

Data showed that the US consumer price index rose less than

Lower inflation provides more room for the US Federal

expected last month. However, this improvement is likely to be

temporary, given the impact of tight import tariffs, which are ex-

Reserve to cut interest rates. Non-yielding gold tends to re-

**Continued on Page 5** 

pected to raise the cost of most goods in the coming months.

main resilient amid lower interest rates.

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emergency number 112

Trade war fuels safe-haven demand

Gold glows brighter in Kuwait

at \$2,945.70.

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Gold prices rose as demand for the yellow metal increased amid concerns over tariffs and the ongoing trade war between the US and several countries, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Meanwhile, lower-than-expected US inflation data provided additional support by reinforcing expectations of interest rate cuts.

By 3:50 am Kuwait time, spot gold was up 0.2 percent at \$2,938.24 per ounce, while US gold futures remained steady

## **Cabinet sets Eid al-Fitr holiday schedule**

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): The Council of Ministers convened its weekly meeting today, Thursday, under the chairmanship of Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

During the session, the Council approved a threeday holiday for all ministries, government agencies, public bodies, and institutions on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, provided that the first day of Eid falls on Sunday, March 30, 2025. In this case, official work will resume on Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

However, if Eid al-Fitr is confirmed to begin on

Monday, March 31, 2025, a five-day holiday will be observed. The break will commence on Sunday, March 30, 2025, marking the completion of Ramadan, followed by a holiday on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Work will then resume on Sunday, April 6, 2025.

For institutions with essential services or a special nature of work, their holiday schedule will be determined by the relevant authorities, ensuring the continuity of public services and the public interest.

## **KUWAIT URGES VIGILANCE AS CELEBRATIONS BRING CHILDREN TO STREETS**



Photo by Samer Shiqer Festive Girgean treats in a kaleidoscope of colors, adding sweetness to the Ramadan celebration

# **Rising prices sour Girgean festivities**

Mol enhances traffic controls

By Najeh Bilal and Marwa Al-Bahrawi Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Girgean is a** celebration that takes place in Gulf countries in the middle of the holy month of Ramadan every year.

This occasion brings joy to children and adults alike, as children go door to door to receive different kinds of sweets.

The newspaper's staff conducted a market tour to look into the prices, during which a number of citizens con-firmed that the prices of Girgean goods this year rose significantly compared to last year.

Market and consumer association officials attributed the 30 percent increase in the prices of Girgean goods this year to the rise of prices of chocolates and sweets in the producing countries

Mohammad Al-Enezi, a citizen, called on regulatory authorities to monitor prices of Girgean goods, as they have risen significantly this year. "Despite the fact that the prices of sweets, chocolates and nuts were relatively stable about a month before Ramadan, merchants often exploit such an occasion to raise prices and achieve high profits,' he asserted.

Umm Safaa agrees with this opinion, stressing there is indeed a clear exaggeration in the prices of Girgean goods this year. She disclosed that the price of a basket containing 10 bags of goods -- supposedly the finest chocolates and sweets -- increased from KD28 during the Girgean season last year to KD 35 this season, while a basket containing 15 bags has reached KD48, compared to KD39 last

'No citizenship for unjust claimants'

**Nationality Law review in progress: Acting PM** 

She pointed out that some inexpensive types are unsafe for children's health, as they use colorful candy and poorquality packaging. She called on officials from consumer associations and supermarkets to put an end to the excessive hike of Girgean prices.

After taking a quick look at the prices, citizen Shafi Al-Saidi said he abandoned the idea of buying Girgean directly from the markets; indicating that he would rather buy Girgean products online, where the prices are lower by about 20 percent.

He expressed dissatisfaction over the high prices, stating that some stores sell medium-quality "popular" twokilogram bags of mixed nuts for KD7, even though the price last year was not more than KD5.

Bu Ibrahim, a sales manager at a shopping center, pointed out that the rise in Girgean prices is an inevitable result of the rising prices of various types of sweets, chocolates and nuts in the producing countries. "Nevertheless, some types of Girgean products are reasonably priced and are suitable for those with limited income, while those with refined taste prefer the finest types of nuts, candy and chocolate; and are also interested in purchasing these products in luxurious boxes and various packaging," he explained. He stated that prices have increased by 20 to 30 percent

depending on the country of origin, especially the French products that are among the finest, indicating a mediumsized packet of French chocolate can cost up to KD60.

He said the demand for Girgean products usually increases after the third week of Ramadan each year. He pointed out that shipping, transportation and packaging costs have increased as well, in addition to the price increase in the sugar product used in manufacturing the sweets.

#### **Continued on Page 5**

#### **Ramadan Timings**

Iftar	Friday	.17:56
Imsak	Saturday	.04:38
Iftar	Saturday	.17:57
Imsak	Sunday	.04:37

### campaign for struggling citizens **By Fares Al-Abdan**

Kuwait rolls out third debt relief

#### Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Ministry of Social Affairs has announced that the third national campaign to pay off the debts of citizens will start on Friday and will continue for a month, in cooperation with charitable societies and charities and under the direct supervision of the ministry to ensure the highest standards of integrity, transparency and justice in the distribution of aid.

In a press statement, the ministry revealed that this campaign is in compliance with the directive of the wise political leadership and a continuation of the State's approach in supporting struggling citizens. It affirmed that it is keen on establishing a mechanism to guarantee the aid reaches the rightful beneficiaries through clear regulations and standards, which will be applied in coordination with the authorized charitable societies and charities

It explained that it will directly supervise the implementation of the campaign, adding that an electronic monitoring system has been adopted to closely monitor the collection and disbursement of donations to ensure compliance with the regulations.

It stated that the charitable societies will collect donations through their own links, while adhering to strict standards in identifying beneficiaries to ensure fair distribution; as it is required that the beneficiary is a Kuwaiti citizen

who cannot afford to pay non-criminal financial obligations, with official documents proving his inability to pay.

The ministry added that all contributions will be handed over to the concerned authorities to pay the debts like the Civil Enforcement Department at the Ministry of Justice for those subject to executive procedures such as travel ban, vehicle seizure and salary cut, or through the General Department for the Implementation of Criminal Judgments at the Ministry of Interior for citizens in correctional institutions in order to make sure that legal procedures are implemented as per the highest level of transparency.

It also stressed that registration for the campaign will be electronic only through the 'Central Aid Platform' and no visitors will be received by the ministry, charitable societies or charities, in compliance with the unified automated system that aims to achieve justice and prevent any violation or unjustified exception.

It affirmed setting the criteria for paying debts, as Sharia provisions will be adhered to in the payment proce-dures, with a detailed study of the financial status of each beneficiary to ensure their eligibility for assistance. It added that a ceiling has been set for the payment amount not to exceed KD20,000; so that the largest possible number of eligible citizens could benefit from the campaign

**Continued on Page 5** 

## **Kuwait strengthens economic** ties with UK and Airbus leader



KUNA photo Kuwait's Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noora Al-Fassam with UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis.

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noora Al-Fassam discussed Wednesday economic cooperation with UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis and President of Airbus in Af-rica and Middle East Gabriel Semelas.

During the meeting, they also tackled a set of economic issues that contribute to achieving Kuwait's development goals during the coming period, the Ministry of Finance said in a press release.

#### **By Munif Naif**

#### Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and Interior Ministry has stressed that the Kuwaiti citizenship issue is thorny and length, affirming that all articles of the Nationality Law will be reviewed, including the amendments to Article Five.

In a statement during his visit to Al-Zawawi Diwaniya on Thursday, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef explained that any decision related to Kuwaiti citizenship will be made carefully. He said everything will happen in due time and in a just manner, especially for those who have acquired rights that are not theirs.

He asserted "Kuwait has gone through an exceptional phase that will not be repeated. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was committed to amend the national identity card."

WASHINGTON, March 13, (AP):

Kuwait has released a group of American prisoners, including veterans and military contractors

jailed for years on drug-related

charges, in a move seen as a gesture

of goodwill between two allies, a

representative for the detainees told

The release follows a recent visit

The Associated Press.

He pointed out that the security situation in the country is not a coincidence, as it is rather the result of interference by individuals who are outside the Kuwaiti society; hence, the need for intensified efforts to maintain national security and stability.

Regarding the number of Bedouns in the country. Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef said "unfortunately, the recorded numbers are not the actual figures. Those whose citizenship has been revoked are considered Bedouns until a decision is made. The Central Agency for Remedying the Situation of Illegal Residents (CARIRS) is currently handling the affairs of Bedouns and there is a new law for them, but I do not know when it will be issued. Some Bedouns have presented American and Canadian passports, as well as those from Arab countries. Their number is approximately 200. Ask the Ministry of Justice how many people sold their homes and properties for fear of being exposed, but I have no proof. I do not want to wrong anyone. Citizenship forgers are being exposed quickly and this work is ongoing. If one is not exposed today, he will be exposed tomorrow.

#### **Continued on Page 5**

#### Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait has welcomed the Jeddah-hosted US-Ukraine talks. A foreign ministry statement extolled Saudi efforts in this regard, which aim at reaching a political settlement for the Russia-Ukraine conflict, underlining the State of Kuwait's belief and support for resolving such crises in peaceful manners.

The talks came upon directives of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, and attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in addition to Ukraine's Head of the Office of the President Andriy Yermak, Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrii Sybiha, and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, along with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has denied reports on social media regarding the reintroduction of the entry visa requirement for Kuwaiti citizens traveling to Iran, reports Al-Seyassah daily

The embassy confirmed that the suspension of the visa requirement continues without interruption, with renewals every six months, as long as the stay in Iran does not exceed 15 days.

It also stated that the embassy issues annual multiple-entry visas to Kuwaiti citizens who make consecutive trips to Iranian cities.



ikh Mohammad **Al-Khalid** welcomes Ramadan well-wishers at **Dar Moza** 



**Crown Prince** marks Ramadan with visit to Jabriya Diwaniya



Savor the Flavor of **Mexico: Traditional Barbacoa Recipe** 

This image provided by Jonathan Franks shows him with six American prisoners detained by Kuwait as they pose for a photo at Kuwait International Airport Wednesday, March 12, 2025, before flying home to the United States. Franks is a private consultant who helped work for their release. (AP)

to the region by Adam Boehler, secure their release. the Trump administration's top **Continued on Page 5** hostage envoy, and comes amid a

'Gesture of goodwill between allies' **Kuwait frees group of jailed Americans** 

continued U.S. government push

to bring home American citizens

Six of the newly freed prisoners

were accompanied on a flight from

Kuwait to New York by Jonathan

Franks, a private consultant who

works on cases involving Ameri-

can hostages and detainees and

who had been in the country to help

jailed in foreign countries.

NO. 18847 **16 PAGES** 

Weather

#### **Prayer Timings** Fajr ...... 04:41 ..... 15:22 Asr. Sunrise .. 06:00 Maghrib .. 17:55 Zohr ..... 11:58 Isha ..... 19:11



Expected weather for next 24 hrs: By Day: Warm with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light

to moderate n light variable v 08-28 km/h.			Bubyan Jahra Failaka Island	27 27 28	13 16 17
Station	Max Exp	<b>Min Rec</b>	Salmiyah	25	19
Kuwait City	27	17	Ahmadi	24	13
Kuwait Airport	26	15	Jal Aliyah	25	14
Abdaly	27	14	Nuwaisib	27	15

## Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid welcomes Ramadan well-wishers at Dar Moza



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and other members of royal family



Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah Ahmed Al-Jarallah greets Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Sabah.



Sheikh Ahmad Jaber Al-Abdullah and Bahrain Ambassador Salah Al-Maliki.



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid and Qatar ambassador.

stability



Saudi ambassador extends greetings.



Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Chinese ambassador and other guests Cheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Sabah warmly welcomed Ramadan



Sheikh Mubarak Al-Jaber and other members of royal family.

All those present at the event exchanged greetings on the occasion of



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf.

2

 $m{J}$ well-wishers at Dar Moza in Qortuba, led by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah along with a number of Royal Family members, officials, public figures and friends.

the holv month of Ramadan.

They implored Allah Almighty to make this a month of goodness, mercy, peace and blessings and to return it to the Islamic nation with security and

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid expressed his gratitude to everyone for their kind sentiments, praying to Allah to accept everyone's good deeds and to make Ramadan a month of goodness and blessings for everyone.

## **EU values Kuwait as close**, reliable friend – Koistinen

#### You can count on us: EU Ambassador

#### **By Fares Al-Abdan**

#### Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Kuwait Anne Koistinen said that "in these difficult times around the world, the EU values Kuwait as a close and reliable friend. Our message to the Kuwaiti leadership and government is very clear: you can count on the EU."

She affirmed "this year is very important for our relations, as Kuwait will host the next EU-GCC ministerial meeting later this year.'

Koistinen made the statement during the Ramadan Ghabqa held at her home recently. She stated "I take this opportunity to congratulate Kuwait on assuming the rotating presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for 2025. The EU is keen on working with Kuwait to strengthen relations with the GCC during its rotating presidency.

She pointed out that the EU and Kuwait enjoy a strong friendship

based on shared interests, including Kuwait's vocal support for multilateralism and the principles of good international cooperation. She added that the EU

highly appreciates Kuwait's prudent and moderate positions, and believes there is much potential. "The positive impact of our relations is also evident, as there is much we can do together at

the bilateral, regional and international levels,' she stressed.

She asserted that the EU and Kuwait are strong

humanitarian actors supporting vulnerable communities around the world, strengthening the United Nations (UN) system and multilateral organizations, and cooperating with them.

She confirmed that "Kuwait is a key partner for the EU in the humanitarian and development fields."She said Director General of the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Maciej Popowski visited Kuwait last month, during which he agreed with Kuwaiti officials to continue working together on humanitarian crises and strengthening multilateralism.

She said the EU is Kuwait's second largest trading partner, "reflecting our strong economic ties.

She also emphasized that "Gaza and Ukraine continue to remind all of us about the international community's need for an effective multilateral system based on universal rules and values that are respected by everyone. Never has respect for the UN Charter, the rules-based international order, and international law been more at stake than now.

#### Ministry grappling with staff shortage

### MoE in disarray as senior Education official resigns

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The acting director of Educational Affairs Department in the Capital Educational District submitted his retirement application effective March 31, 2025; reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The acting director also oversees the intermediate, primary and kindergarten levels.

Sources from the educational sector revealed that this move comes at a critical time, as the Ministry of Education is already grappling with a growing number of vacancies in supervisory positions.

Concerns have been raised that the ongoing departure of experienced educational officials. coupled with the failure to appoint suitable replacements, could lead to administrative disruptions that might affect the quality of education. Many supervisory positions in the ministry, educational districts and school administrations are currently being managed on a temporary assignment basis, sources disclosed.

Sources warned that failure to permanently fill up these positions could undermine the educational process and the effectiveness of administrative operations in schools and educational districts. They called for urgent action to fill these vacancies and address the ongoing loss of qualified personnel to maintain stability and guarantee the continued progress of the educational system.

#### 

Camping ends March 15: Chairman of the Spring Camps Committee at Kuwait Municipality Faisal Al-Otaibi has announced that the spring camping season, which started on Nov 15, 2024 will end on March 15, 2025; reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Otaibi affirmed that the Municipality will enforce the regulations immediately after the camping season concludes. He clarified that there has been no extension of the camping period to date, and an extension requires approval from the Environment Public Authority (EPA). "The Municipality remains committed to the specified end date for the camping season,' he asserted.

He urged camp owners to cooperate with the Municipality by removing their campsites on or before March 15 and ensure the sites are thoroughly cleaned to protect the natural environment and wildlife.

It is worth noting that the Municipality has implemented a comprehensive plan throughout the season to raise awareness among spring camp owners.



Minister of Social Affairs, Family Affairs and Childhood Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah with Chinese officials

## Kuwait, China ministers discuss cooperation in social protection

NEW YORK, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family Affairs and Childhood Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah praised the depth of friendly relations with China in the areas of social protection and family development.

Cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of China kept growing over the past 55 years, she noted on Wednesday during her meeting with Huang Xiaowei - a Chi-nese Minister and Vice Chairperson of the National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW) of the State Council.

The meeting, held on the sidelines of the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York, discussed ways of empowering women and promoting the social services being provided to families.

Dr. Al-Huwailah briefed Huang on Kuwait's social policies aiming to support women and children, promote family stability, achieve social justice and enhance coherence of the society.



Minister of Social Affairs, Family Affairs and Childhood Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah is presented a memento.

Both sides expressed desire to promote cooperation and exchange experiences in the area of social protection, women empowerment and vocational training.

Koistinen

## LOCAL



The Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah addresses the unit during his visit to the 'Mubarak Duty' force.



Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah shakes hands with the soldiers.



KUNA photos Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah offers prayers at the

military camp.

## **Defense minister hails high morale of armed forces**

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): The Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah, paid a visit to the "Mubarak Duty" force in the northern region on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. He was accompanied by Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with several senior military officials.

According to a statement released by the Ministry of Defense on Wednesday, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah commenced his visit by receiving a detailed briefing from the task force commander regarding the operational readiness of the force. Following the briefing, he joined the military personnel in an iftar banquet, sharing in the spirit of Ramadan.

ing in the spirit of Ramadan. During the visit, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah conveyed greetings and best wishes from His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, on the advent of Ramadan.

Expressing his gratitude and pride, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah commended the dedica-

tion and high morale of the armed forces. He acknowledged their relentless efforts and sacrifices in safeguarding the nation's security, stability, and territorial integrity.

stability, and territorial integrity. Concluding his visit, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah urged the land forces to maintain their commitment to duty and continue their service to the homeland. He prayed for the continued safety and prosperity of Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, wishing that Ramadan brings peace and blessings to the nation and its people.

