuance programme, which also aims to support domestic debt capital markets development. However, Sharjah remained the largest and most regular government sukuk issuer in the UAE in 2024, issuing \$1.3 billion of sukuk in the public markets.

In Indonesia, long-term sukuk issuance increased by 14% to \$18 billion in 2024 from around \$16 billion in 2023. This mainly reflects higher external sukuk issuance, which rose to \$5 billion in 2024, the largest annual international sukuk issuance on record, from \$2 billion in 2023, signalling improving external financing conditions.

In Malaysia, gross long-term issuance declined by around 11% to \$19 billion in 2024 from \$21.4 billion in 2023, despite an increase in scheduled sukuk repayments to \$10.5 billion in 2024 from \$9.3 billion in 2023. Islamic T-bills issuance also contracted very significantly compared to 2023, contracting by more than 70%. This decline reflects the normalisation of sukuk issuance volumes following record high government sukuk issuance in 2023. It was also driven by the government's ongoing fiscal consolidation efforts, which reduced its net financing needs. We estimate that the fiscal deficit declined to 4.4% of GDP in 2024 from 5.0% of GDP in 2023.

Türkiye's long-term sukuk issuance increased to around \$7.7 billion in 2024 from \$6.9 billion in 2023, reflecting more favourable market conditions and investor sentiment, as well as a \$3.5 billion sukuk redemption in 2024. The government of Türkiye has been a regular issuer in the international sukuk market since 2021, issuing \$2.5 billion in 2024.

Pakistan remains locked out of the international capital markets, so did not issue any international sukuk in 2024 or 2023, following a \$1 billion seven-year issuance in 2022. However, its domestic sukuk issuance increased to \$7.3 billion in 2024 from \$6.3 billion in 2023, driven by the government's efforts to support the development of the local Islamic banking sector. Since December 2023, the government has been conducting regular Ijarah sukuk auctions on the Pakistan Stock Exchange, issuing both fixed- and variable-rental rate sukuk across one, three, five and 10-year maturities.

Cross-border sukuk issuances stabilised in 2024, accounting for around 20% of total sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance. Despite an increase in overall sukuk issuance volumes, cross-border gross sukuk issuance in the international capital markets declined slightly to \$20.4 billion in 2024 from \$20.8 billion in 2023, marking a stabilisation after last year's significant increase.

Cross-border issuances, mostly in US dollars, accounted for nearly 20% of total gross sovereign and supranational sukuk issuance in 2024, about the same share as over the past 10 years.

Supranational issuances declined to \$4.6 billion in 2024 from \$5.1 billion in the previous year. The Islamic Development Bank and Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD, A2 stable) were the sole multilateral sukuk issuers in 2024. IsDB issued four euro-denominated sukuk during March-July, totalling around \$0.9 billion, and two US dollar-denominated sukuk in May and October, for a total value of \$3.3 billion. ICD issued a \$500 million five-year sukuk in February.

Increased international sukuk issuance by Indonesia and Bahrain more than offset lower issuance by the government of Saudi Arabia. The government of Indonesia issued \$5.1 billion of international sukuk in 2024 compared to \$2 in 2023. Bahrain issued \$2.2 billion in 2024 compared to \$1 billion in 2023. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's international issuance declined to \$5 billion from \$6 billion in 2023, although even this was significantly higher than \$1.8 billion on average during 2018-2022.

Last year was marked by an absence of nontraditional sukuk issuers in the international sukuk market, such as Egypt and the Philippines which raised \$1.5 billion and \$1 billion, respectively, by issuing their inaugural international sukuk during 2023.

Pay just 10% advance and block the 'gold rate'

Malabar Gold unveils 'gold rate' protection offer

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Malabar Gold & Diamond, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 380 showrooms across 13 countries, has unveiled their much-awaited gold rate protection offers, providing customers with the golden opportunity to block the prevailing gold rates by paying just 10% as an advance.

The gold rate protection offer enables customers to purchase their favorite jewellery without having to worry about gold rate fluctuations and this much-awaited facility has been unveiled by Malabar Gold & Diamonds taking into account the jewellery purchase its immense customer base is expected to indulge in during the upcoming season.

Customers can block the gold rate till 30th April 2025 by paying just 10% as an advance. If gold rate increases at the time of purchase, customers can avail the blocked rate and if

it reduces they can still draw mileage of the reduced rate i.e. a customer intending to buy gold jewellery worth KWD 1000 just needs to pay KWD 100 to avail the Gold Rate Protection offer and in turn get protected from the increasing gold rates. Customers can also avail a complimentary diamond voucher for first advance bookings made on or before 13th April 2025. The offer will be valid across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms. Customers can either pay the advance directly at the showroom or online, via Malabar Gold & Diamonds' mobile app.

"The Gold Rate Protection offer has always been one of our most sought-after promotions, providing customers with a sense of confidence amid fluctuating gold prices. With market volatility over the past several months, this offer ensures that customers can purchase their favorite jewellery at the best possible rates, free

from concerns about price hikes. By paying just 10% advance, customers can lock in the gold rate and secure their desired jewellery without worrying about future price fluctuations. So far, over 415,000 customers have taken advantage of this opportunity to own their cherished adornments with complete peace of mind. Additionally, the convenience of our mobile app allows customers to seamlessly avail of this offer, making transactions not only effortless but also secure," commented Mr. Shamlal Ahmed, MD – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

In addition to the 10% advance option, customers can also pay 50% and 100% of the amount as advance to get gold rate protection for 90 days and 180 days respectively. This option will be available to customers throughout the year across all stores of Malabar Gold & Diamonds.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches the much-awaited gold rate protection offer.



Photo from the event.

50 donors contribute to life-saving drive

KEA Fahaaheel holds blood donation camp to mark Kuwait's National Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: In a heartwarming display of solidarity and social responsibility, the Fahaaheel unit of the Kasaragod Expats Association (KEA) in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Blood Donors Kerala Kuwait chapter (BDK), organized a highly successful blood donation camp on Feb 28, 2025. The event, held at the Adan Blood Transfusion Center, was part of the celebrations marking Kuwait's National Day, a momentous occasion for the people of Kuwait.

The blood donation camp was not just a medical activity, but also an initiative to strengthen community ties. It symbolized the spirit of giving and community solidarity, as residents from all walks of life came together for a noble cause – saving lives.

In total, 50 generous individuals donated blood, contributing to the critical need for blood in Kuwait's hospitals and healthcare system. The event not only helped save lives but also helped raise awareness about the importance of regular blood donations, especially in times of emergencies.

The event kicked off with a formal inaugural session that set the tone for the day. Praveen Kumar, representing BDK, began the proceedings with a heartfelt welcome note, emphasizing the significance of blood donation and its role in fostering a spirit of unity and cooperation among expatriates and locals alike.

The inauguration ceremony was led by Dr. George P. Alex, the president of IDAK, who spoke about the importance of such humanitarian efforts in bridging the gap between communities and promoting collective responsibility towards the welfare of society.

The session was presided over by Murali Vazhakkodan, the president of KEA Fahaaheel unit, who thanked all the volunteers and organizations for



A photo from the honoring ceremony.

their tireless work in organizing the event.

The formal part of the event was enriched by the words of appreciation from key figures in the community. Muhammed Kunhi C.H, Asiz Thalankara, Rajan Thottathil of BDK, Srenivasan, Nalinakshan, Ashraf Kuchanam, Surendran Mungath, Sudhakaran Peria, and Sudheer Madikkai all took turns to congratulate the donors, the volunteers and the organizers for making the event a resounding success.

The event was a clear demonstration of efficient organization and teamwork. Volunteers from both KEA and BDK worked tirelessly to ensure that the camp ran smoothly. They assisted the donors at every step of the process – from registration to post-donation care. Their seamless support ensured that the blood donation camp was not only efficient but also comfortable for

all participants.

As the camp concluded, a vote of thanks was delivered by Radhakrishnan Chemeni, who expressed gratitude to all the donors, volunteers, and organizers for their selfless contributions.

This event serves as a powerful reminder of how, by coming together, communities can make a tangible difference in people's lives. The Fahaaheel unit of KEA and BDK are leading by example, and we can only hope that more such initiatives will continue to flourish, inspiring all of us to give and support those in need.

For those interested in organizing future blood donation camps or who may require blood during emergencies, BDK Kuwait is available to provide assistance. Organizations or patients in need can reach out to BDK Kuwait at the following contact numbers: 90041663, 96602365, 99811972

Best account in Kuwait for returns and rewards

KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's monthly and weekly draws

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the monthly and weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2025 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest expected annual return and winning chances. The monthly and first weekly draw in March, based on customers' February deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank.

