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basketball



Amir calls for zero tolerance on crime

'Stay vigilant ... protect Kuwait's future'

- No mercy on drug dealers
- Call for smarter, tougher law enforcement
- Women in security lauded
- Amir praises Fire Force role

KUWAIT CITY, March 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Tuesday urged the Ministry of Interior's personnel to devotedly safeguard Kuwait and clamp down on drugs dealers with utmost firmness.

In speech marking his visit to the Headquarters of the Ministry of Interior (the Building of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah), His Highness the Amir began the statement with an address to the Minister of Defense and the Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the Interior Undersecretary Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and ministry personnel.

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Amiri Diwan photos
His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits the Headquarters of the Ministry of Interior on Tuesday.

Delays in Subiya tender could impact supply plans

Kuwait eyes Gulf power to avoid summer blackouts

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Informed sources at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy revealed that the ministry will be forced to purchase 1,000 megawatts from the Gulf interconnection network during the summer of this year, at an estimated cost of KD 60 million.

The sources indicated that the ministry aims to avoid resorting to programmed power cuts and purchasing energy from the

Gulf interconnection annually, which costs millions of dinars.

They also warned of delays in offering and implementing the tender for the supply, operation, and maintenance of gas turbine units at the Subiya station, which is expected to generate 900 megawatts as part of the fourth phase.

The sources highlighted that the estimated cost of the project is around KD 350 million, and that these units will operate for more than 30 years.

They explained that the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) had refused to approve the ministry's request to offer

the project tender during its meeting on February 11, citing the need for amendments and responses to several inquiries.

Officials from the ministry's power stations sector prepared the necessary responses and have addressed CAPT to reconsider the request, approve the offer, and initiate the procedures for awarding, contracting, and implementing the work.

The sources stressed that the delays in electricity production and the failure of projects in recent years were primarily due to the documentary cycle, lack of budgets, and approvals from regulatory authorities, as indicated in regulatory reports.

Newswatch

RIYADH: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council **Jassem Al-Budaiwi** said the hosting of the US-Ukraine talks in Jeddah affirms the confidence the international community places in the significant role of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in strengthening security and stability worldwide.

"The hosting of the talks reflects the eminent status of the Kingdom as a peace maker pivotal resolving disputes through diplomacy and dialogue," the Secretary-General said in a press release on Tuesday. (KUNA)

JEDDAH: Saudi Defense Minister Prince **Khalid Bin Salman** on Tuesday discussed with US Secretary of Defense **Pete Hegseth** the latest developments in the region alongside joint efforts and ways that contribute to enhancing regional and international security and stability.

The Saudi Press Agency said that the conversation was held during a phone call between Prince Khalid and his American counterpart.

Strategic cooperation between both sides was also covered during the call as was the strengthening of bilateral relations. (KUNA)

Kuwait's health ministry updates medicine prices for better access

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has approved the prices of 146 medicines, pharmaceutical formulas, and nutritional supplements with the aim of enhancing medicine control, ensuring patient safety, and striking a balance between quality and cost.

The new prices will take effect after they are published in the official gazette.

In ministerial Resolutions No. 45/2025 and 46/2025, the minister affirmed the ministry's keenness to regularly review medicine prices, as it helps in strengthening the healthcare system, controlling the cost of treatments, and easing

the financial burden on patients. This is in line with the ministry's vision of supporting access to high-quality, efficient pharmaceutical preparations and nutritional supplements.

In this regard, the Ministry of Health stated that the medicines and formulas listed in the attached document will be added to ministerial Decision No. 74/2023 to ensure integration in pharmaceutical policies and enhance the stability of the pharmaceutical market.

It emphasized the ongoing efforts of the Medicine Pricing Committee to review and approve prices based on well-studied scientific and economic principles for achieving a balance between quality and cost, and enhancing the

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FM confirms officials for Syria and Lebanon diplomatic posts

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya has reaffirmed the appointment of a chargé d'affaires in Syria and a Kuwaiti ambassador to Lebanon, denying the rumor that names have been specified to fill up these positions.

Al-Yahya made the statement when he attended a gathering at the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday night.

Also present at the event were Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mishaal, Director General of Kuwait Ports Corporation Sheikh Khaled Al-Salem, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Advisor at

Continued on Page 5



KPC photo
Deputy Chairman of the Board and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah speaks during his participation in the CERAWEEK conference held in Houston, Texas.

KPC reaffirms commitment to safe, clean energy at CERAWEEK confab

KUWAIT CITY, March 12, (KUNA): Deputy Chairman of the Board and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah headed the company's delegation in CERAWEEK conference, which kicked off in Houston, Texas, on Monday.

In a statement on Wednesday, KPC said the conference, set to conclude on Friday, is attended by thousands of petroleum industries leaders, as well as decision-makers and experts from around the world, to discuss energy-related topics in the light of global economic changes.

In a discussion session chaired by head

of the conference Daniel Yergin, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah affirmed KPC's commitment to provide its clients with safe crude oil supplies and clean products.

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah also underlined the prominent achievements of Kuwait's oil sector in exploration, development and production, especially in marine exploration.

He noted the need to find new solutions to support the corporation's efforts to face economic challenges, and support Kuwait to meet the global demand on crude oil and low-emission products.

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Arabs create their own defeat and never change their attitude

Arabs believe in polygamy but not multiculturalism.

Describing Arabs, Ibn Khaldun said, "They invite people to Paradise, but they do not invite an orphan to a meal."

The education system reveals surprising paradoxes among graduates.

The smartest students pursue medical and engineering degrees.

Third-class graduates often become politicians and rulers.

Those who never attended school often end up in parliament.

They abandon rationality, and cling instead to traditions and superstitions.

We will remain at the bottom, with no hope for progress unless we embrace knowledge.

They are far from freedom, and beggars are a common sight in their countries.

3

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Thursday 17:56
Imsak Friday 04:40



2 Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi diwaniya hosts Ramadan ghabqa



4 'Ramadan brings Kuwaitis closer in faith & tradition'



5 Al-Barjas family hosts Ramadan gathering in Khaldiya

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:43 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 06:02 Maghrib .. 17:54
 Zohr 11:58 Isha 19:11

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-38 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind,

Weather

with speeds of 10-30 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	24	17
Kuwait Airport	26	14
Abdaly	27	14
Bubyan	24	12

Jahra	27	16
Failaka Island	24	17
Salmiyah	23	17
Ahmadi	23	13
Jal Aliyah	26	14
Nuwaisib	25	15



Top and above: Some pictures taken at the gathering.

Photos by Rizk Taufiq

Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi diwaniya hosts Ramadan ghabqa

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi diwaniya in Shamiya hosted a Ramadan ghabqa with ruling family members, ministers, dignitaries, citizens and expatriates in attendance.

Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi warmly welcomed the guests underscoring the importance of Rama-

dan in strengthening societal ties through love, compassion and solidarity. He said this is in addition to fostering a sense of community and connection; adding that these values are considered an integral part of Kuwaiti heritage, passed down through generations.

He pointed out that preserving these values

is crucial for promoting good citizenship and a strong connection to Kuwait.

He expressed his greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti people and expatriates. He hoped that Ramadan will promote cooperation and unity for the benefit of Kuwait and its people.

Amir congratulates Mauritius on the country's Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent President Dharambeer Gokhool of Mauritius a congratulatory cable on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the President of Mauritius life-long good health and Mauritius and its friendly people further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent President Dharambeer Gokhool of Mauritius a congratulatory cable on the occasion of his country's Independence Day on Wednesday, wishing him good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent President Dharambeer Gokhool of Mauritius a congratulatory cable on the occasion of his country's Independence Day on Wednesday.



British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis with some businesswomen.



British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis with ambassadors of other countries.

'Success can only be achieved by joint efforts, unified vision'

Minister thanks directors at KU annual 'ghabqa'

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Kuwait University Faculty Association organized its annual Ghabqa in a Ramadan atmosphere, under the patronage and attendance of Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, as well as in the presence of University Director Dr. Dina Al-Mallam.

Chairman of the association Dr. Bader Al-Azmi affirmed that the association is keen on performing its union role and contribute to resolving university issues through continuous communication with the administration and other concerned parties.

He stressed the importance of the university as the main tributary to all State positions and centers that require expertise and scientific consultations, emphasizing the prominent role of faculty members in serving the country.

He pointed out that the annual Ghabqa aims to enhance communication between faculty mem-

bers. He said this year is distinguished by honoring an elite group of professors who have influenced academic life, including former university directors, heads of the association's administrative body and professors who have devoted their lives to serving Science.

He expressed his appreciation to the university's acting directors who have led the university in recent periods, praising their generosity and efforts.

He asserted that successes can only be achieved through concerted efforts and unified visions, hoping that the university will regain its prestigious position among international universities.

Meanwhile, on behalf of the former directors of the university, Dr. Faiza Al-Kharafi delivered a speech. She expressed her pride in working at the university; stressing that management is not a simple task carried out by an individual, as it is rather a complex task organized by a leader characterized by wisdom, comprehensive vision, good judgment and making the appropriate decision at the appropriate time. She praised the spirit of teamwork during her tenure in managing the university, adding that cooperation and harmony are essential factors in overcoming challenges and having accomplishments.

She also touched on the administrative vacuum in higher education institutions; where many po-

sitions are filled through assignments. She said this affected the workflow; hence, the necessity of appointing staff with experience and wisdom to ensure the continuity of development.

Dr. Mohammad Al-Muhaini spoke on behalf of the former heads of the association's administrative bodies; expressing his pride in participating in this annual meeting that strengthens the bonds of love among faculty members. He lauded the association's role in defending the rights of faculty members and contributing to the development of the university.

Al-Muhaini pointed out that the university has been distinguished throughout its history by respecting academic values, most notably the status of the university professor and the independence of university decisions, which made it one of the most successful academic institutions in terms of achievements.

He also expressed his pride in being the first president of the association in 1974, stressing that the association has been playing a vital role in supporting the university and its members since its establishment.

On the sidelines of the ghabqa, Al-Azmi told reporters that the association supports any step that enhances the university's interest, noting that the minister of higher education is committed to make the necessary legal amendments in line with everyone's aspirations.

Kuwait, Lebanon seek to enhance power of women

NEW YORK, March 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah discussed on Tuesday with the Lebanese First Lady Nehmat Aoun enhancing the role of women in the society.

This came in a meeting they held on the sidelines of the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York.

They underlined the importance of consolidating cooperation in all areas related to families and children support as well as promoting joint initiatives to develop Arab societies.

They also agreed on the need to empower women and increase their role in community development, in a way that buttresses social cohesion and family stability in both countries.

Businessman acquitted

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Court of Appeals upheld the Criminal Court's ruling to acquit a Gulf businessman of stealing checks and personal documents using violence.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant, along with unidentified individuals, of stealing the checks and documents as described in the Incident Book at Hawally Police Station.

The defendants used violence as they allegedly restrained and immobilized the victim to steal the abovementioned items.

Kuwait's subsidy disbursed in 2024 sees decline by 5.1%

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The total subsidy disbursed by the Supply Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry declined by about 5.1 percent in 2024 compared to the previous year, reports Al-Rai daily.

This decrease amounted to KD19.7 million — from KD386 million in 2023 to KD366.3 million in 2024.

According to data from the department, monthly subsidy disbursed in December 2024 decreased by 8.5 percent or KD2.9 million — from KD 36.18 million in November to KD 34.02 million in December.

On an annual basis, the December 2024 subsidy dropped by 17.3 percent or KD6.5 million, compared to KD37.65 million in December 2023.

The number of ration cards increased by 2.4 percent in 2024; rising by 6,400 cards from 262,610 in 2023 to 269,020 in December 2024. The number of beneficiaries also increased, with a 4.17 percent increase or 90,668 additional individuals, bringing the total from 2.169 million to 2.259 million beneficiaries by December 2024.

The subsidy provided by the department is divided into three main categories: basic materials, baby milk and nutrients, and construction materials. The subsidy allocated

for basic materials decreased by KD36.1 million or 2.5 percent — from KD144.86 million in 2023 to KD141.25 million in 2024.

On a monthly basis, this declined by 14.3 percent or KD1.95 million — from KD13.64 million in November to KD11.68 million in December. On an annual basis, it decreased by 26.6 percent or KD4.25 million, compared to KD15.94 million in December 2023.

Subsidy for milk and baby food increased by KD2.82 million or 20.4 percent — from KD13.83 million in 2023 to KD16.64 million in 2024. Monthly subsidy for this category surged by 100 percent or by KD1.23 million — from KD1.29 million in November to KD2.46 million in December. Annually, this increased by 42.3 percent or KD731,800 — from KD1.73 million in December 2023.

Subsidy for construction materials decreased by KD18.9 million or 8.3 percent — from KD227.32 million in 2023 to KD208.4 million in 2024. On a monthly basis, it dropped by 11.4 percent or KD2.18 million — from KD19.15 million in November to KD16.96 million in December. Annually, it decreased by 15 percent or KD3 million — from KD19.99 million in December 2023.

Businesswomen honored at UK embassy annual ghabqa

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The British Embassy in Kuwait hosted its annual Ramadan Ghabqa on Tuesday, highlighting the achievements of distinguished female business leaders and their contributions to both Kuwaiti society and the UK-Kuwait trade partnership, which spans 250 years.

The event, held just days after International Women's Day, recognized the role of women in driving economic growth and strengthening bilateral trade, which now stands at a record £6.2 billion annually.

Naz Demir, Country Director at the UK's Department for Business and Trade, emphasized the significance of female leadership in shaping future trade relations. "This evening, we celebrate past, present, and future female business leaders and their impact on the UK-Kuwait partnership. Events like this reaffirm our shared commitment to

empowering the next generation of female leaders and further strengthening the special bond between our two countries," she said.

British Ambassador to Kuwait, Her Excellency Belinda Lewis, reiterated the UK's dedication to fostering an inclusive business environment. "This year's Ghabqa celebrates both the Holy Month of Ramadan and the invaluable contributions of female business leaders. The UK remains committed to working with partners like Kuwait to ensure innovation and hard work are rewarded, regardless of gender," she stated.

Ambassador Lewis also noted the appointment of Baroness Harriet Harman KC as the UK Special Envoy for Women and Girls, a role aimed at championing gender equality in business and beyond.

Kuwait patronizes Arab League ninth Media Excellence Award

CAIRO, March 12, (KUNA): The Arab League's media and communications sector announced Tuesday the organization of the ninth edition of the Arab Media Excellence Award, "Arab Youth and New Media", under the patronage of Kuwait.

The award, of four categories: television, radio, press and digital media, aims to highlight distinguished media models in the Arab world, the League said in a statement.

Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Media and Communication Sector Ambassador Ahmad Khattabi underlined in a statement importance of taking part in this session as it handles topics that directly affect the youth.

New media is one of the most important features of modernity in Arab societies and it is no longer possible to dispense with social media in public life, especially the youth, he remarked.

Khattabi added that the discussions will shed light on the role of social media in raising awareness of youth about societal issues, supporting comprehensive development, preserving national and cultural identity, and enhancing the spirit of leadership

MoJ unveils e-notification system

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait issued a ministerial decision to add and approve new electronic methods as official means for electronic notification of lawsuits, judgments, orders, and other judicial documents, in line with the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law issued by Decree-Law No. 38/1980, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision aims to facilitate and expedite notification procedures, and ensure that information reaches the concerned parties through reliable and secure channels.

In a statement, the Ministry of Justice explained that, in accordance with resolution No. 125/2025, this step marks progress toward modernizing the judicial system and promoting digital transformation. Electron-



and innovation.

He explained that the Arab Media Excellence Award is an award of material value targeting accredited governmental and private media figures and institutions, and Arab organizations. Khattabi indicated that this encourages quality and professional media and enhances the capabilities of Arab media professionals.

The Arab League will continue to receive nominations until late next April, provided that the conditions are met: that the entity or candidate be of Arab nationality, the language of the submitted work is Arabic, and that the candidate has not previously received an award.

MoJ unveils e-notification system

ic notification will now be available through Kuwait Mobile ID, Sahel application, Sahel Business application, email registered with the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), emails verified during litigation, web services, and text messages.

This decision will help reduce the time needed to complete notification procedures compared to traditional paper advertisements, and improve the reliability of notifications by relying on secure electronic systems. This will also make it easier to deliver notifications to recipients through verifiable methods.

The ministry revealed that the decision will take effect on the first day of the month following its publication in the official gazette.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Arabs create their own defeat and never change their attitude

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Arabs have not changed at all, despite the criticisms directed at them. They have become accustomed to glorifying customs and traditions, and have not changed their attitudes, despite the clear guidance in the Holy Quran: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Al-Rād: 11)

Reports from research centers and ambassadors about the Arab countries they are accredited to reveal the extent of the backwardness of these countries, despite Allah urging them to seek knowledge.

Nearly 700 years ago, Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun said, "Arabs only conquer the simple and triumph over the weak."

This sad truth should be accepted by everyone, including prominent figures, leaders, and even ordinary citizens. They must understand that time is unforgiving and that they will remain a harsh testing ground for a brutal world, which relentlessly pursues its interests at any cost. It is necessary for everyone to understand that there are no permanent allies, only permanent interests.

Reading the report by British Ambassador Jane Marriott, who served in Yemen from 2013 to 2015, on education in the Arab world presented to the British House of Commons years ago, I realized that we, as Arabs, are a nation that creates its own defeats.

- Arabs believe in polygamy but not multiculturalism.
- Describing Arabs, Ibn Khaldun said, "They invite people to Paradise, but they do not invite an orphan to a meal."
- The education system reveals surprising paradoxes among graduates.
- The smartest students pursue medical and engineering degrees.
- Third-class graduates often become politicians and rulers.
- Those who never attended school often end up in parliament.
- They abandon rationality, and cling instead to traditions and superstitions.
- We will remain at the bottom, with no hope for progress unless we embrace knowledge.
- They are far from freedom, and beggars are a common sight in their countries.

Ambassador Marriott stated, "The education system leads to shocking paradoxes among graduates. The smartest, top-tier students go to medical and engineering colleges. The second-tier graduates go to business and economics colleges, and become managers of the top-tier graduates. The third-tier students attend political science colleges and become the country's politicians, thus ruling over the top-tier and second-tier graduates."

Those who fail to complete their education often leave school early to join the army or

police. Once promoted to senior positions, they control politicians and economists, dismiss them and do as they please.

What is truly astonishing is that those who never attended school end up becoming members of parliament, mayors, and tribal leaders, with everyone obeying their commands!

Arabs believe in polygamy, but fail to embrace multiculturalism, diverse languages, religions, civilizations, and freedoms.

Ibn Khaldun said, "Arabs invite people to Paradise, but they are unable to invite an orphan to a banquet. They invite people to Paradise while their countries are full of beggars and shoe shiners."

Arabs disregard rationality, and cling instead to traditions, customs, and superstitions, which limits their ability for innovation and progress.

Knowledge is the weapon with which humanity fights. As long as we remain in darkness, we have no hope for advancement. Without learning and applying knowledge, we will remain at the bottom.

The noose is tightening around the neck of the Syrian sectarian, the swindler, and intelligence agent. He will be forced to return the properties he looted to their rightful owners, including the hotel he stole from that humble Lebanese man. The cars, planes, and farms will be returned to their owners. His partner in crime, the intelligence agent, has already been arrested.

■ Relax, for you will only receive what God has allotted you, whether good or bad.



■ The Arabs used to say, "It is rain that makes roses grow, not thunder."



■ Housing banks, along with the concept of residential housing cities, are the solution to the housing crisis without exorbitant costs. These plans have been successfully implemented in neighboring countries.



■ We want more openness to neighboring countries. Let their people visit us, and let us visit them. Let us forget the past and focus on the future, for it holds much promise.



■ The state is obligated to employ 25,000 citizens in the future. A portion of this workforce is meant to work in the private sector. Have we prepared the private sector for this?



KFF at the site.

KFF photos



Smoke from the rooms.

No loss as blaze hits sports club

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Firefighters from Farwaniya and Subhan fire stations extinguished a fire that broke out in the prefabricated rooms of a sports club in Khaitan on Monday evening.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the fire was extinguished, and no casualties were reported.

74 expats deported

Kuwaiti sponsor's drunk driver faces deportation & entry ban

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: A Kuwaiti citizen's driver was detained at the Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area police station, pending deportation and a re-entry ban, after being caught by his sponsor in a severely intoxicated state, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, a citizen born in 1971 informed the Interior Ministry's Operations Unit that he asked his driver to take him to the cooperative society at noon. However, when the driver got out of his room, he appeared highly intoxicated and in an abnormal state.

The source added "a police patrol was immediately dispatched, arrested the driver, and took him to the police

station, where he will remain pending deportation, that is, after confirming he has no outstanding legal issues which could prevent his deportation."

74 expats deported: The General Traffic Department (GTD) at the Interior Ministry deported 74 expatriates in 2024 for committing serious traffic violations; such as speeding, running a red light and reckless driving, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Meanwhile, the department reiterated that the new Traffic Law will take effect on April 22 calling on motorists to adhere to traffic rules and avoid violations.

Ruling upheld...Kuwaiti citizen absolved in 'terror' outfit links

Court jails man for challenging royal authority

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Court of Cassation upheld the verdict issued by a lower court to refrain from punishing a Kuwaiti citizen in his 30s working in the Ministry of Islamic Affairs who was accused of collaborating with members of the ISIS organization to target Shiites and American forces in Saudi Arabia. He was also accused of encouraging his wife and others to pledge allegiance to the organization's leaders.

The Criminal Court had previously sentenced the accused to five-year imprisonment after he was convicted of communicating with the terrorist organization and planning attacks in Saudi Arabia.

The Public Prosecution charged him with publishing information about the terrorist organization online, promoting extremist ideologies, and disseminating content related to the manufacturing of explosives. The indictment also included charges of joining a banned group that aims to undermine the country's regime through illegal means.

Dr Al-Alawi jailed: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Dr. Fahad Bouslaib, sentenced Dr. Tariq Al-Alawi to two-year imprisonment in a State Security case.

The Public Prosecution accused Dr. Al-Alawi of challenging the rights of His Highness the Amir and undermining the prestige of the state by spreading false information about the Amiri pardon and using money for political purposes during the grilling motion filed by former MP Mughal Al Mudhaf against former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf.

Horse suffers multiple stab wounds in attack on owner

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: In a shocking incident that sparked outrage among equestrian enthusiasts, a horse was stabbed multiple times by an unknown person at a horse track and the suspect managed to escape, reports Al-Anba daily.