# Father gets right to see his child overnight despite losing custody

Underage driver's dad insults Kuwaiti in traffic row

h Al Hemenal

munication between nonents and their shildre

eliwaniya 🍞 چيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Racism ... eradicate disease in the heart before the mind

"RACISM is a disease that must be treated in the heart before the mind. No matter how high we rise in social circles, and obtain hundreds of certificates, positions and money, we will remain ignorant, and suffer from the disease of separation and discrimination between individuals in our society, and we will destroy this society, because we have not been able to treat our hearts that are sick from malicious diseases, such as racism," Kuwaiti author Imad Khamis

Al-Aqab wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"If our educational attainment is modest, we are still statesmen who dream of civilizational and scientific progress. We

are people of culture, insight and

awareness of what this progress will bring us in terms of unifying and building society, but acquiring knowledge alone will not be enough if our hearts are filled with hatred and discrimination between individuals.

"Our true religion has ordered us to educate ourselves, so we learn justice and tolerance, and not to differentiate between people based on skin color, race, religion, gender or any other factors. If our pure and sound hearts teach us the teachings of this true religion, we will live in a coexisting, civilized and generous society.

"So, we have to put hatred and contempt behind us, and focus on our true religion that calls us to be loving brothers, and we are responsible for our religious and cultural heritage. We have to preserve it and live according to its teachings.

"In ancient times, racism existed in the neighborhoods of tribes and nationalities, and today racism is still present in some of our societies. Discrimination between people is still cancerous in some countries, and politicians still exploit these ideas to pressure people's feelings, and to make them struggle with themselves.

"We are captive to old ideas, prejudice and discrimination, and there is no reason to use the factors of racism and discrimination in them. Racism also causes many social problems, such as exclusion and labor discrimination, poverty and lack of social solidarity, as well as many health and mental problems, and therefore, it is very important to address racism quickly and effectively.

"Racism is a disease that must be eradicated in the heart before the mind, and no matter what the educational attainment of any person, we must remember that we are part of one community, and that we are responsible for unifying and building it, based on the teachings of our religion and our human values. from those who call for racism and the division of the people."

#### Also :

"In reality, there are many political interests and players whose mission is to cloud the atmosphere, tarnish the reputation of the transitional government, the era of change, and the administration of the new Syria," Kuwaiti author **Tareq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Definitely, this chaos, both internally and externally, is driven by the interests of players and those who sabotage the political, social, economic and administrative processes during the transitional period. This is intended to halt the wheel of development and ensure a dignified life for the brotherly Syrian people, following the convergence of the people's interests, their welcome of change, and the triumph of their revolution over the regime that has passed away. This comes after all this international support and recognition of the new era in Syria, both Arab and western.

"The success of the new political regime in quelling hotbeds of tension and thwarting coup attempts by outlaws and the new political authority is due to their reliance on a worn-out and criminal remnant, backed by foreign supporters who have interests with the former regime and others who have interests with the enemy of the Syrian nation and people.

"Hence, we see the sinful role of those who tamper with the interests of the brotherly Syrian people, obstructing the process of reform and democratic change, and rallying the people's sects around their new regime and government. However, there are signs of a rallying of all positions and parties from various Syrian factions, representing the strength of national will, to support the decisions of their new transitional government to impose order and stability across the Arab world in sisterly Syria.

"The Arab nation's rallying today around the new Syrian regime, following its return to the fold of the Arab world, completes the process of supporting the supreme Arab interests . The Syrian people are a latent force, possessing vast and diverse capabilities, which the Arab nation needs at this important and sensitive time. This will enable them to utilize their strength and will in their honorable political and social positions to serve the causes of the nation and the region, following the demise of the 'incubus' of the defunct regime, its aides, and those who support it from within and without.

"We wish our sisterly Syria, its people, and its young, new government the return of peace, stability and prosperity after the tampering of the 'tamperers' and haters, and their supporters, both from within and without was extinguished. "May Allah protect Syria and its people."



#### By Jaber AI-Hamoud AI-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: In a first-of-its-kind legal precedent in child visitation cases, the Family Court's Ja'afari Circuit ruled that a father has the right to visit his daughter and have her stay overnight at his residence, despite her being in

her mother's custody. This ruling marks an exception to the existing Ja'afari law, which typically prohibits a child from spending the night with a non-custodial parent.

the night with a non-custodial parent. Lawyer Hawra Al-Habib, who represented the father, explained that the legal provision prohibiting a child from spending the night with a non-custodial parent applies only to children who are below the age at which they can make their own decisions. It does not apply to children who have surpassed that age. Even if the children do not choose to spend the night with the non-custodial parent after reaching the age of choice, it does not mean that the other parent is

deprived of the right to have their child spend the night at their home. She stressed the importance of this right in strengthening family relationships and communication between parents and their children.

In its ruling, the court affirmed that the father has the right to see his daughter on the dates set by the court, emphasizing that this decision promotes empathy, family harmony, and kinship ties in a manner that is in line with the child's best interests and complies with the law.

Accordingly, the court granted the father's request, allowing him the right to visit his daughter and spend the night at his residence. The court also ordered the complainant to pay the expenses and lawyer fees, in accordance with Article 119/1 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

#### 

**Insulted in traffic brawl:** A citizen has lodged a complaint at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential Area police station, indicating that an elderly man insulted him, reports Al-Anba daily.

The complainant told police that a collision occurred between his vehicle and a juvenile's car in the same area. The juvenile asked him to wait until his father arrived to handle the situation and repair the vehicle, suggesting that this will prevent any issues when police officers arrived, as the juvenile did not have a driver's license. The complainant said "given the young age of the driver, I agreed to wait. Shortly afterward, the juvenile's elderly father arrived. Instead of acknowledging his mistake for allowing the child to drive, he insulted and defamed me."

As a result, a case of insult and slander was filed alongside the collision report. The juvenile was issued a citation for driving without a license and referred to the Juvenile Prosecution Office.

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#### Iraq official visits Kuwait

## Kuwait FM receives message from his Iranian counterpart



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives message from Iranian counterpart delivered by the Iranian ambassador.



KUNA photos Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives the Iraq Foreign Ministry undersecretary. KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Wednesday a written message from his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi.

The message, delivered by Iran's Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji during his visit to the Foreign Ministry headquarters, focused on the close bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and ways to strengthen and develop cooperation in various fields.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Wednesday Undersecretary of Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Relations Ambassador Mohammad Bahr Al Uloom and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of their official visit to Kuwait.

During the meeting, also attended by Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, they discussed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to enhance cooperation in various fields.

They also touched upon the latest regional and international developments of common interest. "May Allah protect our country

- Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh





#### Educators argue it favors Science over other core subjects

## Science subject exclusion from last period sparks controversy

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The circular issued by acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Mansour Al-Dhafiri stating that Science should not be included in the last period of the school day for the 2025/2026 academic year has sparked various reactions in the educational field.

The circular, issued on March 10, was addressed to

the directors general of educational districts and the Religious Education Department. This is in response to the General Technical Guidance for Science, which stated the nature of the Science subject requires mental concentration and active student attendance that may not be possible in the last period of the school day.

However, the decision was met with criticism from teachers and educators, some of which uploaded on the X platform. Some considered it discriminatory -in favor of Science at the expense of other subjects; questioning the fate of other subjects like Arabic, Mathematics and English that also require high mental concentration.

Some believe the decision may be related to the issue of teachers leaving early after the implementation of the fingerprint system. Critics think that prohibiting the teaching of Science in the last period could give Science teachers a chance to leave before the rush hour, at the expense of their colleagues in other disciplines. On the other hand, teachers from other disciplines demanded that the decision include all subjects or that the last period be redistributed to the school administration or allocated for extracurricular activities; thus, ensuring fairness among all subjects.

Some educators said the decision could negatively affect the distribution of the school schedule, as it could lead to the continued overloading of other subjects in the last period, which could harm the students' performance in these subjects.

# **KFAED** signs USD 2.1mn deal to aid displaced families in Yemen

#### Kuwait Fund strengthens ties with UNHCR

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed Thursday a deal with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), offering USD 2.1 million in support of housing rehabilitation and maintenance for the displaced people in Yemen.

The project targets returning internally displaced persons and supporting the self-reliance of returning families by providing them with the necessary materials, equipment and labor costs to rehabilitate their homes damaged by the ongoing conflict in Yemen, KFAED said in a press release.

The number of direct beneficiaries of the project activities is estimated at about 670 families.

Acting Director General of KFAED Waleed Al-Bahar said that the deal reflected Kuwait's commitment to stand by the Yemeni people, who are facing harsh living conditions amid the humanitarian crisis due to war and economic instability.

For her part, UNHCR Representative to Kuwait Nisreen Rubaian explained that Yemen remains one of the world's most complex humanitarian crises, with over four million people displaced due to ongoing conflict and economic in-

stability.

She added that approximately 6.7 million people, 40 percent of whom are internally displaced, lack adequate housing, pointing out that many returnees face difficult living conditions in damaged or destroyed homes, exposing them to protection risks and further displacement.

The grant is the eighth contribution of its kind between the two parties in the field of humanitarian support, as Kuwait Fund has previously provided about USD 24 million to UNHCR since 2016 to finance seven projects.

KFAED Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar and UNHCR Representative to Kuwait Nisreen Rubaian signed the grant agreement.



KUNA photo

#### Namaa Charity prepared and served 1,800 iftar meals to worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. **Kuwait's initiatives revive Ramadan spirit**

## Namaa Charity delivers iftar meals to 1,800 worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque

RAMALLAH, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Namaa Charity Foundation implemented an iftar project in Jerusalem, distributing iftar meals to 1,800 worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound over several days, in support of the steadfastness of the people of Jerusalem in the face of daily Israeli challenges.

The Director of Namaa Charity's Relief Department, Khaled Mubarak Al-Shammari, stated that the project was not merely a humanitarian act but rather a message of support and love for the resilience of the people of Jerusalem and an affirmation of the status of Al-Aqsa Mosque. social solidarity, encourage worship at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and revive the Ramadan atmosphere in the blessed city."

Al-Shammari explained that the iftar project aims to enhance the spirit of love and brotherhood among Muslims by providing food support to fasting worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque, especially in light of the difficult economic conditions faced by the people of Jerusalem.

He pointed out that the project aims to support worshippers in the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque by providing them with iftar meals during Ramadan nights, in appreciation of their steadfastness and devotion to the blessed mosque. It also contributes to creating a unique Ramadan atmosphere that strengthens the sense of belonging and spiritual closeness in the holy city, especially during the holy month. vides them with moral support to face the daily challenges imposed by the occupation and the high cost of living.

Al-Shammari stressed that Kuwait places great importance on the Palestinian cause at all levels, including humanitarian and relief efforts, as charitable institutions work to provide food, educational, and medical support to enhance the resilience of the Palestinian people, especially those in Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem is not just a city but a symbol of pride and steadfastness, and it is our responsibility to stand by its people in every way possible," he affirmed.



Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development signs deal to support displaced people in Yemen.



The Kuwaiti diving team removes abandoned fishing nets in Bnaider.

#### **Rare hawksbill turtle rescued**

## Kuwait Dive Team removes 3 tons of abandoned nets from southern sea

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): The Kuwait Dive Team, affiliated with the Voluntary Environmental Foundation, successfully removed three tons of abandoned fishing nets from the southern Kuwaiti sea, in Bnaider.

The team also rescued stranded marine creatures, including a rare hawksbill turtle. The abandoned nets were delivered to the Scientific Center for further action.

Team leader Waleed Al-Fadhel told KUNA on Tuesday that the team received a report about the abandoned nets located three kilometers off the coast of Bnaider. The team proceeded to remove them due to their danger to navigation and the marine ecosystem.

Al-Fadhel explained that the nets were very large and took several hours to remove. This effort is part of the team's ongoing plan to clean Kuwait's southern coasts



KUNA photos The diving team rescues a rare turtle trapped in a net.

of all waste with the aim of protecting the marine environment and sea animals.

He called on beachgoers to protect sea turtles, which are rare and threatened with extinction, and to avoid littering in the sea. When turtles become entangled in nets, they risk suffocation and death. Floating plastic bags pose a danger to turtles, as they mistake the bags for jellyfish, which is a primary food source for them.

He explained that turtle nesting sites in Kuwait are limited to Qaruh Island, located southeast of the Kuwaiti coast. While many researchers monitor these nesting sites, turtles are widespread throughout Kuwaiti waters and are frequently spotted by beachgoers and divers.

There are seven species of sea turtles worldwide, with only two found in Kuwait: the hawksbill and the green turtle. These turtles can grow up to approximately two meters in length and weigh as much as 900 kilograms.

Since its foundation in 1986, the team has carried out various activities to protect sea turtles in marine facilities, help free them from cooling plant tanks, and rescue them from abandoned fishing nets. The team has also contributed to awareness campaigns targeting school students and the community, as well as social media campaigns, publications, films, and interactive workshops to raise awareness about turtle protection and prevent them from facing danger. The team participated in an integrated environmental program on Heron Island, Australia, where they learned about advanced programs aimed at protecting turtle nests, which coexist with the Great Barrier Reef.

Al-Fadhel expressed gratitude for the efforts of the government, as well as scientific, research, and environmental institutions in the country, for their commitment to sea turtle conservation. These efforts include monitoring their movements locally and throughout the Gulf using satellite tracking devices, as well as adhering to international agreements and treaties to protect turtles. Al-Shammari emphasized that the iftar project in Jerusalem serves as a message of solidarity with its people, who are suffering from a stifling economic and social siege while facing daily challenges from the occupation.

He added, "Namaa Charity seeks, through these initiatives, to achieve He further noted that the initiative helps alleviate the economic burdens on the people of Jerusalem and proHe concluded by stating that Namaa Charity will continue to support relief and humanitarian projects in Palestine, calling on all charitable individuals to contribute to such initiatives to deliver a message of love and generosity to the people of Jerusalem, who face adversity with patience and determination.

Authority appoints 9 nutritionists for inspections

## **PAFN launches cafeteria investment drive**

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has appointed nine nutritionists to inspect school cafeterias in order to ensure compliance with health and nutritional standards, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a letter to the Ministry of Education, the authority explained that, through cooperation between the Educational Development and School Activities Sector and the Community Nutrition Sector, the nutritionists were selected to assist with the supervision of school cafeterias for the 2024/2025 academic year; covering both public and private schools.

According to educational sources who spoke with the daily, the primary goal is to inspect the cafeterias to verify the safety of the food and meals served to students. This initiative is crucial in promoting students' health and preventing health issues related to unsafe food consumption.

Sources praised the proactive approach of PAFN in monitoring cafeteria food.

In a related development, PAFN announced the opening of applications for food companies interested in investing in the school cafeteria development project, in line with the school cafeteria regulations.

This is in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No.

5/2021, approved by the PAFN Board of Directors on Oct 12, 2021. Applicants are required to submit the necessary documents either in person at the headquarters of PAFN in Sabah Al-Salem, Block Two, Street 207, Building 82 or through its website; specifically the School Cafeteria Application Platform.

The authority will continue to accept applications until May 1, 2025. The required documents include a letter of approval from the Educational Activities Department at the Ministry of Education's main office, health and commercial licenses for the food facility, a copy of the civil identification card of the legal representative of the facility, a copy of the contract between the investor and the school, the school's commercial license, a license from the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) for the investment site, and approval from KFF for any additional activities within the school building (such as central gas installations and electrical appliances). Applicants must also provide the canteen regulations, which can be accessed through the barcode or purchased from the PAFN's website, stipulating the approved list of food products that meet the school canteen regulations.

If PAFN approves the applicant for canteen investment, it must issue a school canteen license valid for the 2025/2026 academic year.

### Kuwait-funded aid delivered to displaced Yemenis

ADEN, March 13, (KUNA): Two Kuwaiti associations on Thursday distributed 562 food parcels to displaced favmilies in the Yemeni regions of Maarib and Hadramut as part of the 10-year "Kuwait on your side" humanitarian campaign.

The YemenI society, "alwosool al-ensani," said in a statement that it had delivered 321 food packages to the relocated families in Maarib, noting that the aid had been funded by the Kuwaiti Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity.

The society also reported distributing 241 food parcels in Al-Mukalla -- with funding by the Kuwaiti society "balad alkhair."

Abdulwasea Alwaseie, the secretary general of "alwosool," said in a statement the Kuwaiti aid was crucial to back up the impoverished families amid the current hard living conditions in the nation.



Food parcels distributed to displaced families in the Yemeni regions of Maarib and Hadramut as part of the 10-year 'Kuwait on your side' humanitarian campaign.

Greetings of peace and prosperity

## **Crown Prince marks Ramadan** with visit to Jabriya Diwaniya

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah visited the diwaniya of Sheikhs Duaij and Faisal Al-Malik in Jabriya on Wednesday evening as part of his Ramadan visits to Kuwaiti diwaniyas

Sheikhs Duaij and Faisal Al-Malik welcomed His Highness the Crown Prince and expressed their greetings on the occasion of Ramadan, wishing blessings and prosperity for Kuwait and the Islamic nation.

The gathering underscored the importance of social interaction and brotherhood, while reflecting Kuwaiti traditions and values.

















Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah visits the Diwaniya of Sheikhs Duaij and Faisal Al-Malik in Jabriya as part of his annual Ramadan gatherings.

#### Photos by Rezk Taufiq

## 'State eyes youth as driving force for dev't'

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): The Minister of Information. Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi has reaffirmed the State concern for the youth as they constitute the prime force for achieving sustainable development. The minister, in a statement to KUNA mark-

ing Kuwait Youth Day (March 13), underscored the fatherly care of the political leadership for the youngsters, noting that the Public Authority for outh at its centers provides various program

economic, cultural and business sectors, he said affirming that these programs have proven quite helpful for the youngsters to make achievements at various levels. He boasted that the Kuwaiti youth played a crucial role in organizing diverse events and sports games namely the Arabian Gulf football tournaments.

## **KRCS's continued humanitarian aid** to Sudan lauded by Darfur Governor

PORT SUDAN, Sudan, March 13, (KUNA): Governor of Sudan's Darfur region, Minn



and activities for engaging the juniors throughout the year.

These activities cover technological, social,

#### **Continued from Page 1**

**Rising prices** 

He also revealed that Kuwait imports sweets and nuts from Asian countries, most notably India, Pakistan and Malavsia: European countries such as France and the Netherlands: the United States of America: Turkey; and some Arab countries. He added Kuwait has several sweet factories.