The KD 5,000 prize was awarded to Abrar Abdulrahman Humoud Alenzi, Asma Jassem Mohammad Gholoum, and for the weekly draw the KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Shaikhah Abdullah Mohammad Alradhwan, Bashaer Ali Abbas Alali, Mohammad Ahmad Mohammad Alrasheed, Hesham Ali Abdulmoneim Faragallah, Amer Hassan Alalaw, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Faisal Ibrahim Abdulaziz Alrumaih, Fares Nazal Fares Alenzi, Abdulmohsen Khaled Ibrahim Alkhouzam, Khaled Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed, Mohammad Obaid Mohammad Almutairi, Abdullah Abdulhussain Ali Ali, Mohammad Rashed Falah Alazmi, Alaa Hazaa Alradi, Ahmad Abdulaziz Ahmad Alajeel.

It is worth noting that the Al Dirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, which was launched by KIB as part of its suite of banking products intended for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first three months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

In addition to being a savings account, eligibility for the Al Dirwaza draws requires a minimum balance of KD 100, which



must remain in the account for a full month before the weekly and monthly draws, with chances calculated based on the lowest balance of the previous month. As for the quarterly and annual draws, the amount must be maintained for two full months, with chances based on the lowest balance of the two preceding months. A key feature of the 2025 campaign is the doubling of winning chances to encourage customers to increase their deposits in the Al Dirwaza account. Customers will receive one chance per KD 1 if their lowest monthly balance is less than KD 2,000, two chances per KD 1 for balances between KD 2,000 and less than KD 5,000, three chances per KD 1 for balances between KD 5,000 and less than KD 10,000, and four chances per KD 1 for balances of KD 10,000 or more. Terms and conditions apply.

The Al Dirwaza account is in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer. Customers can conveniently open the account remotely via KIB Online on the Bank's website, the KIB Mobile application, or through the KIB Digital Onboarding service, without having to visit a branch.

Additionally, the Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.

Save more, win more with ABK

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait announces Nabil Zalaya as winner of Alfouz weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce Nabil Hassan Zalaya as the winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday, March 3, 2025. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the account has attracted significant attention in the Kuwaiti market. Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

With a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz account continues to surpass expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase



Open an ABK Alfouz account and increase your winning chances.

their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday, 10 March 2025.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased opportunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for!

To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow ABK's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Global experts to participate in 'DentEdge' symposium

IDAK announces 5th Int'l Scientific Symposium

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK) announces the 5th IDAK International Scientific Symposium, set to take place on April 25, 2025 from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM at the prestigious Al Hashemi Ballroom, Hotel Radisson Blu, Al Bidaa, Kuwait.

This biennial event, a cornerstone of Kuwait's dental scientific calendar, promises a full day of enriching academic exchange and networking. Organized in association with the Kuwait Dental Association and the Kuwait Institute of Medical Specialization, the symposium will explore the theme: "DentEdge – Current Paradigms in Dentistry."

The symposium will feature renowned speakers from across the globe, including:

Dr. Mandeep Duggal – Qatar; Dr. Gunaseelan Rajan – India; Dr. Siju Jacob – UAE and Dr. Manal Abu Al Melh – Kuwait

These experts will deliver keynote addresses on groundbreaking topics that reflect the latest trends, innovations, and practices in dentistry.

Over 400 participants have attended each of the previous four editions (2015, 2017, 2019, and 2023), establishing the event as a premier platform



IDAK Symposium speakers.

for professional growth and collaboration among dentists in Kuwait.

Highlights of the symposium include:

Keynote lectures from distinguished speakers; Dr. David Gnanashekar Oration; felicitation ceremony honoring contributions to the dental profession and buffet lunch and networking opportunities

The 5th IDAK International Scientific Symposium will be open to all dental professionals in Kuwait, offering a unique opportunity to gain insights from global leaders in dentistry and engage with fellow practitioners.

For registration details and further information, please visit their official website www.idakuwait.com or write to idakuwait@gmail.com

Black women's long wait for absent men highlighted

Play reflects on Winnie Mandela's fight for freedom

JOHANNESBURG, March 5, (AP) — A new play about anti-apartheid icon Winnie Madikizela-Mandela seeks to highlight the struggles of Black women in South Africa who had to wait years for their husbands' return from exile, prison or faraway work during decades of white minority rule.

The play about the late former wife of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first Black president, is adapted from the novel "The Cry of Winnie Mandela" by Njabulo Ndebele. It explores themes of loneliness, infidelity and betrayal.

At the height of apartheid, Madikizela-Mandela was one of the most recognizable faces of South Africa's liberation struggle while her husband and other freedom fighters spent decades in prison. That meant constant harassment by police.

At one point, she was banished from her home in Soweto on the outskirts of Johannesburg and forcefully relocated to Brandfont, a small rural town she had never visited nearly 350 kilometers (217 miles) away.

Even after she walked hand-in-hand with her newly freed husband in 1990 and raised her

clenched fist, post-apartheid South Africa was tumultuous for her.

Madikizela-Mandela, who died in 2018 aged 81, was accused of kidnapping and murdering people she allegedly suspected of being police informants under apartheid. She also faced allegations of being unfaithful to Mandela during his 27 years in prison.

Those controversies ultimately led to her divorce from Mandela, while their African National Congress political party distanced itself from her.

Inspired

The isolation and humiliation inspired Ndebele to write about Madikizela-Mandela for South Africa's post-apartheid generations.

"How can they implicate Winnie in such horrendous events? She is the face of our struggle," Ndebele's character, played by South African actor Les Nkosi, wonders as he describes his thoughts upon hearing the news of the ANC distancing itself. "The announcement invokes in me a moral anguish from which I'm unable to escape. Is she a savior or a be-

trayer to us?"

A key scene addresses Madikizela-Mandela's appearance before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body formed to investigate human rights abuses during apartheid. She denied murder and kidnapping allegations and declined a request to apologize to families of alleged victims.

"I will not be the instrument that validates the politics of reconciliation, because the politics of reconciliation demands my annihilation. All of you have to reconcile not with me, but the meaning of me. The meaning of me is the constant search for the right thing to do," she says in a fictional monologue in the novel.

The play also reflects how the Mandelas' divorce proceedings played out in public, with intimate details of their marriage and rumors of her extramarital affair.

For the play's director, Momo Matsunyane, it was important to reflect the role of Black women in the struggle against apartheid who also had to run their households and raise children, often in their husbands' long absence.



Ayanda Sibisi performs during a rehearsal of a theatre play called 'The Cry of Winnie Mandela' at Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2025. (AP)

People

No wrongdoing

iHeart, Drake settle dispute

HOUSTON, March 5, (AP) — Texas-based iHeartMedia said it settled its legal dispute with Drake over Kendrick Lamar's dis track "Not Like Us" after demonstrating that it "did nothing wrong."

Drake had alleged in a legal petition filed in November that iHeartMedia received illegal payments from Universal Music Group to boost radio airplay for "Not Like Us."

UMG is the parent record label for both Drake and Lamar. S a n Antonio b a s e d iHeartMedia initially declined

to comment on the settlement, which was revealed last week in court documents. The media company released an updated statement Saturday.

"In exchange for documents that showed iHeart did nothing wrong, Drake agreed to drop his petition. No payments were made - by either one of us," the statement said.

A representative for Drake disputed iHeart's statement Tuesday, saying the company "has not provided a single document as of yet to Drake, let alone any information that showed they did nothing wrong."

Petition

"This back and forth is silly. Drake dropped the petition. We did nothing wrong. End of story," iHeartMedia said in a statement late Tuesday.

In a court document filed Thursday in Bexar County, where San Antonio is located, attorneys for Drake said the rapper and iHeartMedia had "reached an amicable resolution of the dispute" but did not offer any other information.

The dismissal of iHeartMedia from the petition was done "with prejudice," meaning Drake would not be able to refile the petition against the company.

A hearing on a motion by UMG's lawyers to dismiss Drake's petition had been set for Wednesday but was changed to March 24, according to court records filed this week.

Alleges

Drake's petition in Texas also alleges UMG knew "the song itself, as well as its accompanying album art and music video, attacked the character of another one of UMG's most prominent artists, Drake, by falsely accusing him of being a sex offender."

Besides the legal petition in Texas, Drake in January filed a defamation lawsuit in federal court in New York City against UMG over what he alleges are false allegations of pedophilia made in "Not Like Us." Lamar is not named in the lawsuit.

On Tuesday, a judge overseeing the defamation lawsuit rejected a request from UMG to delay a pretrial hearing and put a pause on discovery, which is the exchange of evidence between the two sides. UMG had sought the delay until a judge could hear its request to dismiss the case.

Drake's lawyers said in a statement that they were "pleased with the Court's decision to reject UMG's continued attempts to stall discovery - another clear sign that UMG cannot run from or bury the truth."

UMG's lawyers did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Film



This image released by Focus Features shows, (from left), Finn Cole, Woody Harrelson and Simu Liu in a scene from 'Last Breath'. (AP)

Deep-sea rescue thrills with tension

A true-life rescue drama in 'Last Breath'

LOS ANGELES, March 5, (AP) — A routine deep-sea diving mission in the North Sea goes terribly wrong when a young diver is stranded some 300 feet below the surface in the new film "Last Breath." His umbilical cable has severed. The support vessel above is aimlessly drifting away from the site through violent, stormy waters. And the diver has only ten minutes of oxygen in his backup tank.