Detectives have started procedures to arrest the suspect and determine his motive in trying to stab the horse, which led to the fatal stabbing of the horse.

The Ministry of Interior's Operations Unit received a report about an attempted murder and stabbing of a horse's owner. Security personnel immediately responded and uploaded surveillance camera footage showing the perpetrator rushing toward the horse's owner, attempting to stab him. The horse, however, defended its owner, receiving the fatal stab in a dramatic scene that shook the hearts of those present.

A security source said the horse's owner gave his testimony. The incident sparked a wave of anger on social media, with many demanding the harshest penalty to be imposed on the accused.



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LOCAL



Photos taken from the event

Season of unity and generosity

'Ramadan brings Kuwaitis closer in faith, tradition'

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah pointed out that "Ramadan is a time when Kuwaiti customs and spirituality are prominent. The Sabah family upholds the values of their ancestors, promoting love and solidarity among all members of society. This is evident in the increased acts of kindness and exchange of visits during this holy month."

He added "may Allah bless Kuwait, its wise leadership and its loyal people with continued security, safety and stability under the guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah."



A group photo taken from the event.

Al-Mishari outlines key housing policy reforms

Minister works to overcome barriers

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdul Latif Al-Mishari says the 'Real Estate Development' application is facing certain restrictions, such as financing mechanisms and land liberation, but the ministry is working on developing a clear system to deal with these issues within its executive plan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Al-Mishari said a major issue like the housing problem cannot be solved without an impact on the real estate market, even if only minimally. He affirmed the ministry's commitment to minimizing this impact as much as possible.

Al-Mishari explained from day one, he has made it a priority to meet with both government agencies and the private sector to discuss the housing issue. The matter of real estate financing was specifically highlighted in a meeting with the Minister of Finance, with the participation of the Kuwait Investment Authority and the Central Bank of Kuwait.

The obstacles encountered were minimal, particularly those related to Law No. 118. Some amendments were made to facilitate its implementation. An integrated vision was developed and the problems were resolved within four months of his assumption of the ministry's responsibilities.

He credited the achievement to the team at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) and expressed pride in working alongside everyone at PAHW.

Al-Mishari said, "We held several meetings with the largest real estate development companies and the

Real Estate Union, who represent this sector. We took their recommendations and opinions into account when amending the law, and there is complete agreement between us."

He explained that providing suitable housing alternatives would begin with Kuwaiti families. If time permits, the plan will extend to all segments, referencing the women's housing law, followed by single women. He also highlighted a topic that is often overlooked, which is housing for single men.

Al-Mishari revealed that he had received messages from men who are outside the housing system because they are not married, adding that their issue has not been addressed in terms of housing care.

Regarding the distribution of new residential areas in South Saad Al-Abdullah, the minister clarified that the distributions will take place soon.

He emphasized that the implementation of law No. 118 aligns with the current mechanism for providing land, adding that the Board of Directors of PAHW played a major role in this success and has approved the activation of three main residential areas: Nawaf Al-Ahmad, Al-Khيران, and Al-Sabriyah.

The minister said the initial designs and plans for the main infrastructure of these areas, which will include 150,000 housing units, will soon be launched.

Al-Mishari stressed that labor cities are part of international agreements, adding that PAHW is conducting consultations with relevant parties, particularly concerning future projects.

He affirmed that these cities are expected to come to fruition soon, as the feasibility studies are currently underway to prepare for their inclusion in private sector plans.

Al-Mishari emphasized that labor cities are a priority for both the government and PAHW.

Al-Mishari indicated that three sites have been allocated to PAHW for establishing labor city projects, adding that some existing labor cities in Kuwait fall under the authority of PAHW, while others are overseen by various other entities, including the Ministry of Finance.



Al-Mishari

Authority sets timeline for disciplinary petitions

Capital Markets revises appeal rules

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has issued Resolution No. 37/2025 to amend the rules related to submitting requests to appeal decisions made by the disciplinary board, as outlined in the executive regulations of Law No. 7/2010, which established the Capital Markets Authority and regulates securities activities, and their amendments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The resolution includes an amendment to Articles 5-18 of Chapter Five in Book Three. It specifies that any individual subjected to a penalty outlined in the law may submit an appeal request to the disciplinary board after paying the prescribed fee and following the required format.

Petitions must be submitted to the disciplinary board within three working days from the date of notification of the decision. The board is required to rule on the petition within five working days of its submission. The latest amendment introduces a separate form for submitting grievances against the decisions of the disciplinary board in specific cases.

In addition, the CMA announced the start of preparations for launching its fourth strategic plan, which will cover the fiscal years from 2027/2028 to 2030/2031. The plan aims to establish a clear future vision for the CMA, enhance its role in the development of financial markets, and contribute to supporting the national economy.

More than 20 positions to be filled soon

FM Al-Yahya signals major reshuffling

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya announced that the ministry is in the process of conducting administrative and diplomatic reshuffling, and filling vacant positions.

Indicating that an announcement would be made soon, the minister expressed his hope that these changes would be completed before the Eid al-Fitr holidays.

Al-Yahya revealed that the reshuffling and vacancy fillings would involve more than 20 positions.

In a press statement issued during Al-Yahya's Diwan reception for well-wishers for the holy month of Ramadan, and in response to a question about U.S. President Donald Trump's



Al-Yahya

announcement of a visit to Saudi Arabia and the region, and the possibility of holding an expanded meeting of Gulf states, Minister Al-Yahya stated, "We do not have any details yet. As soon as any new developments arise, they will be announced."

Regarding Kuwait's receipt of an invitation from Baghdad to participate in the Arab Summit scheduled for mid-May, Al-Yahya confirmed that Kuwait will be participating.

About the regular Gulf ministerial meetings scheduled for April, Al-Yahya explained that these meetings, including the meeting of Gulf finance ministers and the donor meeting in Egypt, aim to transform the Egyptian-Palestinian plan into an international Arab plan to gain international support. All doors are open for discussion regarding the proposed amendments and suggestions.

Al-Yahya also expressed his pleasure at the frequent meetings with the diplomatic community during the holy month of Ramadan, and his appreciation for the presence of ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait.

KFAED signs USD 2.5m grant deal with WHO for Yemen health project

KUWAIT CITY, March 12, (KUNA): Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed Tuesday a deal with World Health Organization (WHO), offering USD 2.5 million to support enhanced access to renewable energy sources for healthcare facilities in Yemen.

The project is meant to improve the quality of basic health services for the population, cut the reliance of health facilities on unreliable energy sources, and reduce carbon emissions by providing six hospitals

with continuous and reliable renewable energy sources, KFAED said in a press release.

These health facilities will annually serve about 935,000 people directly and about 1.6 million additional indirectly, it added.

The project involves design, supply, installation and maintenance services for solar energy systems, energy storage batteries and ancillary components to supply health facilities with solar energy to operate priority departments, it explained.

The KFAED pointed out that the project implementation period is expected to take about two years.

KFAED Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar and WHO Representative to the State of Kuwait Dr. Assad Hafeez signed the grant agreement.

This grant is the tenth contribution of its kind between the two institutions in the field of humanitarian support, as the fund has previously provided about USD 25 million to the WHO since 1994 to finance nine projects.



KUNA photo

KFAED Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar and WHO Representative to the State of Kuwait Dr. Assad Hafeez signing the agreement.

'Determination, self-confidence defy Italy's Prigelato snows'

Maryam Theyab races toward new horizons

By Salman Al-Mutairi

TURIN, ITALY, March 12, (KUNA): As soon as you join the crowds of fans from different countries on the stage of the stadium located in the municipality of Prigelato in the Italian city of Turin, you are struck by Maryam's smile and her striking self-confidence.

With determination that defies the region's snow and the difficulties of moving around, Maryam is undergoing her first sporting experience in cross-country skiing after intensive training in two camps held in Dubai and Cairo before participating in the 12th Special Olympics World Winter Games (Turin 2025).

Maryam has a number of previous achievements, including her participation in the Berlin Summer Games in 2023, during which she served as the official spokesperson for the Middle East and North Africa for the International Special Olympics.

She is currently the Health Ambassador for the Middle East and North Africa for the Special Olympics and a member of the Ambition



KUNA photo

Champion Maryam Theyab, a member of Kuwaiti Special Olympics team.

Club for Intellectual Disabilities.

Maryam Theyab told KUNA Monday that she began her athletic career in schools affiliated with the Public Authority for the Disabled until she joined the Kuwaiti (Ambition) Club in 2018, after which she embarked on a long journey of

achievements.

In 2018, she participated in her first regional sports competition, specifically in the Jeddah Marathon, attended by 700 competitors, where she won second place.

She also participated in the World Down Syndrome Champi-

onship in the Czech Republic in the 100-meter run, shot put, and 100-meter walk, indicating that her sports participation gave her more determination and challenge.

Maryam emphasized that the continued support and assistance of her family, officials of the Kuwait Special Olympics, the Ambition Sports Club, and official Kuwaiti bodies enabled her to achieve advanced positions in various local and international forums.

She also stressed that she seeks, in light of this support, to spread the community culture of the importance of integrating people with mental disabilities and empowering them.

Further, Maryam said that she and her colleagues Hajar Al-Rashidi and Abdullah Al-Ali, who are currently participating in the World Winter Games (Turin 2025), are seeking to add a new achievement to the sport of people with intellectual disabilities in the country.

Maryam went on calling every parent to support their children and encourage them to achieve their dreams.

Fatwa clarifies Islamic stance

Ministry of Awqaf bans colored pebbles for graves decoration

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs issued a 'fatwa' (edict) prohibiting the use of colored pebbles (salbough) to decorate graves; stressing that small, regular and uncolored pebbles are enough to stabilize the soil, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Funeral Affairs Department at the Kuwait Municipality had earlier sought a legal ruling from the Fatwa Department on whether it is permissible to cover graves with crushed pebbles (gravel). It requested clarification on whether such practice could be allowed.

In response, Assistant Undersecretary for the Fatwa and Sharia Research Sector at the ministry Turki Al-Mutairi stated that while placing pebbles on graves to stabilize the soil is permissible, and some scholars have considered it a Sunnah, it should not result in the decoration or coloring of graves, as this contradicts the

intended messages of reflection and admonition in Islamic law.

Al-Mutairi also pointed out that putting colored pebbles to decorate the grave is prohibited. He reiterated that only small, regular and uncolored pebbles should be used to maintain the soil's stability.

In a letter, the Funeral Affairs Department stated that some funeral directors have misinterpreted the previous 'fatwa'; leading to the widespread use of pebbles in various colors and sizes, which falls outside the intended legal framework. It stressed the need for a clear legal 'fatwa' to specify a uniform color (such as white or gray) and an appropriate small size for pebbles, in order to prevent expansion of this practice, which could lead to the innovation of new religious practices and the construction of overly ornate graves in various shapes and colors.



People shop for traditional desserts at a restaurant during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in Hawalli Governorate, Kuwait, on March 9, 2025. (Xinhua)

MoE restructures schedules for science lessons

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Ministry of Education has informed school administrations that Science should not be scheduled as the last class of the school day for the 2025/2026 academic year, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a circular, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Mansour Al-Tufairi explained that "with reference to the letter we received from the General Technical Directorate for Science (No. 340909, dated March 3, 2025); it has

been decided that due to the theoretical and practical nature of Science, it should not be scheduled as the final class of the school day. This directive is being communicated to school principals in all educational levels and specializations."

Continued from Page 1

Amir calls

His Highness the Amir urged the MoI command and personnel to remain always vigilant, ready and primarily dedicated for serving the homeland, its interior security, its borders and stability, applying the law firmly on everybody without any exemption.

He also called for "confronting narcotics, and any involved person, with all might and firmness for preserving future of youth, families and society."

"There must be no complacency in protecting the society from this annihilating scourge."

Moreover, His Highness the Amir called for overhauling security tasks, upgrading the security personnel's efficiency, staying abreast of international development with regard of teaching, training and employing the modern sciences to sharpen the personnel skills.

He also called for boosting the confidence and partnership between the MoI and its staff with the citizens, preserving human rights and dignity through combating all forms of crime and offering services justly and equally.

His Highness Sheikh Meshal called for following up on implementing the new traffic law to cut the number of accidents and ensure roads' safety.

He had started his speech saying, "I am pleased along with my brother the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and accompanying brothers, on this blessed night, to meet our brothers and children in the Ministry of Interior, command, chiefs and personnel - both civilians and military, to congratulate all on the advent of the blessed month, praying to His Almighty to aid us in fasting and prayers and accept us among his good subjects."

Affirming that security is the basis for countries' development, progress and prosperity, His Highness the Amir said he is proud of the MoI personnel who play a pivotal role in safeguarding security "of our dear homeland and achieving safety for the Kuwaiti community."

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal praised the MoI personnel efforts in applying the laws on all citizens, also lauding update of the security apparatus with state-of-art systems, namely the biometric technology.

"We also value the ministry's continuous efforts for digital transformation, offering electronic services that save time and effort," he said, lauding role of the Kuwaiti women in the security



Amiri Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister, visits the General Fire Force Headquarters.

sectors where they proved capable of shouldering the responsibility with efficiency and professionalism.

He pledged to continue backing the armed forces, particularly the MoI and its cadres, and supply the forces with most modern equipment.

His Highness the Amir had arrived at the venue, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

He and his entourage were received upon arrival at the MoI headquarters by the Minister of Defense and the Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and the Interior Undersecretary Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following His Highness the Amir's address, the Acting Minister of Interior made a statement, then a film about the MoI's achievements (2024) was screened, followed by a statement by Colonel Dr. Lujain Al-Rushaid on behalf of the Women Police and poetry was recited by Major Mohammad Madi Aayed.

His Highness the Amir was granted a memorial gift.

Also on Tuesday, His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, visited Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) headquarters, on Tuesday.

Accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah.

His Highness was received by Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Salem

Al-Sabah, and KFF Chief Major General Talal Al-Roumi.

In his speech, His Highness congratulated the fire force on the holy month of Ramadan, expressing his pride in the force for their service and sacrifice, as well as the force's chiefs for their leadership and training.

He reaffirmed his support for the force by raising its efficiency and readiness to protect communities, as well as keep pace with developments in the field of prevention through strategic planning.

His Highness noted the fire force's participation in the Sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, wherein Kuwait called on world governments to implement the Sendai Framework.

To continue the force's development and keep pace with its international counterparts, His Highness directed the force's leadership to develop the following:-

Enhancing its member's vigilance and readiness, develop the force's systems to modern ones, benefit from modern technology to increase prevention and awareness, keep equipment updated, and finally cooperate with military, security, and civil sectors to better handle disasters and crises.

For his part, KFF's Chief had a similar speech, congratulating His Highness on the blessed month of Ramadan and thanking him for his dedicated support to the force.

He listed the force's achievements, among them is modernizing the force's systems to electronic ones, carrying out the largest preventative inspection, improve prevention and security systems, establishing new fire stations, implementing training programs, launching awareness campaigns, and many others.

Kuwait's health

economic efficiency of the pharmaceutical sector. This is part of the ministry's commitment to developing the health system in accordance with the latest international standards.

KPC reaffirms

Meanwhile, KPC's official for planning and finance Bader Al-Attar took part in a session on future demand for oil, where he presented the corporation's strategy in dealing with unstable prices through flexible planning and finding different markets.

He said that changes in demand and offer will not affect the growth of KPC, adding that demand for Kuwaiti oil will stay positive for decades, even during turning to alternative energy sources.

FM confirms

at the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Faisal Al-Malik, Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah, Governor of Jahra Hamad Al-Habashi, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs at the Amiri Diwan Mazen Al-Essa, and Director General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Fawaz Al-Mazrouei.

Al-Yahya explained "there are technical, logistic and security issues; as we are still in the preparation phase. The situation in Syria is a bit difficult and I hope it will stabilize soon."

He pointed out that the Kuwaiti Embassy in Syria is currently operating with an administrative staff. "We have no problem with that, as it is currently covered by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Beirut. Our embassy in Damascus will operate soon," he affirmed.

He also confirmed the continuation of Kuwaiti support and assistance for Syria and Lebanon, unveiling a Gulf plan to provide comprehensive assistance according to the needs of both countries.

On the other hand, Ambassador of the UAE to Kuwait Dr. Matar Hamed Hlais Al-Mkasafa Al-Neyadi warmly welcomed the guests. He asserted that such occasions strengthen relations between individuals and society, and are an important bridge for communication and exchange of views.

He praised the depth of bilateral relations and strategic partnership between Kuwait and his country, indicating the two countries are brothers united by blood and history.

Council OK's road projects

Some proposals pending

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: In its sixth meeting for the third legislative term on Wednesday, the Farwaniya Governorate Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Deputy Chairman of the council Khaled Al-Mutairi, approved three out of nine items on its agenda.

tailed study as follows:

■ Two proposals submitted by council member Walid Al-Dagher regarding the construction of an entrance in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak and the construction of an entrance in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak along the Seventh Ring Road;

■ Kuwait Municipality's use of the Park & Ride project sites allocated to Kuwait University as an additional solution

through public transportation to improve traffic flow and reduce the number of vehicles on the main roads that cause traffic congestion around the university campus.

Meanwhile, the committee returned to the executive authority a letter from a citizen regarding the construction of a service road in Sabah Al-Nasser, going towards the Sixth Ring Road.



Al-Mutairi

Following are the approved items:

■ Request of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) to construct a road linking the university campus in Abdullah Al-Mubarak to the Seventh Ring Road;

■ Proposal of Al-Mutairi to expand the entrance and exit to Gate Two of Sabah Al-Salem University City;

■ Request of a citizen for the rezoning of a plot in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

The committee referred three items to the executive branch to prepare a de-

Minister Al-Mashaan assumes leadership of Energy Ministry

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Minister of Public Works and acting Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has officially assumed her duties as Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy; replacing former Minister Dr. Mahmoud Bushehri, reports Al-Anba daily.

During the transition, Al-Mashaan was briefed by Bushehri on the activities of the ministry in recent months, including the projects and measures implemented under his leadership; particularly in relation to energy security and maintenance efforts.

The meeting - which was attended

by the undersecretary of the ministry, along with several assistant undersecretaries and senior officials - covered a range of important topics.

According to sources, Al-Mashaan was briefed on the country's electricity situation, current production, consumption levels, and projected demand.

The discussion also focused on strategies for securing energy through the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority, accomplishments of the recent maintenance season, and preparations for the upcoming peak season.

Al-Barjas family hosts Ramadan gathering in Khaldiya

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Al-Barjas family welcomed well-wishers on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan at their diwaniya in Khaldiya.

Ruling family members, public figures, members of the diplomatic corps, citizens and expatriates flocked to the diwaniya; where they exchanged Ramadan greetings in an atmosphere filled with friendship and connection.

The attendees prayed that Almighty Allah will make this holy occasion a blessing to Kuwait, its leadership and people, and to the Arab and Islamic nations.

They asked the Almighty to perpetuate the blessings of security and stability in the country under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



Al-Barjas Family welcomes public figures and diplomats at diwaniya.

Photos by Samer Sheqir

Kyiv says it's open to 30-day ceasefire

United States arms flow to Ukraine again as Kremlin mulls a ceasefire proposal

KYIV, Ukraine, March 12, (AP): US arms deliveries to Ukraine resumed Wednesday, officials said, a day after the Trump administration lifted its suspension of military aid for Kyiv in its fight against Russia's invasion, and Ukrainian officials signaled that they were open to a 30-day ceasefire backed by Washington.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that it's important not to "get ahead" of the question of responding to the ceasefire proposal. He told reporters that Moscow is awaiting "detailed information" about it from the US and suggested that Russia must get that first before it can take a position.

Arms deliveries to Ukraine have already resumed through a Polish logistics center, the foreign ministers of Ukraine and Poland announced Wednesday. The deliveries go through a NATO and US hub in the eastern

Polish city of Rzeszow that's been used to ferry Western weapons into neighboring Ukraine about 70 kilometers (45 miles) away.

The American military help is vital for Ukraine's shorthanded and weary army, which is having a tough time keeping Russia's bigger military force at bay. But for Moscow, more American aid spells potentially more difficulty in achieving its war aims and likely will be a tough sell in Moscow for Washington's peace efforts.

Meanwhile, an intensifying Russian effort to push Ukrainian forces out of its Kursk region has yielded breakthroughs in recent days, Ukrainian soldiers told The Associated Press. The fighting has escalated as ceasefire talks come to a head, with Moscow intent on taking back its territory and Kyiv determined to hold onto it as a bargaining chip in any negotiations.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (left), and US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz speak with the media following meetings with a Ukrainian delegation in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on March 11. (AP)

Ukrainian forces made a daring raid into the Russian region last August in the first foreign occupation of Russian territory since World War II. They have held on despite intense pressure from tens of thousands of Russian and North Korean troops.

Recent fighting reportedly has focused on the Kursk town of Sudzha, which is a key Ukrainian supply hub and operational base. Ukrainian soldiers said that the situation is dynamic and fighting continues in and around the town, but three of them conceded Russian forces were making headway.

Russian state news agencies RIA Novosti and Tass reported Wednesday that the Russian military have entered Sudzha. It wasn't possible to independently verify either side's claims.

Inside Ukraine, Russian ballistic missiles killed at least five civilians, officials said Wednesday.

US President Donald Trump wants to end the three-year war and pressured Zelenskyy to enter talks. The suspension of US assistance came days after Zelenskyy and Trump argued about the conflict in a tense White House meeting.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who led the American delegation to Tuesday's talks in Saudi Arabia, said that Washington would present the ceasefire offer to the Kremlin, which has so far opposed anything short of a permanent end to the conflict and hasn't accepted any concessions.

"We're going to tell (the Russians) this is what's on the table. Ukraine is ready to stop shooting and start talking. And now it'll be up to them to say yes or no," Rubio told reporters after the talks. "If they say no, then we'll unfortunately know what the impediment is to peace here."

Prospects unclear in Senate

House passes bill to fund federal agencies thru September

WASHINGTON, March 12, (AP): The House passed legislation Tuesday to avert a partial government shutdown and fund federal agencies through September, providing critical momentum as the measure now moves to the Senate, where bipartisan support will be needed to get it over the finish line.

Republicans needed overwhelming support from their members to pass the funding measure, and they got it in the 217-213 House vote. Just one Republican, Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky, voted against the measure. And just one Democratic lawmaker, Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, voted for it.