In related news, the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry continued its inspection tours in markets and shops in the holy month of Ramadan.

The Capital and Al-Siddiq Emergency Inspection Team, headed by Director of the Commercial Control Department Faisal Al-Ansari, intensified its inspection of sweet shops in Shuwaikh.

Al-Ansari told the newspaper that due to the high demand for sweets in the middle of Ramadan to celebrate Girgean, the department has intensified its campaigns to monitor prices and product quality in accordance with the plan established for this purpose. "This is to ensure that merchants strictly comply with the regulations and to protect consumers from violations," he elaborated.

He said the field visits are part of a comprehensive plan to continuously monitor markets and uncover commercial violations. He stressed the importance of consumers' cooperation in reporting violations, warning that deterrent legal action will be taken against anyone proven to have committed violations.

Meanwhile, as the Girgean celebration approaches during the holy month of Ramadan, the Ministry of Interior emphasized the importance of adhering to traffic regulations and security guidelines to ensure the safety of all, especially children, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry highlighted the need to avoid blocking internal roads in residential areas and prohibited the use of recreational vehicles, folklore bands, and food carts in these areas, as they can obstruct traffic and put individuals' lives at risk.

It also confirmed that strict legal action will be taken against violators.

The ministry called on guardians to closely monitor their children, avoid relying on domestic workers, and follow safety instructions to ensure their well-being.

It also urged drivers to reduce their speed and stay alert on both internal and public roads to prevent accidents.

In addition, the Ministry of Interior said it has developed a comprehensive security and traffic plan for the holy month of Ramadan, which includes the deployment of fixed and mobile security patrols across various governorates to enhance public security and safety.

#### **Kuwait rolls**

It clarified that the campaign excludes debts arising from illegal or prohibited transactions, those owed to telecommunication companies or informal financing entities (underfinancing), as they are not considered humanitarian priorities. It added that citizens, who benefited from previous campaigns, will no longer be covered and this will be done through the coordinated efforts of the Ministry of Justice and the participating entities.

The ministry added that localizing charitable work is one of the main pillars of the State's approach in promoting social solidarity and organizing humanitarian aid according to an institutional mechanism that ensures transparency and fairness in distribution. It pointed out that governing charitable work through unified electronic systems contributes to eliminating randomness and guarantees maximum utilization of available resources; thus, achieving the desired impact in supporting deserving groups.

Adopting this approach consolidates the concept of sustainability in giving by creating an accurate database of beneficiaries, and linking charitable initiatives to national development plans to ascertain that support reaches the rightful beneficiaries, the ministry asserted.

It then emphasized that the campaign aims to promote social solidarity and organize charitable work according to a unified mechanism that ensures transparency and integrity, praising the humanitarian role played by charitable societies and charities in supporting national efforts to help the needy.

It urged all segments of society to participate in this initiative, considering its great impact on alleviating the suffering of debtors and enabling them to overcome their financial crises, which contribute to achieving social stability and consolidating the humanitarian values that distinguish Kuwait.

#### **Gold glows**

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump triggered a trade war by raising tariffs by 20 percent on Chinese goods and imposing new 25 percent tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports. Trump later eased the tariffs, granting a one-month exemption for certain goods that met the rules of origin under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Trump also backtracked on Tues-

day afternoon from his pledge to double tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum to 50 percent, just hours after announcing the tariff increases.

The tariff hike was widely expected to increase inflation and economic uncertainty, which pushed gold to a record high of \$2,956.15 on February 24, 2025. Gold is often seen as a hedge against political risk and inflation.

Investors are now awaiting the US producer price index data, set to be released later Thursday, for further insights into the Federal Reserve's monetary policy.

Meanwhile, spot silver rose 0.2 percent to \$33.29 an ounce, plati-num rose by 0.2 percent to \$985.18, and palladium increased by 0.6 percent to \$954.63.

#### **Kuwait frees**

"My clients and their families are grateful to the Kuwaiti government for this kind humanitarian gesture," Franks said in a statement.

He said that his clients maintain their innocence and that additional Americans he represents also are expected to be released by Kuwait later.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The names of the released prisoners were not immediately made public.

The Americans released Wednes-

day had not been designated by the U.S. government as wrongfully detained. The status is applied to a subsection of Americans jailed abroad and historically ensures the case is handled by the administration's special presidential envoy for hostage affairs - the office that handles negotiations for a release. But advocates of those held in

foreign countries are hopeful the Trump administration takes a more flexible approach and secures the release of those not deemed wrongfully detained.

"The sad reality is that these Americans were left in prison for years due to a misguided policy that had, before President Trump took office, effectively abandoned Americans abroad who hadn't been designated wrongfully detained," Franks said in a statement.

"These releases," he added, "demonstrate what is achievable when the U.S. government prioritizes bringing Americans home."

#### **Nationality Law**

On the Kuwaiti citizenship of artists, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef disclosed "we revoked the Kuwaiti citizenship of all artists who obtained it under the 'noble deeds' clause. What have they done in the country to obtain Kuwaiti citizenship under the 'noble deeds' clause?"

Regarding the celebrity money laundering case, he confirmed that "we will open a file on any person whose wealth we suspect is bloated. This file will not be closed until we do so.

On the social security file for those whose citizenship has been revoked, he stated that "all retired women whose citizenship was revoked will receive their full pension. Any woman who paid social security contributions and does not wish to continue with the social security institution will have her contributions fully refunded.

He added that countries will restore the original nationalities of those whose Kuwaiti citizenship and passports were withdrawn, stressing each country has its own time to complete such procedures.

Minawi, on Wednesday expressed his deep thanks and gratitude to the State of Kuwait for its continuous humanitarian support since the outbreak of the Sudanese crisis nearly two years ago.

During his meeting with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sudan, Dr. Fahad Al-Dhafiri, at the embassy headquarters in Port Sudan, Minawi affirmed that Kuwait has remained a strong humanitarian supporter of the Sudanese people. He expressed his thanks to the Kuwaiti leadership, government, and people for their continuous humanitarian support to the Darfur region and the camps for the displaced.

"Kuwait's support has not stopped. Kuwait launched an air bridge through which 35 planes arrived, carrying thousands of tons of food, medicine, and relief supplies, the most recent of which was a plane from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society carrying 40 tons of food and relief supplies to address the difficult conditions in Darfur," he added.

Minawi highlighted the difficult condi-

KUNA photo The Governor of Darfur Region delivers a letter of thanks and appreciation to the Kuwaiti Ambassador for the State of Kuwait's provision of humanitarian aid.

tions experienced by the people of Darfur and the displaced in the camps since May 2024, especially in Zamzam camp, which hosts millions of people displaced by the siege imposed on the city of El Fasher in North Darfur State

Announcement of the list of debts of AI-Marouf and Al-Barjas Combined for General Trading & **Contracting WLL** 

In implementation of the decision issued by the advisor, the bankruptcy judge, in Request No. (1) of 2024, restructuring, and in accordance with the text of Article (110) of the Bankruptcy Law, Mr. Sabah Al-Jalawi, in his capacity as the restructuring trustee, announces the list of acceptable debts, which is as follows:

Creditor Name	Amount Due to Creditor	Type of Debt
COPRI Construction Enterprises w.l.l.	KD 160,000	Ordinary debt
Golden Engineering Group General Trading & Contracting Co. WLL	KD 140,000	Ordinary debt
Combined Group Contracting Company (CGC)	KD 122,608.896	Ordinary debt

## INTERNATIONAL



Ireland's Prime Minister Micheál Martin shakes hands with President Donald Trump during an event in the East Room of the White House in Washington on March 12. (AP)

#### **Ireland cheats US: Trump**

US President Donald Trump welcomed Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin on Wednesday for the annual St Patrick's Day celebration at the White House, where he added Ireland to the list of countries he says are taking advantage of the United States.

Martin countered by noting Ireland's contributions to the US. It was Trump's first Oval Office meeting with a foreign leader since his recent sit-down with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which morphed into a shouting match as they jousted over ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The session ended with Zelenskyy being asked to leave the White House.

Martin, who offered only gentle pushback to some of Trump's comments, returned to the White House in the evening and presented Trump with a bowl of shamrocks at an early St Patrick's Day celebration. The duo also attended an annual luncheon at the Capitol. (AP)

#### FEMA launches review of migrant shelter aid

### WH resumes detention of immigrant families after Biden-era pause

McALLEN, Texas, March 13, (AP): The Trump administration resumed family detention of immigrants last week in a South Texas facility after a Biden-era pause, a legal nonprofit group providing services to migrant families said Wednesday.

Fourteen immigrant families with children as young as one year old were in the detention facility in Karnes County, Texas, about 50 miles (80.5 kilometers) southeast of San Antonio, according to RAICES, which provides services to families at the center. The families are originally from Colombia, Romania, Iran, Angola, Russia, Armenia, Turkey and Brazil.

Faisal Al-Juburi, the organization's chief external affairs officer, said the families had been detained in the U.S. near the Mexican and Canadian borders. Some were in the U.S. for as little as 20 days and others for as long as about 10 years, Al-Juburi said. The nonprofit provided service to adult detainees at the center prior to last week's shift in the center's detention population when the adult detainees were moved out.

Both the Obama administration and Trump's first administration detained families until their immigration cases played out. Trump severely curbed asylum and forcibly separated children from their parents at the border in a



Immigrants seeking asylum walk at the ICE South Texas Family Residential Center on Aug 23, 2019, in Dilley, Texas. (AP)

policy widely denounced as inhumane. The practice of family detention was largely halted, but not abolished, during the Biden administration, which briefly considered restarting it in 2023. U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment Wednesday.

Geo Group, the private corporation that operates the Karnes County Immigration Processing Center, said the

facility can hold up to 1,328 people in a statement issued Monday. It said its contract with the federal government runs through August 2029 and will generate about \$79 million in revenue in its first year.

#### Also:

MCALLEN: The Trump administration has launched a review of organizations that provide temporary housing and other aid to migrants, suggesting they may have violated a law used to prosecute smugglers.

The Department of Homeland Security has "significant concerns" that federal grants used to address a surge of migration under former President Joe Biden were used for illegal activities, wrote Cameron Hamilton, acting administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

His letter, dated Tuesday and obtained by The Associated Press, asks recipients of grants from FEMA's Shelter and Services Program to provide names and contact information for migrants served and "a detailed and descriptive list of specific services provided" within 30 days. The letter says funding will be withheld during the review.

While it doesn't explicitly threaten criminal prosecution, it raises concerns that recipients may have violated U.S. Criminal Code Section 1324, a felony offense against bringing people across the border illegally or transporting them within the United States. It also says executive officers must sign sworn statements that they have no knowledge or suspicions of anyone in their organizations violating the smuggling law. FEMA did not immediately respond to a request for comment late Wednesday.

#### Carney open to talk about common approach to trade

## Canada's incoming premier ready to meet Trump if Canadian sovereignty respected

TORONTO, March 13, (AP): Canada's incoming Prime Minister Mark Carney said Wednesday he's ready to meet with US President Donald Trump if he respects Canadian sovereignty and is open to talk about a common approach to trade.

Trump has declared a trade war on his northern neighbor and continues to call for Canada to become the 51st state, a position that has infuriated Canadians. Trump has threatened economic coercion in his annexation threats and suggested Tuesday the border is a fictional line.

I am ready to sit down with President Trump at the appropriate time under a position where there is respect for Canadian sovereignty and we are working for a common approach, a much more comprehensive approach for trade," Carney said

Carney, who will be sworn in Friday with his new Cabinet, spoke to reporters at a steel factory in Hamilton, Ontario after Trump officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25%. Canada is the largest foreign supplier of steel and aluminum to the US

Carney said workers in both countries will be better off when "the greatest economic and security partnership in the world is renewed, relaunched. That is possible." He added he respects Trump's concerns for American workers and about fentanyl.

'Today is a difficult day for Canada and the industry because of these unjustified tariffs that have been put on," Carney said.

Canada responded with its own countermeasures. It plans to impose retaliatory tariffs of 29.8 billion Canadian dollars (\$20.7 billion) starting Thursday in response to the U.S. taxes on the metals. Canada's new tariffs would be on steel and aluminum products, as well as US goods including computers, sports equipment and water heaters worth CA\$14.2 billion (\$9.9 billion).

We don't want to do this because we believe in open borders and free and fair trade but we are doing this in response," Carney said.

Canada's new tariffs are in addition to its 25% counter tariffs on CA\$30 bil-



Liberal Party of Canada Leader Mark Carney, (right), speaks to Cana-dian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after Carney was announced as the winner of the party leadership at the announcement event in Ottawa, Ontario on March 9. (AP)

lion (\$20.8 billion) of imports from the US that were put in place on March 4 in response to other Trump import taxes that he partially delayed by a month.

Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly said Wednesday this is now the second round of unjustified tariffs leveled against Canada.

"The excuse for the first round was exaggerated claims about our border. We addressed all the concerns raised by the US," Joly said.

'The latest excuse is national security despite the fact that Canada's steel and aluminum adds to America's security. All the while there is a threat of further and broader tariffs on April 2 still looming."

Joly said the excuses for those tariffs shift every day.

"The only constant in this unjustifiable trade war seems to be President Trump's talk of annexing our country through economic coercion. Yesterday he called our a border a fictional line and repeated his disrespectful 51st state rhetoric," Joly said.

The US president has given a variety of explanations for his antagonism of Canada. He has said that his separate 25% tariffs on all imports from Canada, some of which have been suspended for a month, are about fentanyl smuggling and objections to Canada putting high taxes on dairy imports that penalize US farmers. He also continued to call for Canada to become part of the United States. "MrCarney is a serious person, a serious man, and he'll engage only if there are serious talks," Joly said.

Meanwhile, China hopes that the incoming government in Canada will adopt a positive and pragmatic approach toward China, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday. Spokesperson Mao Ning made the remarks during a daily press briefing following Mark Carney's victory on Sunday in the leadership race for Canada's ruling party, paving the way for him to succeed Justin Trudeau as prime minister.

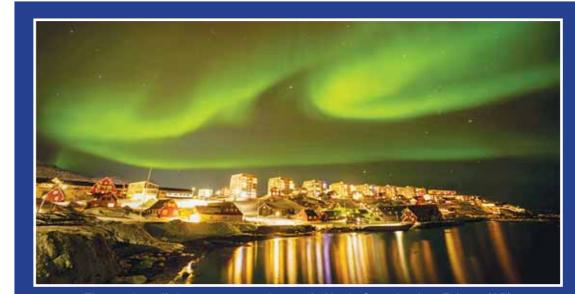
"We noted relevant reports and express congratulations to Mr Carney," Mao said, noting that China always believes that the two sides need to grow bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

"We hope that the Canadian side will form an objective and rational perception of China, pursue a positive and pragmatic policy toward China, and work with China in the same direction for the improvement and growth of bilateral relations," she said.

### Truce would help Kyiv: Putin advisor

### Russia retakes key Kursk town from Ukraine

MOSCOW, March 13, (AP): Russia and Putin's high-profile visit to his troops "Before the talks start, and they



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claimed Thursday that its troops have driven the Ukrainian army out of the biggest town in Russia's Kursk border region, as a senior Kremlin official said that a U.S.-proposed 30-day ceasefire in the war three years after the fullscale invasion of Ukraine would help Kyiv by giving its weary and shorthanded military a break.

The Russian Defense Ministry's claim that it recaptured the town of Sudzha, hours after President Vladimir Putin visited his commanders in Kursk and wore military fatigues, could not be independently verified. Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment on the claim.

The renewed Russian military push

In this image made from video released by the Russian Presidential Press Service, on March 12, Russian President Vladimir Putin, (left), shakes hands with Russian Chief of General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov as he visits military headquarters in the Kursk region of Russia. (AP)

came as U.S. President Donald Trump presses for a diplomatic end to the war. The US on Tuesday lifted its March 3 suspension of military aid for Kviv after senior US and Ukrainian officials made progress on how to stop the fighting during talks held in Saudi Arabia.

Trump said Wednesday that "it's up to Russia now" as his administration presses Moscow to agree to the ceasefire. The US president has made veiled threats to hit Russia with new sanctions if it won't engage with peace efforts. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that US negotiators were on their way to Russia, but he wouldn't comment on Moscow's view of the ceasefire proposal.

haven't started yet, it would be wrong to talk about it in public," he told reporters.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News that national security adviser Mike Waltz spoke Wednesday with his Russian counterpart. She also confirmed that Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff will head to Moscow for talks with Russian officials, possibly including Putin.

Russian news agencies reported Thursday that Witkoff's plane had landed in Moscow. It wasn't immediately possible to verify the reports.

Senior US officials say they hope to see Russia stop attacks on Ukraine within the next few days.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian Presi-dent Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser, complained in televised remarks Thursday that a ceasefire would grant a "temporary break for the Ukrainian military.

Ushakov said that Moscow wants a "long-term peaceful settlement that takes into account Moscow's interests and concerns." His comments came a day after his phone call with Waltz.

Ushakov's comments echoed statements from Putin, who has repeatedly said a temporary ceasefire would benefit Ukraine and its Western allies.

The US still has about \$3.85 billion in congressionally authorized funding for future arms shipments to Ukraine, but the Trump administration has shown no interest so far in using that authority to send additional weapons as it awaits the outcome of peace overtures.

### Duda calls on US to place N-weapons in Poland

WARSAW, Poland, March 13, (AP): Poland's President Andrzej Duda again called on the United States to deploy nuclear weapons to Poland as a deterrent to Russia, the latest indication that the frontline NATO nation is increasingly considering nuclear protection as fears of Russia grow. Duda made his appeal in an interview with the Financial Times published on Thursday, repeating an appeal he made to the Biden administration in 2022.