As if that wasn't enough, it's also a true story. If merely reading this is giving you heart palpitations already, you can only imagine the white-knuckle experience of watching this all play out on the big screen. It's 40ish minutes of pure suspense and anxiety as the story shuffles between the man at the bottom of the ocean, Chris Lemons (Finn Cole), his fellow saturation divers (Woody Harrelson as Duncan and Simu Liu as Dave) in the diving bell below the waters who are unable to help and the crew in the support vessel above (including Cliff Curtis and Mark Bonnar) scrambling to get their systems back online and operational as the clock rapidly runs out. Ten minutes has never felt so short - and then it just gets worse as the clock starts counting up, showing Chris's time without oxygen.

At one point, Liu's character Dave, a no-nonsense, all-business diver says matter-of-factly at that it's a body recovery, not a rescue. Deep-sea saturation diving is a dangerous business,

described at the start of the film as the most dangerous job on earth. Chris tells his fiancé, in a short introduction, that it's no more dangerous than going to space. She replies that it's funny that he thinks that is comforting.

The real incident happened in September 2012 - Dave, Duncan and Chris were just one team of divers sent to the ocean floor off the coast of Aberdeen, Scotland, to repair oil pipeline.

Dynamic

The seas were particularly rough that day, with winds up to 35 knots, common for the North Sea but also not what one might call safe. Chris and Dave were in the middle of their work when they heard the urgent calls to abort: The dynamic positioning system in the support vessel above had failed and they were in drift. Chris scrambled to maneuver out of the pipeline corridors, but his umbilical got caught. For a brief, awful moment he's the anchor to the ship above, but soon enough the cord snapped, and he was thrown back to the ocean floor in pitch black with no coms, no heat and very little hope for survival. News articles about the incident clock his backup oxygen supply as being closer to five or six minutes - perhaps the movie wanted to give the audience a little buffer.

If this sounds at all familiar, it may be because it was made into a documentary, also called "Last Breath" and released in

2019. While it was well-received, some true stories are just too gripping to exist solely in that form. It's not exactly a surprise that a narrative film was made as well. There's a good track record of recent complimentary adaptations - think Ron Howard's "13 Lives" and "The Rescue" about the Thai boys soccer team stuck in the cave.

This one was made by Alex Parkinson, the same director who co-directed the doc, and it's a well-executed narrative interpretation that doesn't get in its own way with padding. Harrelson gets to be the wise mentor who really doesn't want to lose someone on his last mission. Liu gets to flex his action muscles (literally and figuratively) in a modest but solid role. And they don't go out of their way to shoehorn in a villain - this is just a group of people trying their best to save a life.

The only real problem, if one can even call it that, is that it's so short. The film doesn't take liberties with stretching out the timeline much at all and after 93 minutes, the whole thing is over. It feels strange to want a movie to be longer, but in the case of "Last Breath" I was both desperate for it to end, for anxiety reasons, and also wanting more.

"Last Breath," a Focus Features released in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 Motion Picture Association for "brief strong language." Running time: 93 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: A cybercrime crew stole then resold more than 900 digital tickets to Taylor Swift concerts and other pricey events on StubHub, according to prosecutors in New York.

The international scam involved people working in Jamaica for a firm contracted by the online ticket marketplace, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said Monday. bThe contractors stole the URLs of tickets purchased on StubHub and emailed them to others in New York, who then downloaded and resold them on StubHub at exorbitant prices, she said.

The crew raked in more than \$600,000 in profits over roughly a year between June 2022 and July 2023, according to prosecutors.

The majority of the stolen tickets were for Swift's Eras Tour, but the thieves also boosted ones for Adele and Ed Sheeran concerts, NBA games and the U.S. Open Tennis Champion-

ships. bKatz added that investigators are still determining the extent of the operation, including other potential co-conspirators.

Two of those involved, Tyrone Rose and Shamara Simmons, were arrested and charged last Thursday with grand larceny, computer tampering and conspiracy charges, Katz's office said.

Rose, 20, was among those in Jamaica who redirected purchased tickets to the emails of Simmons, 31, and another accomplice based in the New York City borough of Queens, according to prosecutors.

Rose was apprehended while he was visiting New York and was ordered to surrender his passport, Katz's office said Tuesday. He and Simmons pleaded not

guilty and were released pending their next court date Friday. (AP)

□ □ □

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.: Florida's attorney general announced Tuesday that his office has opened a criminal investigation into Andrew and Tristan Tate, who are charged with human trafficking in Romania, days after they returned to the U.S. Attorney General James Uthmeier announced on social media that he directed his office to work with law enforcement to conduct a preliminary inquiry into the Tate brothers.

"Based on a thorough review of the evidence, I've directed the Office of Statewide Prosecution to execute search warrants and issue subpoenas in the now-active criminal investigation into the Tate brothers," Uthmeier said.

After the Tates landed in Fort Lauderdale on Thursday, Gov. Ron DeSantis told reporters that the brothers weren't welcome in Florida and that he would have the attorney general ex-

amine whether the state may have any jurisdiction over their alleged crimes.

During an appearance Monday on the PPD Podcast, Andrew Tate said the governor was caving to media pressure. Tate said he has a US passport and a right to visit his home country. He said he has broken no laws and that he has never even been tried, let alone convicted, of a crime. (AP)

The Tates, who are dual US-British citizens, were arrested in late 2022 and formally indicted last year in Romania on charges they participated in a criminal ring that lured women to that country, where they were sexually exploited. Andrew Tate was also charged with rape. They deny the allegations.

Andrew Tate, 38, is a former professional kickboxer and self-described misogynist who is a hugely successful social media figure, attracting millions of followers, many of them young men and schoolchildren drawn in by the luxurious lifestyle the influencer projects online. (AP)



Drake



Swift

Chinese architect honored for celebrating ordinary people's lives

Liu Jiakun wins Pritzker Prize for people-centered design

NEW YORK, March 5, (AP): The annual Pritzker Architecture Prize has been awarded to Liu Jiakun of China, who earned the field's highest honor for "affirming architecture that celebrates the lives of ordinary citizens," organizers announced Tuesday.

Liu, 68, becomes the 54th laureate of the prize, considered akin to a Nobel in the field of architecture. In an interview with The Associated Press in his office in Chengdu in China's southwestern Sichuan region, the architect said he had a simple definition of his profession:

"To simplify, the task of architects is to provide a better living environment for human beings," he said, speaking in Mandarin. "First of all, you do something that is functional. But if it is just like that, it cannot be called architecture. (So) you have to provide poetry."

Liu is known for creating public areas in highly populated cities where there is little public space, "forging a positive relationship between density and open space," a Pritzker statement said.

The architect "upholds the transcendent power of the built environment through the harmonizing of cultural, historical, emotional and



Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Chinese architect Liu Jiakun interacts with a scale model of the West Village project at his office in Chengdu in southwestern China's Sichuan province on Sunday, March 2. (AP)

social dimensions, using architecture to forge community, inspire compassion and elevate the human spirit," the statement said.

Among his 30 or so projects, which range from academic institutions to commercial buildings to civic spaces, organizers cited in particular his 2015 West Village in Chengdu, which spans a block. The

five-story project includes a perimeter of pathways for cyclists and pedestrians around "its own vibrant city of cultural, athletic, recreational, office and business activities within, while allowing the public to view through to the surrounding natural and built environments."

They also noted the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute Department of Sculpture

in Chongqing, which they said displays an alternate solution to maximizing space, "with upper levels protruding outward to extend the square footage of a narrow footprint."

Liu was born in 1956 in Chengdu and sent at age 17, during the Cultural Revolution, to labor on a farm in the countryside. He has said he felt inconsequential - until he was accepted to architecture school in Chongqing, where he "suddenly realized my own life was important."

Interview

In the interview Sunday in his office in Chengdu, Liu said the speed of change in China during his early adulthood was "very fast, and it was turning things upside down. Even until now, sometimes I feel like I have lived several lifetimes."

Liu established his practice, Jiakun Architects, in 1999. He said he is not one of those architects who likes to have a strongly recognizable visual style. Rather, Liu said, he pays more attention to method and strategy.

"Many architects use a strong personal style and form to gain a foothold in the world," Liu said. "No matter where it is, people can tell

immediately that it is his or her work with a very strong symbolism. But I am not such a kind of architect."

"I don't want to have a very clear or obvious style that can be recognized as mine just at a glance," he said. "I take a more methodological and strategic approach. I hope that when I go to a specific place, I can use my methodology and strategy to adapt to local conditions. I like to fully understand the place, and then look for resources, problems ... and then distill and refine, and finally turn (this) into my work."

Liu also said he tries to balance his country's artistic and architectural heritage with the realities of modern technology.

"I think China's traditional architecture is of course brilliant and very classic," he said, "but it is a product of its time."

He said he hopes to deeply understand "the thematic part of tradition that can survive," and then express it with contemporary technology and language. In that way, he said, "tradition can be used as a core ... but the presentation of your work is contemporary."