In the Senate, they'll need support from at least eight Democrats to get the bill to President Donald Trump's desk. It's one of the biggest legislative tests so far of the Republican president's second term, prompting Vice President JD Vance to visit Capitol Hill on Tuesday morning to rally support.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., moved ahead on the bill, essentially daring Democrats to oppose it and risk a shutdown that would begin Saturday if lawmakers failed to act on the continuing resolution, often referred to by lawmakers as a CR.

"We did our job today," Johnson said moments after the vote.

Johnson's strategy had the backing of Trump, who called on Republicans to "remain UNITED - NO DISSIDENT -



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, arrives for a closed-door meeting as House Republicans push ahead with a go-it-alone strategy on an interim GOP spending bill that would keep federal agencies funded through Sept 30 despite key Republican holdouts and united opposition from Democrats, at the Capitol, in Washington, March 11. (AP)

Fight for another day when the timing is right."

Lawmakers said the bill would trim \$13 billion in non-defense spending from the levels in the 2024 budget year and increase defense spending by \$6 billion, which are rather flat changes for both categories when compared with an overall topline of nearly \$1.7 trillion in discretionary spending. The bill does not cover the majority of gov-

ernment spending, including Social Security and Medicare. Funding for those two programs is on autopilot and not regularly reviewed by Congress.

Democrats mostly worried about the discretion the bill gives the Trump administration on spending decisions. They are already alarmed by the administration's efforts to make major cuts through the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, run by

billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk. And they say the spending bill would fuel the effort.

Spending bills typically come with specific funding directives for key programs, but hundreds of those directives fall away under the legislation. So the administration will have more leeway to reshape priorities.

For example, a Democratic memo said the bill would allow the administration to steer money away from combating fentanyl and instead use it on mass deportation initiatives.

"It is not a simple stopgap that keeps the lights on and the doors open," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. "This is Republican leadership handing over the keys of the government, and a blank check to Elon Musk and to President Trump."

Rep. Tom Cole, the Republican chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, acknowledged the continuing resolution was not the outcome he sought but said it was time to end the cycle of short-term funding extensions. This will be the third in recent months. He blamed Democrats for trying to rein in Trump's authority on spending.

"We're not going to have a Republican Senate and a Republican House restrict a Republican president from the legitimate exercise of executive authority," Cole said. "And then, oh, by the way, ask him to sign the bill."

Democrat Gottfried easily wins Minnesota House special election

ST. PAUL, Minn., March 12, (AP): Voters in a Minnesota House district at the center of post-election drama over chamber control decisively chose Democrat David Gottfried on Tuesday, tying the House and ending a short-lived Republican majority. The Democratic victory will force the two parties to work together on a budget for the next two years.

Gottfried got about 70% of the vote to defeat Republican Paul Wikstrom, who also ran for the seat in November.

The special election in the heavily Democratic district in the northern St. Paul suburbs of Roseville and Shoreview was scheduled after a state court ruled that Democratic winner Curtis Johnson failed to meet residency requirements. That disrupted an expected 67-67 tie in the House and led to the collapse of a power-sharing agreement when Republicans tried to capitalize on their unexpected majority, prompting a three-week Democratic boycott of the chamber.



Gottfried

The parties reached a new power-sharing agreement in February that assumed Democrats would win the special election and restore the tie. Under the terms of the deal, Republican Lisa Demuth will remain House speaker for the next two years. Once Gottfried is sworn in, the two parties will have even strength on most committees, with co-chairs who will take turns holding the gavel, except for an oversight committee that Republicans will control to investigate fraud in government programs.

Democrats hold a one-seat majority in the Minnesota Senate. Given the tie in the House, some degree of bipartisan cooperation will be required to get the 68 votes needed to pass the big budget measures to Democratic Gov. Tim Walz. Updated budget projections released last Thursday suggested difficult negotiations ahead. The projected surplus for the next two-year budget slipped to \$456 million, while the projected deficit for the two years after that grew to \$6 billion.

Gottfried's 40-point margin of victory exceeded Johnson's 30-point win in November. Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris carried the district with 68% of the vote over President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee.



Members of the Portuguese parliament take their seats at the start of a debate preceding the vote on a confidence motion concerning Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro in Lisbon on March 11. (AP)

New election likely in May

Portugal's government loses confidence vote

LISBON, Portugal, March 12, (AP): Portugal's minority government lost a confidence vote in parliament Tuesday, forcing its resignation and bringing the European Union country's third general election in three years.

The government's fall marks the worst spell of political instability since Portugal adopted a democratic system more than 50 years ago in the wake of the 1974 Carnation Revolution, which ended a four-decade dictatorship.

A string of minority governments has been unable to forge alliances that might ensure the administration completes its constitutional four-year term without opposition parties teaming up to bring it down.

A new election, likely in May, pitches the country of 10.6 million people into months of political uncertainty just as it is in the process of investing more than 22 billion euros (\$24 billion) in EU development funds. The European con-

tinental, meanwhile, is facing immediate challenges to its security and economy.

Voter discontent with a return to the polls could play into the hands of the radical-right populist party Chega (Enough), which has fed off frustration with mainstream parties. Portugal has been caught up in the rising European tide of populism, with Chega surging into third place in last year's election.

The government asked for the confidence vote, saying it was needed to "dispel uncertainty" about its own future amid a simmering political crisis that has focused on Social Democrat Prime Minister Luis Montenegro and distracted attention from government policy.

After more than three hours of at times loud debate and following dramatic late twists as the government tabled proposals to avoid its defeat, the government called an hourlong recess and lawmakers went into a huddle. The

government said it made a last-minute offer to the Socialists.

Silence fell on the chamber after the result was announced.

"Things are how they are. We gave our all," Montenegro, the prime minister, told reporters as he left the National Assembly, Portugal's parliament.

Socialist leader Pedro Nuno Santos, the leader of the largest opposition party, described the government's conduct as "shameful," saying it resorted to "maneuvers, games, tricks" to survive. The controversy has revolved around potential conflicts of interest in the business dealings of Montenegro's family law firm.

Montenegro, who says he'll stand for reelection, has denied any wrongdoing. He said he placed control of the firm in the hands of his wife and children when he became Social Democratic leader in 2022 and has not been involved in its running.

additional to the professional army and a territorial defense force.



Tusk

Security fears have grown sharply in recent weeks in the country along NATO's eastern flank as Russia continues to pound Ukraine with missiles and drones, and as the Trump administration has put its commitments to NATO in question.

Tusk said Friday his government was working on a plan for military training for all Polish men. He gave

more details Tuesday. (AP)

Demokraait wins most votes:

The center-right Demokraait Party won the most votes in a surprising result in Greenland's parliamentary elections, held in the shadow of U.S. President Donald Trump's stated goal of taking control of the island one way or another.

Both Demokraait, or the Democrats, and the second-place finisher Nalaraq, or Point of Orientation, favor Greenland's independence from Denmark but differ on the pace of change.

Demokraait won nearly 30% of the vote, compared to just 9% in the election four years ago, Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation KNR TV reported. (AP)

Austria's new government stopping family reunions immediately for migrants

VIENNA, March 12, (AP): The new Austrian government said Wednesday that family reunion procedures for migrants will be immediately halted because the country is no longer able to absorb newcomers adequately.

The measure is temporary and intended to ensure that those migrants who are already in the country can be better integrated, Chancellor Christian Stocker from the conservative Austrian People's Party said.

"Austria's capacities are limited, and that is why we have decided to prevent further overloading," Stocker said.

The new measure means that migrants with so-called protected status - meaning they cannot be deported - are no longer allowed to bring family members still living in their home countries to Austria.

The new three-party coalition made up of the People's Party, the center-left Social Democrats and the liberal Neos, has said that curbing migration is one of its top issues and vowed to implement strict new asylum rules.

Official figures show that 7,762 people arrived in Austria last year as part of family reunion procedures for migrants. In 2023 the figure was 9,254. Most new arrivals were minors.

Migrants who are still in the asylum process or have received a deportation



Chancellor Christian Stocker signs papers during the swearing-in ceremony of the Federal Government in the presidential office at the Hofburg Palace, in Vienna, Austria on March 3. (AP)

order are not allowed in the first place to bring family members from their countries of origin.

Most recent asylum seekers came from Syria and Afghanistan, the Austrian chancellery said in a statement.

The European Union country has 9 million inhabitants.

Stocker said the measure was necessary because "the quality of the school system, integration and ultimately the security of our entire systems need to

be protected - so that we do not impair their ability to function."

The government said it had already informed the EU of its new measures. It denied to say for how long it would put family reunions on hold.

"Since last summer, we have succeeded in significantly reducing family reunification," Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said. "Now we are creating the legal basis to ensure this stop is sustainable."

EU wants to increase deportations and supports 'return hubs' in third countries

STRASBOURG, France, March 12, (AP): The European Union wants to increase deportations and is opening the way for "return hubs" to be set up in third countries for rejected asylum-seekers, according to a new migration proposal unveiled Tuesday.

Only 20% of people with a deportation order are effectively removed from EU territory, according to the European Commission, which presented the "European System for Returns" in Strasbourg as a potential solution. The proposal aims to set a standard

for all 27 members of the bloc and allow national authorities from one country to enforce the deportation order issued by another. Such rules were missing from the EU's migration and asylum pact approved last year.

"The European system needs to be clear that when someone is issued a return decision they are being told to leave, not just the country but the entire European Union," said Magnus Brunner, the EU's commissioner for migration, who called the current 20% removal rate unacceptable.

"Any figure would be an improvement, but we don't want to pin down any specific figures," he added.

For the proposal to work, however, the EU needs to get countries of origin to readmit their citizens. Brunner acknowledged that the commission and member states are still working on improving that.

The "return hubs," a euphemism for deportation centers, would apply only to people whose asylum requests have been rejected and exclude unaccompanied minors, Brunner said. He added that any future deal would have to include safeguards to ensure international law and human rights are respected.



An aerial photograph taken by a drone shows migrants entering a detention center for processing following earlier court rejections, in the port of Shengjin, northwestern Albania on Jan 28. (AP)

Europe

'Train 100K army reservists':

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Tuesday his government intends to put 100,000 volunteers through military training yearly starting in 2027 as it seeks to build an army of reservists with worries about Russia growing.

He also said he told Cabinet ministers that they and other government officials would undergo military training, and his decision had been accepted "with full understanding."

Tusk announced last week that Poland needs 500,000 soldiers, more than double the current number. It would include reservists in

Philippine ex-prez Duterte heads to The Hague to face ICC charges linked to 'war on drugs'

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, March 12, (AP): Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte was being flown to the Netherlands on Wednesday to face an International Criminal Court charge of crimes against humanity linked to the deadly crackdown on drugs he oversaw while in office.

The 79-year-old Duterte's arrest Tuesday on a warrant issued by the global court was hailed by human rights groups and families of victims as a major breakthrough and step toward ending impunity.

Flight tracking data showed that after leaving Manila, the jet carrying Duterte waited for hours in Dubai before taking off again, apparently headed for Rotterdam The Hague Airport. The court didn't immediately comment on the flight, but Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said Tuesday that police arrested Duterte when he returned from a trip to Hong Kong and sent him to the ICC.

When he arrives in the Netherlands, he will be taken to the court's detention unit inside a Dutch prison complex near the North Sea coast.

Rights groups and families of victims welcomed the arrest. "This is a monumental and long-overdue step for justice for thousands of victims and their families," said Jerrie Abella of Amnesty International.

"It is therefore a hopeful sign for them, as well, in the Philippines and beyond, as it shows that suspected perpetrators of the worst crimes, including government leaders, will face justice wherever they are in the world," Abella added.

Emily Soriano, the mother of a victim of the crackdowns,

said she wanted more officials to face justice.

"Duterte is lucky he has due process, but our children who were killed did not have due process," she said.

Duterte's supporters, however, criticized his arrest as illegal and sought to have him returned home. Small groups of Duterte supporters and people who backed his arrest demonstrated on Wednesday outside the court before his arrival.

The ICC opened an inquiry in 2021 into mass killings linked to the so-called war on drugs overseen by Duterte when he served as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao and later as president.

Estimates of the death toll during Duterte's presidential term vary, from the more than 6,000 that the national police have reported and up to 30,000 claimed by human rights groups.

ICC judges who looked at prosecution evidence supporting their request for his arrest found "reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Duterte is individually responsible for the crime against humanity of murder" as an "indirect co-perpetrator for having allegedly overseen the killings when he was mayor of Davao and later president of the Philippines," according to his warrant.

Within days of being taken into custody at the court's detention center, Duterte will be taken to court for a hearing. Judges will confirm his identity, check that he understands the charges against him and set a date for a hearing known as a confirmation of charges at which a panel of pretrial judges will assess if prosecutors have sufficient evidence to merit sending him to a full trial.



Supporters of former President Rodrigo Duterte rush to the fence of the Villamor Air Base in Manila, Philippines on March 11, upon learning that the plane taking the ex-president to The Hague has left the airport. (AP)

An act of terrorism: Rind

Pakistani forces in standoff as militants hold about 250 hostages on hijacked train

QUETTA, Pakistan, March 12, (AP): Pakistani forces were in a tense standoff Wednesday with hundreds of militants holding about 250 people hostage on a train they had hijacked in the remote southwest the day before, officials said. The security forces held off from full-out battles as militants wearing vests loaded with explosives had barricaded themselves inside the train with the hostages.

The separatist Baloch Liberation Army had claimed responsibility for the attack Tuesday in a tunnel in Bolan, a district in restive Balochistan province. Its spokesman Jeeyand Baloch said the group was ready to free passengers if authorities agree to release jailed militants.

There has been no comment from the government, which has rejected such demands in the past.

At least 30 militants were killed in initial exchanges of gunfire since Tuesday. By late Wednesday, security forces had rescued 190 of the 450 passengers who were initially on the train, according to three senior security officials.

Helicopters were backing up Pakistani forces in the rugged region, said spokesman Shahid Rind, describing the attack as "an act of terrorism."

It was the first time the BLA separatists had hijacked a train, though the group has attacked trains before. The BLA regularly targets Pakistani security forces and has also in the past attacked civilians, including Chinese nationals working on multibillion-dollar projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Estimates say the BLA has around 3,000 fighters.

Pakistan hosts thousands of Chinese workers as part of Beijing's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which is building major infrastructure projects, including ports and airports in Balochistan. China condemned the latest attack and foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said her country "will continue to firmly support Pakistan in advancing its counterterrorism efforts."

Authorities said the rescued so far include women and children. An undisclosed number of security personnel have been killed, according to the three security officials. They spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media.



Passengers rescued by security forces from a passenger train attacked by insurgents arrive at a railway station in Quetta, Pakistan on March 12. (AP)

Officials say the Jafer Express train was partially inside a tunnel when the militants blew up the tracks, forcing the engine and nine coaches to stop. The driver was wounded and guards aboard the train were attacked, although the officials gave no details on how many there were or about their fate.

Rescued passengers were being sent to their hometowns and the injured were being treated at hospitals in the Mach district. Others were taken to Quetta, the

provincial capital, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) away. The train was traveling from Quetta to the northern city of Peshawar when it came under attack.

Balochistan, which borders Iran and Afghanistan, has long been the scene of insurgency with separatists demanding greater autonomy from the government in Islamabad and a larger share of the region's natural resources.

Also, insurgencies on either side of the Iran-Pakistan border have frustrated both countries. Their governments suspect each other of supporting - or at least tolerating - some of the groups operating on the other side of the border.

In Iran, the militant group Jaish al-Adl has carried out many attacks in recent years. Tehran has sought help from Pakistan in countering the threat from it, and Pakistan also wants Tehran to deny sanctuaries to BLA fighters.

In January 2024, Islamabad and Tehran engaged in tit-for-tat airstrikes targeting insurgents inside each other's border areas, killing at least 11 people, but quickly deescalated the situation through talks.

The BLA said the hostages and some captured members of the security forces were being guarded by suicide bombers Wednesday. The BLA has warned that the life of hostages would be at risk if the government does not negotiate.

Trains in Balochistan typically have security personnel on board as members of the military frequently use trains to travel from Quetta to other parts of the country. In November, the BLA carried out a suicide bombing at a train station in Quetta, killing 26 people.

Analysts said the train attack and its focus on civilians could backfire.

"After failing to damage the Pakistan Army within Balochistan, BLA has shifted its targets from military to unarmed civilians. This may give them instant public and media attention, but it will weaken their support base within the civilian population, which is their ultimate objective," said Syed Muhammad Ali, an Islamabad-based independent security analyst.

Oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan is Pakistan's largest and least populated province. It's a hub for the country's ethnic Baloch minority, whose members say they face discrimination and exploitation by the central government.

Son of HK ex-publisher Lai says 77-year-old could die in jail and calls for father's release

WASHINGTON, March 12, (AP): The son of prominent Hong Kong former publisher Jimmy Lai, who is facing possible life imprisonment in the Chinese city, called Tuesday for his father's release in a high-profile national security case.

Sebastien Lai, in a meeting with reporters in Washington, said the

prison conditions where his 77-year-old diabetic father is being held in solitary confinement are "inhumane for anybody, any age." "There is a real fear that he might pass away at any time," said the son, who is leading an international campaign to free his father. "This year will be the fifth year for him to be in prison."

The case has drawn widespread international condemnation and is seen as evidence of the erosion of press freedom and judicial independence in Hong Kong. The elder Lai, founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper known for its anti-Beijing stance, is standing trial on charges of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and of conspiring with others to issue seditious publications. The collusion charge carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Last year, Lai pleaded not guilty to all charges. On March 6, he presented his final testimony and lawyers from both sides are expected to return to court to deliver their closing statements in August. He has been convicted in four separate cases involving fraud and unauthorized assemblies and has been given sentences totaling more than seven years, according to Amnesty International.

Lai, an outspoken critic of Beijing, was arrested in 2020 in a crackdown following anti-government protests in Hong Kong a year earlier. The Beijing and Hong Kong governments say a strict national security law helped restore stability to Hong Kong after the demonstrations.



Sebastien Lai, son of imprisoned Hong Kong media publisher Jimmy Lai, shows a picture of his father, during a preview of the Geneva Summit for Human Rights, at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Feb 17. (AP)

Somali forces end militant attack on hotel, all al-Shabab militants killed

MOGADISHU, Somalia, March 12, (AP): Somali security forces on Wednesday ended a 24-hour siege at a hotel in the central city of Beledweyne, leaving an unknown number of people dead, including all the al-Shabab militants who launched the attack, officials said.

The attack began when a car bomb exploded Tuesday at the Cairo Hotel, which houses traditional elders and military officers involved in coordinating the government's offensive against al-Shabab.

The mayor of Beledweyne, Omar Alasow, on Wednesday said security forces had "successfully ended the siege" and that six al-Shabab militants died. It is still unclear how many civil-

ians were killed in the attack.

The al-Qaida-affiliated al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack.

Beledweyne, about 335 kilometers (208 miles) north of the capital, Mogadishu, is the capital of the Hirran region and a strategic location in the ongoing campaign against al-Shabab.

Estimates of the death toll from the attack varied. One local resident, Muh-sin Abdullahi, said six people, including two well-known traditional elders, were killed. But witness Hussein Jeelle Raage said three of his family members were among at least 11 people he knew were dead. Footage shared on social media showed thick smoke rising from the hotel, with significant destruction to the building.



An ambulance is seen on the beach following an attack on Mogadishu, Somalia on Aug 3, 2024. (AP)

Angola plans to act as mediator

DAKAR, Senegal, March 12, (AP): Angola on Tuesday announced plans to act as a mediator in the conflict between Congo and the Rwandan-backed rebel group M23, according to a press release posted on the official page of the Angolan president's office.

Felix Tshisekedi, the president of Congo, was in Angola to discuss a potential peace process. According to the press release, Angola will begin to establish contacts with both the Congolese government and M23 rebels with direct negotiations to be carried out in the coming days.

The announcement comes after several canceled peace talks hosted by Angola that had previously excluded M23 and instead focused on their Rwandan backers. M23 is one of about 100 armed groups that have been vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern Congo near the border with Rwanda, in a conflict that has created one of the world's most significant humanitarian crises. More than 7 million people have been displaced.

The rebels are supported by about 4,000 troops from neighboring Rwanda, according to U.N. experts, and at times have vowed to march as far as Congo's capital, Kinshasa, over 1,000 miles away.



Tshisekedi

Defense minister vows to reclaim territory lost to rebels

Petro calls for referendum on health, labor reforms

BOGOTÁ, Colombia, March 12, (AP): Colombian President Gustavo Petro said Tuesday he will call for a special election in which voters will be able to approve or reject labor reform and health reform, which have been stalled for months in congress.

In a nationally televised speech, Petro accused Colombia's senate of "mocking" voters and siding with the nation's "oligarchy" by turning down his efforts to reform the nation's labor laws and its health system.

With dozens of activists and pro-government politicians standing behind him, Petro called on his supporters to mobilize in favor of his government's reforms.

"We have searched in our constitution for a path that will enable people to make decisions without intermediaries," Petro said. "Now the people must decide if they want to be slaves, or if they want to be free and respectable."

Petro's proposal came just hours after a group of eight senators issued a statement saying they would reject the president's health reform in a crucial committee vote.

The Colombian president has often struggled to get legislation passed by the nation's congress, where his party lacks a majority of seats.

During his presidential campaign in 2022, Petro promised he would transform Colombia's health system by eliminating insurance companies that handle obligatory social security payments and put a government agency in charge of administering those funds.

Petro has accused insurance companies of mishandling millions of dollars.



From left: Colombian Air Force Commander Gen Luis Carlos Cordoba, Defense Minister Pedro Sanchez, President Gustavo Petro and Armed Forces Commander Adm Francisco Cubides, review the troops during a military ceremony where Sanchez formally takes command of the military in Bogota, Colombia on March 11. (AP)

But his health reform has been turned down several times by legislators who argue it would give too much power to government bureaucrats and say the government does not have the capacity to administer millions of patients.

Petro, a leftist who has long advocated for more government intervention in the economy, has also struggled to get his labor reform through congress. He has proposed increasing pay for nocturnal workers, and making it harder for companies to hire workers on short-term contracts.

Also:
BOGOTÁ, Colombia: Colombia's newly appointed defense minister said

Tuesday that he will focus on taking back territory lost to rebel groups that have forced thousands to flee their homes this year.