Duda's adviser for international affairs, Wojciech Kolarski, followed up on Duda's appeal with an interview on Poland's RMF FM radio Thursday morning in which he argued that nuclear protection would improve security for Poland, a NATO member along the alliance's eastern flank that shares borders with Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian territory of Kaliningrad.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a political opponent of Duda's, said last week that Poland was in talks with France concerning President's Emmanuel Macron's proposal to use France's nuclear

deterrent to protect the continent from Russian threats. Moscow called that idea "extremely confrontational."

Tusk made his comment to parliament after Macron said he has decided to open a "strategic debate" on using France's nuclear deterrent to protect European allies amid concerns over potential U.S. disengagement. The French president described Moscow as a "threat to France and Europe" in a televised address to the nation.

France is the only nuclear power in the European Union.



Poland's President Andrzej Duda attends a parliament session on March 7 in Warsaw, Poland, (AP)

The northern lights appear over homes in Nuuk, Greenland on Feb 17. (AP)

## **Greenland's election winners push back** against Trump wish to take control of island

NUUK, Greenland, March 13, (AP): Greenland's likely new prime minister on Wednesday rejected US President Donald Trump's effort to take control of the island, saying Greenlanders must be allowed to decide their own future as it moves toward independence from Denmark.

Jens-Frederik Nielsen's Demokraatit, a pro-business party that favors a slow path to independence, won a surprise victory in Tuesday's parliamentary election, outpacing the two left-leaning parties that formed the last government. With most Greenlanders opposing Trump's overtures, the campaign fo-cused more on issues like healthcare and education than on geopolitics. But on Wednesday Nielsen was quick to push back against Trump, who last week told a joint session of Congress that the U.S. needed Greenland to protect its own national security interests and he expected to get it "one way or the other."

"We don't want to be Americans. No, we don't want to be Danes. We want to be Greenlanders, and we want our own independence in the future,' Nielsen, 33, told Britain's Sky News. "And we want to build our own country by ourselves.'

Greenland, a self-governing region of Denmark,

has been on a path toward independence since at least 2009, when the government in Copenhagen recognized its right to self-determination under international law. Four of the five main parties in the election supported independence, though they disagreed on when and how to achieve it.

The island of 56,000 people, most from Indigenous Inuit backgrounds, has attracted international attention since Trump announced his designs on it soon after returning to the White House in January.

Trump is focused on Greenland because it straddles strategic air and sea routes in the North Atlantic and is home to the U.S.'s Pituffik Space Base, which supports missile warning and space surveillance operations. Greenland also has large deposits of the rare-earth minerals needed to make everything from mobile phones to renewable energy technology.

But Trump's overtures weren't on the ballot.

The 31 men and women elected to parliament on Tuesday will have to set priorities for issues such as diversifying Greenland's economy, building infrastructure and improving health care, as well as shaping the country's strategy for countering the president's America First agenda.

America

Gov seeks more Helene aid: New North Carolina Democratic Gov Josh Stein gave his first address to a joint General Assembly session Wednesday night, hitting on

familiar campaign and early-term themes of helping Hurricane Helene victims, making living expenses affordable and focusing on bipartisan accomplishments

Stein delivered the biennial State of the State message with a call to legislators in the ninth-largest state to work with him and avoid partisan animosity that he says is now in Washington.

"We do not need to be pulled into those political games," Stein said



Stein

from the House floor near the close of his 42-minute speech, which was televised statewide. "We can create something better, something forward-looking right here in North Carolina, and we can do it together." (AP)

#### 

Manhole blast at 'varsity: An explosion inside a maintenance hole on the Texas Tech University campus in Lubbock set off fires and power outages, leading school officials to issue evacuation orders for several buildings and cancel classes for the rest of the week, university police said.

The explosion happened Wednesday night at the Engineering Key section of campus, which was evacuated.

'I heard an explosion and then saw a smoke ring, almost like a cartoon or something," doctoral degree student Robert Gauthreaux III told KCBD-TV. "It traveled about 200 feet in the air." Gauthreaux said he went inside the architecture building, which lost power. He said he and others tried to help someone who was trapped inside an elevator. (AP)

## **INTERNATIONAL**

'Duterte refused fingerprinting, threatened lawsuits during arrest: police

## ICC takes custody of Philippine ex-president Duterte in crimes against humanity case

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, March 13, (AP): The International Criminal Court took custody of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Wednesday on a warrant accusing him of crimes against humanity for deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he oversaw while in office.

Rights groups and families of victims hailed Duterte's arrest, and the court's chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, called it "a crucial step in our continuous work to ensure accountability for the victims of the most serious crimes under ICC jurisdiction."

Supporters of Duterte criticized the administration of current Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Duterte's political rival, for arresting and surrendering the former leader to a court whose jurisdiction his supporters dispute.

The 79-year-old former president arrived in the Netherlands on a flight from Manila, where he was arrested on an ICC request Tuesday.

The Dutch-based court said in a statement that medical assistance was made available to Duterte as a precaution, in line with standard procedures when a suspect arrives. The court did not comment on his state of health.

An ambulance drove to the hangar where his plane was taken, and medics wheeled a gurney inside. A police helicopter hovered close to the airport, and later a black SUV was seen leaving the airport accompanied by police. Its destination was not immediately clear. Crowds gathered outside the detention center for ICC suspects.

The Philippine Embassy in The Hague provided consular assistance to Duterte upon his arrival, including winter clothing and care packages, the Philippine Foreign Ministry said in a statement issued Thursday in Manila.

Within days, Duterte will face an initial appearance where the court will confirm his identity, check that he understands the charges against him and set a date for a hearing to assess if prosecutors have sufficient evidence to send him to a full trial. If his case goes to trial and he is convicted, Duterte could face a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

"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



Supporters of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte hold flags and banners during a demonstration outside the International Criminal Court detention center near The Hague in Scheveningen, Netherlands on March 12. (AP)

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.

While Duterte's plane was in the air, grieving relatives gathered in the Philippines to mourn his alleged victims, carrying the urns of their loved ones. "We are happy and we feel relieved," said 55-year-old Melinda Abion Lafuente, mother of 22-year-old Angelo Lafuente, who she says was tortured and killed in 2016.

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.

Duterte threatened a police general with lawsuits, refused to be fingerprinted and told law enforcers "you have to kill me to bring me to The Hague" in a tense confrontation after his arrest in Manila that was ordered by the International Criminal Court, a Philippine police general said Thursday.

Police Maj Gen Nicolas Torre provided details for the first time of Tuesday's 12-hour standoff at a Philippine air base before he and other police officers managed to bring the 79-year-old former leader onto a government-chartered jet that took him to The Hague, Netherlands, where he was detained by the global court on charges of crimes against humanity.

Duterte was once feared for his brutal anti-crime crackdowns and reviled for his irreverence while in office. Duterte's stunning reversal of fortune was celebrated by human rights groups as a historic triumph against state impunity everywhere.

Duterte was arrested Tuesday after he arrived at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport with his common-law wife, daughter and friends from Hong Kong.

He was later taken under heavy police guard to a nearby presidential lounge at the Villamor Air Base to undergo booking for arrested criminal suspects, including fingerprinting, before being taken to a plane for the long flight to The Hague to be turned over to the ICC, Torre said.

But Duterte, his family, lawyers and friends resisted and prevented the former leader from being brought to a Gulfstream G550 executive jet, according to Torre.

The ex-president, who used to be a government prosecutor and congressman, refused to undergo the police booking procedure after his arrest, Torre said.



Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, meets with journalists who covered the third session of the 14th NPC, extending his appreciation for their efforts, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 12, 2025. (Xinhua)

#### China's top legislator praises journalists for NPC session coverage

China's top legislator Zhao Leji on Wednesday met with journalists who covered the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), extending his appreciation for their efforts.

Zhao, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, commended major news outlets for their well-planned and well-organized coverage. He noted that their reports conveyed confidence and strength while highlighting the country's pragmatic and efficient democratic process.

Zhao encouraged the media to continue exploring and utilizing the rich news resources related to the system of people's congresses as well as NPC work and deputies, helping to effectively tell the story of China and its whole-process people's democracy. The NPC session was held from March 5 to 11. (Xinhua)

## Taiwan's Lai says tougher measures needed to counter stepped-up Chinese infiltration, spying

TAIPEI, Taiwan, March 13, (Agencies): Taiwanese President William Lai Ching-te said Thursday tougher measures are needed to counter stepped-up Chinese infiltration, spying and other efforts to weaken the island's defenses. Lai cited a range of recent incidents

involving China that fall into a "gray area" of psychological warfare short of open armed conflict.

Beijing's efforts to "subvert, obtain secrets, lure members of the armed forces and influence public opinion to lose confidence in our national defense require that we step up our legal safeguards to prevent and detect such incidents," Lai said at a news conference.

Lai's Democratic Progressive Party favors the island's continued de-facto independence from Beijing. China has refused almost all official contact with the DPP since Lai's predecessor, Tsai Ing-wen, was elected eight years ago.

China regularly sends ships and planes into airspace and waters near the island in an effort to intimidate its 23 million people and wear down its armed forces and morale. Taiwan's government recently expelled the Chinese wife of a Taiwanese citizen after the woman repeatedly posted short clips on Chinese social media saying China would conquer Taiwan in half an hour and praising the Chinese leadership.

Such acts are illegal under Taiwan's laws on aiding and abetting the enemy. The woman, who also held official Chinese titles as a consultant, can ap-



In this photo released by the Taiwan Presidential Office, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te speaks at a press conference after a security meeting about US President Trump's tariffs on trade partners and semiconductors at the presidential office in Taipei on Feb 14. (AP)

#### ply for residency again in five years. Other recent incidents have included Taiwanese artists and influencers living in China reposting statements from Chinese state media asserting Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan. The two sides split amid civil war in 1949.

Retired Taiwanese service members have also passed information about the island's weapons systems to Chinese agents and sought to recruit serving military members to serve as spies. Meanwhile, if the "Taiwan inde-

pendence" separatist forces provoke, exert pressure, or dare to cross the red line, resolute actions will be taken in response, a Chinese mainland spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Chen Binhua, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, made the remarks when asked whether the newly unveiled 2025 government work report, which emphasizes "firmly advancing the cause of China's reunification" without mentioning "peaceful reunification," indicates a shift in the mainland's position.

Chen said that the principles of peaceful reunification and "one country, two systems" are China's basic policies for resolving the Taiwan question. This is the best way to realize reunification across the taiwan Strait, and best serves the interests of Chinese people on both sides of the Strait and the entire Chinese nation, the spokesperson added.

#### Also:

**BEIJING:** A 5.0-magnitude earthquake struck the sea areas off Taiwan's Taitung County at 1:09 p.m. Thursday (Beijing Time), according to the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC).

The epicenter was monitored at 23.07 degrees north latitude and 121.55 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 15 km, said a report issued by the CENC.

#### Police vow to hold them back

### Gangs unleash new attack on Haiti's capital

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 13, (AP): A powerful gang coalition has launched new attacks on Haiti's capital, driving dozens of families from homes as police vowed to hold the gunmen back.

Authorities evacuated students at a school in western Port-au-Prince as heavy gunfire continued in the area near the renowned Oloffson Hotel, which once attracted international celebrities in the 1970s and '80s.

Meanwhile, cries for help emerged on social media for a group of priests trapped inside a church in the Carrefour-Feuilles neighborhood, which endured much of the attack by the Viv Ansanm gang coalition that began late Tuesday.

"They're trying to take more ar-



A displaced woman rests in a shelter for people fleeing their homes to escape gang violence, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Feb 28. (AP)

eas, but police are there, making sure that doesn't happen," Lionel Lazarre, deputy spokesman for Haiti's National Police, told a press conference.

He said police have new plans to fight gangs that already control 85% of Haiti's capital, but declined to provide details, citing safety reasons.

Lazarre noted that police recently seized 10,000 bullets, weapons and drugs from a minibus in the town of Mirebalais, northeast of Port-au-Prince. He said two of the four people carrying the ammunition were lynched by a mob on Sunday, while the others escaped.

The latest attacks come days after William O'Neill, the UN's human rights expert on Haiti, visited the troubled Caribbean country.

"The risk of the capital falling under gang control is palpable," O'Neill said Tuesday, even as Haitian police work with a UN-backed mission led by Kenyan police to help quell gang violence.

O'Neill and others have called for a reinforcement of the mission, which the US has said lacks funding and personnel. Last year, more than 5,600 people were reported killed across Haiti. Gang violence has left more than one million homeless in recent years.

## Pakistan's prime minister to meet with survivors, commandos who ended insurgents' train attack

deadly attacks in recent months,

claimed responsibility for the at-

tack that began Tuesday and ended

Wednesday when troops killed all

33 insurgents in an operation that

the military said resulted in no fur-

ther passenger deaths. The train was

heading from the Balochistan capi-

tal, Quetta, to the northern city of

Peshawar when insurgents blew up

the track, forcing nine coaches and

QUETTA, Pakistan, March 13, (AP): Pakistan's prime minister traveled to restive southwestern Balochistan province Thursday to meet survivors of a train attack and the commandos who rescued over 300 passengers from the insurgents who killed 21 civilians and four troops.

The Baloch Liberation Army, an outlawed group behind multiple



Rescue workers transport a coffin containing the body of a victim from a passenger train attacked by insurgents, upon arrival at a railway station in Much, Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province on March 13. (AP)

the engine of the Jafer Express train to stop partially inside a tunnel.

The BLA regularly targets Pakistani security forces and has attacked trains, but had never been able to hijack any train in the past. They have also attacked outsiders such as Chinese workers, thousands of whom are involved in multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects in Balochistan.

Oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan is Pakistan's largest and least populated province. Members of the ethnic Baloch minority say they face discrimination and exploitation by the central government.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was to visit Quetta on Thursday. Authorities said arrangements were made to transport the bodies of victims to their hometowns and people who were wounded were receiving medical treatment.

In an overnight statement, the military said it had "confirmed intelligence" indicating that the assault was "orchestrated and directed by terrorist ring leaders operating from Afghanistan, who were in direct communication with the terrorists throughout the incident."

#### Ethiopia's Tigray appeals for help after TPLF seize towns

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, March 13, (AP): The interim government of Ethiopia's Tigray region appealed for the Ethiopian federal government to intervene after a faction of the Tigray People's Liberation Front seized control of two major towns, leaving several people wounded and raising fears of a return to civil war. On Tuesday the TPLF faction seized Adigrat, the second-biggest town in Tigray, and appointed a new administrator, ousting the office-holder loyal to the interim government. On Wednesday night, it took control of Adi-Gudem, a town near the regional capital, Mekele. Several people in Adi-Gudem were injured when forces attempted to occupy a government building.

The TPLF fought a brutal two-year war against federal forces which ended in November 2022 with the signing of a peace agreement and the formation of a TPLF-led interim government. Hundreds of thousands of people are believed to have been killed in the fighting which began in November 2020, with millions displaced and many left near famine in Africa's second-most populous country. However, since the war ended, the TPLF has splin-

However, since the war ended, the TPLF has splintered. In October, its leader, Debretsion Gebremichael, expelled the head of the interim government, Getachew Reda, from the party along with four members of his cabinet.



Ethiopians holding national flags protest against what they say is interference by outsiders in the country's internal affairs and against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the party of Tigray's fugitive leaders, at a rally organized by the city administration in the capital Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on Oct 22, 2022. (AP)

## Lawmakers in South Africa plan to spend more on health, defense after US cuts aid

JOHANNESBURG, March 13, (AP): Lawmakers in South Africa laid out plans to shore up the budgets for health and defense but also put up value added tax by 0.5%, a move that will raise the cost of living as consumers pay more for goods, including food, and services.

An additional 28.9 billion rand (\$1.5 billion) was earmarked for health spending in the 2025 budget, Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana said, as the country scrambles to make up for cuts to aid from the U.S. under the Trump administration.

The extra money will pay the salaries of roughly 9,300 medical personnel in clinics and hospitals and about 800 newly qualified doctors.

Health spending overall is expected to grow from 277 billion rand in 2024/25 to 329 billion rand in 2027/28.

The increase comes amid concerns that South Africa's health system, which cares for the world's largest HIV population and has 5.5 million people on life-saving antiretroviral drugs, will be strained by cuts to USAID, the U.S. agency for international development.

In early February, President Donald Trump cancelled PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which provides over \$400 million annually to South Africa's HIV programs and nongovernmental organizations.

Although 74% of South Africa's HIV response is funded

domestically, some services depend on U.S. government funding, which makes up around 17% of the nation's AIDS response budget. Despite South Africa being one of Africa's most developed nations, it struggles with high debt rates and slow GDP growth.



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, (right), greets opposition Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen, (left), at the first sitting of Parliament since elections in Cape Town, on June 14, 2024. (AP)

#### USD stabilizes at KD 0.308, euro at KD 0.335

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): The exchange rate of US dollar stabilized on Thursday against the Kuwaiti dinar trading at KD 0.308 and the euro firmed at KD 0.335 compared to yesterday's rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

The CBK, in its daily bulletin, said the ster-

ling pound rose by 0.22 percent to KD 0.399, the Swiss Franc rose by 0.32 percent to KD 0.349, 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



In partnership with Kuwait Food Bank

## Gulf Bank distributes Ramadan food packages to families in need

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: As part of its ongoing initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank, in collaboration with the Kuwait Food Bank & Relief, has distributed Ramadan Food Packages to support underprivileged families and individuals in need, with the active involvement of the Sawa'ed Al-Khaleej volunteer team

Upholding its annual tradition, the Bank continues to organize various charitable activities throughout Ramadan, reaffirming its commitment to community sustainability. Among these efforts, the distribution of food packages helps ease financial burdens for families facing economic hardships

The initiative seeks to alleviate some of the burdens on these families amid rising living costs, by providing essential food supplies that last for several days.