Liu said he also seeks to balance commercial imperatives with civic concerns.

"The rapid development of cities

nowadays is basically driven by capital. It is natural for capital to pursue profits," he said. But he added: "You have to leave the public the space they deserve. Only in this way can the development of a city be positive and healthy, rather than being completely high-density, where people live in drawers and boxes ... without even a place to go and no space for communication."

The Pritzker Architecture Prize was established in 1979 by the late entrepreneur Jay A. Pritzker and his wife, Cindy. Winners receive a \$100,000 grant and a bronze medalion.

Asked if he thought the honor would impact his life, Liu replied: "I have thought about it. But I want to maintain normalcy ... I don't want to become nervous about everything. Of course, it has its advantages. I will definitely not need to promote myself too much. But will it also make me better at work? Not necessarily. Excessive expectations may become a pressure."

He had another concern, too. "And will it make me too busy and prevent me from working more attentively?" he pondered. "I hope to keep the normalcy and the freedom, as well as calmness."

Aging impact same as smoking, alcohol use

Extreme heat may speed up aging

By Eunyoung Choi

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

What if extreme heat not only leaves you feeling exhausted but actually makes you age faster?

Scientists already know that extreme heat increases the risk of heat stroke, cardiovascular disease, kidney dysfunction and even death. I see these effects often in my work as a researcher studying how environmental stressors influence the aging process. But until now, little research has explored how heat affects biological aging: the gradual deterioration of cells and tissues that increases the risk of age-related diseases.

New research my team and I published in the journal *Science Advances* suggests that long-term exposure to extreme heat may speed up biological aging at the molecular level, raising concerns about the long-term health risks posed by a warming climate.

My colleagues and I examined blood samples from over 3,600 older adults across the United States. We measured their biological age using epigenetic clocks, which capture DNA modification patterns - methylation - that change with age.

DNA methylation refers to chemical modifications to DNA that act like switches to turn genes on and off. Environmental factors can influence these switches and change how genes function, affecting aging and disease risk over time. Measuring these changes through epigenetic clocks can strongly

predict age-related disease risk and lifespan.

Research in animal models has shown that extreme heat can trigger what's known as a maladaptive epigenetic memory, or lasting changes in DNA methylation patterns. Studies indicate that a single episode of extreme heat stress can cause long-term shifts in DNA methylation across different tissue types in mice. To test the effects of heat stress on people, we linked epigenetic clock data to climate records to assess whether people living in hotter environments exhibited faster biological aging.

Biological

We found that older adults residing in areas with frequent very hot days showed significantly faster epigenetic aging compared with those living in cooler regions. For example, participants living in locations with at least 140 extreme heat days per year - classified as days when the heat index exceeded 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32.33 degrees Celsius) - experienced up to 14 months of additional biological aging compared with those in areas with fewer than 10 such days annually.

This link between biological age and extreme heat remained even after accounting for a wide range of individual and community factors such as physical activity levels and socioeconomic status. This means that even among people with similar lifestyles, those living in hotter environments may still be aging faster at the biological level.

Even more surprising was the magnitude of the effect - extreme heat has a comparable impact on speeding up aging as smoking and heavy alcohol consumption. This suggests that heat exposure may be silently accelerating

aging, at a level on par with other major known environmental and lifestyle stressors.

While our study sheds light on the connection between heat and biological aging, many unanswered questions remain. It's important to clarify that our findings don't mean every additional year in extreme heat translates directly to 14 extra months of biological aging. Instead, our research reflects population-level differences between groups based on their local heat exposure. In other words, we took a snapshot of whole populations at a moment in time; it wasn't designed to look at effects on individual people.

Our study also doesn't fully capture all the ways people might protect themselves from extreme heat. Factors such as access to air conditioning, time spent outdoors and occupational exposure all play a role in shaping personal heat exposure and its effects. Some individuals may be more resilient, while others may face greater risks due to preexisting health conditions or socioeconomic barriers. This is an area where more research is needed.

What is clear, however, is that extreme heat is more than just an immediate health hazard - it may be silently accelerating the aging process, with long-term consequences for public health.

Older adults are especially vulnerable because aging reduces the body's ability to regulate temperature effectively. Many older individuals also take medications such as beta-blockers and diuretics that can impair their heat tolerance, making it even harder for their bodies to cope with high temperatures. So even moderately hot days, such as those reaching 80 degrees Fahrenheit (26.67 degrees Celsius), can pose health risks for older adults. (AP)



In this Feb 2025 photo provided by Colossal Biosciences are genetically edited mice with long, thick, woolly hair at a lab in Dallas, Texas. (AP)

Revive extinct traits in animals

Experts 'create' mice with woolly mammoth-like hair

WASHINGTON, March 5, (AP): Extinction is still forever, but scientists at the biotech company Colossal Biosciences are trying what they say is the next best thing to restoring ancient beasts - genetically engineering living animals with qualities to resemble extinct species like the woolly mammoth.

Woolly mammoths roamed the frozen tundras of Europe, Asia and North America until they went extinct around 4,000 years ago.

Colossal made a splash in 2021 when it unveiled an ambitious plan to revive the woolly mammoth and later the dodo bird. Since then, the company has focused on identifying key traits of extinct animals by studying ancient DNA, with a goal to genetically "engineer them into living animals," said CEO Ben Lamm.

Outside scientists have mixed views about whether this strategy will be helpful for conservation.

"You're not actually resurrecting anything - you're not bringing back the ancient past," said Christopher Preston, a wildlife and environment expert at the University of Montana, who was not involved in the research.

On Tuesday, Colossal announced that its scientists have simultaneously edited seven genes in mice embryos to create mice with long, thick, woolly

hair. They nicknamed the extra-furry rodents as the "Colossal woolly mouse."

Results were posted online, but they have not yet been published in a journal or vetted by independent scientists.

The feat "is technologically pretty cool," said Vincent Lynch, a biologist at the University of Buffalo, who was not involved in the research.

Scientists have been genetically engineering mice since the 1970s, but new technologies like CRISPR "make it a lot more efficient and easier," said Lynch.

The Colossal scientists reviewed DNA databases of mouse genes to identify genes related to hair texture and fat metabolism. Each of these genetic variations are "present already in some living mice," said Colossal's chief scientist Beth Shapiro, but "we put them all together in a single mouse."

They picked the two traits because these mutations are likely related to cold tolerance - a quality that woolly mammoths must have had to survive on the prehistoric Arctic steppe.

Colossal said it focused on mice first to confirm if the process works before potentially moving on to edit the embryos of Asian elephants, the closest living relatives to woolly mammoths.

Mission end

Stuck astronauts near Earth return

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 5, (AP): NASA's two stuck astronauts are just a few weeks away from finally returning to Earth after nine months in space.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams have to wait until their replacements arrive at the International Space Station next week before they can check out later this month.

They'll be joined on their SpaceX ride home by two astronauts who launched by themselves in September alongside two empty seats.

During a news conference Tuesday, Wilmore said that while politics is part of life, it did not play into his and Williams' return, moved up a couple weeks thanks to a change in SpaceX capsules. President Donald Trump and SpaceX's Elon Musk said at the end of January that they wanted to accelerate the astronauts' return, blaming the previous administration.

But Williams, in response to a question, did take issue with Musk's recent call to dump the space station in two years, rather than waiting until NASA's projected deorbit in 2031. She noted all the scientific research being performed at the orbiting lab.

"This place is ticking. It's just really amazing, so I would say we're actually in our prime right now," said Williams, a three-time space station resident. "I would think that right now is probably not the right time to say quit, call it quits."

Williams said she can't wait to be reunited with her Labrador retrievers. The hardest part about the unexpected extended stay, she added, was the wait by their families back home.

"It's been a roller coaster for them, probably a little bit more so than for us," she said. "We're here. We have a mission. We're just just doing what we do every day, and every day is interesting because we're up in space and it's a lot of fun."

Jordan evacuates 29 kids from Gaza for treatment

AMMAN, March 5, (Xinhua): A total of 29 Gaza children along with their families were evacuated to Jordan on Tuesday, the first batch of the 2,000 children who will receive medical treatment in the Kingdom.

The Jordanian Armed Forces said the evacuation was coordinated by the army, the World Health Organization,

and the Health Ministry as part of the Jordanian medical corridor initiative.

During a press conference, Military Media Director Brigadier General Mustafa Al-Hiyari said that four children were evacuated via helicopters from the Royal Jordanian Air Force through the Marka Military Airport, and 25 children were evacuated via

land in ambulances through the King Hussein Bridge, also known as the Allenby Bridge.

According to Al-Hiyari, the total number of patients treated in Jordan's field hospitals in Gaza and the West Bank since the beginning of the Hamas-Israel conflict has exceeded half a million.

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SPORTS

LeBron scores 34 after historic 50,000th point

Pacers recover from blown lead, close out Rockets

LOS ANGELES, March 5, (AP): LeBron James finished with 34 points and became the first player to score 50,000 combined points in the regular season and playoffs, and the Los Angeles Lakers extended their longest winning streak in four years to seven games with a 136-115 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Tuesday night.