In an address to the nation's troops, Defense Minister **Pedro Sánchez** said that it was time for Colombia's military to "strengthen national sovereignty and protect" the nation's population.

The retired general hinted that Colombia's military, which had been recently asked to refrain from attacking rebel groups by the nation's government, will now take a more offensive role. "We cannot continue to allow our police and military to be spat at, attacked and have their throats slit as if they were inanimate objects" he said.

US bans flights to Haiti's capital until Sept 8 as UN expert says gang violence more dire

UNITED NATIONS, March 12, (AP): The United States on Tuesday extended its ban on flights to Haiti's capital until Sept 8 because of escalating gang violence, which the UN's human rights expert on the Caribbean nation said is more dire than ever. The Federal Aviation Administration's announcement extends a ban on US flights to Port-au-Prince that began in November after gangs opened fire on three commercial planes. The initial ban was set to expire on Wednesday.



Supporters celebrate the installation of Fritz Alphonse Jean, an economist and former central bank governor, who replaces Leslie Voltaire in the rotating presidency of the transitional presidential council, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 7. (AP)

William O'Neill, the UN human rights commissioner's expert on Haiti, who just visited the country for the fourth time since his appointment two years ago, told UN reporters on Tuesday that the gang violence is worse, as is "the pain and despair of an entire population."

Despite efforts by Haiti's national police and a UN-backed Kenya-led multinational police force, he said, "the risk of the capital falling under gang control is palpable."

"These violent criminal groups continue to extend and consolidate their hold even beyond the capital," O'Neill said. "They kill, rape, terrorize, set fire to homes, orphanages, schools, hospitals, places of worship."

He said the gangs have infiltrated all spheres of society, "with the utmost impunity and, sometimes, as many sources point out, with the complicity of powerful actors."

The gangs have grown in power since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise and are now estimated to control up to 85% of the capital.

O'Neill said over 1 million people have been displaced, with nowhere to go. In makeshift camps, he said, hunger and sexual violence are widespread and "for many it's a matter of survival." He urged Haitian authorities to fight the impunity and corruption that he said were the major obstacles to dismantling the gangs. He said they must also beef up the police force, which he said numbered 9,000 to 10,000 in a country of 11 million people, compared with about 50,000 in the neighboring Dominican Republic, which has a similar population.

USD stabilizes at KD 0.308, euro rises to KD 0.335

KUWAIT CITY, March 12, (KUNA): The exchange rate of US dollar stabilized on Wednesday against the Kuwaiti dinar trading at KD 0.308 and the euro rose by 0.39 percent settling at KD 0.335 compared to yesterday's rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

The CBK, in its daily bulletin, said

the sterling pound rose by 0.27 percent to KD 0.398, the Swiss Franc dropped by 0.38 percent to KD 0.348, while the Japanese Yen remained firm trading lower than KD 0.002

The declared exchange rates by the CBK reflect average currency prices for the day and do not mirror actual transactions.

Business



Ahmed Al-Nuwaibit welcoming stc guests at the 'weyak' Ghabga.



A large turnout of entrepreneurs during the 'weyak' Ghabga.

Organized under the umbrella of its 'weyak' initiative

stc hosts Ramadan Ghabga gathering for entrepreneurs

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, held its 4th gathering for entrepreneurs that have participated in the 'weyak' initiative, this year in theme of a Ramadan Ghabga. The 'weyak' Ghabga aligns with stc's corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework, especially under the pillar that focuses on empowering entrepreneurs and providing them with innovative platforms to enhance their presence in the market and collaborate with like minded individuals.

The Ghabga was held on the 55th floor of Al Hamra Business Tower, where the exclusive event brought together over 100 entrepreneurs for an evening on networking and entertainment. Attendees had the opportunity to interact with stc's Executive Management as well as several stc employees, building closer connections between the Company and Kuwait's entrepreneurial community.

As part of stc's commitment to supporting and engaging with the entrepreneurial community and startup ecosystem, the Ghabga served as an interactive platform for attendees to exchange insights, explore potential synergies, and

build strong relationships, especially amongst stc representatives. The event also served as a token of appreciation from stc to all those who have participated or played a role in the 'weyak' initiative, emphasizing their roles in fostering a thriving ecosystem for innovation and development in Kuwait.

stc expressed in a statement that its commitment to the SME community is deeply embedded within its CSR framework, reflecting the Company's strategic vision to support and empower entrepreneurs and startups in Kuwait. By providing access to innovative platforms, mentorship opportunities, and networking events, stc continues to enable the growth of emerging businesses and foster an ecosystem where SMEs can thrive. Through initiatives like the 'weyak' Ghabga, the Company strengthens its relationships with key players in the entrepreneurial sector, strengthening its role as a key enabler of digital transformation and innovation.

The 'weyak' initiative was launched by stc as part of its CSR strategy to support and empower SMEs through various initiatives, workshops, and engagement platforms. The program is designed to provide entrepreneurs with valuable resources, exposure, and business development opportunities, help-

ing them expand their presence in the market. Over the year, stc has evolved the 'weyak' initiative to bridge the gap between startups and industry leaders. Through the program, the Company aims to build a united collaborative community that nurtures innovation and supports long-term growth in Kuwait's business landscape.

About stc

Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) is a Kuwaiti shareholding company incorporated pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 187 on 22 July, 2008, to operate and manage the third GSM mobile network in Kuwait as per Law No. 2 of 2008. Accordingly, stc launched its operations in December 2008 and was listed on Boursa Kuwait in December 2014.

stc Kuwait is a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and solutions to customers, both for individuals and enterprises, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and is a subsidiary of stc Group. stc Kuwait has expanded its portfolio by acquiring companies such as Qualitynet General Trading and Contracting Company (solutions by stc) in Kuwait, and e-portal Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

Oil price drops to \$73.31 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 12, (KUNA): Kuwait oil price dropped by 88 cents to reach USD 73.31 per barrel on Tuesday vis a vis USD 74.19 pb on Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Wednesday.

In international markets, forwards of the Brent crude oil rose by 28 cents to reach USD 69.56 pb, and those of the West Texas Intermediate crude climbed by 22 cents to settle at USD 66.25 a barrel.

Kuwait oil profits set to surge in 2025/26 budget

KPC targets 4 mln bpd production

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The profits of local oil companies affiliated with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) will remarkably improve in the 2025/2026 budget, in contrast to the current fiscal year when profits declined after the substantial gains in fiscal 2022/2023.

The expected improvement is attributed to Kuwait's gradual increase in its OPEC Plus share, scheduled to begin in April. The share of Kuwait will increase from 2.413 million barrels to 2.421 million barrels per day, reaching 2.548 million barrels per day by September 2026.

This gradual increase is expected to positively impact the profits of KPC and its subsidiaries, not only in the coming year but also in future

years. KPC continues to advocate for a larger share in OPEC Plus, especially considering Kuwait's strong commitment to the voluntary reduction initiated in 2023.

In contrast, international oil companies experienced profit losses in 2024 due to fluctuating crude oil prices, declining refined petroleum derivative prices, and rising global transportation costs resulting from ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Despite these challenges, Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), which owns the Burgan field -- the world's second-largest oil field -- and other northern fields, is actively involved in marine exploration as part of its plan to solidify Kuwait's oil leadership.

These efforts, combined with those of other companies, aim to support KPC's 2024 plan to increase oil production from four million barrels per day and raise gas production from 499 million cubic feet per day of non-associated gas to two billion cubic feet per day.

Fuel price hikes

IMF approves \$1.2 billion 'disbursement' for Egypt

CAIRO, March 12, (AP): The International Monetary Fund said Tuesday it completed its fourth review of Egypt's economic reform program approving a \$1.2 billion disbursement for the North African country.

The IMF said in a statement it completed its fourth review on Monday and Egyptian authorities can immediately draw the funds. The IMF executive board also granted Egypt's request for an arrangement under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility with access to an additional \$1.3 billion.

Egyptians have been grappling with soaring inflation as they navigate rising daily costs that reached another high last year. They included an increase in fuel prices, a hike in subway fares and a slide in the Egyptian pound against foreign currencies. A recent government decision to raise minimum monthly wages is yet to grant some relief.

Last month, Finance Minister Ahmed Kouchouk announced that the monthly minimum wage for pub-

lic sector workers will increase to EGP 7,000 (\$138) starting in July, up from EGP 6,000 (\$118.58). It's meant to match that of private sector workers whose monthly minimum wage increase took effect on March 1. The wage increase for public sector workers comes as part of the government's social protection initiative.

In October, Egypt raised fuel prices between 10% and 17%, a move likely to impact the cost of both goods and services. The cost of a liter of diesel -- which is heavily relied on for public transport -- increased from 11.5 pounds (\$0.23) to 13.5 pounds (\$0.25), while the price of 92-octane gasoline rose to 15.25 pounds (\$0.31) from 13.75 pounds (\$0.28).

Egypt reached a deal with the IMF last spring to more than double the size of its bailout to \$8 billion. The price hikes have been deemed necessary to meet conditions set by the IMF for further assistance to the country.

'We aim to instill a culture of food conservation and responsible consumption'

NBK launches 'Reduce Food Waste' campaign to promote sustainability and social responsibility

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) reinforces its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility with the launch of the Reduce Food Waste Campaign, aimed at minimizing food waste and encouraging the community to preserve food resources.

As part of this initiative, NBK installed refrigerators at the entrances of its branches across all governorates (two branches per governorate) and filled it with iftar meals. The community is also encouraged to donate excess food and fill the refrigerators with, ensuring that edible and fresh food reaches those in need while also fostering a culture of sustainable consumption.

Yaqoub Al-Baqer, AVP at NBK Public Relations and Event Management, commented on the campaign, stating: "Through this initiative, we aim to make sure iftar meals are accessible to everyone in addition to instill a culture of food conservation and responsible consumption. By placing refrigerators at our branches, we are providing the community with a practical and accessible way to contribute to reducing food waste and supporting those in need. At NBK, we believe in the power of collective action to drive



Yaqoub Al-Baqer

meaningful change."

Al Baqer emphasized NBK's long-term dedication to sustainable initiatives, stating: "We believe that community work is an investment in the future. That's why we continue to introduce initiatives that foster generosity, awareness, and social cohesion—solidifying

NBK's role as a key contributor to Kuwait's society."

This initiative is part of the Annual Ramadan Program, "Doing Good Deeds," which has been a cornerstone of its CSR initiatives for over 25 years. This year's program introduces new community-driven activities designed to strengthen so-

cial bonds and promote generosity during the holy month.

Through this initiative, NBK aims to inspire the community to take active steps toward reducing food waste, reinforcing its broader efforts to support environmental sustainability and social well-being.



NBK installs refrigerators at branches to provide iftar meals.

New cargo terminal at BIAL to handle 360,000 tonnes annually

Menzies Aviation unveils new cargo terminal at Bengaluru Airport

LONDON, March 12: Menzies Aviation, the leading service partner to the world's airports and airlines, has unveiled its new 245,000 square feet greenfield domestic cargo terminal in partnership with BIAL (Bengaluru International Airport Ltd).

The new state-of-the-art cargo terminal is designed to enhance operational efficiency for Menzies' cargo operations. It will support a wide variety of airfreight commodities, and incorporates advanced technology, specialised storage facilities, and sustainable design principles to deliver seamless handling while accommodating future growth in cargo demand.

Strategically located at Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru, the terminal spans more than seven acres and is designed with scalability in mind. Handling up to 360,000 tonnes of cargo at peak capacity, it boasts a total built-up area of more than 245,000 square feet, 80% of which is dedicated to core operational activities, ensuring high efficiency and seamless cargo management.

With space for up to 42 trucks simultaneously, the facility also has eight strategically placed floor-level weighted scales for accurate cargo weight and volume verification.

Constructed in line with the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) standards, the new facility is poised to set a new benchmark for efficient and eco-friendly cargo handling. It incorporates sustainable design elements such as sky lighting, enhanced ventilation for optimal air quality, water conservation measures, efficient waste management systems, and energy efficient technologies.

Charles Wyley, EVP Middle East, Africa & Asia, said: "Our new greenfield domestic cargo terminal at Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru (BLR) is a major step forward in our commitment to delivering efficient, reliable and future-ready logistics solutions. With the rapid growth in air cargo in India, which is set to reach 5.8 million tonnes by 2029, this facility is de-



Menzies aviation's new Greenfield Cargo Terminal in Bengaluru.

signed to not only meet today's demand but to scale for future needs as the industry continues to evolve."

Satyaki Raghunath, COO of Bengaluru International Airport Limited, added, "This new domestic cargo terminal reflects our unwavering commitment to sustainable growth. By seamlessly integrating eco-friendly practices with cutting-edge technology, we have created a facility that addresses the growing demand for domestic cargo but also sets benchmarks for operational efficiency and environmental responsibility. This new facility will bring us closer to realising our vision of becoming a premier air cargo hub, unlocking new opportunities and driving economic growth."

About Menzies Aviation

Menzies Aviation is the leading service partner to the world's airports and airlines, with operations on six continents, at more than 300 airports in 65-plus countries, serving more than 4.5 million

flights a year and handling over 2.5 million tonnes of cargo.

Supported by a team of more than 50,000 highly trained people, the company provides complex and time-critical ground services, including passenger, lounge and ramp services; air cargo services, including handling, warehousing and wholesale freight forwarding; and fuel services, including fuel farm management and into-plane fuelling.

Menzies Aviation is recognised across the industry for delivering the safest, most secure and sustainable services tailored to customers' needs and is essential to keeping passengers, aircraft and cargo moving, round the clock, every minute of every day.

Menzies Aviation is headquartered in London, and since its founding in 1833, has become the largest aviation services group in the world by number of countries, airports and aircraft turns.

BUSINESS



The Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team actively participates in the company's Ramadan initiatives.



Daaij Al-Oud, Waleed Al-Khashti, and Omar Al-Damkhi with Zain's team.

In collaboration with Kuwait Food Bank

Zain visits Souq Al Mubarakiya to distribute iftar meals

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Zain organized a visit to the historic Souq Al-Mubarakiya market in the heart of Kuwait City to distribute iftar meals to market workers. This initiative, which runs daily throughout the Holy Month for the 18th consecutive year, is part of the company's annual Ramadan campaign, Zain Al-Shuhoor.

The visit was attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Technology Officer, Daaij Al-Oud, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti, Deputy Director General for Administrative Affairs at the Kuwait Food Bank, Mahmood Al-Kandari, Grand Mosque Imam Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi, as

well as representatives from Zain, Kuwait Food Bank, and members of the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team.

This initiative is a key pillar of Zain's annual Ramadan program, through which the company, in partnership with its strategic ally, the Kuwait Food Bank, provides daily iftar meals. These meals are distributed via food trucks that travel across the country, reaching densely populated areas to serve workers, individuals, and underprivileged families.

Additionally, Zain provides daily iftar meals at Manahi Al-Dawas Hall in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, bringing the total number of meals distributed throughout

the Holy Month to 40,000. Zain's team actively supervises and organizes this initiative, with support from the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team, comprising employees from various departments, reinforcing Zain's commitment to meaningful community engagement.

Year after year, Zain Al-Shuhoor continues to expand and evolve, introducing new programs and initiatives. Through this campaign, the company strengthens its collaboration with various organizations across the country, embodying the spirit of generosity that defines Ramadan. It also reflects the deep-rooted values of Kuwaiti society in supporting others and fostering love and peace.

Earn unlimited cashback

ABK introduces Visa Platinum Advantage 1.2.3 prepaid card

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) was thrilled to announce the launch of its most innovative prepaid card - ABK Visa Platinum Advantage 1.2.3. This innovative card marks a significant advancement in unifying customer rewards, integrating two robust loyalty programs: Cashback and Advantage Loyalty.

The ABK Visa Platinum Advantage 1.2.3 prepaid card allows customers to earn unlimited cashback of 1% on all purchases, while simultaneously accumulating 2 Advantage points per local transactions and 3 points per international transaction. This unique offering creates two streams of rewards on a single card and on a single transaction, enhancing the value and convenience for customers.

Expressing her enthusiasm, Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said, "We are proud to introduce an unparalleled loyalty experience. Our customers can now enjoy the benefits of 2 loyalty programs including Cashback and Advantage Loyalty program in one card. This innovation aligns with our commitment to providing outstanding banking services that meet our customers' needs."

Marafi added, "The ABK Visa Platinum Advantage 1.2.3 prepaid card is not just a payment tool; it is a gateway to exceptional rewards and exclusive offers through the ABK Advantage Loyalty Program. Customers can easily manage their expenses while enjoying the benefits of our dual loyalty programs, making every purchase rewarding."

The introduction of the card is a testament to ABK's commitment to its 'Simpler Banking' promise. By streamlining customer experience through integrated rewards and user-friendly banking solutions, ABK ensures that customers can easily manage their finances while reaping the benefits of the Bank's innovative offerings.

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

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 45 branches.

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



Johair Marafi



ABK Visa Platinum 1.2.3

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

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

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

Core inflation drops to 3.1%

US inflation slows for first time since Sept

WASHINGTON, March 12, (AP): U.S. inflation slowed last month for the first time since September and a measure of underlying inflation fell to a four-year low, even as additional tariffs on steel and aluminum that kicked in Wednesday threaten to send prices higher.

The consumer price index increased 2.8% in February from a year ago, Wednesday's report from the Labor Department showed, down from 3% the previous month. Core prices, which exclude the volatile food and energy categories, rose 3.1% from a year earlier, down from 3.3% in January. The core figure is the lowest since April 2021.

The declines were larger than economists expected, according to a survey by data provider FactSet. Yet they remain higher than the Federal Reserve's 2% target. Sticky inflation could create problems for President Donald Trump, who promised during last year's campaign to "knock the hell out of inflation."

Yet on a monthly basis, inflation also came in much lower than expected. Consumer prices rose 0.2% in February from the previous month, down from a big 0.5% jump in January. And core prices rose just 0.2%, below the 0.4% increase in January. Economists watch core prices because they are typically a better guide to inflation's future path.

Grocery prices were unchanged last month from January, bringing some relief to consumers grappling with a 25% jump in grocery prices from four years ago. The cost of eggs, however, jumped 10.4% in February from the previous month and are nearly 60% more expensive than a year ago.

Avian flu has forced farmers to slaughter more than 160 million birds, including 30 million in January. Average egg prices hit \$4.95 a dozen nationwide in February, a record high. The price had consistently been below \$2 a dozen for decades before the disease struck.

'Awards highlight KFH's commitment to the banking sector'

KFH wins 3 awards for exceptional performance in 2024 by Visa

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) won 3 prestigious awards from VISA in recognition of its outstanding performance in 2024. These awards highlight KFH's commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and leadership in the banking sector, not to mention the keenness on continuously reinforcing the value of its banking cards.

The 3 distinguished awards are:
Best-in-Class CIF Growth in Kuwait for 2024

Best-in-Class Commercial Card Volume Growth in Kuwait for 2024

Best-in-Class Cross Border Ecomm growth in Kuwait for 2024

It is worth noting that "Best in Class" compares KFH against banks of its caliber (top 3) and KFH is on top.

KFH Group Chief Executive Officer Khaled Yousef Al-Shamlan, expressed his pride in the recognition, indicating on receiving the awards from Visa's SVP and Group Country Manager for GCC, Dr. Saeeda Jaffar, in the presence of number of KFH and Visa officials at KFH Headquarters, that the 3 awards are a direct reflection of KFH's ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence in delivering customer-centric banking solutions.

He pointed out that through its customer-centric approach and strategic investments in cutting-edge technology, KFH, the largest bank in Kuwait by market capitalization and the second-largest Islamic bank in the world, continues to drive growth in key areas, positioning itself as a leader in the financial landscape.

Rationale behind the wins
Al-Shamlan explained that KFH's achievement of the Best-in-Class CIF Growth in Kuwait for 2024 is a testament to the bank's robust expansion efforts, particularly in the digital realm. By embracing digital transformation, KFH has enhanced its customer experience with seamless and secure banking solutions tailored to the needs of both retail and corporate customers.



Khaled Al-Shamlan with officials from Kuwait Finance House and Visa.

He added that the award of Best-in-Class Commercial Card Volume Growth in Kuwait for 2024 highlights KFH's pivotal role in supporting local businesses through customized financial tools. Its innovative commercial card solutions streamline transactions, improve cash flow management, and offer businesses efficient ways to meet their financial needs, solidifying KFH's position as a

trusted partner for businesses of all sizes. "The award of Best-in-Class Cross Border Ecomm growth in Kuwait for 2024 recognizes KFH's commitment to providing customers with secure and convenient e-commerce solutions. In response to the global rise in online shopping, KFH has invested heavily in advanced technology and strategic partnerships to ensure its customers enjoy seamless and secure international online transactions", Al-Shamlan indicated.

He added "At KFH, we continuously strive to enhance the banking experience for our customers by leverag-

ing the latest technologies and offering tailored products and services. We will continue to build on this momentum and lead the way in shaping the future of banking in the region."

Al-Shamlan pointed out that KFH's continued success in earning these awards reinforces its leadership position in the banking sector and its unwavering dedication to meeting the needs of its customers, both locally and internationally, while also underlines Visa's great confidence in KFH's products that keep pace with international standards of creativity and innovation.

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Trump's 25% tariffs on all steel & aluminum imports go into effect

EU hits back with \$28 billion in counter-tariffs

WASHINGTON, March 12, (AP): President Donald Trump officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25% on Wednesday, promising that the taxes would help create U.S. factory jobs at a time when his seesawing tariff threats are jolting the stock market and raising fears of an economic slowdown.

Trump removed all exemptions from his 2018 tariffs on the metals, in addition to increasing the tariffs on aluminum from 10%. His moves, based off a February directive, are part of a broader effort to disrupt and transform global commerce. The U.S. president has separate tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, with plans to also tax imports from the European Union, Brazil and South Korea by charging "reciprocal" rates starting on April 2.

The EU announced its own countermeasures on Wednesday. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that as the United States was "applying tariffs worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermeasures worth 26 billion euros," or about \$28 billion. Those measures, which cover not just steel and aluminum products, but also textiles, home appliances and agricultural goods, are due to take effect on April 1.

Trump told CEOs in the Business Roundtable on Tuesday that the tar-



US President Donald Trump walks from the Oval Office to depart on Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Feb. 28, 2025. (AP)

iffs were causing companies to invest in U.S. factories. The 8% drop in the S&P 500 stock index over the past month on fears of deteriorating growth appears unlikely to dissuade him, as Trump argued that higher tariff rates would be more effective at bringing back factories.