For 60 years, Gulf Bank has played a vital role in Kuwait's economic and social development. The distribution of Ramadan food packages is one of the many charitable initiatives the Bank undertakes during the holy month, demonstrating its deep commitment to the community

year, the Our Traditions This Bring Us Together Ramadan cam-





Gulf Bank distributes Ramadan food packages to support underprivileged families.

paign features a four-day distribution of food packages in collaboravisitors at LuLu Hypermarket and tion with the Kuwait Food Bank and Shamiya Cooperative Society. City Hypermarket. Additionally, Gulf Bank took part in the Joy Land event, providing families in need Bank's commitment to corporate sustainability, encompassing social, ecowith household essentials, Eid clothnomic, and environmental aspects. ing, and Ramadan food packages. Through carefully curated programs, The Bank also extended its generosthe Bank continues to drive meaning-

ity by distributing food packages to

ful impact in line with its 2025 strategy, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community.

US, China, and EU tariffs weigh on oil prices

Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The Bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

## Oil price rises to \$73.47 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti oil price rose 16 cents to USD 73.47 per barrel in Wednesday's trading compared to Tuesday's USD 73.31, reported Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC). In global markets, Brent futures increased USD 1.39 to USD 70.95, as West Texas crude also increased by USD 1.43 to reach USD 67.68.

#### Al-Nasser leads delegation at CERAWeek

### **KPC** engages in key discussions at Houston's 'CERAWeek' conference

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Oil Corporation (KPC) continues to take part in Houston's CERAWeek conference to engage in discussions on challenges and opportunities amidst global economic changes.

In a statement on Thursday, KPC mentioned that Executive Vice President of Planning and Finance, Shaima Al-Ghunaim, participated in a panel discussion on the role of technology and innovation in empowering women within the energy sector.

As for KPC's Deputy Managing

the role of artificial intelligence in promoting creativity and excellence in the oil sector.

Al-Afasi highlighted KPC's efforts in adopting latest tech and strengthening operational capacity and sustainability.

KPC's participation in the conference, set to conclude on Friday, reflects its commitment to exchanging expertise and visions with leading companies in the field, as well as bolstering relations with partners.

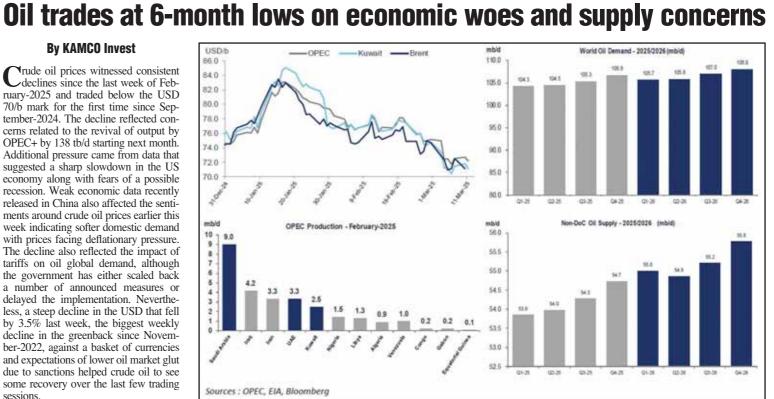
Deputy Chairman of the Board and CEO of KPC, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah headed the company's delegation in the conference

#### **By KAMCO Invest**

These initiatives reaffirm Gulf

rude oil prices witnessed consistent declines since the last week of February-2025 and traded below the USD 70/b mark for the first time since September-2024. The decline reflected concerns related to the revival of output by OPEC+ by 138 tb/d starting next month. Additional pressure came from data that suggested a sharp slowdown in the US economy along with fears of a possible recession. Weak economic data recently released in China also affected the sentiments around crude oil prices earlier this week indicating softer domestic demand with prices facing deflationary pressure. The decline also reflected the impact of tariffs on oil global demand, although the government has either scaled back a number of announced measures or delayed the implementation. Nevertheless, a steep decline in the USD that fell by 3.5% last week, the biggest weekly decline in the greenback since November-2022, against a basket of currencies and expectations of lower oil market glut due to sanctions helped crude oil to see some recovery over the last few trading sessions.

Meanwhile, the uncertainty related to the trade policy announcements from



previous expected due to sanctions on on energy imports since the start of the oil rigs from Baker Hughes showed

Director for Planning, Abdullah Al-Afasi, he took part in a session on

#### As part of 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

## NBK 'warns' customers about WAMD payment fraud tactics

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) remains committed to supporting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). The initiative aims to promote financial literacy, enhance financial inclusion, and educate customers across all segments of society.

As part of the campaign, NBK is raising awareness among customers about fraudulent schemes targeting Instant Payment Service (WAMD). The bank underscores the importance of recognizing these tactics and following essential precautions to safeguard against falling victim to such fraudulent transactions.

The Bank warned that fraudsters often contact individuals, falsely claiming to have mistakenly transferred funds to their accounts via "WAMD". They then urge recipients to return the money using payment links sent through WhatsApp, which are secretly designed to access victims' bank accounts and steal their financial information.

Furthermore, NBK urged customers to remain vigilant and avoid clicking on suspicious links or those from unknown sources. The bank emphasized the importance of verifying the legitimacy of messages and communications before taking any action or making financial transfers. Additionally, it advised regularly updating banking passwords to enhance security and protect against potential breaches or data leaks.

The bank also urged customers to follow key security measures when using WAMD. These include verifying the beneficiary's name and transaction amount before transferring funds, ensuring the recipient's number is saved in their contact list, and confirming the legitimacy of the request, including the name and amount, before proceeding with the transaction.

NBK continues to play a proac-



tive role in identifying emerging fraud tactics, equipping customers with essential knowledge, and providing clear, actionable guidance on prevention. Through its social media platforms, the bank consistently delivers targeted awareness materials, empowering customers to stay vigilant and safeguard their financial security.

NBK leverages its extensive communication capabilities, including its industry-leading digital channels with the largest following among Kuwaiti banks, to ensure the campaign's messages are effectively disseminated to the widest audience, reinforcing financial awareness and security. The "Let's Be Aware" campaign,

launched by CBK in collaboration with KBA and local banks, stands as the largest financial awareness initiative in the region. It aims to enhance banking and financial literacy among customers by addressing critical topics, including fraud prevention measures, optimal use of banking services, and the promotion of a savings and investment culture, along with other key financial education themes.

NBK is a key supporter and strategic partner of all CBK campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising financial and banking awareness across society.

As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK actively organizes various initiatives to educate the community on banking-related matters. Additionally, the bank conducts extensive training programs for its employees to strengthen their expertise in fraud prevention and financial crime mitigation.

the US continued to unsettle the market after the US postponed tariffs on imports covered by the USMCA free trade agreement with Mexico and Canada until next month after initially implementing it at the start of last week. The US also doubled its tariffs on Chinese imports to 20%. The trading partners responded with tariffs on imports from the US, with China mainly targeting tariffs on US food and agricultural items.

On the supply side, an announcement from the US which said that tariffs won't apply to Canadian oil exported off the Gulf Coast helped to narrow the discount on Canadian crude oil vs WTI but had an overall negative impact on the market. Prices were also affected earlier this month after Iraq said it is ready to resume oil supplies from the Iraq-Turkey crude oil pipeline after more than two years following successful negotiations between the countries, although the supply has not resumed until last week. The talks that the US would increase sanctions on Iranian crude oil were embedded in the prices and as a result, recent statements had minimal impact on the prices. On the geopolitical front, news about Russia/Ukraine talks continued, mediated by the US, but recent attacks on Russian oil refineries supported prices.

In terms of crude oil production, OPEC output witnessed the biggest monthly increase in four months. Average crude oil output from the group reached 27.35 mb/d, as per data from Bloomberg, the highest output in 14 months. The increase was led by higher production mainly in Iraq, Libya, Venezuela and the UAE that more than offset a decline in output in Nigeria. Meanwhile, oil production in the US witnessed swift revival and showed consistent gains over the last five weeks to reach a new record high of 13.51 mb/d at the end of February-2025.

#### **Oil Prices**

Crude oil market witnessed steep volatility over the last few weeks, with volatility benchmarks hitting the highest level since the start of the year. Crude oil spot prices have also traded in a wide band over the last two months with Brent reaching a peak of USD 83.5/b in January-2025 and falling to below USD 70/b during the second week of March-2025. Prices have mostly trended downwards over the last few weeks with marginal intermittent recovery on a few trading sessions. Brent futures have traded around the USD 70/b level after witnessing consistent weekly declines. The decline last week came in at 3.85%, the steepest in 18 weeks, was led by fears of a demand impact led due to uncertainty surrounding the impact of the tariffs imposed by the US on its trading partners and the counter measures anounced by mainly Europe and China. However, the latest report from the US EIA highlighted that the crude oil oversupply glut would be lower than oil supplies from Iran and Venezuela. The recovery also reflected an oversold market and a declining risk premium associated with the tariffs, although some analysts expect a delayed impact in the coming months.

În terms of monthly price trend, prices of almost all crude grades reported low-single digit declines during February-2025 as compared to the averages for January-2025. Average spot Brent crude oil price witnessed the biggest monthly decline in five months at -5.2% to reach USD 75.1/b during February-2025 as compared to an average of USD 79.3/b during January-2025. On the other hand, average OPEC reference basket price witnessed a slightly smaller decline of 3.2%, also the steepest decline in five months, to reach ÚSD 76.8/b while Kuwait export grade crude prices witnessed a similar decline of 2.8% to average at USD 78.2/b during February-2025. Meanwhile, the consensus estimate for Brent crude showed downward revision for Q2-2025 and Q4-2025 while it was flat for the remaining two quarters. The consensus forecast for Q1-2025 stood at USD 75.0/b, according to data from Bloomberg, while the forecast for Q4-2025 was down marginally to USD 72.0/b. The EIA kept its forecast for 2025 unchanged at USD 74/b but raised the forecast for 2026 to USD 68/b in its latest monthly report.

#### World Oil Demand

World oil demand growth forecast for 2025 was kept unchanged in the latest monthly report from the OPEC. The report shows a demand growth of 1.4 mb/d this year with demand expected to average at 105.2/b during the year. However, there were revisions at the regional level. In the OECD region, the demand growth forecast for the Americas was once again lowered by 0.02 mb/d to an average demand of 25.06 mb/d with demand in the US expected to be lower by 0.05 mb/d at 20.46 mb/d in 2025. Demand forecast for the OECD region underwent a downward revision of 0.03 mb/d with demand expected to reach 45.88 mb/d in 2025.

The OPEC also kept its world oil demand growth forecast for 2026 unchanged at 1.43 mb/d with demand expected to average at 106.63 mb/d during the year. At the country level, there were downward revisions to demand data for the OECD Americas, and OECD Asia Pacific that was offset by upward revisions to demand data for OECD Europe, and Other Asia and the Middle East regions.

Expectations for oil demand growth revival in China was dented after the release of the recent economic data. China's CPI dropped more than expected and reached below zero for the first time in 13 months in February-2025 indicating persistent deflationary pressure. Data

year also showed softer trends with crude oil imports declining by 5% during the first two months of 2025 to reach 83.85 million tons. The decline also indicated the tightened supplies from Russia and China. In terms of fuel usage, a government agency in China has suggested that the refiners in China should focus on fine chemical industries and cut the output of refined petroleum products, highlighting the changing consumption pattern of diesel and gasoline due to the increasing sale of electric vehicles in the country. Meanwhile, oil and petroleum products demand in India declined to the lowest in five months during February-2025 to reach 19.1 million metric tons, as per data government data. The m-o-m decline stood at 6.7% while the y-o-y decline came in at 5.4%. The m-o-m decline was broad-based and was seen across almost all product categories.

#### World Oil Supply

The OPEC retained its forecast for non-DoC liquids supply during 2025 at a growth by 1.01 mb/d during 2025 to an average of 54.21 mb/d. However, there were revisions at the country level with an upward revision in forecast for the OECD Americas by 0.04 mb/d with supply expected to reach 28.31 mb/d during the year while supply forecast for the OECD Europe region was lowered by 0.08 mb/d to an average of 3.632 mb/d. The net impact on supplies from the OECD was a downward revision of 0.04 mb/d. In the non-OECD regions, supplies forecasts from India and Africa underwent an upward revision of 0.03 mb/d each that was partially offset by marginal downward revisions in supply forecast for China and the Middle East regions. Supply growth forecast for 2026 for the non-DoC countries was also kept unchanged by the OPEC in its latest monthly report with supply expected to increase by 1.0 mb/d during the year to reach an average of 55.21 mb/d.

Meanwhile, the forecast for oil market glut in 2026 took a breather after the latest monthly report from the US EIA pointed to reduced surplus in the market owing to sanctions from the US on oil flows from Iran and Venezuela. The EIA expects world oil market oversupply to average at 0.5 mb/d in 2026 vs. previous forecast of an oversupply of 1 mb/d. The EIA also lowered its oversupply prediction for 2025 to 100 tb/d, a sharp downward revision vs. its previous forecast of an oversupply of 0.5 mb/d. In terms of inventory, the agency expects buildups in Q3-2025 as compared to its earlier forecast of buildups starting from Q2-2025. In terms of oil output, the EIA expects record US crude oil production in 2025 at 13.6 mb/d and followed by 13.76 mb/d in 2026. Based on weekly numbers, current US oil production averaged at 13.51 mb/d at the end of February-2025. Meanwhile, data on flat active rigs during the week ended 7-Mar-2025 at 486. The number of oil rigs in the US has shown growth for four consecutive weeks until the week ended 21-Feb-2025 to reach 488 rigs, the highest since September-2024 and recorded a marginal decline of two rigs during the last week of the month.

**OPEC Oil Production & Spare** Capacity

After two consecutive months of declines, OPEC oil production reported the biggest monthly increase in over 2.5 years during February-2025. Average oil output reached 27.35 mb/d during the month after an increase of 320 tb/d from last month, as per data from Bloomberg. The increase was mainly led by higher production in Iraq, Libya, Venezuela and the UAE that was partially offset by a decline mainly in Nigeria and Gabon. Data from OPEC secondary sources, however, showed a significantly smaller output growth in the OPEC at 154 tb/d during February-2025 to reach an average of 26.86 mb/d. The data also showed a broad-based increase with Iran and Nigeria witnessing the biggest output growth during the month by 34 tb/d each followed by UAE and Iraq with output growth of 25 tb/d and 19 tb/d to record average production of 2.95 mb/d and 4.01 mb/d, respectively.

Oil production by the overall DoC group also showed a healthy increase of 363 tb/d to reach an average output of 41.01 mb/d during February-2025, as per OPEC secondary sources. The data indicated a faster growth in non-OPEC DoC countries with Kazakhstan boosting monthly production by almost 200 tb/d during the month to an average of 1.77 mb/d, around 0.3 mb/d over its OPEC+ quota. The producer said that has IOCs to cut output so the country can meets it OPEC+ quota.

Meanwhile, in a significant development, the OPEC+ countries announced to gradually unwind the existing production cuts until the end of 2026. Saudi Arabia and seven other members of the OPEC+ alliance announced to increase production starting from next month adding 138 tb/d. However, the announced said that the production levels will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly depending on the market imbalances.

Oil production in Iraq increased by 150 tb/d during the month and averaged at 4.16 mb/d, the highest in five months, according to data from Bloomberg. The country has been negotiating the start of oil exports from the Kurdistan region, but talks failed to reach a decision despite several weeks of negotiations mainly due to disagreements over the price of crude oil, as per media reports. Meanwhile, the country recently announced the discovery of a new oil field in the southern East Baghdad that may add 2 billion barrels of medium and light crude to the country reserves.

## **BUSINESS**

Al-Saif: The competition emphasizes bank's social role during the holy month of Ramadan

## **KFH launches annual Quran recitation competition**

يا اء

Reciting the Quran.

A child recites the Qur'an

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched the 12th annual Quran Recitation competition. The twoday competition is designed for children and youth.

KFH Executive Manager Social Media and PR Services Center, Abdullah Al-Saif, said that the competition encourages the discovery of talents in Tajweed and recitation, and motivates the current generation to read the Holy Quran, while also clarifying some of the rules of Tajweed. He also noted that the competition was broadcast on KFH's social media channels and received extensive media coverage from various outlets.

He further stated, "KFH's hosting of this competition, which boasts the largest prize value, is a significant part of its 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan' program. This initiative demonstrates KFH's commitment to its social responsibilities and aligns with the core values of Ramadan, a time for Quranic reflection and recitation."

Al-Saif highlighted the significant number of Quran memorizers and reciters who have registered for the competition. As the pioneering host, KFH has



Participants pose for a group photo.



Child participating in the competition.

earned significant trust, resulting in strong participation in this competition, which is further enhanced by a distinguished judging panel and excellent organization.

The competition is organized separately for male and female participants, as clarified by Al-Saif. It includes awards



Abdullah Al Saif and the organizing team.



Participant receives a certificate.



A child displays a certificate after the competition.



A contestant and his father.

for approximately 40 winners, with prizes distributed to those selected from among the applicants at the conclusion of the competition. Participants will recite specific verses from designated sections, as determined by the judging committee. Another competition was held for KFH employees, with valuable prizes



Children's joy after participating in the competition.



A child participating in the Kuwait Finance House competition.

#### for 30 winners.

From Iftar campaigns and mosque hospitality to sports events, public engagement, and Iftar meals distribution, KFH's 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan' program offers a diverse range of community initiatives, showcasing its dedication to social responsibility.

## Economy at a crossroads

## Policy uncertainty in the US taking a toll on the global growth outlook

#### By National Bank of Kuwait

The global economy is at a crossroads given heightened policy uncertainty while monetary easing, though ongoing, has limited room to run further given already material cuts to policy rates while inflation continues to be above target. In the US, amid tariff flipflops and wider policy uncertainty, the economy is showing signs of weakness with bond yields down sharply recently and expectations for Fed rate cuts rising again. In the Eurozone, the tariff threat is a major headwind, but the expected increase in defense spending should boost growth. The UK economy lost the early-2024 momentum while fiscal and monetary policies have little room to support growth. In Japan, policy rates are set to rise further in 2025 while 10year bond yields have surged to multiyear highs. Finally, China has set an ambitious 5% growth target for 2025, signaled an appetite to increase fiscal spending, and sticked, so far, to a limited tariff-retaliation strategy.

ulation, delaying the expected support to the economy. Meanwhile, Republicans in Congress are trying to find a way to pass/implement Trump's plans as well as deal with the debt ceiling issue, big challenges to surmount given their razor-thin majority, often wide differences among them, and no support from Democrats.