Luka Doncic had 30 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds for the Lakers, who have won 17 of 20 to move into second place in the Western Conference at 39-21. Jaxson Hayes had a season-high 19 points and 10 rebounds as Los Angeles won its second straight without injured starters Austin Reaves and Rui Hachimura.

Zion Williamson scored 37 points for the 14th-place Pelicans, who went 2-2 on an encouraging road trip. Trey Murphy III added 19 points.

James surpassed his latest milestone with a 3-pointer early in the first quarter. Lakers fans gave a standing ovation moments later to James, who acknowledged it with a wave of his hand.

Pacers 115, Rockets 102

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton scored 28 points and matched a season high with 15 assists, and the Indiana Pacers recovered after blowing a 17-point third-quarter lead to beat the Houston Rockets.

Pascal Siakam scored 18 points and Myles Turner added 16 for the Pacers, who have won six of eight.

Alperen Sengun scored 25 points and Tari Eason had 16 points and 14 rebounds for the Rockets, who dropped their third in a row.

Indiana led 90-73 with three minutes left in the third quarter but immediately allowed a 15-0 run by Houston. The Rockets pushed ahead 96-95 on a layup by Amen Thompson with 8:45 left in the fourth, but Aaron Nesmith responded with a three-point play that kicked off an 18-3 run by the Pacers.

Raptors 114, Magic 113

In Orlando, Ja'Kobe Walter swished a contested 3-pointer with 0.5 seconds remaining and Toronto edged Orlando after blowing a 12-point lead in the fourth quarter.



Philadelphia 76ers guard Lonnie Walker IV, left, vies for the ball against Minnesota Timberwolves guard Donte DiVincenzo in the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game in Minneapolis. (AP)

Paolo Banchero rallied the Magic, scoring 22 of his 41 points in the final period on 8-for-8 shooting. He made two free throws with 5 seconds left to give Orlando a 113-111 lead.

Banchero, who finished with eight rebounds, eight assists and four steals, also scored 41 in a loss to Golden State last Thursday. The Magic have dropped four straight and five of six - all at home.

Walter, a rookie from Baylor, had 17 points for the Raptors, who improved to 7-23 on the road. They won 104-102 at Orlando on Sunday night.

Bucks 127, Hawks 102

In Atlanta, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his seventh triple-double of the season, and surging Milwaukee beat Atlanta.

Damian Lillard scored 23 points for

the Bucks, who have won three straight and seven of eight. Milwaukee remained in fourth place in the Eastern Conference, with the same record as fifth-place Indiana (35-25).

Trae Young led Atlanta with 28 points and 13 assists. Caris LeVert - who made the game-winning layup at the buzzer in Atlanta's 132-130 victory at Memphis on Monday night - scored 21 points.

Neither team led by more than eight points. Following the final tie at 121, the Bucks scored the final six.

Warriors 114, Knicks 102

In New York, Stephen Curry had 28 points and nine assists while running his personal record to 12-1 at Madison Square Garden, and Golden State beat New York.

Jimmy Butler and Brandin

Podziemski added 19 points apiece for the Warriors, who improved to 3-1 on their five-game trip. It feels like home for them on the Knicks' floor, where they have won 12 of the last 14 times.

Draymond Green finished with eight points, nine rebounds and eight assists on his 35th birthday.

OG Anunoby scored 29 points and Jalen Brunson had 25 for the Knicks, who had their three-game winning streak snapped. They played without All-Star center Karl-Anthony Towns, who was out for personal reasons. Coach Tom Thibodeau said before the game he didn't know if Towns would be with the team when it left for a five-game trip that starts Thursday against the Lakers.

Timberwolves 126, 76ers 112
In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards

scored 18 points. Naz Reid added 23 and Minnesota pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat short-handed Philadelphia.

Julius Randle had 16 points for Minnesota in his second game back after missing 13 games with a groin strain. Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 20 points off the bench. The Timberwolves used a 25-9 run at the start of the fourth to take control.

Paul George returned after missing one game with groin soreness, but Philadelphia was without guard Tyrese Maxey (lower back strain) and played its third game since announcing Joel Embiid will miss the rest of the season for left knee injury management. George finished with just seven points on 3-of-11 shooting.

Quentin Grimes led the 76ers with

30 points, and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 24 for Philadelphia, which has lost 13 of 15 and was playing the second game of a back-to-back after losing 119-102 at home to Portland a night earlier.

Cavaliers 139, Bulls 117

In Chicago, Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points, Jarrett Allen added 25 points and 17 rebounds, and NBA-best Cleveland won their 11th straight game, over Chicago.

Darius Garland added 19 points on 7-of-22 shooting for the Cavs, who rested forward Evan Mobley and fell behind by 15 points in the first half but still found a way to extend their third double-digit winning streak of the season. Cleveland began the season 15-0 and had a 12-game run in December and January.

Coby White led the Bulls with 25 points. Talen Horton-Tucker scored a season-high 22 and Zach Collins had 20.

Spurs 127, Nets 113

In San Antonio, Devin Vassell had a career-high 37 points along with 10 rebounds, and San Antonio rolled to a victory over Brooklyn.

Brooklyn (21-40) lost its fifth straight, dropping 2 1/2 games out of 10th place in the Eastern Conference.

Cam Thomas had 24 points to lead the Nets, and Cameron Johnson added 17.

Stephon Castle scored 17 points, and De'Aaron Fox and Keldon Johnson added 15 each for San Antonio. Bismack Biyombo, who signed a contract for the rest of the season hours earlier, had 13 points and 14 rebounds.

Vassell was 8 for 11 on 3-pointers and also had five assists.

Suns 119, Clippers 117

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant scored 34 points, Devin Booker added 17 and Phoenix rallied from a 23-point deficit late in the third quarter to beat Los Angeles.

The Suns trailed by 19 entering the fourth but came all the way back thanks to big buckets from Durant and backup guard Collin Gillespie. Phoenix had a 43-22 advantage in the fourth, reviving its playoff hopes.

Gillespie scored 10 points on 4-of-6 shooting, including 2 for 3 from 3-point range, to give the Suns a much-needed spark in the second half. Nick Richards added 16 points on 8-of-10 shooting.

The Clippers lost despite Ivica Zubac's 35 points - a career high. He added 10 rebounds and shot 15 of 19 from the field. Kawhi Leonard and James Harden both scored 21.

'Already a marketing triumph'

Hamilton's move to Ferrari is having cultural impact far beyond Formula 1

MILAN, March 5, (AP): Met Gala chair, co-producer on a Brad Pitt movie, activist, and now Ferrari driver.

Lewis Hamilton's impact stretches far beyond Formula 1 and his quest to win a record-breaking eighth world title with his new team.

The partnership of F1's biggest celebrity - and only Black driver - with its biggest brand reaches people who don't consider themselves F1 fans, and may not even have watched a race.

In some respects, Hamilton's move is already a marketing triumph. He won't race for Ferrari until next week in Australia, ending 13 months of hype since he announced his decision to leave Mercedes.

"Obviously the commercial success and the success for Ferrari's brand has been unprecedented," Michael E. Sawyer, author of an upcoming biography of Hamilton, "Sir Lewis," told The Associated Press. "It just makes the brand that much more iconic. It's always been about pushing boundaries."

Expectations are high, too, around Hamilton's



In this file photo, Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain talks at a press conference during a Formula One pre-season test at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain. (AP)

potential impact in Italy in terms of representation and creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds.

"When it was announced that (Hamilton) was in Ferrari, the industry started thinking, especially in fashion, that things would start changing," Michelle Francine Ngonmo, the founder of Afro Fashion Week Milano and an advocate for diversity in Italian fashion, told the AP.

Hamilton's first photos

Hamilton was broadly on pace with rivals and his teammate Charles Leclerc over three days of pre-season testing in Bahrain last week. Still, Hamilton said he and Ferrari have "definitely got some work to do to improve."

Hamilton has indicated he needs time to adapt, but one key rival has argued a successful start will be key to keep Ferrari's passionate fans on board.

"They'll love him if he's quick and he delivers and he'll feed off that energy," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said last month. "If it doesn't get off to a good start, then it'll inevitably be harder for him."

Hamilton has always brought his own perspective to the sport.

His advocacy on racism, police violence, LGBTQ rights and environmental causes has reached audiences around the world, and put the spotlight on human rights in many of the countries where F1 goes racing.

Hamilton also spent his time at Mercedes working behind the scenes to increase inclusion within the team and promote science and technology careers among children from diverse backgrounds. He said last year he wanted to do the same at Ferrari and that the team was "super excited" to participate. No details have been released yet.

"It would be great for the community here in Italy to actually see these kind of initiatives being implemented, going beyond the words," Ngonmo said.

The size and potentially long-term nature of Fer-

rari's commitment to Hamilton is a sign the company "understands without any question the things that he's concerned about," said Sawyer, Hamilton's biographer. "I think Ferrari and Lewis went into this with their eyes open. They know exactly what they're doing."