"The higher it goes, the more likely it is they're going to build," Trump told the group. "The biggest win is if they move into our country and produce jobs. That's a bigger win than the tariffs themselves, but the tariffs are going to be throwing off a lot of money to this country."

Trump on Tuesday threatened to put tariffs of 50% on steel and aluminum from Canada, but he chose to stay with the 25% rate after the province of Ontario suspended plans to put a surcharge on electricity sold to

Michigan, Minnesota and New York.

In many ways, the president is addressing what he perceives as unfinished business from his first term. Trump meaningfully increased tariffs, but the revenues collected by the federal government were too small to significantly increase overall inflationary pressures.

Trump's 2018 tariffs on steel and aluminum were eroded by exemptions.

After Canada and Mexico agreed to his demand for a revamped North American trade deal in 2020, they avoided the import taxes on the metals. Other U.S. trading partners had import quotas supplant the tariffs. And the first Trump administration also allowed U.S. companies to request exemptions from the tariffs if, for instance, they couldn't find the

steel they needed from domestic producers.

While Trump's tariffs could help the gains to the steel and aluminum industries in the United States, they could raise prices for the manufacturers that use the metals as raw materials.

Moreover, economists have found, production fell by nearly \$3.5 billion because of the tariffs in 2021, a loss that exceeded the \$2.3 billion uptick in production that year by aluminum producers and steelmakers, the U.S. International Trade Commission found in 2023.

Trump sees the tariffs as leading to tell more domestic factories, and the White House has noted that Volvo, Volkswagen and Honda are all exploring an increase to their U.S. footprint. But the prospect of higher prices, fewer sales and lower profits might cause some companies to refrain from investing in new facilities.

"If you're an executive in the boardroom, are you really going to tell your board it's the time to expand that assembly line?" said John Murphy, senior vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The top steel exporters to the U.S. are Canada, Mexico, Brazil, South Korea and Japan, with exports from Taiwan and Vietnam growing at a fast pace, according to the International Trade Administration. Imports from China, the world's largest steel producer, account for only a small fraction of what the U.S. buys.

The lion's share of U.S. aluminum imports comes from Canada.

Chairman confirmed that full provisions have been made and that insurance companies are responsible for coverage

Boodai: No financial impact on Jazeera Airways from the 'Balloon' ruling

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Jazeera Airways Chairman Marwan Boodai explained that the \$236 million ruling in favor of the Ministry of Defense in the balloon case will not financially impact Jazeera Airways due to the comprehensive insurance coverage and full provisions in place for such incidents.

Boodai told Al-Arabiya and CNBC Arabia that airlines are constantly exposed to incidents and accidents, indicating Jazeera Airways is not an exception.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) investigated the 2017 accident, when a Jazeera Airways airplane collided with a cable of a tethered balloon. The investigation uncovered several intertwined reasons between parties in the DGCA, air traffic control, Jazeera Airways, the pilot and his assistant, and the Ministry of Defense. This led to the

initial ruling.

Boodai emphasized that Jazeera Airways has established full allocations for this case. "Insurance companies will cover any accident, while airlines receive premium allocations and other benefits according to the agreement with the insurance companies. The percentage that Jazeera Airways will pay under the terms of its insurance contracts has yet to be determined, but it will be a very modest sum. Jazeera Airways has full insurance coverage for this case from international insurance companies until a final ruling is issued," he clarified.

In another development, Jazeera Airways announced its efforts to enhance its operational processes by providing self-service ground handling services for its fleet at Kuwait International Airport.

This strategic step supports the company's

ongoing transformation journey to increase operational efficiency, enhance customer experience, and reduce operating costs.

Jazeera Airways continues to achieve significant milestones in its growth journey as it approaches the 20th anniversary of its first flight. It now operates a fleet of 24 Airbus A320 aircraft, carrying approximately five million passengers annually. It also holds a 31 percent share of passenger traffic at Kuwait International Airport and operates more than 18,000 flights annually.

The airline stated that it is preparing for a significant growth phase with the delivery of new aircraft starting in 2027 as part of an order valued at more than \$3.4 billion. This includes 26 new aircraft -- 18 Airbus A320s and eight Airbus A321s.

Boodai disclosed that "following our

success at Jazeera Airways, in cooperation and under the supervision of the DGCA, in establishing specialized departments for aircraft maintenance, flight training, and continued airworthiness management (CAMO); we are now seeking to expand our operations to provide autonomous ground handling services as a pivotal achievement within our long-term strategy to improve operational efficiency and enhance the passenger experience, in coordination with the concerned authorities."

He added "as we continue to expand and prepare to receive new aircraft, this strategic step will enable us to improve operational execution time, deliver superior service quality and reduce costs; ensuring that our prices remain competitive and affordable for our customers."



Marwan Boodai

EU retaliates against Trump's trade moves

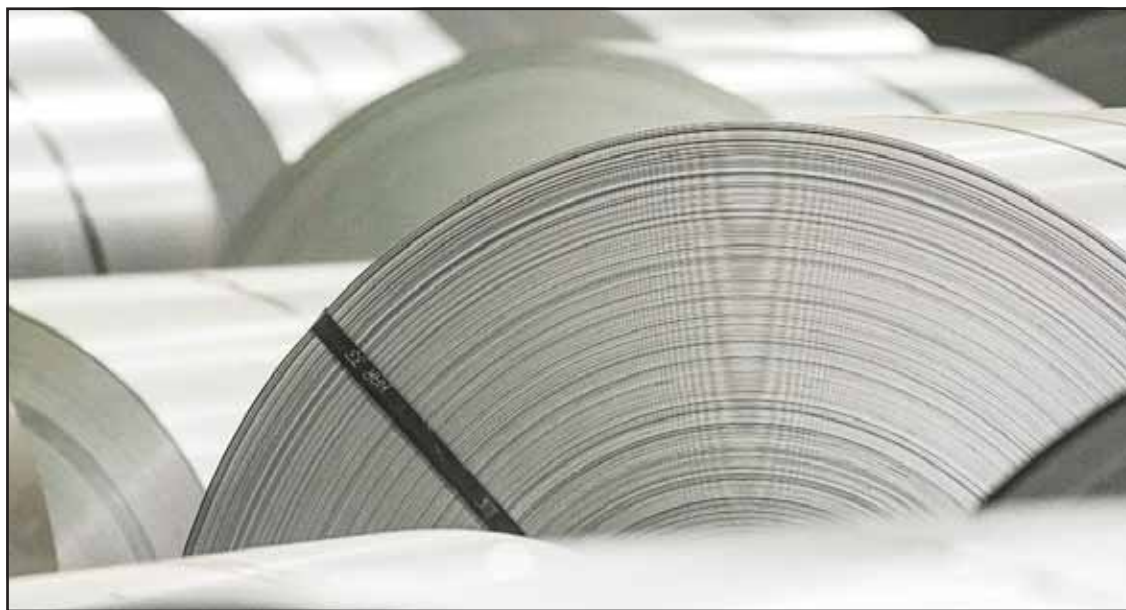
Group slaps tariffs on produce from Republican states

BRUSSELS, March 12, (AP): The European Union on Wednesday announced retaliatory trade action with new duties on U.S. industrial and farm products, responding within hours to the Trump administration's increase in tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25%.

The world's biggest trading bloc was expecting the U.S. tariffs and prepared in advance, but the measures still place great strain on already tense transatlantic relations. Only last month, Washington warned Europe that it would have to take care of its own security in the future.

The EU measures will cover goods from the United States worth some 26 billion euros (\$28 billion), and not just steel and aluminum products, but also textiles, home appliances and agricultural goods. Motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans will be hit, as they were during President Donald Trump's first term.

The EU duties aim for pressure



Coils of steel are seen at the ArcelorMittal Dofasco Steel Plant in Hamilton, Ontario, Friday, Feb. 14, 2025. (AP)

points in the U.S. while minimizing additional damage to Europe. The tariffs - taxes on imports - primarily target Republican-held states, hitting soybeans in House speaker Mike Johnson's Louisiana, but also beef and poultry in Kansas and Nebraska.

Produce in Alabama, Georgia and Virginia is also on the list.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement that the bloc "will always remain open to negotiation."

"As the U.S. are applying tariffs

worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermeasures worth 26 billion euros," she said. The commission manages trade and commercial conflicts on behalf of the 27 member EU countries.

"We firmly believe that in a world

fraught with geopolitical and economic uncertainties, it is not in our common interest to burden our economies with tariffs," von der Leyen said.

The commission also said that steel and aluminum products would be hit in return, but also textiles, leather goods, home appliances, household tools, plastics and wood. Agricultural products will also be impacted - including poultry, beef, some seafood, nuts, eggs, sugar and vegetables.

Trump said his taxes would help create U.S. factory jobs, but von der Leyen said: "Jobs are at stake. Prices will go up. In Europe and in the United States."

"We deeply regret this measure. Tariffs are taxes. They are bad for business, and even worse for consumers. These tariffs are disrupting supply chains. They bring uncertainty to the economy," she said.

The American Chamber of Commerce to the EU said the U.S. tariffs and EU countermeasures "will only harm jobs, prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic."

"The two sides must de-escalate and find a negotiated outcome urgently," the chamber said Wednesday.

Trump slapped similar tariffs on EU steel and aluminum during his first term in office, which enraged European and other allies. The EU also im-

posed countermeasures in retaliation at the time, raising tariffs on U.S.-made motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans, among other items.

This time, the EU action will involve two steps. First, on April 1, the commission will reintroduce what it calls "rebalancing measures," which the EU had from 2018 and 2020 but which were suspended under the Biden administration. Then on April 13 come the additional duties targeting 18 billion euros (\$19.6 billion) in U.S. exports to the bloc.

EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič traveled to Washington last month in an effort to head off the tariffs, meeting with U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and other top trade officials.

He said on Wednesday that it became clear during the trip "that the EU is not the problem."

"I argued to avoid the unnecessary burden of measures and countermeasures, but you need a partner for that. You need both hands to clap," Šefčovič told reporters at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

The EU could lose up to 3.7 million tons of steel exports, according to the European steel association Eurofer. The U.S. is the second biggest export market for EU steel producers, representing 16% of the total EU steel exports.

Future response not ruled out

Trump tariffs disappointing but no retaliation, says UK

LONDON, March 12, (AP): The British government on Wednesday called the Trump administration's tariffs on global steel and aluminum imports "disappointing," but said that it won't impose retaliatory measures.

Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, however, did not rule out future tariffs on U.S. imports and said he would "continue to engage closely and productively with the U.S. to press the case for U.K. business interests."

"We will keep all options on the table and won't hesitate to respond in the national interest," Reynolds said.

Treasury Minister James Murray echoed that, telling Times Radio: "We reserve our right to retaliate."

Britain is not part of the European Union, which Wednesday announced import taxes on American goods, ranging from steel and aluminum to bourbon, peanut butter and jeans in re-

sponse to Trump's move.

Center-left U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has worked to build strong ties with President Donald Trump, in hope of avoiding the tariffs levied on many other U.S. trading part-

ners.

After a meeting last month at the White House, Trump and Starmer said their governments would work on sealing a long-elusive U.S.-U.K. trade deal.

Reynolds said the government

remains "focused on a pragmatic approach and are rapidly negotiating a wider economic agreement with the U.S. to eliminate additional tariffs and to benefit U.K. businesses and our economy."

The tariffs are a new blow for Britain's once-mighty steel industry, which has shrunk dramatically from its 1970s peak and now accounts for 0.1% of the economy. Thousands of jobs are due to be lost at the country's biggest steelworks, at Port Talbot in Wales, as owner Tata Steel tries to make the unprofitable plant leaner and greener.

Trade body UK Steel said that in 2024, Britain exported 180,000 metric tons (198,000 U.S. tons) of steel to the United States, about 7% of the U.K.'s total steel exports by volume and 9% by value. The aluminum industry says the U.S. market accounts for 10% of U.K. exports.



Britain's Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds speaks during an announcement at Iikura Guest House on March 7, 2025, in Tokyo. (AP)

Deal signed with top Indian telecom operator

Musk's Starlink could help remote parts of India get online

NEW DELHI, March 12, (AP): Elon Musk's Starlink signed an agreement with India's top telecom operator on Wednesday to bring the U.S. satellite internet giant's services to the world's most populous country, a day after announcing a similar agreement with the country's second-largest provider.

The deals with Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel, which together control more than 70% of India's telecom market, could help bring internet connections to millions of people who live in remote areas.

But they depend on Starlink obtaining government approval to enter India. The partnership announcements come weeks after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Musk in Washington.

Wednesday's deal will allow Starlink to stock and sell its equipment in Jio's thousands of retail outlets, giving the company direct distribution across India. Starlink will also use its partners' network infrastructure to enhance satellite coverage across India, where a vast population still lacks internet access.

A statement from Jio said Starlink will complement the Indian telecom giant's broadband services "by extending



A man walks past a Reliance Jio signage in front of a closed shop in Hyderabad, India, April 22, 2020. (AP)

high-speed internet to the most challenging of locations in a quick and affordable manner." Jio will also provide installation and activation support for the Starlink devices, the statement said.

Jio has long been at odds with Starlink over methods for awarding satellite service spectrum in India.

Jio had urged Indian government to grant spectrum for satellite services

through auctions to ensure fair competition, while Musk wanted spectrum to be allocated administratively, in line with global trends. Indian government eventually decided to assign satellite spectrum.

It is unclear whether Starlink's licence application has already been approved, but local media reports suggest it is nearing initial regulatory approval.

Last November, India's telecoms minister, Jyotiraditya Scindia, said Starlink had yet to comply with security norms, and that a license would be issued to the company only after it meets all the requirements.

Yet the biggest challenge Starlink faces in India could be pricing.

Mobile data in India is among the world's cheapest - Ambani's Jio once even gave it for free with mobile plans.

Tesla, Musk's electric car maker, has also faced hurdles in India due to the country's high import duties on vehicles, but it could be getting a boost as well. The company began hiring in India last month and has also signed a lease deal to open its first showroom in Mumbai, according to local news reports.

Australia won't retaliate against 'unjustified' Trump's tariffs

MELBOURNE, Australia, March 12, (AP): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Wednesday that U.S. tariffs on Australian steel and aluminum were unjustified, but his government would not retaliate with its own tariffs.

U.S. President Donald Trump said last month he was considering a tariff exemption for Australia, a free trade treaty partner that has traded with the United States for decades.

A former Australian government secured an exemption with the previous Trump administration in 2018 based on arguments including that Australian steelmaker BlueScope employs thousands of workers in the U.S.

Albanese said he would continue to pursue an Australian exemption. The 2018 exemption took several months to secure.

"It has been foreshadowed that no country regardless of its relationship with the United States has been granted an exemption. Such a decision by the Trump administration is entirely unjustified," Albanese said.

"Tariffs and escalating trade tensions are a form of economic self-harm and a recipe for slower growth and higher inflation. They are paid by the consumers. This is why Australia will not be imposing reciprocal tariffs on the United States," Albanese added.

The U.S. officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25% on Wednesday.

The U.S. decision not to exempt Australia was announced days after a spat became public between Trump

and the former Australian prime minister who secured the 2018 exemption, Malcolm Turnbull.

Trump described Turnbull, who quit politics in 2018 after being overthrown as prime minister by his own government, as a weak and ineffective leader.

"Malcolm Turnbull, the former Prime Minister of Australia who was always leading that wonderful country from 'behind', never understood what was going on in China, nor did he have the capacity to do so," Trump wrote on social media.

"I always thought he was a weak and ineffective leader and, obviously, Australian's (sic) agreed with me!!!" Trump added.

Trump was responding to an interview Turnbull gave this week to U.S. media company Bloomberg in which the former Australian leader said Chinese President Xi Jinping would take advantage of the U.S. president's chaotic and erratic leadership.

"I think China will take advantage, massive advantage of Trump," Turnbull told Bloomberg.

"What my prediction will be that President Xi will aim to be the exact opposite of Trump. Where Trump is chaotic, he will be consistent. Where Trump is rude and abusive, he'll be respectful. Where Trump is erratic, he will be consistent," Turnbull said.

"And what that will do is build trust with countries, and there'll be many countries who will, you know, looking at China on the one hand and Trump on the other, will find China a more attractive partner," Turnbull added.

30 food items involved

Hungary orders price controls on basic foods as inflation spikes

BUDAPEST, Hungary, March 12, (AP): Hungary's government will limit the profit margin for grocers on a number of basic food items, the prime minister said on Tuesday, a response to growing inflation hitting consumers in the Central European country.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in a video on social media that commercial grocers must limit their markup to no more than 10% of wholesale price on 30 different food items, a policy that would be in effect from mid-March until the end of May, but could be extended.

He said that the government would monitor grocers' compliance with the policy, but didn't specify which foods would be included in the requirement.

"In order to curb excessive and unjustified price increases, we have been negotiating with representatives of commercial chains in recent days," Orbán said. "Unfortunately, the vendors' offers fell far short of our expectations."

Inflation data released Tuesday by Hungary's statistical office showed an

annual inflation rate of 5.6% for February, while food prices were up 7.1% on the year. By contrast, average inflation in the 20-member eurozone was 2.4% in February, according to the European Union's statistical office Eurostat.

Hungary, which isn't a member of the eurozone, uses the forint as its national currency.

The data came as an "unpleasant inflation surprise" for Hungary, which "indicates increasing price pressure in the Hungarian economy with regard to more permanent inflationary trends," Orsolya Nyeszte, a macroeconomic analyst with Erste Bank, wrote in a note on Tuesday.

Hungary has frequently led the EU in inflation in recent years as a cost of living crisis has gripped the country. The populist government has pointed to external factors such as the war in neighboring Ukraine and EU sanctions against Russia to explain the yearslong inflation spiral, though prices in other regional countries like Poland, Romania and Slovakia haven't risen nearly as steeply.

GCC nation elevates storytelling through culture and technology

Abu Dhabi to introduce world's largest drone light show

ABU DHABI, UAE, March 12, (AP): His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, has witnessed the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), Colorado-based Nova Sky Stories, and Abu Dhabi-headquartered Analog, an Emirati company, specialised in physical intelligence and mixed reality.

Through this multi-year partnership agreement, Abu Dhabi is set to launch a pioneering initiative that will integrate cutting-edge drone technology into large-scale immersive storytelling, further solidifying its position as a global hub for innovation in culture and entertainment. The synchronised drone performances will create artistic narratives across multiple iconic locations, weaving together the emirate's rich heritage and dynamic future.

It will introduce the world's most advanced fleet of 10,000 light-show drones, a first-of-its-kind initiative in the region, blending cultural narratives with advanced drone technology to create immersive experiences.

His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of DCT Abu Dhabi, said: "By harnessing innovative technologies, we are finding new and immersive ways to share our vision and culture with the world. At the intersection of creativity and entertainment, this partnership with Nova Sky and Analog will challenge convention, raising the bar for what residents and visitors can experience. These visual spectacles reinforce Abu Dhabi's leading position in entertainment innovation, delivering experiential and memorable moments for all."

Kimbal Musk, CEO and Co-Founder of Nova Sky Stories, said: "We are excited to be part of this partnership with DCT Abu Dhabi. With this pioneering initiative, Abu Dhabi is at the forefront of embracing innovation and will have

the largest fleet of the most advanced light drones in the world for storytelling and entertainment. Nova empowers the world's greatest artists and musicians to bring their art to the sky and we cannot wait to show the world what is possible with a fleet this size."

Alex Kipman, Founder and CEO of Analog, said: "Abu Dhabi's skyline is set to become a dynamic canvas for storytelling. We are painting holographic stories in the sky, fusing tradition with next-generation technology so audiences can feel that spark of wonder only possible when imagination meets reality. At Analog, we exist to birth new realities, and in partnership with Nova Sky Stories, DCT Abu Dhabi is reimagining what entertainment can be - one that honours Abu Dhabi's heritage and sets the bar for immersive experiences worldwide."

Entertainment

Powered by real-time synchronisation and adaptive intelligence, these dynamic drone formations will reimagine the possibilities of live entertainment, making Abu Dhabi's skyline an evolving canvas for innovation.

The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors and its creative industries, fuelling economic progress and helping to achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions. By working in partnership with the organisations that define the DCT Abu Dhabi's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the DCT Abu Dhabi's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture, tourism and creative industries.

DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and

landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.

Nova Sky Stories empowers the world's leading governments, musicians and artists to bring unrivaled awe to their live audiences.

Nova Sky Stories has led the world in drone entertainment for over a decade with a veteran team of artists and engineers. Nova is vertically integrated, from software and hardware IP, to manufacturing our own drones, to design, and pilots. This enables us to prioritize safety with our lightweight, quiet, and precise drones that are also reliable in complex environments, including urban areas and extreme temperatures. Through the seamless fusion of technology and artistry, Nova transforms drone performances into breathtaking Sky Stories that capture hearts and minds. Certified to fly in over 40 countries across the globe, Nova Sky Stories is an international company working with the world's greatest venues, artists, and brands.

Analog is a next-generation technology company specializing in edge computing, adaptive intelligence, and mixed reality, founded in 2024 and headquartered in Abu Dhabi. With strategic backing from G42, we unite technology and creativity to spark inspiration, connect communities, and empower people to reimagine reality. Our human-first ethos ensures every innovation respects and amplifies human potential, rather than overshadowing it. By crafting solutions that invite dialogue, expand perspectives, and transform ideas into tangible outcomes, Analog enables individuals, organizations, and ecosystems to explore uncharted territories. We champion a shared vision of progress - where imagination, empathy, and collaboration unlock bold new futures. Through adaptive intelligence and immersive experiences, we strive to create a future without limits.

People

#MeToo retrial

Weinstein due in court for rulings

NEW YORK, March 12, (AP): **Harvey Weinstein's** #MeToo retrial next month will largely be an abridged version of the original, with one big addition: a charge based on an allegation from a woman who wasn't a part of the first case.

Just how the reprise of the disgraced movie mogul's prosecution plays out should come into focus on Wednesday, when a judge is set to issue rulings on a variety of issues, including the scope of accuser testimony and potential expert witnesses.

Weinstein, 72, is expected to be in court when Judge Curtis Farber rules.

His retrial is scheduled to start April 15 in state court in Manhattan - nearly a year after New York's highest court overturned his 2020 conviction on rape and sexual assault charges.