#### Higher defense spending in the Eurozone to boost growth while the tariff threat is a major headwind

The Eurozone economy grew by 0.2% q/q in Q4, higher than-initiallyestimated putting full-year growth at 0.9%, up from 0.4% in 2023. Meanwhile, CPI inflation remains above the 2% target, with the headline rate at 2.4% y/y and core at 2.6% in February, driven by still-elevated though softening services inflation. PMI surveys for January-February indicate generally steady growth in terms of services and on in manufacturing In a major development, the EU, led by Germany is pushing for massive fiscal reform to allow increased government spending on defense. Germany's chancellor-in-waiting, Friedrich Merz, is planning to amend the country's constitution to exempt defense and security expenditures from limits on public spending. The expected major increase in government spending (over several years) across the EU will push up GDP growth and likely inflation as well, with the bond yields of the bloc's four largest economies soaring by more than 40 bps in one week's trading in early March while the euro rallied by more than 4% against the US dollar over the same period. On the other hand, the threat of tariffs is a major headwind, with president Trump on several occasions vowing to impose a 25% duty on imports from the EU. We note that the latter is the US's largest trading partner and had a merchandise trade surplus with the US of around \$240 billion in 2024, indicating that it will likely be targeted in a meaningful way by Trump's "reciprocal" tariffs, starting early April. Given statements by EU officials, the bloc will undoubtedly retaliate to any US-imposed tariffs. Finally, at its March meeting, the ECB cut rates by another 25 bps (to 2.5%), bringing total cuts to a steep 1.5% since June 2024, and lowered 2025-2026 GDP growth by 0.2 percentage points (to 0.9% and 1.2%, respectively), on weaker projected exports and investment.

Given the weakening economic landscape and the likelihood of an official downgrade to the GDP growth forecast later this month, the government finances will likely come under further pressure. The government may have to raise taxes again (still seemingly unlikely at this point), and/ or rationalize spending, pressuring growth prospects. Regarding trade and possible tariff implications, the US has a goods trade surplus with the UK, and hence, imposing tariffs on the latter may not be a priority for the US administration. At its February meeting, the Bank of England (BoE) cut the bank rate by 25 bps to 4.5%, and sharply downgraded its 2025 GDP growth forecast to 0.75% from 1.5%. Moreover, price pressures resurfaced with CPI inflation in January at a 10-month high of 3% y/y, and the BoE projecting a rise further to then softenin only by end-2027. Amid higher inflation and accelerating wage gains, the bank may struggle to cut interest rates aggressively to support growth. The futures market is currently expecting around two more 25 bps rate cuts by end-2025, with a hold at the bank's meeting later this month.

# **Steel and aluminum are a part of American life**

#### Trump's tariffs could have rippling effects

WASHINGTON, March 13, (AP): Steel and aluminum are ubiquitous in Americans' lives. A stainless steel refrigerator holds aluminum soda cans. A stainless steel drum tumbles inside an aluminum washing machine. They're the metals used in cars and airplanes, phones and frying pans, skyscrapers and zippers.

That's why President Donald Trump's 25% tariffs on all steel Mick Beekhuizen, the president and CEO of The Campbell Co., said in an earnings call last week that his company imports tin mill steel from Canada. Beekhuizen said Campbell is working with its suppliers to mitigate the impact of tariffs, but it may need to raise prices.

The Consumer Brands Association, which represents packaged food makers, said it's urging the Trump administration to exempt aluminum and steel products that aren't available in adequate quantities in the U.S. Otherwise, consumers will likely see higher grocery prices.

"We encourage the Trump administration to recognize the different retail price of countertop products like espresso makers and toasters anywhere from 10% to 15% starting April 1, according to Richie Palmero, the store's small appliance buyer.

Abt sells coffee makers that range from \$100 to \$500, as well as espresso makers priced from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Palmero said that putting another \$250 on the price of a \$2,500 espresso maker is a lot, but she said she doesn't think sales will suffer significantly.

"I think customers would still buy it because it's good quality," she said. "But they might think about it. They might take longer to buy it. It might not be an impulse buy. I don't think they're going to go down to Mr. Coffee or a \$20 coffee maker." The Retail Industry Leaders Association said the compound effect of those import taxes, earlier tariffs on goods from China imposed during Trump's first term and maintained by former President Joe Biden, and a new round slapped on Chinese products last A could be substantial. The trade group, which represents major U.S. chains, asked its members to come up with a list of popular household items to illustrate how the multiple layers might add to the cost of finished products. The 20 entries included pushpins, trash cans, ladders, grills, paper towel holders, mixing bowls, wine racks, shower caddies, chicken coops and steel wool. By the association's calculations, the selected imports face a potential duty of 45% to over 70% when they go through U.S. customs. The amounts varied depending on where the products were made and if they already were subject to a base tax or a tariff from Trump's first term. Portable griddles and tabletop grills from China, which had the highest starting duty, would get taxed at almost 75% of its value. "Stacking tariffs on household goods will also raise costs on American families, millions of whom have struggled through the worst bout of inflation in 40 years," Michael Hanson, a senior executive vice president at the Retail Leaders Industry Association, said in a Wednesday statement. U.S. beverage companies use more than 100 billion aluminum cans each vear, according to the Can Manufacturers Institute. Most of the thin rolled sheets of aluminum alloy that are used for cans are made in the U.S., but can makers do import a small percentage, the institute said. The Brewers Association, which represents 9,500 independent U.S. craft beer makers, estimates that 10% of U.S. cans are made from Canadian aluminum. Aluminum tariffs will force small brewers to pay more for cans, the association said, even as steel tariffs drive up the cost of equipment like kegs and fermentation tanks.

#### Amid tariff flip-flops and wider policy uncertainty, the US economy is showing signs of weakness

In the US, post-election buoyancy has faded, with January's retail sales and personal spending falling, and some sentiment indicators weakening. In fact, the treasury secretary recently warned of a "detox period" for the economy, attributing that to a needed shift from public spending to privatesector spending. Some forecasts are now indicating negative GDP growth in Q1, though that could be partially skewed by soaring imports given tariff front-running as seen in the January trade data. The markets are echoing this weaker outlook with the UST 10-year yield falling by around 50 bps since mid-January, the S&P 500 dropping 9% since 19 February, and the futures market currently implying two-to-three 25-bps Fed rate cuts up from zero-to-one few weeks ago. Meanwhile, the labor market continues to soften gradually with moderating monthly job gains, but a still-low unemployment rate (4.1%) and ongoing-robust wage growth (4% y/y). A more pronounced weakening in the job market will not be surprising amid the increased policy uncertainty, impacting confidence and investment levels, especially given the ongoing federal job cuts. Meanwhile, January's PCE inflation helped calm some worries about renewed price pressures with the core rate moderating to 2.6% y/y, nearly a four-year low.

The weaker outlook is mainly being driven by the tariff-related flipflops and wider uncertainty about the administration's overall policies. In terms of tariffs, what went into effect already is only a 20% duty on Chinese goods, while several other sectoral and country-specific (mainly Canada, Mexico, EU) levies have been imposed then postponed, threatened, or still due to go into effect. A key date will be April 2nd, when details of "reciprocal" duties will start to be announced on different countries. On the other hand, Trump's pledges, such as lowering taxes and increasing oil output are yet to materialize, while not much has been seen in terms of dereg-

#### UK economy has lost H1 2024 momentum while fiscal/monetary policy have little room to support growth

The UK economy has lost the momentum seen earlier in 2024 partly due to the budgetary hike in employment taxes and a re-acceleration in inflation. Although Q4 GDP growth came in at a higher-than-expected 0.1% q/q, improving from no growth in Q3, that was mainly driven by higher government expenditures and an increase in inventories, while household spending was flat, and business investment fell.

The recent PMIs continue to indicate sustained headwinds, with manufacturing (46.9 in February) at the lowest since December 2023 and services still subdued at around 51 since November 2024.

#### Policy rates in Japan are set to rise further in 2025 while 10-year bond yields surge to multi-year highs

Japan's GDP growth for Q4 2024 improved to 0.6% q/q from 0.4% in Q3 mainly on rebounding business spending and a strong net exports performance. In contrast, growth in private consumption (more than half of GDP) decelerated sharply, likely impacted by the persistent inflation, which has remained on an uptrend, reaching a two-year high of 4% y/y in January, while core inflation (3.2%) rose to its highest level since June 2023. This contributed to the Bank of Japan's (BoJ) decision to hike interest rates to around 0.5% in mid-January, the highest since 2008, while raising its projections for core inflation for FY24 and FY25 to 2.7% and 2.4% respectively, from 2.5% and 1.9% previously, making core inflation above the 2% target for four straight years. This has supported the yen which is currently trading at levels last seen in October 2024 while 10year government bond yields remain on an uptrend, reaching a multi-year high of more than 1.5% recently. However, the BoJ is expecting costpush price pressures to dissipate by mid-2025, supporting a positive rise in real wages, especially following the Shunto 2025 negotiation results, which the BoJ considers as key for further rate hikes. Market-implied expectations are currently split regarding another rate hike in the summer, but overall indicate at least one more 25 bps hike before year-end. Related to that, recently, the BoJ Deputy Governor Uchida mentioned that the bank plans to continue raising interest rates in line with market expectations, and remained optimistic about the country's economy. In fact, the services PMI climbed to 53.0-53.7 in January-February, sharply higher than the Q4 average (50.4) and the highest in six months, auguring well for Q1 growth. and aluminum imports - which went into effect Wednesday - could have widespread impact on manufacturers and consumers.

Here are some of the industries and products that rely on aluminum and steel:

The construction industry uses about one-third of all U.S. steel shipments, more than any other industry, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. The industry depends on a global supply chain to build everything from airports to schools to roads, according to Associated Builders and Contractors, a trade group with more than 23,000 members.

The group says some contractors were able to lock in prices on steel or aluminum ahead of the tariffs. But if they are prolonged, the import taxes will ultimately raise prices at a time when the construction industry is already struggling with higher costs for labor and materials. And uncertainty around the tariffs will make it less likely that companies will commit to big building projects, the group said. Annie Mecias-Murphy is the co-

owner and president of JA&M, a contractor for commercial buildings based in Pembroke Pines, Florida. Some of the main materials her company uses are rebar, or reinforced steel, and post-tension cables, which reinforce concrete after it's poured.

"In attempts to get ahead of the tariffs, we do try to lock in our prices and work with our trade partners and clients on different strategies," Mecias-Murphy said. "But ultimately, the rising costs make it difficult for small business owners like myself to contemplate large-scale multi-year projects."

Tin mill steel is used for a wide variety of packaging, from soup cans to hairspray. And the U.S. currently imports 70% of its tin mill steel, according to the Can Manufacturers Institute.

The institute said the more limited tariffs Trump imposed in 2018 resulted in the closure of nine tin mill lines in the U.S. as manufacturers shifted to other types of steel or simply shut down. As a result, only three U.S. tin steel lines remain open. needs of different U.S. manufacturing sectors," said Tom Madrecki, vice president of supply chain resiliency at the Consumer Brands Association.

Most of Ford, GM and Stellantis' steel and aluminum already comes from the United States, reducing the direct impact the companies would feel from higher duties.

But experts have warned that tariffs might mean the three Detroit automakers have to raise their prices. Domestic steel and aluminum producers will have to increase their capacity to meet demand or risk a short supply in the near term, making these products more expensive and driving up vehicle costs.

Another automaker who could feel the pain from tariffs: Elon Musk's Tesla. During a January earnings call, Tesla Chief Financial Officer Vaibhav Taneja noted the uncertainty around tariffs.

"The imposition of tariffs, which is very likely, ... will have an impact on our business and profitability," Taneja said.

This could be detrimental to an already inflation-sensitive American car buyer. The average transaction price for a new vehicle was just over \$48,000 last month, according to Kelley Blue Book.

And as with the steel and aluminum tariffs of Trump's first term, automakers are likely to have to revisit their financial outlooks for the year as they brace for impact.

Makers and sellers of products ranging from microwaves to dishwashers are considering how to navigate cost increases.

Some like Whirlpool, which produces 80% of what it sells in the U.S. domestically, appear to be more insulated from the tariffs. Whirlpool executives told analysts at an investor conference earlier this month that Whirlpool has locked in contracts for a minimum of one year for most of its raw materials, including steel.

But Abt, a family-owned appliance and consumer electronics store in Glenview, Illinois, received notices this week from manufacturers that said they would raise the suggested

### U.S. wholesale prices unchanged in February, in sign that inflationary pressures are easing for now

WASHINGTON, March 13, (AP): U.S. wholesale inflation decelerated last month, suggesting that price pressures are easing for now. The Labor Department reported Thursday that its producer price index - which tracks inflation before it reaches consumers - was unchanged from January after rising 0.6% the month before. Compared to a year earlier, producer prices were up 3.2%, down from a year-over-year gain of 3.7% in January.

The readout comes as President Donald Trump ramps up his trade war with a wide range of U.S. trade partners, threatening to send inflation higher. He has effectively imposed 25% taxes - tariffs - on foreign steel and aluminum and has plastered 20% levies on Chinese imports. In coming weeks, he is set to impose 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico and to introduce "reciprocal tariffs" that match

higher taxes that other countries slap on U.S. products.

On Wednesday, the Labor Department said that consumer price inflation slowed last month for the first time since September. The consumer price index was up 2.8% from a year ago, down from a 3% year-over-year increase in January. Core consumer prices rose 3.1% from a year earlier, smallest increase since April 2021.

What's On



ABK's Alfouz account.

'More savings, more chances to win'

### **ABK** announces Awatif Alzaher as Alfouz weekly draw winner

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce Awatif Abdulsamad Alzaher as the winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday, 10 March 2025. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

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

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

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner! ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday,17March 2025

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

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

#### 'Best account of its kind'

## KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2025 campaign, which is distinguished by

three chances per KD 1 for balances between KD 5,000 and less than KD 10,000, and four chances per KD1 for balances of KD 10,000 or more. Terms and conditions apply.

#### Distinguished guests attend KMA Gala Concert, applauding exceptional performances

### KMA hosts annual Winter Concert to showcase student talent

#### **By Cezary Owerkowicz** Special to the Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: People who are familiar with the desert know that, during winter, it transforms into a lush, green landscape, even blossoming. It seems this does not only apply to desert, as it is also true in the world of music. Kuwait Music Academy (KMA), proud to be the country's first professional music school, organizes the annual Winter Concert to showcase the talents of its students. This event is not only for the students, their families and friends; as music lovers and distinguished guests are also invited.

The most recent concert was held a few weeks ago at KMA's headquar-ters in Salwa. With the opening of two new branches in Mahboula (Baraka Complex) and Sabah Al-Salem (Argan Bedaya Complex), along with a growing number of participants in the Winter Music Feast, KMA decided to hold six consecutive concerts -- from 9:00 a.m. until late evening.

**Embrace Your Passion** 

At the recent logo unveiling of KMA, the Opening Festival Concerts and evening Gala; the co-founders of KMA-- Mrs. Fajer Al Mazidi and Professor Cezary, along with Director Karol Masternak, welcomed the participants and guests.

In their remarks, they emphasized that "talent is not only a treasure for families but also for communities and countries." They pointed out that talent is as precious as diamonds, so it must be discovered and nurtured with care and precision to reveal its true brilliance and beauty. This kind of work requires outstanding profes-sionals, and KMA believes that its teachers could create such a team.

**Music Family** 

Three young children -- Danah Ashkanani, Cataleya Amira Apo-daca and Jad Al Jawhari -- opened the first morning concert. Following them, dozens of children and youths performed on various instruments, including piano; string instruments (classical and electric guitar, violin and viola); and wind instruments (flute, clarinet and saxophone). They sang arias, popular songs, and even Arabic tunes, captivating an enthusiastic audience.

The performers showcased their talents either solo or alongside their colleagues and teachers, accompanied by orchestral soundtracks. The teachers -- Mr. Karol, Mrs. Kinga, Mrs. Inna, Mr. Alex, Mr. Kamil, Mr. Dmitrii and Mr. Viktor -- provided excellent support for the students. Each concert concluded with warm, extended applause and a group family photo.

This is the hallmark of KMA concerts and its daily work. It fosters a family atmosphere, which was evident in the common 'Home of Music'. Such a sense of community is reflected in the number of siblings and mer students who continue their musical education at KMA. Most notably, the first grandchild of a former Treasure of Talents program student has now joined the academy!



Small violinist Reagan Myers plays with Mr. Dmitrii.

Co-Founders of KMA Mme Fajer Al Mazidi & Prof Cezary Owerkowicz opening the Gala Concert.





Young musicians shine in KMA Winter Concert.

'Revolutionary Etude' performed by Danah Ahmed Raveaa, and an outstanding presentation of the 'Ballade Sonata' by Mr. Dmitrii, who then invited guests to next Friday's Chamber Concert, 'Viola Bouquet.' This event is expected to mark the beginning of a new chapter for KMA's activities, dedicated to music lovers in Kuwait, while showcasing KMA teachers as truly exceptional concert musicians.

#### land) and Dr. Ivan Seheda (Ukraine). Forty Kuwaiti years

The year 2025 is especially meaningful to me as it marks the 40th anniversary of my arrival in Kuwait and Seventh International Chopin Competition in Kuwait, set to take place in May 2025. This event coincides with the global celebration of the al Chonin Vear w Internatic being observed worldwide and in Poland, Chopin's homeland. Poland is also celebrating its presidency of the European Union. At the same time, Kuwait celebrates 2025 for being declared as the Arab Capital of Culture and the Capital of Arab Media, as well as the presidency of the GCC.