Sawyer, who is associate professor of African American literature and culture at the University of Pittsburgh, said one way to illustrate Hamilton's impact in Italy was in comparison with soccer greats.

The buzz around Hamilton is similar to when Diego Maradona played for Napoli in the 1980s, Sawyer suggested, but also cautioned that Italy hasn't always treated Black athletes warmly, pointing to the racism faced by Italian soccer player Mario Balotelli.

In an interview with Time last month, Hamilton said he's thought about soccer racism in Italy in the context of joining Ferrari. "I'm not going to lie, it definitely crossed my mind when I was thinking about my decision," he said.

"Like in so many things, it's often such a small group of people that set that trend for many. I don't think that it's going to be a problem."

One way Hamilton has already endeared himself to Italians is by using Italian words and phrases in interviews, something Ngonmo welcomes.

"I think he is trying to make people understand," she said, "that Italy could be a place where everyone can belong."

All-female fight card

Trailblazing Olympic refugee boxer Cindy Ngamba set for a pro debut

LONDON, March 5, (AP): Something stood out to Cindy Ngamba as she glanced around when Friday's all-female boxing event was first announced.

So many world championship belts. Ngamba wants one of her own.

"I saw Natasha Jonas and Lauren Price and Caroline Dubois with their belts, and I remember saying 'Oh, that looks nice, I would love to have one of them,'" she said.

Achieving goals is kind of Ngamba's thing. At the Paris Games, she became the first athlete competing as a refugee to earn a medal when she took bronze in the middleweight category.

A decade ago the Cameroon-born Ngamba thought she was about to be deported from Britain. Now she's set to make her professional debut at Royal Albert Hall. She's facing veteran Kirstie Bavington in a super welterweight bout in London as part of an all-female card headlined by the Jonas vs. Price welterweight world title unification fight.

"I can see it, that dream of me having a belt and being the world champion," Ngamba told The Associated Press, "but at the same time you have to be in the present and you have to make sure you get the job done."

The 26-year-old Ngamba tries not to think ahead too much. That's because she knows circumstances can change so quickly.

Ngamba had arrived in Britain at age 11 - her father and siblings live here, too - in Bolton, just north of Manchester, and set about learning English and trying to fit in. She picked up boxing at age 15, and it became an escape from the stress of worrying about her residency status.

She described being arrested as a teenager while checking in at an immigration center in Manchester.

"My case was still pending. I applied and they rejected it. When they reject your case, you have to go and re-apply again. I was in a situation where even though I was re-applying every time, they could have arrested me at any moment," she said. "I visualized that they could arrest me in the street or in my house, in school or with my friends. I never knew it was going to be at an immigration center where I usually (went) every weekend."

Worried she would be deported, she thought to herself: "I have no one in Cameroon, no family in Cameroon. Who is going to take care of me?"

She was held overnight at a detention fa-



Olympic refugee boxer Cindy Ngamba attends boxing media workout in London. (AP)

cility in London before being released.

Her progress in the boxing ring - Ngamba was an England amateur champion at three different weights - attracted the attention of Britain's elite development program. Ngamba was brought in to spar the likes of Jonas, Price and others in hopes that she would eventually compete for Britain.

Ngamba, one of the flagbearers for the Olympic refugee team at the opening ceremony in Paris, is still treated as one of their own at "GB Boxing." After the Olympics, her name was added to the wall of fame at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield, and she joined British Olympians at a Buckingham Palace reception where she met King Charles III.

The main attraction is a welterweight clash of generations with 40-year-old Natasha Jonas facing 30-year-old Lauren Price.

Both are former Olympians. Welsh boxer Price (8-0) won a gold medal for Britain at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. She is the WBA champion.

Jonas (16-2-1), of Liverpool, competed at the 2012 London Games when women's boxing made its debut in the Olympic program. She fell just short of a medal when she lost to Ireland's Katie Taylor in the quarterfinals. Jonas holds the WBC and IBF welterweight titles.

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Bielsa calls up uncapped pair

MONTEVIDEO, March 5, (Xinhua): Uruguay manager Marcelo Bielsa has included uncapped pair Alan Matturo and Randall Rodriguez in a provisional squad for World Cup qualifiers against Argentina and Bolivia, the Uruguayan football association said on Tuesday.

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SPORTS

Kohli leads the way as India reaches Champs Trophy final



India's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between India and Australia at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP)

Australia suffers four-wicket loss

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, March 5, (AP): Virat Kohli led the way with 84 runs off 98 balls as India beat Australia by four wickets to reach the final of the Champions Trophy.

Kohli's 74th ODI half-century helped India finish with 267-6 in reply to Australia's 264 all out in the first semifinal. Pacer Mohammed Shami spearheaded India's bowling and took 3-48 in 10 overs to restrict Australia on a slow wicket.

"This game is all about pressure - if you go deep, the opposition usually gives in," Kohli said.

Steve Smith top-scored for Australia with 73 off 96 balls. Indian spinners Varun Chakravarthy and Ravindra Jadeja grabbed two wickets each.

For India, Shreyas Iyer helped put on 91 off 111 balls for the third wicket and anchor the chase.

Lokesh Rahul finished with 42 not out off 34 balls as India registered the highest chase against Australia in an ICC event.

India's victory confirms that the final will be played in Dubai, where the 2013 champions will face the winner between South Africa and New Zealand, who play on Wednesday in Lahore, Pakistan. Lahore would have hosted the final if India had exited the tournament.



India's Hardik Pandya bowls a delivery during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between India and Australia at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP)

After Australia won the toss and opted to bat, Shami struck early as opener Cooper Connolly was caught behind for a nine-ball duck.

Smith anchored the Australian innings with a sedate half-century as he put on 50 off 32 balls for the second wicket with Travis Head, who started slow but hit five fours and two sixes to score 39 off 33 balls. Chakravarthy had him caught in the ninth over, with Shubman Gill taking a fine running catch in the deep.

Marnus Labuschagne scored 29 and added another 56 runs with Smith for the third wicket but India's spinners dominated the middle overs after Rohit Sharma changed his bowlers around.

Jadeja trapped Labuschagne lbw in the 23rd over, and then Josh Inglis was out caught four overs later.

It brought Smith and Carey together and they added 54 off 58 balls before Shami returned to bowl Smith for a timely breakthrough in the 37th over. It became a double blow as Axar Patel bowled Glenn Maxwell (7) in the next over.

At 205-6, Carey dug Australia out of trouble by hitting eight fours and a six to shepherd the third powerplay for his side, reaching 50 off 48 balls.

After Carey was run out, Australia crossed the 250-mark in the 48th over and Ben Dwarshuis

scored 19 runs with a four and a six, but the total was still under par by about 20-30 runs.

Chasing 265, Sharma hit three fours and a six to score 28 off 29 balls, but Shubman Gill was out bowled for eight. Connolly trapped Sharma lbw in the eighth over, bringing Kohli and Iyer together.

Their partnership proved to be key.

Kohli hit five fours in all and reached 50 off 53 balls. Together, they never let the required run-rate go too high as India exerted control over the chase.

Zampa missed a return catch off Kohli, but made amends by bowling Iyer at the other end. It didn't trigger the required collapse as Axar Patel scored a calm 27 off 30 balls.

The game went deep as India did lose wickets whenever it looked like it was in complete control - Patel was bowled in the 35th over, and Kohli was caught at the boundary off Zampa against the run of play in the 43rd.

Rahul finished things off with two fours and two sixes, finishing unbeaten in the end. Hardik Pandya scored 28 off 24 balls, with three sixes, to move things along, as India was never really bothered in its pursuit.

"At the halfway stage, we felt like it's a reasonable score," Sharma said. "The nature of this pitch doesn't allow you to play your shots. We were clinical with the bat, and calm and composed in our chase."

Kuwait Club regains handball league lead

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Kuwait Club reclaimed the top spot in the Kuwait Handball League after securing a hard-fought 33-30 victory over Burgan in an intense and competitive match. The game was one of Kuwait's previously postponed fixtures due to its participation in the 27th Asian Clubs Championship, a qualifier for the 2025 Super Globe, held last November in Doha, Qatar.

Kuwait Club leads the league standings with 18 points, while Burgan, who had held the top position for several weeks, dropped to second place with 17 points.

In another rescheduled match, Kazma, whose fixtures were also delayed due to its participation in the "Doha Asian," defeated Al-Arabi 31-25. This victory propelled "Al-Burtuqali" to third place with 15 points, while "Al-Akhdar" slipped to fifth with 14 points.

The postponed matches continue today, with Al-Nasr facing Kazma at 9:00 pm, followed by Kuwait Club taking on Yarmouk at 10:30 pm. Both matches will be played at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex



Burgan player is held back by Kuwait Club players during the league match.

Hall.

The league's rescheduled games will conclude next Saturday when Kuwait Club meets Khaitan and Kazma faces Fahaheel. Regular league action will resume with the 12th round of the General Handball League starting on March 21, followed by the 13th round on March 25.