At his last court appearance, in January, Weinstein implored Farber to start the retrial sooner. He told the judge "I don't know how much longer I can hold on" with cancer, heart issues and harsh conditions at New York City's Rikers Island jail complex, where he is locked up.

Weinstein is being retried on charges that he forcibly assaulted a movie and TV production assistant in 2006 and raped an aspiring actor in 2013. The additional charge, filed last September, alleges he sexually assaulted a different woman at a Manhattan hotel in 2006.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office said in court papers that the woman, who has not been identified publicly, came forward to prosecutors just days before the start of Weinstein's first trial but was not part of that case.

Prosecutors said they did not pursue the women's allegations after Weinstein was convicted and sentenced to 23 years in prison, but they revisited them and secured a new indictment after the state's Court of Appeals threw out his conviction last April.

Farber ruled in October to combine the new indictment and existing charges into one trial.

Weinstein's lawyers contend that prosecutors prejudiced him by waiting nearly five years to bring the additional charge, suggesting they had elected not to include the allegation in his first trial so they could use it later if his conviction were reversed.

Weinstein has denied that he raped or sexually assaulted anyone.

Last month, Weinstein added Jennifer Bonjain, a lawyer who has represented Bill Cosby and R. Kelly, to a legal team that includes defense attorneys Arthur Aidala, Diana Fabi Samson and former judge Barry Kamins.

In vacating Weinstein's conviction, the Court of Appeals ruled that the trial judge, James M. Burke, unfairly allowed testimony against him based on allegations from other women that were not part of the case. Burke is no longer on the bench and such testimony won't be part of the retrial.

Film



This image released by A24 shows John Malkovich in a scene from 'Opus.' (AP)

A misguided horror-satire

An unhinged Malkovich can't save 'Opus'

LOS ANGELES, March 12, (AP): In the new horror movie "Opus," we are introduced to Alfred Moretti, the biggest pop star of the '90s, with 38 No. 1 hits and albums as big as "Thriller," "Hotel California" and "Nebraska." If by name Alfred Moretti sounds more like a personal injury attorney from New Jersey, that's the first sign "Opus" is going to stumble.

John Malkovich leans into his regular off-kilter creepy to play the unlikely pop star at the center of this serious misfire by the A24 studio, a movie that also manages to pull "The Bear" star Ayo Edebiri back to earth. How both could be totally miscast will haunt your dreams.

Writer-director Mark Anthony Green has created a pretty good premise: A massive pop star who went quiet for the better part of three decades re-emerges with a new album - his 18th studio LP, called "Caesar's Request" - and invites a select six people to come to his remote Western compound for an album listening weekend. It's like a golden ticket.

Edebiri's Ariel is one of those invited. She's 27, a writer for a hip music magazine who has been treading water for three years. She's ambitious but has no edge. "Your problem is you're middle," she's told. Unfortunately, her magazine boss is also invited, which means she's just a note-taker. Edebiri's self-conscious, understated humor is wasted here.

It takes Ariel and the rest of the guests - an influencer, a paparazzo, a former journalist-nemesis and a TV personality played by Juliette Lewis, once again cast as the frisky siren - way too much time to realize that Moretti has created a cult in the desert. And they're murderous. This is Cameron Crowe's "Almost Famous" crossed with Mark Mylod's "The Menu."

Error

It's always a mistake to get too close a look at the monster in a horror movie and Green makes the same error with his pop star, ludicrously nicknamed "The Wizard of Wiggle." Watching Malkovich, in his 70s, make vulgar pelvic thrusts at his visitors while wearing a weird metallic top really doesn't inspire dread. It inspires cringe and an AARP membership.

Costume designer Shirley Kurata has clearly lost the thread, putting Malkovich in Nehru jackets embellished with sprays of crystals, a sarong, gloves with rings on top and platform shoes. He looks less like a superstar than a sommelier at a stuffy molecular gastronomy restaurant: "This cabernet has notes of chocolate and leather."

Most egregious is that the music doesn't match the expectations. Hitmakers Nile Rodgers and The-Dream wrote several Moretti songs for the film and they're laughably bad Eurotrash pop. The

movie opens with slo-mo images of fans rocking out rapturously to Moretti and yet no viewer will want to hear these songs again. They're very middle.

Part of the problem is it's not clear what kind of artist he is - a guitar hero? A dance savant? A Lady Gaga-like explorer? Fascinatingly, TV on the Radio's 2008 song "DLZ" is heard over the final credits, nothing original. If you don't have the goods, why even make this film?

As if you didn't already know, not everyone will leave this remote New Mexican compound, where the guests are under constant surveillance, cellphones and laptops have been confiscated, and workers have curious scars. "This whole thing is a trip," one says. It gets weirder: Moretti insists all pubic hair be removed. And there's something with oysters.

Green wobbles as he tries to land this plane and what had been an intriguing premise to talk about fame and the parasitic industries that live off it turns into a gross-out, run-for-it bloodfest and a plot that unravels. It becomes what it intended to satirize - a pop spectacle.

"Opus," an A24 release in theaters Friday, is rated R for "violent content including a grisly image, language, sexual material and brief graphic nudity." Running time: 103 minutes. One star out of four.

Variety

NAIROBI, Kenya: Technology workers in Kenya have held a vigil for a colleague who died in unclear circumstances after she was unable to travel to her home in Nigeria for two years.

Ladi Anzaki Olubunmi, a content moderator for TikTok employed by the subcontractor Teleperformance Kenya, died last week and her decomposing body was discovered in her house after three days.

It was unclear what caused her death, but colleagues say she had complained of fatigue and was "desperate to go back home."

Teleperformance Kenya told The Associated Press on Wednesday that they didn't deny Olubunmi her leave to go home. Her family in Nigeria says she only traveled once since coming to Kenya three years ago.

Content moderators working for subcontracted firms based in Kenya have in the past described working condi-

tions that they say include lower than average pay, lack of mental health support, long working hours and intimidation. (AP)

NEW YORK: Venture capitalist Amy Griffin's memoir about confronting childhood trauma is **Oprah Winfrey's** latest book club pick.



Winfrey

Griffin's "The Tell" was published Tuesday. It has been promoted as a "journey of healing and truth-telling." "I've spent the last five years writing, drafting and considering every word I wanted to share about my experience," Griffin, the founder of G9 Ventures, said in a statement.

"When Oprah called, I forgot every one of those words." Griffin founded her firm in 2017.

Her investments have included Goop, Bumble and Hello Sunshine.

Winfrey established her book club in 1996 and currently presents it in partnership with Starbucks.

Winfrey's conversation with Griffin took place at a Starbucks in Chicago. The video podcast can be viewed on Winfrey's YouTube channel. (AP)

LONDON: The London Book Fair (LBF), one of the world's premier publishing events, opened on Tuesday, highlighting China's publishing achievements, global collaborations, and growing influence in the industry.

Running through Thursday, the fair is expected to draw more than 30,000 publishing professionals and over 1,000 exhibitors from around the world.

"Book fairs like this and working with publishers globally, including those from China, are essential for sharing knowledge," said Martin Liu, chief operating officer and publisher at LID Publishing. His London-based company is responsible for the English edition of The Power of

Time, a Chinese publication.

Liu noted that after the book's launch, he and his colleagues were "amazed" by the diversity and world-class quality of books from China, emphasizing that Chinese publishers play a crucial role in bringing Chinese literature and ideas to global readers.

At the China stand, more than 50 Chinese publishers and book trade companies are showcasing over 4,000 high-quality publications. The three-day event features approximately 40 activities, including book launches, copyright signings, and reader seminars, underscoring China's commitment to fostering international literary dialogues.

Yang Hao, author of Diablo's Boys, expressed excitement ahead of her book's English edition launch. "I have waited a long time for this translation and publication, and I am extremely excited," she told Xinhua, adding that despite language differences, the essence of the book remains intact. She said she hopes international readers will appreciate the "different texture" of the translated version. (Xinhua)

'Statue highlights American exceptionalism'

Filmmaker unveils 7-foot Trump statue for Presidents Day

COLORADO, March 12: Steven Barber, a filmmaker and former combat reporter, has honored Presidents Day by unveiling a statue of Donald Trump to cement his place in American history.

According to an article published in Newsweek, the statue, which stands seven feet tall and weighs 680 pounds, is made of gold-painted bronze and sits atop a granite pedestal. It depicts Trump holding a "Make America Great Again" hat while raising his fist in a pose inspired by his reaction during the July 13 assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Barber, describing the statue as "the most impressive significant presidential monument in history," believes the statue highlights American exceptionalism at its highest level.

The statue is currently in Colorado and is slated for transport to Trump International Golf Course in West Palm Beach, Florida, in the coming days.

The statue project has attracted significant attention, with various prominent figures, including Colorado Representative Lauren Boebert and even President Trump. Barber, who has

been friends with Trump since the early 2000s, emphasized that he has been trying to build the statue since 2016, and called the opportunity "divine providence." However, Barber faced resistance due to the controversial nature of Trump's political persona, which made it difficult to secure support. His fortunes changed when he learned of Anthony Constantino, CEO of custom printing company Sticker Mule, who made headlines in October for unveiling a massive "Vote For Trump" sign. After reaching out to Constantino, Barber received a generous \$275,000 donation, which helped push the project forward.

The statue was created by Lundeen Sculpture, a Colorado-based studio responsible for other high-profile monuments like a statue of Amelia Earhart in the US Capitol and the Apollo 11 astronauts at the Kennedy Space Center.

Barber is confident that this tribute to Trump will lead to more business opportunities, and he is already in discussions with Secretary of the Internal Affairs Doug Burgum about contributing more sculptures to Trump's National Garden of Ameri-

can Heroes. This initiative, which aims to honor 250 significant American figures for the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026, had been abandoned under the previous administration but has been revived under Trump's leadership.

Despite some reservations about certain policies and decisions made by the administration, Barber remains a strong supporter of Trump. He praised the current administration as "the greatest thing" and expressed satisfaction with Trump's recent actions, such as taking a more combative stance after the 2022 FBI search at Mar-a-Lago. However, Barber did express concerns about some of the president's more unusual policies, like banning plastic straws and eliminating the penny, noting that they seemed less urgent. He also voiced skepticism about Elon Musk's involvement in the administration, stating that Musk might be better suited to focus on his own ventures, like SpaceX, rather than holding a political role. Nonetheless, Barber believes that Trump's leadership and the resulting monuments will continue to resonate in American history.



Filmmaker and art broker Steven Barber pictured next to the statue of Trump, created by Lundeen Sculpture

Fashion



A model wears a creation as part of the Saint Laurent collection. (AP)



A model wears a creation as part of the Chanel Fall/Winter 2025-2026 Womenswear collection. (AP)



Models wear creations by Chanel. (AP)



Vittoria Ceretti wears a creation as part of the Chanel Fall/Winter 2025-2026 Womenswear collection presented Tuesday, March 11, in Paris. (AP)



A model wears a creation from Chanel's 2025-2026 collection. (AP)



Gigi Hadid wears a creation as part of the Miu Miu 2025-2025 collection. (AP)



A model wears a creation by Chanel. (AP)

Saint Laurent closes Paris Week with striking power

Chanel stages a grand bow to the future

PARIS, March 12, (AP): By all logic, Chanel should be floundering. A global juggernaut without a captain, the house has been in limbo since the abrupt departure of Virginie Viard, drifting toward an uncertain horizon while awaiting the arrival of Matthieu Blazy in the fall.

Yet against all odds, inside the majestic Grand Palais, Chanel did what it has done for a century: endure. And not just endure. Dazzle.

The Paris Fashion Week fall show on Tuesday unfolded beneath a colossal swirling black ribbon, an audacious centerpiece that coiled toward the ceiling, defiant and theatrical. It was a collection that could have been a placeholder lost in transition. Instead, it was sterling - refined, exacting and utterly Chanel.

The front row was a collision of fashion royalty and Hollywood power. Naomi Campbell, Riley Keough, and Charlotte Casiraghi led the pack, joined by actresses Dakota Fanning and Simone Ashley, while music sensations Raye and AP Dhillon underscored Chanel's cross-generational and global appeal.

Many looks were framed by a layer of sheer silk - flowing blouses draped over jackets, tulle overlays that subtly distorted the lines of traditional tweed tailoring, and diaphanous founced capes that floated above classic Chanel silhouettes.

This interplay of transparency and structure gave the collection an airy, dreamlike quality. Matte satin ribbon trimmed a military-inspired anthracite tweed jacket, while pretty bows secured balloon sleeves on a sheer black organza tunic top. A trio of dresses featured a fluttering ribbon print tracing the brand's signature interlocking Cs.

Allover looks played with super-

positions of the same fabric, creating surrealist effects: a cherry red tweed jacket, wrap skirt and flared pants appeared alongside matching accessories like a boater hat, gloves and boots. By blending light, illusionary fabrics with bold statement pieces, Chanel underscored its mastery of craftsmanship and innovative design.

One accessory stole the show: a giant pearl handbag, appearing across multiple looks and drawing instant snapping. Alongside the monochromatic elegance, there were flashes of color - red tweed, bright silk linings and surrealist layering, an echo of Karl Lagerfeld's high-energy collections.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Campbell, a longtime Chanel icon, reflected on the show's nostalgic '90s influences. "I love the artisan, the workmanship. They go back and look into the history of the DNA of the brand - that's what they think of first and foremost. And then they create it,

but with that twist on it. This show for me had a lot of things that reminded me of the 90s, and I loved the silhouettes, the skirt, the jacket, the skirt and pants together. Everything was very wearable."

She also reminisced about her friend, the late Lagerfeld, whose vision defined Chanel for decades. "I really miss his honesty," she said. "He had a soft spot, but he never sugarcoated anything. We always worked at night, and sometimes he'd tell me to stay over. It was such an incredible time. His presence is still felt, always."

Beyond the clothes, Campbell emphasized Chanel's strides in diversity. Last year, Lupita Nyong'o was named a house ambassador, further solidifying Chanel's commitment to representation: "I have such respect for Chanel for being the first luxury brand to go to sub-Saharan Africa, to Dakar, which I got to witness."

The house had a landmark Métiers

d'Art show in Dakar in 2022, the first time a major luxury brand staged a show in the region. It launched an ongoing cultural exchange program. It wasn't just a one-time event. Chanel has continued its engagement by bringing students to Paris and sending artisans to Senegal, fostering a creative dialogue.

"That, to me, is action," Campbell said, smiling. "I'm really proud that I got to witness that in my lifetime in this business."

Saint Laurent

Saint Laurent closed Paris Fashion Week in dramatic fashion Tuesday night, with the Eiffel Tower glowing against the night sky and a vast black onyx stage polished to a mirror-like sheen.

Designer Anthony Vaccarello's fall collection refined the house's codes into pure, striking silhouettes - where sharp tailoring and commanding shoulders set the tone. Models moved with quiet authority across the onyx stage, their looks defined by bold proportions, rich textures, and a stripped-back sense of power.

"Chanel gave women freedom, Yves Saint Laurent gave them power." The famous words of Saint Laurent's partner Pierre Bergé, echoed in every cut and contour. Vaccarello's vision was one of strength without excess-structured blazers worn as dresses, crisp pencil skirts, and bomber jackets exuding effortless cool. These weren't clothes that followed trends; they commanded attention.

A show of this magnitude attracted an equally formidable audience. Austin Butler, Zoë Kravitz, Kid Cudi, and Charli XCX took their seats as the runway came to life. The most anticipated moment of the night arrived with Bella Hadid, making her singular catwalk

appearance of the season. Her presence ignited social media, reaffirming Saint Laurent's cultural dominance.

Vaccarello has always understood the language of power dressing, and this season was no exception. Shoulder lines were bold and deliberate, defining the collection's structured blazers, high-collared frocks, and sleek outerwear.

Models cut through the dimly lit stage in rich, saturated hues - tangerine, fuchsia, and deep grass green - bringing depth to an otherwise restrained aesthetic. Experimental fabrics elevated the collection: silicone-coated floral and animal prints, stretch materials paired with guipure lace, and distressed couture textiles. The closing looks, with voluminous skirts and sculptural hip inserts, added a hypnotic, fluid movement to the show.

Miu Miu

At Miu Miu, the little sister brand of Miuccia Prada, the feminine wasn't just celebrated - it was deconstructed, reconfigured and worn with a wink.

The starry Paris Fashion Week collection on Tuesday took the very idea of womanhood and turned it into a conversation starter, one silk-knit bias cut at a time.

And what a crowd to witness it. ASAP Rocky, perched in the front row in a nonchalant slouch, soaked in the scene, while Sydney Sweeney, swathed in Miu Miu's latest ode to femininity, radiated old Hollywood meets modern mischief.

Prada, known for casting both models and Hollywood stars, sent a mix of familiar faces and first-time mixes down the runway - Gigi Hadid, Raffey Cassidy, and Sarah Paulson - blurring the line between fashion and film with every step.

Variety

SYRACUSE, N.Y.: A woman who accused Mike Tyson of raping her in a limousine in 1991 is dropping her lawsuit against the former heavyweight boxing champion, according to a letter filed in US District Court.

The letter from Tyson's attorney, Daniel Rubin, said the accuser's attorney "has informed me that plaintiff is withdrawing her complaint and voluntarily discontinuing" the case. The March 7 letter to Judge Mitchell Katz was first reported by USA Today.

The woman's attorneys said Tuesday in a statement that the case had to be dismissed on procedural grounds.

"We are extremely disappointed that the court did not allow us to amend the pleadings in the case. It's a shame our client's case had to be dismissed on procedural grounds," the statement provided by attorney Darren Seilback said. "We stand by our client's account of the events and support her 100%."

In her January 2023 lawsuit, the woman said Tyson, the undisputed heavyweight champion from 1987 to 1990, raped her after she met him at an Albany nightclub. She said she has suffered in the years since from "physical, psychological and emotional injury." (AP)

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NEW YORK: Two members of an Eastern European criminal organization were "hired guns for the government of Iran" in a plot to assassinate an Iran-born journalist at her New York City residence three years ago, a prosecutor told a federal jury in an opening statement on Tuesday at the start of a trial for the men.

Assistant US Attorney Jacob Gutwillig said the plot to assassinate Masih Alinejad was part of Iran's more than decade-long quest to silence a woman who exposed the Iranian regime for human rights abuses and for silencing political expression. The prosecutor told jurors they will hear the author and contributor to Voice of America explain why the government of Iran wanted to silence her.

By day's end, though, her accused would-be assassin was testifying for the government, prompting Alinejad to post on social media that she was "overwhelmed with mixed emotions."

"You might find this hard to believe - but for simply posting videos of myself showing my hair and encouraging women in Iran to do the same, the regime sent a man with an AK-47 to my house in Brooklyn to kill me," she said.

Alinejad wrote that she could not be in the courtroom because she will be a trial witness.

She fled Iran following the country's disputed 2009 presidential election and became a U.S. citizen in October 2019. She will describe why she stands up to the Iranian regime. Gutwillig said, and why she "refuses to back down." (AP)

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LOS ANGELES: Metallica is bringing their powerhouse performance from Mexico City straight to viewers' faces courtesy of Apple.

The company said Tuesday that Metallica's show will be delivered in an immersive concert experience on the Apple Vision Pro video headset on Friday. The concert experience will feature the band's iconic hits including "Whiplash," "One" and "Enter Sandman."

Filed during the sold-out finale of their M72 World Tour last year, Metallica's concert brings viewers closer to James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett, and Robert Trujillo with high-resolution, 180-degree video and immersive spatial audio.

"With Metallica on Apple Vision Pro, you feel like you're right there: front row, backstage, and even on stage with one of the biggest bands of all time," said Tor Myhren, vice president of marketing communications at Apple.

The company said Apple built a custom stage layout featuring 14 of their immersive video cameras, including some that moved around the stage. If you don't own one of the \$3,500 headsets, don't worry. Customers are able to book a Vision Pro demo to experience Metallica's performance at their local Apple store.

Other performances that have been exclusively shown on the Vision Pro includes Alicia Keys and Raye. The Weekend also had his immersive music experience called "The Weeknd: Open Hearts." (AP)



Models wear creations as part of the Saint Laurent Fall/Winter 2025-2026 Womenswear collection presented Tuesday, March 11, in Paris. (AP)

CDC, NIH, WHO face threats to crisis response

5 years of COVID: Why coordination is key in health crises

By Katherine A. Foss
Middle Tennessee State University

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

Five years ago, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a global pandemic. The novel coronavirus, dubbed SARS-CoV-2, began as a "cluster of severe pneumonia cases of unknown cause" reported in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It had spread to 118,000 cases reported in 114 countries by March 11.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general at the time, said in a media briefing that day that "the WHO is deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction." He urged leaders to move quickly to scale up their emergency responses, saying that "all countries can still change the course of this pandemic."

Public health agencies like the WHO and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention played critical roles throughout the pandemic in coordinating with local health departments to detect, trace and test for the virus. The WHO and CDC websites received unprecedented traffic as they became invaluable go-to sources for the most up-to-date resources on means of prevention, case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths. The National Institutes of Health was instrumental in its development of COVID-19 treatments and contributions to vaccine research.

Now, five years later, the Trump administration has cut more than 5,000 employees at the NIH and the CDC combined, and is withdrawing the US from the WHO.

At the same time, the US is facing outbreaks of tuberculosis, a resurgence of measles among unvaccinated communities, and the worst flu season in 15 years.

Much of the work of the WHO, CDC and other public health agencies occurs behind the scenes, only occasionally drawing public attention. To put these roles into perspective, it can be helpful to examine public health before these unifying entities existed.

As the author of the 2020 book "Constructing the Outbreak: Epidemics in Media and Collective Memory" and "Capturing COVID: Media & the Pandemic in the Digital Era," published in 2025, I have extensively studied how public health crises have unfolded. And through my research as a health communication scholar, I have analyzed the integral role of nonprofits and public agencies in protecting public health.

Network

Both the WHO and the CDC were set up in the 1940s. Before an international or even national network of public health agencies existed, there were no coordinated communication means, external investigations or formalized ways of recording data across geographic areas. Without a means of sharing information, it was much more difficult for outbreaks and epidemics to be linked between regions.

One notable example was the 1918 influenza pandemic, a deadly combination of influenza and pneumonia that first emerged in a Kansas army base in the spring of 1918. From there, the epidemic moved overseas, spreading throughout Asia and Europe by late summer. When it returned to the US in August, the disease had been mislabeled the "Spanish flu." The lack of media coverage of the spring outbreak, paired with the lack of disease tracking, meant that most

people believed the lethal strains had begun in Europe.