10

the highest expected annual return and winning chances. The second weekly draw in March, based on customers' February deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Mohammad Ayed Suroor Alotaibi, Ashraf Mohamed Elsouda Mohamed, Mohammad Khalaf Deej, Khaled Mohammed Mohammed Alherz, Fahad Mohammed Khalifa Altararwa, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Emad Abdulrahman Ali Alhuwail, Ahmad Ibrahim Abdulmajeed Hashad, Ferial Taha Ali Elkaramany, Farid Shawky Labib Agayby, Musalam Hussain Abdulnabi Alqattan, Hany Nabil Mohammad Saeed, Taghreed Ismail Mousa Siam, Abdulqader Meteib Abdulqader Mohammed, Noura Mohamed Ali Bader.

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

In addition to being a savings account, eligibility for the Al Dirwaza draws requires a minimum balance of KD 100, which must remain in the account for a full month before the weekly and monthly draws, with chances calculated based on the lowest balance of the previous month. As for the quarterly and annual draws, the amount must be maintained for two full months, with chances based on the lowest balance of the two preceding months. A key feature of the 2025 campaign is the doubling of winning chances to encourage customers to increase their deposits in the Al Dirwaza account. Customers will receive one chance per KD 1 if their lowest monthly balance is less than KD 2,000, two chances per KD 1 for balances between KD 2,000 and less than KD 5,000,

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

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

#### About KIB

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

Through a network of branches spread across the State of Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.

#### Gala Concert

The Evening Gala Concert was opened by the incredibly talented oung Kuwaiti pianist, Abdullah Almutairi; followed by Reyna Elisabeth Philip, and the courageous continuation of a family tradition by the young Polish pianist, Witold Masternak, who performed Chopin's Polonaise. The event also featured Chopin's

The audience, including several distinguished guests such as ambassadors and diplomats, warmly applauded the performers. The guests included HE Belinda Lewis (UK), HE Hans-Christian Freiher von Reibnitz (Germany), HE Eduardo Pena Heller (Mexico), HE Michal Cholewa (Pomy involvement in various activities here. Having been part of the Winter Concerts from the very beginning, I have been happy to witness their constant development and the increasing level of excellence.

After the concerts, I often reflect on how education, in all its forms, can be compared to gardening. Just as plants require nurturing, patience and care; knowledge must be cultivated with passion and love. Only then can we expect to see truly fruitful results. Postscript

KMA is excited to announce the

This is a remarkable occasion to celebrate music's power to support peaceful diversity, tolerance and rapprochement in humanity through the talented young musicians of Kuwait and the world. Music transcends boundaries, it does not translation or explanation.

Users flee X and Instagram as Meta rolls back hate speech rules

### Fediverse gaining popularity as alternative to mainstream social media

#### **By Aram Sinnreich**

**The Conversation** 

American University School of Communication

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

#### 

You've probably noticed lately that a lot of peo-ple are trying out alternatives to the big social media networks X, Instagram and Facebook. For example, after Elon Musk bought Twitter in 2022 and started allowing far more disinformation and hateful content on the site, renamed X, advertisers and users started backing away. More recently, Meta's decision to roll back hate speech rules has prompted many people to consider leaving Instagram and Facebook.

Some of the most popular new destinations include "federated" services like Mastodon and Pixelfed, as well as the quasi-federated Bluesky. Federated means decentralized - rather than one central service, like X, federated systems have tens of thousands of servers. They also tend to be nonprofit and community-run.

Federated services, otherwise known as "the fediverse," have been hailed as a network for public communication, dialogue and debate, where ordinary people, not corporations, shape their social spaces, and where advertisers, hate speech and intrusive algorithms are much easier to avoid. News organizations, nonprofits, universities and even governments have experimented with the fediverse and Bluesky, partially or even completely shifting their social media presence away from X.

However, as we, researchers who study media and communications, and our coauthors Thomas Struett and Patricia Aufderheide describe in a recently published paper, history provides numerous examples of other promising platforms for the digital public sphere that have died untimely deaths. We identified potential pitfalls from these

examples and ways to avoid them.

We identified three such challenges: too many cooks, commercial capture and guilt by association

One nice thing about the big social media platforms is you know who's in charge.

But instead of centralizing power like Meta or X, the fediverse has a distributed governance structure. While decentralized governance helps the fediverse avoid some of the pitfalls associated with the big social media platforms, like political censorship and surveillance capitalism, it introduces other risks that must be addressed before the fediverse can serve as a worthy replacement.

In short, when too many cooks are in charge, it's hard to make a good meal. Take content moderation, for example. The fediverse offers great tools for blocking, and built-in codes of conduct, but these tools are specific to individual "instances" the tens of thousands of fediverse servers. Who decides who gets blocked? With no central authority, governance is in the hands of fediverse members, who use hashtags like #fediblock to loosely coordinate. And that means people who are more likely to be harassed also end up having to do more of the work to prevent harassment.

The fediverse, like email or the web itself, is open source. It was also developed with no input from the big social media platforms. But its origins won't necessarily prevent the big platforms from taking over.

Look what happened to email, for instance. Once upon a time, there were thousands of different email providers. But today, nearly everyone is on Google's Gmail and Microsoft's Outlook, mostly because those companies added extra bells and whistles and sold email as a part of larger packages to employers, schools and other organizations.

This could easily happen again. Meta has al-

ready used fediverse protocols for its new microblogging service, Threads. While this helps Threads and Mastodon users to communicate, it also means Meta has a vested interest in shaping the technology's future, in ways that might conflict with the hopes of today's fediverse users - especially those who just fled Instagram and Facebook.

While some social media companies might seek to capture the fediverse, others might seek to undermine its reputation by highlighting some of its unsavory uses. This has happened with several beneficial alternative technologies in the past, such as peer-to-peer file sharing, the dark web and endto-end encryption.

The fediverse is already facing such challenges. In 2023, researchers at Stanford University published a report suggesting that child sexual abuse material can easily find a home on the fediverse. Couple this with claims from researchers that "toxic content is prevalent and spreads rapidly" across the fediverse, and a terrifying narrative emerges in which child sexual abuse material is spreading out of control.

Though this content could flourish in pockets of the fediverse, the scary scenario of prevalent child sexual abuse material is not the case. There are many moderation tools, including shared blocklists, that prevent it. However, the idea that the fediverse is full of harmful content was used by Elon Musk to justify his anti-competitive decision to block links from X to Mastodon.

We're still bullish on the fediverse, and on Bluesky, if it manages to become a truly federated platform.

But democratized tech doesn't guarantee democratic outcomes.

If these platforms are going to deliver on their promise, it's important to learn from the mistakes of the past. That will mean users putting in the work to make sure they remain safe, accessible, noncommercial and well respected. (AP)

# Features



Actor embraces new challenges, friendships in 'Dope Thief'

## For busy Henry, project breaks are as good as rest

LOS ANGELES, March 13, (AP): If you ask **Brian Tyree** Henry about taking time off, he bursts out laughing. Since breaking out as rapper Paper Boi in the FX series (Arther Structure) about, Henry was read

"Atlanta," he's become one of the busiest actors in Hollywood. He's worked consistently - with directors including Barry Jenkins, Steve McQueen and Chloe Zhao and big-name actors like Brad Pitt, Jennifer Lawrence, Chris Hemsworth and Melissa McCarthy. Henry's been nominated for two Primetime Emmy Awards, a Tony Award and an Oscar.

His latest role is in the limited series "Dope Thief" for Apple TV+ premiering Friday. Henry and Wagner Moura play Ray and Manny, two longtime friends in Philadelphia who pose as federal agents, conducting fake raids to steal drugs and money. It's a series of easy scores until they rob the wrong people and become targets themselves. Soon they're hiding out from the real DEA and a drug kingpin while trying to keep their family safe.

"The minute that Wagner and I met each other, it was an instant electricity... We just felt like we knew each other all our lives," said Henry. "That is exactly what you needed for Ray and Manny.

The first episode was directed by Ridley Scott, and the series was created and written by Peter Craig, adapted from a novel by Dennis Tafoya.

Craig describes Henry's versatility as an actor as "like a jazz musician... It's fantastic for a writer, because you can throw him all kinds of added moments, and he'll incorpo-

When the opportunity to star in "Dope Thief" came about, Henry was ready for that long-awaited break - from TV. He wrapped "Atlanta" and had "about two days off" before going into another FX show, "Class of '09," where he played a character's past, present and future, and he was exhausted.

"Television is hard, you know? Like, I hear myself complaining about it; I know it's a first world problem, but you get very attached when you're doing a series. You're living with the character for quite a long time."

#### **Prosthetics**

So, there Henry was at 3 a.m. on a night shoot of "Class of '09," wearing prosthetics as his character's future self, when his manager presented him with the script for "Dope Thief." "Within the first 10 pages I was incredibly attracted to Ray and also the bond he has with Manny.'

Time off otherwise really hasn't been his thing (hence the laughter), but Henry is quick to remind that he's had two long breaks from acting. One was during the lockdown phase of the pandemic, and the other was during the Hollywood strikes.

"When you're a person that's constantly on the move and the universe tells you to sit your (expletive) down, you kind of have to listen," said Henry. "I don't think I would

have stopped had the universe not said stop.' Production was underway on "Dope Thief" when the

Hollywood guild strikes were called in 2023. Henry opted to stay in Philadelphia.

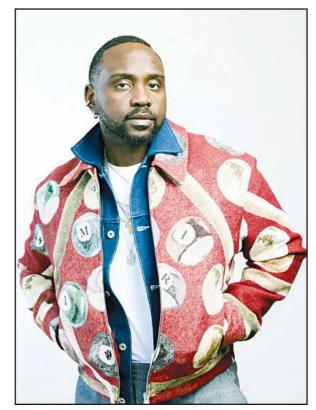
"I didn't go anywhere. I made sure to be there just in case," said Henry, who for the first time was an execu-tive producer on the project. He wanted to be close in proximity to his local crew. They had a cookout with bouncy castles. "I would explore, or we'd go tubing and I would drive to this little town called New Hope that has a wonderful ice cream shop called Moo Hope. It was truly amazing to be present and experience that part of life for myself."

Henry doesn't just bond with the crew on his sets but actors too, often walking away with new friends who happen to be very famous, like, say, Julia Roberts - whom he's currently filming a movie with in London. "She's somebody I truly cherish," he said.

"It's never going to stop being weird to me," Henry ad-mits. "The part that is really hard for me - that I'm still fighting with - is when they tell me they're fans of my stuff and I'm just like, 'Shut up!' I literally say it to their face." The biggest revelation about working alongside these

accomplished actors is that Henry is now one of them.

"At the end of the day, now, these are my peers, these are my contemporaries, and I can't continue to act like they're not. I can't continue to act like I have to shrink myself to fit in these spaces. I no longer have to do that. And what I also love is that they'll reaffirm that for me, too ... and that's the great part.'



Brian Tyree Henry poses for a portrait on Feb. 26, 2025, in New York. (AP)

## Film to explore untold tale of Donald Goines

Murder mystery

DETROIT, March 13, (AP): Who killed Donald Goines?

Producers of a documentary on the life of the prisoner-turned urban fiction writer of novels about the violence, drugs and prostitution that he surrounded himself with in Detroit are hoping the answer hasn't been lost to time - or the streets.

It's been more than 50 years since Goines and his common-law wife, Shirley Sailor, were found shot to death on Oct. 21, 1974 in their flat in Highland Park, a small enclave of Detroit. Each had been shot five times. Their two young children were home at the time of the killings.

Goines was 37.

No arrests were made and rumors swelled. Some speculated the killings had something to do with Goines' heroin addiction. Others nodded to the theory that the fictional subjects of his novels appeared a bit too much like the real-life hustlers, pimps, drug dealers and stickup men who prowled the city's streets.

"There have been at least a half-dozen, quite possibly a dozen, elements of speculation as to how Mr. Goines and the mother of his children were murdered," said Bill Proctor, a private investigator hired to find the killer or killers. "But no one has come forward with enough information to charge the persons responsible."

Proctor said a \$5,000 reward being offered by the producers of the documentary might help "shake the trees" and find "someone who might still be alive or have an understanding" of the facts of the case.

Goines wrote 16 books over a span of several short years. His raw, stark and undiluted writings are filled with the urban street life imagery of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

"Dopefiend," was published in 1971. Fifteen more including "Street Players," "Daddy Cool" and "Kenyatta's Last Hit," would follow over the next three years. The titles and the content resonated with many Black readers, especially in Detroit where Goines' books often held prominence on living room coffee tables and bookshelves.

Film



#### Visualize

"When I read his books, I can visualize - I can picture what he's writing about," said his daughter, Donna Sailor. "He was so descriptive about what he wrote. That's kind of like how it was back then."

Donna Sailor was 2 when her parents were killed. She doesn't remember anything about the shooting or her parents.

"We would see friends of the family that knew my dad and my mom," Sailor, 52, told The Asso-ciated Press Thursday. "They would say she was a sweetheart, and she was funny and had a great smile.'

Less information about Goines was volunteered, though, she added.

"No one ever went into great detail about him. They would say he was a nice guy," said Sailor.

The urban lit genre dates back at least to 1967, and the release of the memoir "Pimp," written by Robert Maupin, who also was in jail when he began writing under the name Iceberg Slim. Maupin built a large word-of-mouth following and one of his readers was Goines. Generations later, hip-hop stars like Tupac Shakur were also inspired by the books and have referenced Goines and Iceberg Slim in their recordings. Shakur even once declared: "Machiavelli was my tutor, Donald Goines my father figure."

Goines' parents owned a clothes-cleaning and other businesses in Detroit and were part of the city's Black middle class. He enlisted in the Air Force and spent time in Korea and Japan during the Korean War. It was there Goines became addicted to heroin, according to various reports on his life.

After his time in the military, Goines returned to Detroit in the mid-1950s. He drifted into the city's criminal underbelly, finding himself jailed for various crimes.

Holloway House published Goines' novels from 1971 to 2008, according to current publisher Kensington.

Under Kensington, Goines books have sold about 500,000 copies in print, alone. He consistently is one of Kensington's top reordered authors and his books have been "selling at a stronger pace" since it launched a reissue program in 2020, according to the company.



Donna Sailor poses next to poster of upcoming documentary about the life of her father and urban literature writer Donald Goines on March 12, 2025 in Detroit. (AP)



This image released by Focus Features shows Cate Blanchett in a scene from 'Black Bag.' (AP)

Soderbergh's film delivers tension and intrigue

## 'Black Bag' crackles as a sleek spy thriller

LOS ANGELES, March 13, (AP): If you're hosting a dinner for half a dozen British intelligence agents with the aim of ferreting out a mole, what should you cook?

For George Woodhouse (Michael Fassbender), who's preparing for four colleagues, plus himself and his wife, Kathryn St. Jean (Cate Blanchett), who, like him, is a high-level operative, it's chana masala with a few drops of truth serum. Will there be any mess to clean up?" Kathryn asks her husband as they're getting ready.

"With any luck," he responds.

So goes much of the crackling patter of "Black Bag," Steven Soderbergh's delicious marital drama cloaked as a sleek spy thriller. Lean and taut, the 93-minute "Black Bag" is more a sizzling amuse-bouche than full-course meal, but it's simmered to perfection.

George and Kathryn, as fellow agents at London's National Cyber Security Centre, don't seemingly have what you might call a traditional marriage. Each has their own secret ops, leaving large swaths of their lives off limits to the other. When George asks where Kathryn is flying off to on Wednesday, she shrugs with a smile, "Black bag

In the movie's opening scene - a slinky tracking shot that trails George into and out of a nightclub - an agent named Meacham (Gustaf Skarsgard) gives him the assignment to track down the mole, with the added wrinkle that Kathryn can't be dismissed as a possible suspect. A cyber-worm device called Severus that's capable of hacking into nuclear facilities has gone missing. The fate of the world, as it so often is, is said to be at stake.

But, really, the state of George and Kathryn's marriage is what interests us. Extreme though their situation is, their union is one that, like any couple, is built on trust and devotion, even if their professional lives demand the inverse. When George, lying on top of Kathryn tells her he'd do any-thing for her, she coos, "Would you kill?" It's a fair-enough test to the bounds of wedded bliss, sure, but her second question matters even more. "Would you lie?"

Over that dinner - a scintillating set piece around a darkened dinner table inside their London town house - we can quickly gather just how much the truth means to George. He's renown for his powers with a polygraph. As a youngster, he even brought down his own father, uncovering his affair. "I don't like liars,' George says through clenched teeth.

#### Relationships

They're joined by Colonel James Stokes (Regé-Jean Page); the in-house psychologist Dr. Zoe Vaughan (Naomie Harris); the carousing spy Freddie Smalls (Tom Burke); and the newest NCSC recruit, cyber specialist Clarissa (Marisa Abela). Both are paired off in clandestine relationships that quickly emerge, among other secrets. More than state secrets, infidelity dominates the conversation.

Fassbender's spook is an agent of precision. He wears gleaming black-framed glasses. When only a few drops of sauce land on his cuff, he immediately withdraws to change his shirt. Hard as it would seem, Fassbender has found a character almost as dispassionate and monotone as his methodical assassin in David Fincher's "The Killer."

This time, though, he's not a loner. Blanchett's Kathryn is kept more at a remove from us. She's mysterious and aloof - a femme fatale, maybe, we're led to wonder. An "aroma of hostility" accompanies her, Zoe tells her in a psych evaluation. Is she the mole?

This is an insular film, taking place mainly in crisply composed interiors, aside from the lake George occasionally fishes for bass in. There, in a fitting encapsulation of a movie full of smooth surfaces with currents twisting underneath, the camera gently rests on the water's surface.

"Black Bag" follows a run of agilely directed thrillers by Soderbergh made with screenwriter David Koepp ( "Pres-"Kimi"). They are both at the height of their almostence," too-easy powers; the script, especially, is peppered with delectable dialogue. Their movie adopts the air of menace and suspicion of a John Le Carré novel, yet hinges on the sturdiness of its married couple, like a super spy version of Nick and Nora from "The Thin Man" or a more cerebral "Mr. & Mrs. Smith."