Shafique earns recall after Champs Trophy omission

Pakistan drops Babar and Rizwan for five T20s against New Zealand

ISLAMABAD, March 5, (AP): Pakistan dropped captain Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam for the T20 series against New Zealand and rewarded several domestic performers for the five-match series starting on March 16.

Salman Ali Agha will lead the side with all-rounder Shadab Khan as the vice-captain. Salman also led Pakistan to a 2-1 win in the T20 series against Zimbabwe late last year.

Rizwan was retained as skipper for the three ODIs against New Zealand starting March 29, and the squad also included Babar.

However, selectors have rung in several changes in the ODI squad after Pakistan made an early exit from the Champions Trophy, losing to both New Zealand and India. It finished fourth in its group after its last game was washed out against Bangladesh.

Fast bowlers Haris Rauf and Shaheen Shah Afridi are part of the T20 squad, but were dropped for the ODIs. Top-order batters Kamran Ghulam and Saud Shakeel were also dropped but opener Abdullah Shafique was recalled after selectors ignored him for the Champions Trophy because he had made three successive ducks in South Africa.

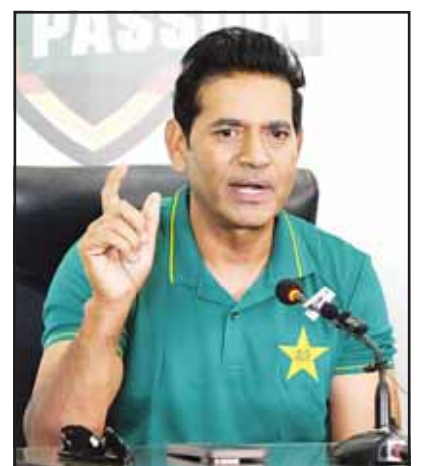
Openers Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub are still recovering from injuries and neither left-handed batters was considered for the eight white-ball games in New Zealand.

"We need to play fearless and aggressive cricket in the T20 format and that's why we have brought in new players," Pakistan interim head coach Aaqib Javed told reporters on Tuesday.

"Nowadays teams are scoring over 200 in T20 cricket. We also need batters who could utilize the first six overs of the batting powerplay and play big shots."

Javed's contract initially ran until the Champions Trophy, but will continue as the Pakistan Cricket Board is still searching for a full time head coach.

Batters Abdul Samad and Hasan



Pakistan interim head coach Aaqib Javed speaks during a press conference to announce squad for upcoming New Zealand tour, in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP)

Nawaz along with fast bowler Mohammad Ali are the three uncapped players in the T20 squad.

Samad scored 115 runs at a strike-rate of 166.67 in the domestic T20 Champions Cup while Nawaz scored 312 runs and finished as the second highest run-getter in the tournament. Ali, a right-arm Pakistan test fast bowler, topped the bowling chart in the same tournament with 22 wickets.

T20 squad: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan, Abbas Afridi, Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Irfan Khan, Jahandad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Haris, Omair Bin Yousaf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufiyan Muqem and Usman Khan.

ODI squad: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Imam-ul-Haq, Irfan Khan, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Sufiyan Muqem and Tayyab Tahir.

Auburn 'physically dominated' in loss to Texas A&M

New Mexico clinches MWC title and top seed

RENO, Nev., March 5, (AP): Donovan Dent's 33 points led New Mexico past Nevada 71-67 on Tuesday night, assuring the Lobos of at least a tie for the Mountain West Conference regular-season title and the No. 1 seed for the league tournament.

Dent also added seven assists for the Lobos (24-6, 16-3 Mountain West Conference), who have one game remaining at home against UNLV. New Mexico swept second-place Colorado State (15-4).

Nelly Junior Joseph added nine points for New Mexico while shooting 3 of 8 from the field and 3 for 4 from the line while he also had 15 rebounds. Mustapha Amzil shot 2 of 9 from the field, including 2 for 6 from 3-point range, and went 2 for 4 from the line to finish with eight points.

Nick Davidson finished with 15 points and seven rebounds for the Wolf Pack (16-14, 8-11). Kobe Sanders added 15 points, six rebounds, six assists, two steals and two blocks for Nevada. Tyler Rolison finished with 12 points and six assists.

Auburn coach Bruce Pearl knew exactly why his top-ranked team fell to No. 22 Texas A&M.

"They just physically dominated us," he said.

The Aggies never trailed in the 83-72 victory which snapped a season-long four-game skid.

It was Texas A&M's first-ever win over a team ranked No. 1 in the AP Top 25 poll and ends a six-game winning streak for the Tigers, who clinched the

Southeastern Conference title with a win over Kentucky on Saturday.

Auburn has held the top spot in the poll for eight straight weeks and was a unanimous No. 1 pick for a second consecutive week.

Pearl denied that Auburn looked past the Aggies after wrapping up the conference championship this weekend. He said their struggles were simply a matter of A&M playing better Tuesday night.

"They physically manhandled us," he said. "And if this team is going to continue to win, we're going to run up against teams like Texas A&M or like Florida or like Duke that are big and physical."

Henri Veesaar scored 22 points, Caleb Love added 21 and No. 24 Arizona pulled away for a 113-100 win over rival Arizona State.

The Wildcats (20-10, 14-5 Big 12) won the first meeting this season in a game that got so testy at the end Arizona State coach Bobby Hurley pulled his players off the floor before the handshake line.

Julian Rishwain scored 26 points as UNLV beat San Diego State 74-67 on Tuesday night.

Rishwain shot 9 for 13, including 6 for 9 from beyond the arc for the Rebels (17-13, 11-8 Mountain West Conference). Jaden Henley scored 17 points while shooting 5 for 9 (4 for 6 from 3-point range) and 3 of 4 from the free-throw line. Jalen Hill had 11 points and shot 2 of 5 from the field and 7 of 13 from the free-throw line.

The Aztecs (20-8, 13-6) were led by Nicholas Boyd, who recorded 19 points. San Diego State also got 15 points, 10 rebounds, six assists, four steals and three blocks from Miles Byrd. BJ Davis had 10 points.

Richie Saunders scored 23 points and No. 23 BYU outlasted No. 10 Iowa State 88-85 in double overtime for its seventh consecutive victory.

Dallin Hall had 22 points off the bench for the Cougars (22-8, 13-6 Big 12), who recovered after blowing a 21-point lead in the second half. Egor Demin added 12 points and Mawot Mag scored 10.

Joshua Jefferson finished with 19 points and Milan Momcilovic had 18 for the Cyclones (22-8, 12-7), who have lost three of four. Curtis Jones scored 16 off the bench, Tamin Lipsey added 15 and Keshon Gilbert contributed 13 points and eight steals.

Jackson Shelstad scored eight of his 17 points in the final 90 seconds as Oregon closed on a 10-0 run and the Ducks beat Indiana 74-64 for their sixth win in a row.

Nate Bittle finished with 14 points, seven rebounds, six assists and four blocks for Oregon (22-8, 11-8 Big Ten). TJ Bamba added 13 points and Kwame Evans Jr. 10.

Trey Galloway led Indiana (18-11, 9-10) with 16 points. Oumar Ballo added 10 points and 12 rebounds, his 10th double-double this season and the 44th of his career.



Texas A&M forward Andersson Garcia is fouled on a shot by Auburn forward Jahki Howard as teammates defend. (AP)



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Aston Villa's Morgan Rogers, left, fights for the ball with Brugge's Maxim De Cuyper during the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between Club Brugge and Aston Villa at the Jan Breydel Stadium in Bruges, Belgium. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait Club eyes Crown Prince Cup glory as tournament gets underway

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: The 31st edition of the Crown Prince Cup kicks off today with two preliminary round matches. Kuwait Club faces Al-Tadamon at 9:30 pm at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, while Sulaibikhat takes on Khaitan at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at the same time.

The preliminary round continues tomorrow, Friday, with Kazma meeting Yarmouk and Salmiya facing Burqan. On Saturday, Al-Jahra takes on newly promoted Al-Jazeera, while Fahaheel clashes with Al-Shabab. Meanwhile, the matches between Al-Arabi and Al-Sahel, as well as Al-Qadisiya and Al-Nasr, have been postponed due to Al-Arabi's participation in the Asian Challenge Cup and Al-Qadisiya's involvement in the Gulf Champions League.

Since the tournament's inception in the 1993-94 season, only five clubs have claimed the title. Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya, and Al-Arabi have each won the cup nine times, while Salmiya has secured two titles, and Kazma has lifted the trophy once.

Kuwait Club aims for a strong start in its pursuit of the title, which it last



A file photo of players fighting for the ball.

won three seasons ago. The team is also looking to move past an early exit from the competition two seasons ago when Al-Salmiya eliminated them with a 3-2 victory in the preliminary round.