No one formally tracked these outbreaks until the disease returned with American troops in August 1918. In September, the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service attempted to gauge the magnitude and transmission of influenza by sending telegrams to state health officers.

By that point, it was much too late for mass preparation. The few stories of the spring outbreaks had been buried in a flood of competing news stories about the world war. Therefore, people knew almost nothing about the raging disease until it infected their own town. Short on resources and caregivers, communities struggled to create makeshift hospitals and find healthy residents to nurse the ill.

For example, at the University of Kansas during the influenza pandemic, female professors cared for sick students, faculty and staff, washed linens and prepared food. Since agencies like the WHO and CDC didn't yet exist and the world war further impeded communication, little information was documented and shared across geographic regions, such as the sharing of information on how to prevent the disease from spreading, possible treatments or even the number of cases and deaths.

The influenza pandemic quickly faded in the public's collective memory, due in part to an absence of personal narratives and follow-up stories after cases subsided - at least until COVID-19 sparked renewed public interest in the 100-year-old crisis.

Starting in the 1930s, public health responses to polio outbreaks demonstrated the advantages of nationally coordinated efforts. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis helped battle polio through fundraising, running extensive campaigns to educate the public, supporting scientific research and helping victims from the acute hospital stage through rehabilitation. This effort was especially apparent in the 1952 polio epidemic. (AP)

Congo faces mpox setback

Meningitis outbreak in Nigeria claims 13 lives

ABUJA, Nigeria, March 12, (AP): Nigerian authorities confirmed Tuesday that a meningitis outbreak in the northwest was behind the death of at least 26 people over several weeks.

The spread of the disease in the state of Kebbi began late January with over 200 suspected cases recorded, the state commissioner for health, Musa Ismail, told reporters in Birnin Kebbi, the state capital.

Ismail also said medical supplies have already been dispatched to the affected areas, and isolation centers set up to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Sokoto, another state in the northwest and about 150 kilometers (90 miles) away from Kebbi, has urged residents to remain vigilant after several cases were suspected.

Sokoto state commissioner of health, Faruk Abubakar, said residents should take precautionary measures and seek immediate medical attention at the nearest health facility if they are experiencing symptoms such as high fever, stiff neck and severe headaches.

Meningitis, more common during the hot season in Nigeria, is a significant public health challenge in Africa's most populous country that affects the protective membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Additionally to this communicable disease, Nigeria is also battling malaria and has the highest burden in the world.

Nigeria previously received aid from the United States Agency for International Development to combat these diseases, but that support has recently been withdrawn.

Between 2022 and 2023, Nigeria, located in an area known as the African Meningitis Belt, recorded 2,765 suspected cases and 190 deaths, according to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2024, the World Health Organization said 153 people died in a similar outbreak.

Mpox: Hospitals across eastern Congo that were once at the forefront of the country's response to the mpox outbreak are facing a setback in detecting the disease and offering treatment following the advance of Rwanda-backed rebels in the region.

The mpox global health emergency is worsening as the fighting between

the M23 rebel group and Congolese troops escalates in eastern Congo, which has been the epicenter of the health crisis. Many patients have fled and can't be found. Recently arrived vaccines are running short as supplies can't reach combat zones. Hospitals have been under attack.

The Associated Press visited one of the mpox hot spots, which is now under control of M23 rebels backed by neighboring Rwanda. Health workers and remaining patients described a growing disaster.

"The situation has been very difficult. Insecurity has disrupted everything," said Dr. Serge Munyahu Cikuru, medical officer in charge of the Miti Murhesa health zone in South Kivu province's Kabare territory.

The country, meanwhile, continues to battle other diseases in the east, including cholera and measles, in addition to mysterious outbreaks that recently started in the northwestern region.

Congo saw a 31% weekly increase in mpox cases last week, bringing the total to 16,255, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, that is only one side of the story: Only seven out of the 26 provinces reported cases last week, the public health agency said at its last briefing, partly blaming the security crisis.

Although Congo has seen a surge in the current vaccination phase as compared to the previous one, much of that success is in other regions while eastern Congo remains cut off.

The Miti Murhesa treatment center is fast running out of supplies.

Mubake Buroko Patrick, an mpox patient at the facility, said it was difficult to get drugs in the weeks following the fighting.

"The war has complicated our access to medicines," he said. "I'm feeling a little better, but the treatment needs to be improved."

Africa CDC's mpox incident manager Dr. Ngashi Ngongo told reporters last week that authorities have started negotiations for a humanitarian corridor, which would require the suspension of hostilities to allow for humanitarian aid in conflict zones. More than 600 mpox patients fled different hospitals in eastern Congo as the fighting escalated, the Africa CDC said.

Spherex to survey universe's evolution

NASA's new telescope to map entire sky

CALIFORNIA, March 12, (AP): NASA's newest space telescope rocketed into orbit Tuesday to map the entire sky like never before - a sweeping look at hundreds of millions of galaxies and their shared cosmic glow since the beginning of time.

SpaceX launched the Spherex observatory from California, putting it on course to fly over Earth's poles. Tagging along were four suitcase-size satellites to study the sun. Spherex popped off the rocket's upper stage first, drifting into the blackness of space with a blue Earth in the background.

The \$488 million Spherex mission aims to explain how galaxies formed and evolved over billions of years, and how the universe expanded so fast in its first moments.

Closer to home in our own Milky Way galaxy, Spherex will hunt for water and other ingredients of life in the icy clouds between stars where new solar systems emerge.

The cone-shaped Spherex - at 1,110 pounds (500 kilograms) or the heft of a grand piano - will take six months to map the entire sky with its infrared eyes and wide field of view. Four full-sky surveys are planned over two years, as the telescope circles the globe from pole to pole 400 miles (650 kilometers) up.

Spherex won't see galaxies in exquisite detail like NASA's larger and more elaborate Hubble and Webb space telescopes, with their narrow



In this image from video provided by SpaceX, the company's SpaceX's Falcon rocket, carrying NASA's newest space telescope, Spherex, lifts off from Vandenberg Space Force Base, Calif., Tuesday, March 11. (AP)

fields of view.

Instead of counting galaxies or focusing on them, Spherex will observe the total glow produced by the whole lot, including the earliest ones formed in the wake of the universe-creating Big Bang.

"This cosmological glow captures all light emitted over cosmic history," said the mission's chief scientist Jamie Bock of the California Institute of Technology. "It's a very different way of looking at the universe," enabling scientists to see what sources of light may have been missed in the past.

By observing the collective glow,

scientists hope to tease out the light from the earliest galaxies and learn how they came to be, Bock said.

"We won't see the Big Bang. But we'll see the aftermath from it and learn about the beginning of the universe that way," he said.

The telescope's infrared detectors will be able to distinguish 102 colors invisible to the human eye, yielding the most colorful, inclusive map ever made of the cosmos. It's like "looking at the universe through a set of rainbow-colored glasses," said deputy project manager Beth Fabinsky of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

18 satellites launched from new spaceport

China debuts commercial spaceport launch pad

WENCHANG, Hainan, March 12, (Xinhua): A group of 18 low Earth orbit satellites was launched aboard the Long March-8 Y6 carrier rocket from the Hainan commercial spaceport launch site in south China's Hainan Province in the early hours of Wednesday.

The satellites, the fifth group of their kind, have entered their preset orbit successfully, according to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC). They will form part of China's commercial satellite constellation, Spacesail.

This mission was the inaugural launch from the site's No. 1 launch pad, which, following the first launch from the No. 2 pad on Nov. 30, 2024, signifies the dual-pad readiness of China's first commercial spaceport for future missions. Experts say that Wednesday's achievement demonstrated China's ambition to revolutionize launch efficiency and safety for future high-density orbital missions.

CASC expert Xiao Yun said that both the Long March-8 rocket and the No. 1 launch pad passed practical verification tests on Wednesday, establishing a foundation for future high-density launches through improved coordination and compatibility. "The efficient operational capacity of the new launch pad can significantly reduce the rocket launch cycle, providing commercial users with faster and more reliable services," Xiao said.

The No. 1 launch pad is a purpose-built launch facility for the Long March-8 rockets, and it includes innovations in launch safety protocols, operational models and autonomous ground systems.

The launch pad, standing 83 meters tall, features a modular steel structure design and employs a dual-direction flame deflection cone that rise 3.9 meters above ground to enable cooling and noise reduction functions for the first time, enhancing rapid-reuse capabilities.

Radiosurgery

New 'software' for brain tumor

SAN CARLOS, Calif., March 12, (AP): ZAP Surgical Systems, Inc., a global leader in non-invasive robotic brain surgery, has announced the ZAP-Axon® Radiosurgery Planning System, an entirely new software platform dedicated to the company's ZAP-X® Gyroscopic Radiosurgery system. Designed to simplify, accelerate, and enhance treatment planning, Axon aims to set new benchmarks in world-class radiosurgery brain tumor treatments. Axon is currently pending FDA 510(k) clearance and is expected to be available in Spring 2025.

"Removing the clutter and complexity, Axon's simplified design empowers clinicians to rapidly master state-of-the-art radiosurgery planning while reducing the number of clicks and awkward navigation typically encountered in legacy planning systems"

Dedicated exclusively to cranial stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS), Axon eliminates the cumbersome user interfaces of comprehensive planning systems designed for full body use and myriad radiation delivery techniques. Instead, Axon provides a simplified, intuitive display with clarity in the presentation of sophisticated SRS data without superfluous input and output.

"Removing the clutter and complexity, Axon's simplified design empowers clinicians to rapidly master state-of-the-art radiosurgery planning while reducing the number of clicks and awkward navigation typically encountered in legacy planning systems," commented John R. Adler, MD, Professor Emeritus of Neurosurgery at Stanford University and Founder and CEO of ZAP Surgical Systems. "I'll go so far to say it's so easy, even a brain surgeon can use it!"

Leveraging an innovative Krylov quadratic optimizer, Axon also aims to improve treatment quality and preserve eloquent brain tissue by allowing clinicians to easily and quickly explore multiple alternative candidate plans. What traditionally required a 20-minute optimization process can now be accomplished in just 30-45 seconds. Such rapid-turn iterations enable clinicians to effectively explore additional optimal plan variables.

"Often faster than today's standard planning systems, Axon provides an enhanced approach to multiple plan iteration evaluations," said Alex Maslowski, PhD, Vice President of Software at ZAP Surgical.

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'The World Cup is global, and we must play by global rules and the global labor standards'

International labor union says FIFA blocking access to Azteca Stadium for inspection

MEXICO CITY, March 12, (AP): An international federation of labor unions said FIFA denied it access to the Azteca Stadium to inspect conditions of construction workers doing renovations ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

Ambet Yuson, the general secretary of the Building and Wood Workers' International, said FIFA told them that they didn't need inspections because the local workers already have a union and that there have been no incidents so far.

"The World Cup is global, and we must play by global rules and the global labor standards," Yuson said at a news conference. "The role of an international organization as BWI is to come and to be an independent inspector to see if what they are saying is true or not."

The Azteca has been temporarily closed for renovations since May 2024 and stadium owner Emilio Azcarraga Jean recently said the plan is to reopen sometime this year.

Azcarraga Jean hasn't fully disclosed what modifications will be made to the Azteca for the World Cup that Mexico will co-host with Canada and the United States.

The stadium, which opened in 1966, will host five games at the tournament and will become the first to host three World Cup opening matches. It also hosted the tournament openers of the 1970 and the 1986 World Cups.

"Building on past cooperation with FIFA, an agreement for joint inspections in Mexico, U.S. and Canada was negotiated, but FIFA pulled out before signing, blocking independent oversight at dangerous construction sites," the BWI in a statement.

The Azteca Stadium director, Felix Aguirre, did not immediately respond to a request for an interview.

A FIFA spokesperson told The Guardian that the stadium's renovation "is not managed by

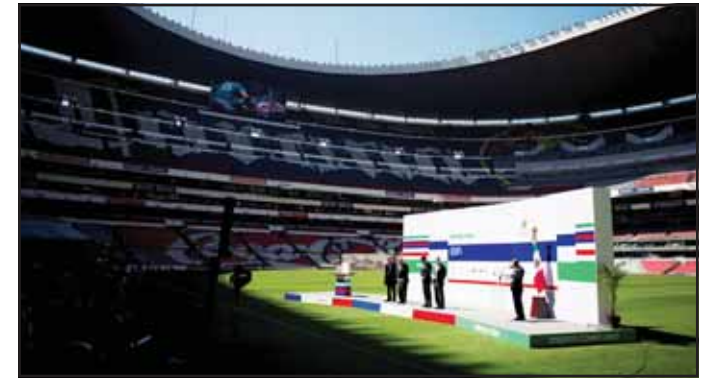
FIFA" but that the governing body "strives to respect and promote the highest international labor standards and seeks to ensure that the rights of workers in the various activities directly related to its operations are upheld."

FIFA added that in cooperation with the Azteca Stadium, it is "actively engaging with stakeholders and monitoring the conditions offered to the workers."

BWI claims to have inspected working conditions for the past four men's World Cups, as well as the past three summer Olympics.

According to the BWI, only 7% of the construction workers in Mexico belong to a union, making them vulnerable to poor conditions and wages.

"In all World Cups, construction workers die and we have not heard that somebody died in a construction site in Mexico," Yuson said. "Should we wait for someone to die? Or should we do the inspection now so we can prevent a single death?"



From left, Mexico Secretary of Tourism Enrique de la Madrid, President of the Mexican Football Federation Decio de Maria, Director for the Mexico World Cup candidacy Yon de Luisa, Secretary General of the Mexican Football Federation Guillermo Cantu, listen to Mexico's Interior Secretary Alfonso Navarrete Prida during the presentation of the guarantees for Mexico's bid for the 2026 Soccer World Cup, at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. (AP)

NBA-leading Cavaliers sink Nets for 2nd 15-game win streak of season



Brooklyn Nets forward Jalen Wilson (22) goes to the basket in front of Cleveland Cavaliers forward Evan Mobley (4) in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Cleveland. (AP)

Haliburton's stunning 4-point play gives Pacers win over Bucks

CLEVELAND, March 12, (AP): All-Star Darius Garland scored 18 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter and the NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers rallied for a 109-104 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday night, matching the longest winning streak in franchise history at 15 games.

Jarrett Allen had 23 points and 13 rebounds, and Evan Mobley had 21 points, nine rebounds and six assists for Cleveland, which also began this season with a 15-game win streak. The Cavaliers trailed by 18 points in the third quarter.

Cleveland is 55-10 -- tying the fifth-best start in NBA history -- and owns the best home record in the league at 30-4. All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell (left groin soreness), forward De'Andre Hunter (illness) and guard Ty Jerome (rest) didn't dress for the game.

Cam Thomas scored 27 points, Cameron Johnson had 17 points and Ziaire Williams added 14 before fouling out for Brooklyn. The Nets dropped five games behind Chicago for the final play-in tournament spot in the East.

Pacers 115, Bucks 114

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton made a fadeaway 3-pointer while being fouled and completed the four-point play with 3.4 seconds left, and the Indiana Pacers stunned Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks.

Haliburton ran along the left sideline, took an inbound pass from Andrew Nembhard and launched a 3 while falling out of bounds, absorbing contact by Antetokounmpo, and the ball found the net with Haliburton sprawled on the floor in the corner.

After Haliburton made the free throw for a one-point lead, Antetokounmpo raced up the court and got off a clean 3-point try, but the shot fell short at the buzzer, and the Pacers drew even with the fourth-place Bucks in the Eastern Conference standings.

Haliburton, who had missed the last three games with a hip injury, finished with 14 points and 10 assists. Pascal Siakam led Indiana with 25 points and 12 rebounds, and Bennedict Mahturin added 17 points.



New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (1) attempts to drive past Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard (2) in the second half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans. (AP)

Brook Lopez scored a team-high 23 points and Antetokounmpo had 19 points and 17 rebounds.

Indiana led 103-93 with 8:08 remaining, but Milwaukee responded with a 10-0 run and tied it on a 3-pointer by Gary Trent Jr. Neither team led by more than five after that.

Pelicans 127, Clippers 120

In New Orleans, Zion Williamson had 22 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds, and the New Orleans Pelicans snapped a four-game slide with a 127-120 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Pelicans briefly lost a lead that was as large as 21 points in the first half, when the Clippers missed 13 of their first 14 3-point shots. But New Orleans rallied back in front late in the third quarter and held off the Clippers thanks in large part to Wil-

liamson. He had 10 points, five rebounds and five assists in the fourth quarter, invigorating the crowd with one clutch play after another.

CJ McCollum scored 23 points and Trey Murphy III added 21 points for New Orleans, highlighted by his reverse alley-oop dunk of McCollum's job. Rookie center Karlo Matkovic chipped in 15 points and Jose Alvarado scored 14.

Kawhi Leonard scored a game-high 29 points and James Harden added 25 points and 17 assists for the Clippers, who had won six of their previous seven, but didn't take their first lead until Ivica Zubac dunked Harden's lob with 5:08 left in third quarter.

Zubac had 19 points and 11 rebounds, while Kris Dunn and Derrick Jones Jr. each scored 11 for the Clippers.

Pistons 123, Wizards 103

In Detroit, Cade Cunningham had 27 points and 10 assists, and the Detroit Pistons beat NBA-worst Washington in a physical game that included two late flagrant fouls by the Wizards.

Washington's Richaun Holmes was ejected in the fourth quarter for throwing an elbow to the face of Detroit's Ausar Thompson while securing a rebound. A few minutes later, the Wizards' Marcus Smart was assessed a flagrant-1 foul for elbowing the Pistons' Tim Hardaway Jr.

Jalen Duren added 15 points and 13 assists for the Pistons, who ended a two-game skid. Detroit entered the night in sixth place in the Eastern Conference.

Smart led the Wizards with 16 points. Bub Carrington and Jordan Poole scored 15 apiece.

Trial could last up to four months

Argentina puts 7 of Maradona's healthcare professionals on trial

BUENOS AIRES, March 12, (AP): An Argentine court on Tuesday started its trial of seven healthcare professionals accused of negligence in the death of Diego Maradona, at age 60.

Maradona was under the care of those professionals when he had a cardiac arrest in a house outside Buenos Aires on Nov. 25, 2020.

Three judges will decide whether those charged, including a neurosurgeon, a psychiatrist and several medical staffers, are guilty of manslaughter. The maximum jail time for those sentenced is 25 years.

According to the prosecution, the accused professionals didn't provide adequate medical care.

Prosecutor Patricio Ferrari said he will provide evidence that, between Nov. 11-25 2020, Maradona was taken to a house in a private neighborhood in the town of Tigre, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, without being in "full use of his mental faculties" to decide on home hospitalization.

Ferrari said it was a reckless hospitalization in which there was no control.

"After condemning him to oblivion in that house... they deliberately and cruelly decided that he should die," he said.

The prosecutor showed an image of the former soccer star lying in the bed where he was found dead with his abdomen visibly swollen.

The tearful family of the 1986 World Cup winner were present at the courtroom. Maradona's oldest daughters, Dalma and Giannina, sat in the front row near Verónica Ojeda, former partner of the footballer, and Jana, another of his daughters.

Minutes before the start of the trial, Ojeda shared a video on social media of Maradona's son Diego Fernando wearing a T-shirt with the face of the football star, and the word "justice."

The trial could last up to four months and there will be three hearings per week.

The spotlight is on neurosurgeon Leonardo Luque, Maradona's personal physician for the last four years of his life. He performed surgery to remove a blood clot from the former footballer's brain just weeks before his death.

Six other professionals will be on trial. Psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, who prescribed the medication that Maradona took until the time of his death, psychologist Carlos Diaz, Nancy Forlini, a coordinator of the medical company hired for Maradona's care during his hospitalization, Mariano Perroni, a representative of the company that rendered nursing service, Dr. Pedro Di Spagna, who monitored his treatment, and nurse Ricardo Almirón.

Gisela Madrid, a nurse who was also indicted, will be tried by a jury later this year.



Physician Leopoldo Luque, left, arrives with lawyer Julio Rivas for a court hearing in the trial charging the medical team that treated late soccer star Diego Maradona with homicide by negligence in San Isidro on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

Adams and Reyna on US roster for 1st time under Pochettino

WASHINGTON, March 12, (AP): Tyler Adams and Gio Reyna are back with the U.S. national team after recovering from injuries, giving coach Mauricio Pochettino close to a first-choice lineup for the first time since he took over as coach last fall.

Pochettino picked the two midfielders along with defender Cameron Carter-Vickers for his 23-man roster ahead of the CONCACAF Nations League semifinal against Panama on March 20 at Inglewood, California. The three-time defending champion Americans meet Mexico or Canada three days later in a final or third-place game.

The three have not played for the U.S. since last summer's Copa America, when a first-round exit led to Pochettino replacing Gregg Berhalter.

Adams was sidelined by back surgery and didn't play his first match of the season for Bournemouth until Oct. 26.

Limited by a groin injury, Reyna has made only five starts this season for Borussia Dortmund.

Pochettino wanted to see him now, knowing Reyna along with Juventus teammates Weston McKennie and Tim Weah will not be unavailable for June

matches because FIFA has given the Club World Cup priority.

Agyemang, Luna, Tim Ream, Patrick Schulte, Zack Steffen and Brian White are the six Major League Soccer players on the roster who were at the January training camp, which was not on FIFA international dates.

The roster:

Goalkeepers: Patrick Schulte (Colorado Rapids), Zack Steffen (Colorado Rapids), Matt Turner (Crystal Palace)

Defenders: Cameron Carter-Vickers (Glasgow Celtic), Marlon Fossey (Standard Liege), Mark McKenzie (Toulouse), Tim Ream (Charlotte), Chris Richards (Crystal Palace), Antonee Robinson (Fulham), Joe Scally (Borussia Moenchengladbach), Austin Trusty (Glasgow Celtic)

Midfielders: Tyler Adams (Bournemouth), Johnny Cardoso (Real Betis), Diego Luna (Salt Lake), Weston McKennie (Juventus), Gio Reyna (Borussia Dortmund), Tanner Tessmann (Lyon)

Forwards: Patrick Agyemang (Charlotte), Yunus Musah (AC Milan), Christian Pulisic (AC Milan), Josh Sargent (Norwich), Tim Weah (Juventus), Brian White (Vancouver)

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Ecuador hit by injuries ahead of World Cup qualifiers

QUITO, March 12, (Xinhua): New England Revolution striker Leonardo Campana will be among four key names missing from Ecuador's squad for World Cup qualifiers against Venezuela and Chile, head coach Sebastian Beccacece said.