Currently leading the Zain Premier League, the "Whites" are enjoying a period of stability and are on course for their 20th league title and fourth

consecutive championship. Despite defeating Al-Tadamon 3-0 in their only meeting this season, Kuwait remains cautious, recalling last season's Amir Cup quarter-final exit at the hands of Al-Tadamon.

Meanwhile, Al-Tadamon aims to continue its impressive run this season and hopes to replicate its past success in knocking Kuwait out of cup competitions.

Both Sulaibikhat and Khaitan enter this clash with equal chances of advancing, with each side eager to make a deep run in the tournament.

Khaitan has struggled in the Zain Premier League and now faces the challenge of avoiding relegation. The team is determined to stay among the league's "big ten" and avoid a repeat of the 2022-23 season when it dropped to the First Division.

On the other hand, Sulaibikhat has shown improvement in recent First Division matches, winning three of its last four games to climb to fourth place, just four points behind the league leader.

Historically, Khaitan has had the upper hand in recent encounters, winning three of their last five First Division meetings, with one loss and one draw.

Al-Qadisiya's Petrovic cautious despite narrow win in first leg

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, March 5: Al-Qadisiya's Montenegrin coach, Zeljko Petrovic, expressed his delight following his team's 1-0 victory over Al-Nasr of the UAE in Dubai on Tuesday in the first leg of the Gulf Champions League semi-finals.

Speaking at the post-match press conference, Petrovic emphasized that the win provided his team with an advantage ahead of the return leg next week. However, he acknowledged, "I am fully aware that this advantage is minimal, given the quality of Al-Nasr and their coach, who have outstanding players capable of turning the tie around."

He added that the victory serves as a morale booster before the decisive second leg, expressing his hope that Al-Qadisiya can secure a place in the final.

Petrovic noted that the match was technically more balanced



Al-Qadisiya's Montenegrin coach, Zeljko Petrovic

before Al-Nasr's Ali Mabkhout was sent off. He explained that the numerical disadvantage gave the home side an extra psychological lift.

He further pointed out that Al-

Qadisiya's drop in performance during the second half was due to fatigue, as his squad had played 13 matches in just 60 days, impacting their energy levels in certain games.

On the other hand, Al-Nasr's Dutch coach, Alfred Schreuder, admitted that the red card made the match more challenging for his side. He noted that Al-Qadisiya capitalized on the mistake and managed to score the decisive goal.

Despite the setback, Schreuder was pleased with his team's second-half performance, stating that they created dangerous opportunities but were ultimately unable to find the back of the net.

He remained optimistic about Al-Nasr's chances of qualification, stating, "We still have a strong opportunity to progress. Al-Nasr has the ability to bounce back and deliver its best performance in the return leg to keep our campaign alive in the competition."

Real takes narrow lead in Champs League last 16

Good night for English sides

MADRID, March 5, (Xinhua): English clubs Aston Villa and Arsenal took significant steps toward the Champions League quarterfinals with convincing victories in the first legs of their last-16 ties.

Aston Villa secured a 3-1 win away to Club Brugge, while Arsenal thrashed PSV Eindhoven 7-1, effectively sealing their qualification on a day when the Madrid derby between Real and Atletico Madrid also grabbed attention.

Real Madrid struck early against Atletico, with Rodrygo scoring in the third minute after a pass from Fede Valverde. The forward cut inside and curled a shot into the far post.

Vinicius Jr had chances to extend Real's lead but was denied by Jose Gimenez and Jan Oblak. Atletico equalized through Julian Alvarez, who beat Eduardo Camavinga and finished with a precise shot past Thibaut Courtois.

Despite Atletico's strong start to the second half, Real Madrid regained the lead in the 54th minute when Brahim Diaz scored with a low shot from outside the area.

Aston Villa's win against Club Brugge saw Leon Bailey open the scoring in the third minute with a powerful finish. Maxim De Cuyper quickly equalized for the Belgian side, but Villa took control when Brandon Mechele scored an own goal. Marco Asensio added a third from the penalty spot to give Villa a commanding lead.

Arsenal made an emphatic statement in Eindhoven. Jurrien Timber's header from Declan Rice's free kick put them ahead in the 18th minute. Ethan Nwaneri doubled the lead just three minutes later with a left-foot shot.

Mikel Merino added a third in the 31st minute before Noa Lang converted a penalty for PSV before halftime. However, Arsenal responded quickly in the second half, with Martin Odegaard and Leandro Trossard scoring in quick succession to make it 5-1.

Odegaard struck again to complete his brace, prompting many home fans to leave. They missed Ricardo Calafiori adding a seventh goal with five minutes left.

In the day's final match, Karim Adeyemi's 21st-minute thunderbolt gave Borussia Dortmund a 1-0 lead over Lille. The French side leveled in the 68th minute when Hakon Haraldsson got a touch on Jonathan David's low cross to score.



Atletico Madrid's Giuliano Simeone, left, fights for the ball with Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior during the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the Bernebeu stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Athletic returns to Rome in Europa League

Sociedad has good chance of beating Man Utd

MADRID, March 5, (Xinhua): Real Sociedad has the chance to take a step towards the quarterfinals of the Europa League when the team from San Sebastian faces a struggling Manchester United in the Reale Arena on Thursday evening.

Real Sociedad goes into the game after a 4-0 defeat away to FC Barcelona, which was conditioned by the 17th minute red card shown to defender Aritz Elustondo. It's not the first time the team has suffered an early red card, with Igor Zubeldia also been shown an

early red card in a recent trip to play Betis and Aihen Munoz leaving his side with 10 away to Lazio in the last Europa League group game.

Home coach Imanol Alguacil has stressed the importance of not giving his side's rival an early advantage with

rash challenges.

He will be able to welcome Take Kubo and Sheraldo Becker into his side, and Kubo especially should boost the Real Sociedad attack against a rival whose season hit another low point on Sunday with an exit from the FA Cup on penalties to Fulham.

The FA Cup defeat means winning the Europa League is Manchester United's only chance of a trophy (and of playing in Europe next season), but Ruben Amorim's side is struggling for any kind of consistency, with the players looking slow in defense, while struggling to score.

Rasmus Hojlund and Joshua Zirkzee are both out of form in attack, while 17-year-old Chido Obi-Martin, who has looked lively in recent matches, isn't included in United's Europa League squad, leaving winger Alejandro Garnacho as his side's main attacking threat from open play.

If Real Sociedad can avoid conceding free kicks and corners near the penalty area, half of the job will be done.

Athletic Club Bilbao travels to play Roma on Thursday. Roma has improved since the return of Claudio Ranieri to the dugout, but Athletic has also gained European experience since September and has key player Oihan Sancet back in the squad after a muscle injury kept him out of its narrow defeat to Atletico Madrid at the weekend.

Best of the Rest

Pumas edges toward last 8: Robert Ergas and Rogelio Funes Mori scored goals in each half as Mexico's Pumas UNAM eased to a 2-0 home win over Costa Rican side Alajuelense in the first leg of their CONCACAF Champions Cup round of 16 tie on Tuesday.

Ergas gave his side the lead at Ciudad Universitaria in Mexico City by slotting a first-time effort into the far corner after Pablo Monroy's pass.

Mexico international forward Mori doubled the advantage when he headed home after a set piece in the 73rd minute. Elsewhere in the round of 16 on Tuesday, Nicolas Ibanez canceled out Pavel Bucha's early goal to earn Mexican outfit Tigres UANL a 1-1 draw with Cincinnati in the United States.

The winner of the competition will automatically qualify for the FIFA Club World Cup and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup. (Xinhua)

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Goalkeeper faces a longer ban: Millwall goalkeeper Liam Roberts could receive an extended ban for a dangerous challenge which left Crystal Palace forward Jean-Philippe Mateta needing 25 stitches.

The Football Association said it had filed a claim to increase Roberts' punishment from the standard three-game ban for serious foul play, which it called "clearly insufficient." Roberts has until Thursday to provide a response, the FA said.

Roberts was sent off just eight minutes into the FA Cup fifth-round game after he ran out of the box and leaped to kick the ball clear, but struck Mateta in the side of the face with a high left-footed follow-through.

Mateta needed lengthy medical treatment before he was stretchered off the field wearing a neck brace and taken to hospital. Palace said he needed "specialist treatment and 25 stitches to a severe laceration to his left ear."

Palace won the game 3-1 for a place in the FA Cup quarterfinals.

Mateta, Palace's top scorer this season, has said he hopes to be back in action "very soon." (AP)

□ □ □

Roque 'anxious' for debut: Forward Vitor Roque said Tuesday he was ready and anxious to make his debut for Palmeiras after joining the Brazilian Serie A club from Barcelona.

The 20-year-old completed a medical on Tuesday, having agreed to a five-year contract reportedly worth 25 million euros (around 27 million U.S. dollars) plus performance-based add-ons. "I'm very happy to be here. The structure is incredible, it was what I imagined given the size of the club," Roque told Palmeiras' official website. (Xinhua)



Fulham's Antonee Robinson, left, challenges for the ball with Manchester United's Noussair Mazraoui during the English FA Cup soccer match between Manchester United and Fulham at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)