Campana will be sidelined for up to a month after tearing a hamstring during New England's 2-0 away defeat to Philadelphia in Major League Soccer last Saturday.

Beccacece said that Lens left-back Jhoanner Chavez (hamstring), Cercle Brugge winger Alan Minda (thigh) and Sparta Prague right-back Angelo Preciado (knee) would also be absent from the matches later this month.

"They are players that I would love to have here but unfortunately we'll have to make do without them," the Argentine manager told reporters. "We have to be able to deal with this type of adversity, like all national teams." Ecuador will meet Venezuela in Quito on March 21 and Chile in Santiago four days later. The Tricolor are currently third in the 10-team South American zone qualifying group with 19 points from 12 matches, six points behind leaders Argentina. Beccacece said he was quietly confident of securing a top-six place, an outcome that would earn his side an automatic berth at next year's FIFA World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

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SPORTS

Maine wins over Vermont in America East Conference Tournament

Gonzaga beats Saint Mary's to capture West Coast Conference Tournament title

LAS VEGAS, March 12, (AP): The metrics - and oddsmakers - indicated Gonzaga was far better than its record, and there was little doubt the Bulldogs had the ability to once again compete at a high level.

Maybe it was simply a matter of timing. Braden Huff scored 18 points in just his second start of the season as Gonzaga averaged two regular-season losses to Saint Mary's, beating the 19th-ranked Gaels 58-51 in the West Coast Conference Tournament championship on Tuesday night.

The Bulldogs (25-8) secured the WCC's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament, though both teams were safely in the field regardless of the outcome. "We've had an inordinate amount of one-possession games," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "I think that's why we're such an interesting seed going into this NCAA Tournament. I think we were 350th in luck in Kenpom. We've had more banked 3s on us than I could ever, ever remember in my entire career."

"Whether it's law of averages coming through or just a little resiliency ... or maybe it's just desperation by some seniors who don't want this thing to end." The Bulldogs also got some measure of revenge for losing to the Gaels in last year's title game, which ended Gonzaga's run of four conference championships and 10 of 11. Gonzaga also extended its national record to 18 consecutive 25-win seasons.

Saint Mary's (28-5) had its seven-game winning streak stopped. The Gaels also had won 17 of 18 games.

"We've had a great year," Saint Mary's coach Randy Bennett said. "We did not play well tonight."



Gonzaga guard Khalif Battle (99) celebrates as he scores against Saint Mary's during the second half of an NCAA college basketball championship game in the West Coast Conference men's tournament in Las Vegas. (AP)

Khalif Battle scored 14 points for the Zags, Graham Ike added 11 and Ryan Nembhard had 10.

Mitchell Saxen led Saint Mary's with 20 points but scored only six after halftime. Two-time WCC Player of the Year Augustas Marciulionis finished with 12 points.

Saint Mary's was attempting to become the first team since San Diego in 1996-97 to beat Gonzaga three times in a season. But Gonzaga entered the game with the higher Kenpom rating, ninth to 22nd for the Gaels, and was a 3 1/2-point favorite at BetMGM Sportsbook.

"You've got to go through some hardships in order to win," Battle said. "We've been practicing for this moment. I think we were prepared more than ever going into this tournament, so I'm happy we were able to hoist the trophy."

Kellen Tynes had 13 points in Maine's 57-42 win against Vermont on Tuesday in a semifinal game of the America East Conference Tournament.

The third-seeded Black Bears (20-13) advance to the championship to face top-seeded Bryant on Saturday. Bryant beat Albany in the other semifinal on Tuesday night. Maine now has won three straight after losing four of five.

Tynes also contributed 13 rebounds, three steals, and three blocks for the Black Bears. AJ Lopez scored 12 points, going 5 of 12 from the floor, including 1 for 5 from 3-point range, and 1 for 4 from the line.

No. 2-seed Vermont (20-11, 1-1) was led by Ileri Ayo-Faleye, who posted 14 points, six rebounds and two blocks. Sam Alamutu added eight points and 21 rebounds for Vermont. Nick Fiorillo had seven points and six rebounds. The loss snapped the Catamounts' eight-game winning streak.

Kuwait squad complete as Al-Arabi players join training camp in Dubai

Al-Zanki replaces Ghannam



Head coach Pizzi directs the players during training session.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, March 12: The Kuwait national team is now at full strength as Al-Arabi players joined the squad at its training camp in Dubai, UAE, on Thursday evening. The team is gearing up for the crucial 2026 World Cup qualifier matches against Iraq and Oman, scheduled for March 20 and 25, respectively.

Al-Qadisiya players arrived at camp a day earlier after concluding their Gulf Champions League campaign in style, securing a spot in the final by defeating UAE's Al-Nasr 4-3 on penalties. Meanwhile, Al-Arabi players linked up with the squad follow-

ing the conclusion of their Asian Challenge Cup commitments.

In a late squad change, head coach Juan Pizzi has called up Ahmed Al-Zanki to replace Meshari Ghannam, who sustained an injury that rules him out of the upcoming matches. Ghannam underwent medical tests to assess his recovery timeline, with the final diagnosis confirming that he will require several days of treatment before returning to action.

The team will conclude its training session on Thursday evening before facing China in a friendly match on Friday. The fixture serves as a final test for Pizzi to evaluate his squad's readiness and reintegrate returning players ahead of their departure to Basra, Iraq, on March 18.

Kuwait's Consul General in the UAE, Khaled Al-Zaabi, visited the national team's training camp in Dubai, accompanied by Ayman Al-Husseini, head of the delegation and member of the Kuwait Football Federa-

tion's Board of Directors, along with Khaled Al-Farsi from the Kuwaiti Consulate.

Al-Zaabi encouraged the players to give their best effort in the upcoming World Cup qualifiers, emphasizing the embassy's commitment to supporting the team's preparations. In response, Al-Husseini expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti Embassy and Al-Zaabi for its assistance in ensuring a smooth and successful training camp.

Meanwhile, Oman faces a challenging schedule before meeting Kuwait. The team will first take on South Korea before returning to Kuwait for its March 25 qualifier.

Additionally, Oman is set to play a friendly against Sudan on Thursday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bousher. The match had been uncertain for several days, especially after Oman's planned friendly against Niger was canceled due to logistical issues preventing the opposing team's arrival.

Sabah Al-Ahmad Cooperative Society launches soccer tourney registration

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: The Sabah Al-Ahmad City Cooperative Society has announced the opening of registration for the fourth edition of its Ramadan Soccer Tournament, available for both adults and juniors. Registration began on Wednesday and will continue through to next Saturday. To participate, players must be shareholders or children of shareholders. Each team will consist of seven players, plus two substitute players.

Mohammed Khashman Al-Ajmi, the treasurer of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Cooperative Society, expressed that this year's Ramadan tournament will be more competitive than previous editions, anticipating a high level of participation. He also extended his gratitude to the chairman and members of the society for their ongoing efforts to enhance the community and their dedication to bringing joy



Mohammed Khashman Al-Ajmi

and serving the area's residents and shareholders.

Additionally, Al-Ajmi confirmed that the organizing committee has set aside valuable cash prizes for the first and second-place winners in both the adult and junior tournaments.

Al-Hilal and Al-Ahli secure last 8 spots

RIYADH, March 12: Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal booked its place in the AFC Champions League quarter-finals with a commanding 4-0 victory over Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor in the second leg of the Round of 16 at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Riyadh.

Hamad Al-Yami opened the scoring in the 31st minute, followed by a goal from Brazilian Malcom Oliveira in the 41st minute. Salem Al-Dawsari converted a penalty in the 51st minute, while Nasser Al-Dawsari sealed the win with a stoppage-time goal. Despite Pakhtakor's 1-0 first-leg win last Tuesday, Al-Hilal advanced with an aggregate victory.

Meanwhile, Al-Ahli also progressed to the quarter-finals after defeating Qatar's Al-Rayyan 2-0 in the second leg at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah. Algerian star Riyad Mahrez netted both goals in the 77th and 83rd minutes.

Al-Ahli had already secured a strong



Al-Hilal player celebrates after scoring against Pakhtakor.

position with a 3-1 victory in the first leg in Doha, ensuring its advancement with a 5-1 aggregate win.

Best of the Rest

Saint-Etienne fans banned: Saint-Etienne supporters have been banned by French authorities from traveling to Montpellier for this weekend's Ligue 1 game between the two relegation-threatened clubs because of a high risk of violence.

Montpellier sits rock bottom in the French league standings, with Saint-Etienne just one spot above in 17th place.

The French authorities said Saint-Etienne's travels are often marred by "public order disturbances due to the violent behavior of certain supporters or individuals claiming to be supporters of this team," and noted that some Montpellier fans are also prone to violence. (AP)

South African pledges to seek private finance for new stadiums

African soccer leader Patrice Motsepe re-elected

CAIRO, March 12, (AP): African soccer leader Patrice Motsepe was re-elected Wednesday and urged working with private financiers to help federations build national stadiums in countries where government budgets are tight.

The 54 member federations of the Confederation of African Football - 12 of whom currently cannot host national-team games in international competitions - elected Motsepe by acclaim unopposed to have a second four-year term.

Motsepe, a South African billionaire with mining interests, also renews his \$300,000-a-year position as a vice president at FIFA, whose president Gianni Infantino sat with Motsepe on stage Wednesday.

The owner of Mamelodi Sundowns, which will play in the FIFA Club World Cup in the United States in June, Motsepe has strong political connections as a brother-in-law of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Motsepe referred Wednesday to his talks with other heads of Afri-



In this file photo, Patrice Motsepe, the President of the Confederation of African Football, arrives for the 2022 soccer World Cup draw at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

can governments.

"Many of the heads of state I meet, they say to me," Motsepe told African soccer leaders, "Whatever money we have, we have got to pay back our loans."

We love football but we have to ask ourselves should we take the money to build a stadium or build a hospital or build a clinic or spend more on education."

"There is a love for football but

the support of the government is not as strong as it can be. And it is not because the governments don't love football," he said.

Motsepe said there are now only 12 CAF members, compared to 38 in recent years, which do not have stadiums certified for international games. Those include qualifiers for the World Cup and African Cup of Nations which must be played in neutral countries, often Morocco.

"But for us it is 12 too many," the CAF president said, promising to engage more with private financiers. "You cannot develop football in any country in Africa if the national teams and clubs do not play in front of their supporters."

Africa has a record nine guaranteed places at the first 48-team men's World Cup next year being hosted by the U.S., Canada and Mexico. At the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Morocco became the first African team ever to reach the semifinals.

Four African teams will play at the 32-team Club World Cup.

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PSG's Nuno Mendes sends a cross by Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain at Anfield in Liverpool, England. (AP)

Sports

Al-Qadsiya reaches Gulf Champions League final



Al-Qadsiya players led by Al-Mutawa celebrate after qualifying for the final.

Al-Mutawa turns back the clock

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 12: Al-Qadsiya secured its spot in the Gulf Champions League final after edging past UAE's Al-Nasr 4-3 on penalties.

The first leg saw Al-Qadsiya claim a narrow 1-0 victory, courtesy of a goal from Ismail Xavi. However, Al-Nasr bounced back in the return leg, with Matheus Oliveira and Samir Mimišević finding the net. Bader Al-Mutawa kept Al-Qadsiya's hopes alive by scoring its lone match goal.

Al-Qadsiya struggled in the first half, appearing disorganized and sluggish across all three lines. Its lack of movement allowed Al-Nasr to dictate the tempo, pressing forward with confidence. The visitors capitalized on this early dominance in the 16th minute when Oliveira headed in a well-delivered cross past goalkeeper Khaled Al-Rashidi.

Al-Nasr continued to threaten, creating multiple scoring chances, but managed to convert only one goal before the break.

In the second half, Al-Qadsiya's Montenegrin coach, Zeljko Petrovic, introduced Libyan professional Mohamed Soula and Eid Al-Rashidi in an attempt to shift the momentum. However, Al-Nasr remained in control and doubled its lead in the 56th minute through Mimišević.

With 20 minutes left, veteran captain Bader Al-Mutawa made a significant impact after coming off the bench. He reignited his team's chances by scoring a crucial goal in the 77th minute, pushing the match into extra time. Despite increased efforts from both sides, the deadlock remained, leading to a decisive penalty shootout.

In a tense conclusion, Al-Nasr missed three penalties, while Al-Qadsiya failed to convert two. Ultimately, the Kuwaiti club emerged victorious, sparking jubilant celebrations among its fans.

Al-Qadsiya now awaits the winner of the clash between Iraqi side Duhok and Saudi club Al-Ettifaq. The two-legged final is set for April 8 and 15.

Both teams deserved to go through: Luis Enrique

PSG ousts Liverpool from Champions League to join Barca, Bayern and Inter in quarterfinals

MADRID, March 12, (AP): Gianluigi Donnarumma came through and Paris Saint-Germain defeated Liverpool in a penalty shootout to join Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan in the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

PSG beat Liverpool 1-0 on the night to level the aggregate score at 1-1. Ousmane Dembélé scored 12 minutes into the second-leg match after a blunder by the Liverpool defense.

After extra time, Donnarumma stopped the penalty shots by Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones to secure his team a 4-1 shootout win. Desire Doue scored the winning spot kick for PSG.

"It does not matter if we deserve the win. Both teams deserved to go through," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "We were better in Paris and they were better here. My team showed great personality and character at Anfield."

The French league leader - seeking its first Champions League title - had lost at this stage in five of the past eight editions. It lost to Borussia Dortmund in last season's semifinals.

"It was the best game of football I have ever been involved in," Liverpool manager Arne Slot said. "It was an incredible performance, especially if you compare it with last week. We were creating chances and then we were 1-0 down. We ran out of luck after last week."

Barcelona cruised past Benfica with Raphinha scoring twice and Lamine Yamal once in a 3-1 win at home.

The Catalan club advanced 4-1 on aggregate score after last week's 1-0 victory and will play either Borussia Dortmund or Lille in the quarterfinals.

After a 3-0 first-leg win, Bayern Munich had no trouble advancing past German rival Bayer Leverkusen.

Bayern made it to the last eight a record 23 times in the Champions League era after a 2-0 win at Leverkusen to advance 5-0 on aggregate.

Inter moved on past Feyenoord with a 2-1 victory at San Siro to ad-



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski, top, heads the ball past Benfica's Florentino Luis during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between FC Barcelona and SL Benfica at the Lluis Companys Olympic Stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

vance 4-1 on aggregate.

Bayern and Inter will meet in the last eight.

A thrilling clash at Anfield saw chances come and go at both ends, with Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson pulling off a string of saves to deny PSG, and with Liverpool substitute Jarell Quansah hitting the post in the second half.

Dembélé took advantage of mix up between Ibrahima Konate and Alisson to roll the ball into the empty net for the only goal of the game.

Premier League leader Liverpool, which did not make it to the Champions League last season, won the first leg 1-0 through Harvey Elliott's late goal in Paris last week.

Raphinha's double made him the leading scorer in the Champions League this season with 11 goals. He had scored the lone goal last week in Lisbon.

The Brazil forward put Barcelona ahead in the 11th, then Yamal added to the lead in the 27th before assist-

ing in Raphinha's second goal in the 42nd to become the youngest player to score and assist in a Champions League match at 17 years, 241 days.

"My teammates make things much easier for me," Yamal said. "It was a good goal but sometimes these things come off and sometimes they don't. For the assist, I tried to shoot and Raphinha turned it into a goal."

Nicolás Otamendi scored for Benfica in the 13th to become the third-oldest scorer in a Champions League knockout game at the age of 37 years, 27 days, according to UEFA. Yamal's goal meant he became the second-youngest.

Harry Kane scored his 10th Champions League goal of the season and set up another as Bayern Munich cruised into the quarterfinals.

Leverkusen never looked likely to overturn the three-goal deficit from the first leg, even before Kane bundled in the ball at a free kick in the 52nd after Leverkusen's Patrik Schick misjudged an attempted

clearance.

Kane set up Alphonso Davies for Bayern's second goal with a flicked cross in the 71st as the all-German rivalry became a one-sided contest. Bayern could have scored more as Jamal Musiala hit the crossbar with one shot and the post with another.

A goal at the start of each half saw Inter easily advance, with Marcus Thuram scoring a stunning eighth-minute opener. The Inter forward received the ball midway inside the Feyenoord half and then weaved his way into the area before unleashing a powerful effort into the top right corner.

Jakub Moder leveled from the penalty spot shortly before halftime after being tripped by Hakan Çalhanoğlu.

Inter restored its advantage on the night six minutes into the second half with a penalty of its own, which Çalhanoğlu converted after Mehdi Taremi was fouled by Thomas Beelen right in the corner of the area.

Basque duo to duke it out in Europa League

MADRID, March 12, (Xinhua): Athletic Club Bilbao faces Roma in the San Mames Stadium on Thursday night knowing it has to overturn a 2-1 first leg defeat if it wants to keep alive the dream of playing May's Europa League final in its home ground.

The Basque side looked to have secured a 1-1 draw in the Olympic Stadium in Rome after an intense first leg, only for a lapse in concentration to allow Eldor Shomurodov to score with the last kick of the game and change the complexion of the tie.

Last Thursday's game also came at a cost to Athletic, who lost Spain international defender Dani Vivian to a muscle injury, while Yeray Alvarez was sent off five minutes from time.

There is still a big doubt over the fitness of top-scorer, Oihan Sancet, who missed the first leg and Sunday's 1-1 draw at home to Mallorca with a hamstring problem. If Sancet recovers it will be a huge boost to coach Ernesto Valverde, but if not, Alex Berenguer or Unai Gomez will come into the side, behind either Gorka Guruzeta or Maroan Sannadi in attack.

The match is sold out, with 3,000 fans travelling from Italy meaning a security cordon will be around San Mames to try and avoid any incidents.

Real Sociedad travels to Manchester on Thursday after a 1-1 draw at home to Manchester United a week ago.

Last week's tie saw United play better in the first half, while Real Sociedad improved after the break and could have taken a narrow win.

The game comes in the wake of comments made by United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe criticizing several of the players in the squad and also following the announcement that the club will start work on building a 100,000-capacity stadium to replace Old Trafford.

Luka Sucic is a doubt for Real Sociedad, who will need to improve on its weekend defeat to Sevilla, while Kobbie Mainoo, Jonny Evans and Lisandro Martinez are out for the home side, who also have doubts over Harry Maguire and Manuel Ugarte.

Selection trials to resume

WFI suspension revoked by India's sports ministry

NEW DELHI, March 12, (Xinhua): India's federal ministry of sports revoked the suspension imposed on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) after over 14 months, state-run broadcaster - All India Radio (AIR) said.

The move will pave the way for the conduct of domestic tournaments and the selection of national players for international tournaments.

"The sports ministry has lifted the suspension on the WFI, ending months of uncertainty surrounding the sport," the broadcaster said. "The decision will pave the way for the resumption of activities, including selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship in Amman, Jordan." According to the broadcaster, the ministry has also set guidelines for the WFI to follow.

"It must ensure that selections for all international events are conducted fairly, transparently, and in compliance with the sports code, United World Wrestling regulations, and other official directives," AIR said. "Additionally, the ministry instructed the federation to maintain a balance of power among its elected office-bearers and to distance itself from suspended or terminated officials." The ministry on December 24, 2023 had suspended the then newly elected WFI led by Sanjay Singh for multiple violations, including the hasty announcement of the Under-15 (U-15) and Under-20 (U-20) national championships. Sanjay Singh was elected the new chief of the WFI on December 21, 2023 but the sports ministry then felt that the elected body appeared to be in complete control of former office bearers in complete disregard to the sports code.

Singh is considered a loyalist of former WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh who had to step aside following allegations of harassment from female wrestlers, a charge he outrightly denies.

Norway's lofty reputation shaken

Cheating scandal shocks ski jumping, topples champions

GENEVA, March 12, (AP): Sign stealing in baseball. Match fixing in soccer. Doping allegations in swimming. Now ski jumping has its own scandal.

Cheating by Norway team officials manipulating ski suits has shaken a national reputation for fair play and high-minded principles at their home Nordic world championships, where the host team dominated the medal table.

Two Olympic gold medalists, Marius Lindvik and Johann André Forfang, were disqualified from the large hill event in Trondheim days after Lindvik soared to become world champion on the normal hill.

Though both athletes were backed by the Norwegian team insisting they knew nothing about deliberately altered ski suits, their head coach and equipment manager confessed and were suspended.

The scandal has shocked the ski jumping world, raising questions about how widespread this practice is, and tarnished Norway's standing for honesty in sports.

What has emerged involves team officials manipulating pre-approved and microchipped suits to increase their size and improve aerodynamics to help athletes fly further. It was revealed in footage secretly filmed from behind a curtain then sent by a whistle blower to international media. An official from the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS) said the illegal alterations were only subsequently confirmed by tearing apart the seams of the croch area on the offending Norwegian ski suits.

The scandal has unfolded in Norway which always scores high in Transparency International's anti-corruption index, tied for fifth in the most recent global ranking.

Norwegian sports officials also led on controversial issues by taking public positions in 2022 in refusing to host Russian athletes days after the full invasion of Ukraine and challenging soccer World Cup host Qatar on human rights.

The same Norwegian ski federation that helped push

FIS to exclude Russians three years ago now finds its staff and star athletes under investigation by the Switzerland-based governing body.

"The only thing that matters for FIS is to leave this process 100% convinced that the sport is free from any form of manipulation," its secretary general Michel Vion said in a statement Tuesday.

Athletes and officials from across the world left Trondheim on Sunday sad and disappointed. FIS race director for men's ski jumping, Sandro Pertile, told The Associated Press in an interview.

"Norway is a country that we all know as a leader in human rights, in equality, integration. I cannot believe that there is a (cheating) system," Pertile said in an online call Tuesday, suggesting there was "a few individuals that went really far over the limits." If the infractions seemed obscure and technical to non-fans, the breach of trust was severe: "This action was somehow killing our principles, our style, our joy for our discipline," Pertile said.



Marius Lindvik of Norway celebrates after winning the gold medal in the ski jumping men's normal hill HS102 event at the Nordic World Ski Championships in Trondheim, Norway. (AP)