All of the supporting players - while they make up a fine ensemble - are ultimately playthings in their game of love. In a casting coup, a former James Bond - Pierce Brosnan - drops in late in the film as Arthur Stheiglitz, the head of NCSC. In his handful of scenes, Brosnan is rageful and ferocious, chomping into both Ikizukuri (prepared live fish) and the scenery.

His presence both enlivens a movie already humming with the uber-cool chemistry of Blanchett and Fassbender while transforming "Black Bag" into a twisty rejoinder to that notoriously skirt-chasing spy. Here, Mr. Bond, is how sexy monogamy can be.

While directing a satellite to peer down upon his wife on some unknown mission in Europe, George explains their mystifying dynamic to Clarissa: "I watch her, and she watches me. If she gets into trouble, I will do everything in my power to extricate her."

In her response, Clarissa speaks for everyone: "That's so hot.

"Black Bag," a Focus Features release is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for language including some sexual references, and some violence. Running time: 93 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

#### Variety

#### WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.: President Donald Trump's team is already looking for locations for his presidential library,

and Florida may be a top contender. A Florida legislator said Monday that the state has a "high likelihood" of getting its first presidential library.

Presidential libraries are significant for post-administration historical archives depicting materials from a former president's term. They require years of planning and don't use federal funding.

The state Senate Rules Committee on Wednesday unanimously backed Sen. Jason Brodeur's bill that he said would "prevent any municipality or county from imposing frivolous obstacles to the establishment of a presidential library within the state."

Brodeur said other states that built presidential libraries had construction roadmaps created to follow state and local laws, and Florida would need the same. He also said all former presidents are welcome to put a presidential library in Flor-

ida, not just Trump. "I anticipate that this will be a pretty popular attraction. It is somebody who's likely even the most famous developer in the world right now," he said. Brodeur's bill

comes as Trump's team is looking at several South Florida

universities - including Florida Atlantic University and Florida International University - as potential spots for a presidential library. A secretary at the FAU president's of-

Trump

fice said she had not heard of any plans for a presidential library and declined to comment further. Spokespeople for FAU and FIU, and the White House press office didn't immediately respond to messages about possible plans for a presidential library. (AP)

#### 

NEW YORK: 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 was not a part of the first case.

But at a key pretrial hearing Wednesday, the disgraced movie mogul's lawyers cautioned that because Weinstein's 2020 rape and sexual assault conviction was overturned, the past isn't prologue - it's almost entirely irrelevant.

"We can take that transcript and all the judge's rulings and throw them in the garbage," Weinstein's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, argued. "That trial was declared illegal by the highest court in this state.'

New York's Court of Appeals threw out Weinstein's conviction last year, setting the stage for a retrial in state court in Manhattan. In September, another charge was added based on allegations from a third accuser. The trial will start April 15 and prosecutors say it could take about five weeks.

How the retrial will play out began to take shape Wednesday as Judge Curtis Farber ruled on a number of outstanding issues, including expert testimony and the language used to describe the accusers.

Farber granted a prosecution request to call a psychologist, Dawn Hughes, as an expert witness on the psychological and traumatic effects of rape and sexual assault. Hughes previously testified for actor Amber Heard at Johnny Depp's libel trial against Heard in 2022 and as a prosecution witness in singer R. Kelly's federal sex trafficking trial in Brooklyn in 2021.

The judge also granted a defense request to preclude the term "survivor" from being used to describe Weinstein's accusers. He told prosecutors to instruct any police officers who testify to refer to the women as "complaining witnesses" instead. (AP)

## IFTAR INDULGENCE

## SAVOR THE FLAVOR OF MEXICO: TRADITIONAL BARBACOA RECIPE

Embassy of Mexico in Kuwait is delighted to present an THE authentic taste of Mexico with this traditional barbacoa recipe. This beloved dish, known for its rich and robust flavors, is a true testament to Mexico's culinary heritage.

#### The Origin of Lamb Barbecue in Mexico

Barbacoa has deep roots in Mexican history, originating from the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and Mesoamerica. Traditionally, this dish was prepared by slow-cooking meat in a pit, a technique that allowed the flavors to meld and the meat to become incredibly tender. However, the story of barbacoa extends beyond its origins. Its journey through history reflects a fascinating blend of culinary traditions from diverse cultures.

The technique of cooking meat in a pit was influenced by the arrival of Spanish colonizers, who brought their own traditions of slow-cooked meats, along with the influences of Arabic cuisine. Arabic traders introduced the concept of slow-cooked, spiced meats to the Iberian Peninsula, which was then adapted by Spanish settlers in the Americas. This cross-cultural exchange gave rise to the barbacoa we cherish today.

In Mexico, barbacoa has evolved to include local ingredients and techniques. One distinctive element is the use of maquey leaves (also known as maguey or agave leaves), which are used to wrap and cook the meat. This method imparts a unique, smoky flavor, enhancing the meat's tenderness and adding depth that is quintessential to Mexican barbacoa. Additionally, the slow-cooking process with maquey leaves produces a delicious consomé (a rich broth) that accompanies the dish and adds another layer of flavor.

On August 13, 2024, the community of Dajiedhi in the municipality of Actopan, Hidalgo, made history by breaking the Guinness World Record for the largest barbecue. This remarkable achievement attracted over 10,000 attendees, showcasing the region's commitment to its culinary heritage and solidifying Hidalgo's reputation as the cradle of traditional Mexican barbecue.

Traditionally, barbacoa is prepared by slow-cooking meat in a pit underground, a method that melds flavors beautifully and results in incredibly tender meat. For those without access to a pit, barbacoa can also be deliciously prepared in a slow cooker, making this beloved dish accessible to home cooks everywhere.

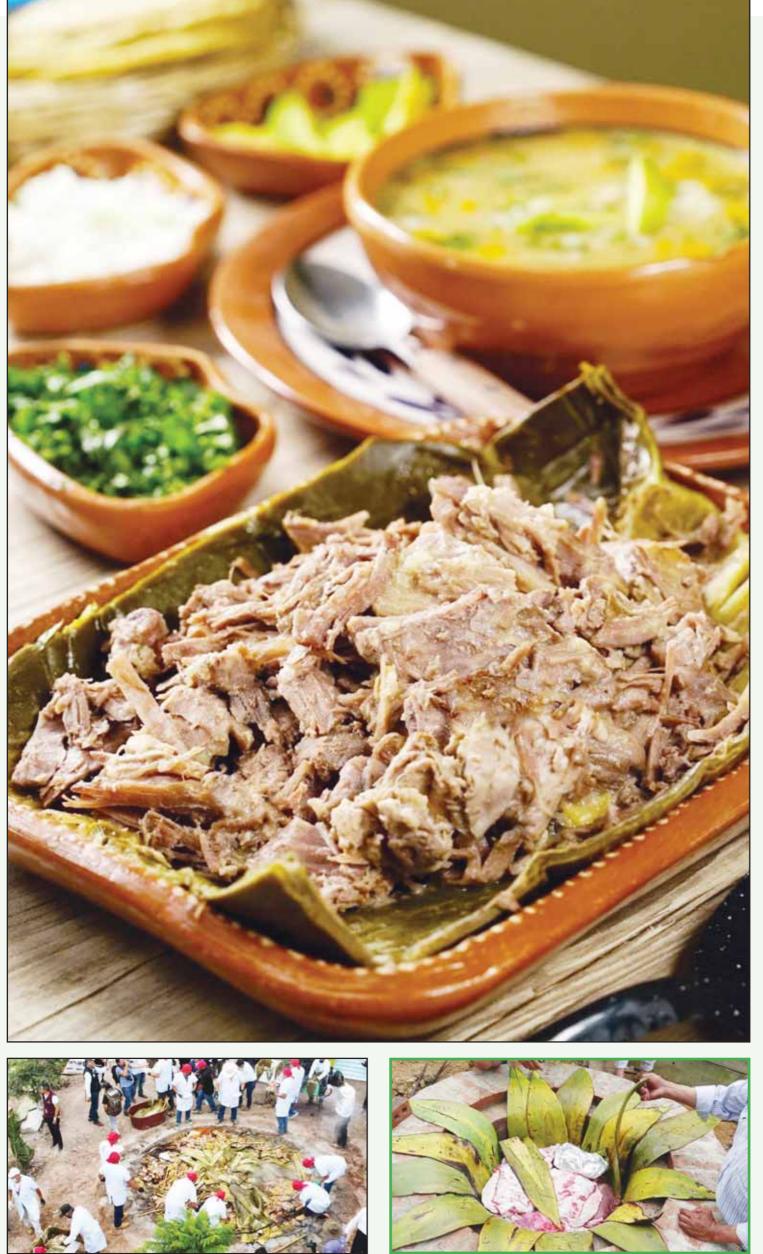
## **REGIONAL SPECIALTIES**

The art of cooking barbacoa varies across Mexico, but one region is renowned for its exceptional barbacoa: Hidalgo. In Hidalgo, barbacoa is traditionally prepared in a pit, lined with maquey leaves, which imparts an unparalleled flavor and tenderness to the meat. The state is celebrated for its barbacoa festivals, where locals showcase their skills and offer a taste of this time-honored tradition.

Experience the essence of Mexican culture and cuisine with this barbacoa recipe. It's perfect for a hearty meal that brings people together and celebrates the vibrant traditions of Mexico.



His Excellency Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller, Ambassador of Mexico





#### **Ingredients:**

• 3 pounds lamb shoulder, trimmed of excess fat and cut into 2-inch chunks

• 4 cloves garlic, finely minced

• 2 chipotles in adobo sauce, finely chopped

- 1 (4-ounce) can diced green chiles
- 1 small white onion, finely chopped



- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin

• 1 tablespoon dried Mexican oregano (or standard dried oregano)

• 2 teaspoons fine sea salt

• 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

• 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

• 1/2 cup beef stock or water Instructions:

1. Slow Cook: Combine all ingredients in the bowl of a slow cooker. Toss gently to mix. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours, or on high for 3-4 hours, until the lamb is tender and shreds easily with a fork.

2. Shred and Soak: Shred the lamb into bite-sized pieces using two forks, right inside the slow cooker. Toss the meat with the juices, then cover and let it soak for an additional 10 minutes. Discard the bay leaves.

3. Serve: Use tongs or a slotted spoon to serve the barbacoa. Enjoy the deep, flavorful taste of this traditional Mexican delight!

**ENJOY AND RAMADAN MUBARAK!** 

## **HEALTH/SCIENCE**

The Conversation

Tuberculosis surges again

## **'TB resurgence' leaves** health experts puzzled

#### By Karen Dobos & Marcela Henao-Tamayo

Colorado State University The Conversation is an inde-pendent and nonprofit source

of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

#### 

An outbreak of tuberculosis, or TB - a lung disease that is often accompanied by a hacking cough - began in January 2024 in Kansas City, Kansas, and two nearby counties and continues as of early March 2025. To date, 147 people have been reportedly diagnosed with TB in the outbreak. with 67 becoming ill. The remain-ing 80 people diagnosed with TB in Kansas contracted the illness but showed no symptoms, which is called a latent infection.

TB is the leading infectious cause of death around the world, outpaced only by COVID-19 during the first

three years of the pandemic. The Conversation asked mi-crobiologists Karen Dobos and Marcela Henao-Tamayo, both from Colorado State University, to explain why this ancient disease seems to be making a comeback.

Mycobacterium tuberculosis is the organism that causes the disease tuberculosis in humans. The disease has been infecting humans for thousands of years. Researchers found evidence of the disease 9,000 years ago in the excavated remains of people who lived in the Eastern Mediterranean region during that time.

Reports of TB date back to around 410-400 B.C.E., when the physician Hippocrates termed the disease phthisis, an archaic word that means a progressive "wasting away," due to the way people with the disease become emaciated.

TB was also known as consumption for the same reason. Similarly, it was called the white plague or white death - due to anemia from the disease, with people appearing pallid or chalky - leading to nearcertain death. Untreated active TB, meaning cases that are symptomatic, is highly lethal. About half of all people with

untreated active TB die from the disease, whereas treatment reduces the death rate to 12%.

#### Condition

One of the more colorful phrases describing TB is "the king's evil." This is a form of TB that also causes neck swelling and lesions, a condition called scrofula. During the Middle Ages, people believed that the touch of a king could cure a person from this form of TB through miraculous intervention. recognized as World TB Day.

Tuberculosis is spread by small infectious droplets in the air. A TB patient may emit these droplets by coughing, singing and potentially from regular breathing that occurs during sleep or resting.

One form of TB can be spread through unpasteurized dairy products. While rare, there have been reports of TB transmission through bone grafts, in which healthy, donated bone material is used to replace damaged bones.

The origin of the TB outbreak in Kansas remains unknown as of early March 2025.

Importantly, a patient with untreated TB can infect 10 to 15 others.

The COVID-19 pandemic has played a pivotal role in the resurgence of TB. Cases increased globally by 4.6% from 2020 to 2023, reversing decades of steady declines in the disease. In the U.S. alone, TB cases rose by more than 15% from 2022 to 2023.

#### Deaths

During mandatory shutdowns, people were less able to access health care centers for early diagnosis of TB or to fill prescriptions for treatment, perhaps due to the fear of contracting COVID-19 while visiting a medical care facil-ity. COVID-19-related disruptions in care resulted in nearly 700,000 excess deaths from TB.

Access to health care may not be the only factor behind this uptick. Medical supply shortages and delays in shipment may have also played a role. For example, the U.S. experienced shortages of one of the primary TB drugs between 2021 and 2023.

Multidrug treatment is currently the only way to cure TB and stop its spread.

Prior to the late 1930s, when the first antibiotic for TB treatment was developed, TB treatments included bloodletting and consumption of cod liver oil. The most popular treatment involved isolated sanatoriums in high-altitude areas such as the Adirondacks and the Rocky Mountains, where the cold, dry air was believed to be a cure. Scholars at the time suggested that the potential for cure was due to these environments being more invigorating for the body and provid-ing more restful sleep. There is no evidence to support these beliefs.

Streptomycin was the first antibiotic treatment to become available for TB, in the 1940s. However, the microorganism quickly became drug resistant. A second antibiotic, called isoniazid, was developed as a first-line treatment against TB in the 1950s. Again, the microorgan-

#### Poultry vaccination may help prevent virus spread

## US considers bird flu vaccines to avoid culling

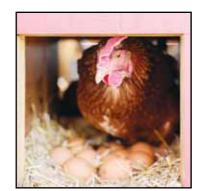
OMAHA, Neb., March 13, (AP): Vaccines could be a key means of suppressing bird flu and avoiding the slaughter of millions of chickens, which is blamed for egg prices averag-ing nearly \$6 a dozen. But the move has been delayed in part because of concerns it could jeopardize chicken exports worth billions of dollars a year. The US Department of Agriculture

has announced plans to spend \$100 million to study bird flu vaccines to fight the disease in concert with meat chicken, egg and turkey groups. That's part of a larger \$1 billion effort to invest in more protections to keep the virus off farms that President Donald Trump believes will help lower egg prices.

Chicken meat producers remain the most resistant to vaccines because of concerns they could harm meat exports, which totaled nearly \$4.7 billion last year. Egg and turkey producers sell most of their products in the US and have been hit hardest by the virus. Without a new policy including vac-

cines, the government will continue to slaughter every flock with a bird flu infection to limit the spread of the dis-

#### Awareness vital



A Red Star hen, a hybrid breed that lays large brown eggs, stands on eggs inside her coop at Historic Wagner Farm, Feb. 7, 2025, in Glenview, Ill. (AP)

ease. Those deaths have totaled over 166 million birds in the US since 2022.

Most birds killed are egg-laying chickens, and the death of so many hens is the main reason egg prices keep rising. The average price per dozen has hit \$5.90, and in some part of the country, it is far higher.

Poultry veterinarian Simon Shane, who runs www.Egg-News.com, said the government is hesitant to use vaccines and change its policy of kill-ing birds largely because of the meat chicken industry's opposition. "Basically this is a political issue,

and this only came to a head because eggs are at \$8 to \$9 a dozen, and it's embarrassing the government - embarrassing the present administration," Shane said.

Before using vaccinations, the gov-ernment must decide how to devise an effective system and monitor for outbreaks within vaccinated flocks that might not show any symptoms, said John Clifford, the USDA's former longtime chief veterinary officer, who now works with a poultry industry export group. Once that is figured out, the industry can negotiate with countries to minimize trade problems.

"What the industry wants is the ability to develop the strategic plan to share that with the trading partners and then find out what kind of impact that that will have on trade," Clifford said. There are fears that vaccinating

could allow the virus to linger unde-

tected in flocks and mutate in ways that could make it more of a threat to humans and allow sick birds to get into the food supply. Like with other diseases, properly cooking chicken to 165 degrees Fahrenheit (74 degrees Celsius) will kill bird flu, but the industry and chicken buyers don't want it there at all.

For meat chicken, known as broilers, the virus isn't as significant because those birds are slaughtered at 6 to 8 weeks old and thus have less chance of being infected compared with egg-laying hens, which live to 2 years or older. Also most broilers are raised in the Southeast, which hasn't had as many outbreaks as the Midwest and West.

Another delay to vaccinating concerns distribution. Egg farmers want to administer it through chicken feed or water, saying it's not practical to give shots to millions of birds in a single barn.

It can also be difficult to tell the difference between a vaccinated bird and one that has been sick with the virus. That would make other countries nervous about importing meat.

Alzheimer's deaths exceed breast and prostate cancer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., March 13, (Agencies): New Mexico has paired up with the Alzheimer's Association in a pilot US initiative aimed at raising awareness about a disease that affects several million people across the nation, including family members and friends who often provide countless hours of unpaid care.

The joint campaign - a year in the making - features billboards, digital ads and social media posts. It was unveiled Wednesday, days after authorities confirmed that actor Gene Hackman died at his Santa Fe home of heart disease with complications from Alzheimer's disease.

Hackman, like the majority of people with Alzheimer's and related dementias, lived at home. His wife, Betsy Arakawa, was his caregiver but died from hantavirus, a rare, rodent-borne disease. Experts believe Hackman, in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's, was unable to seek help.

The goal of the new partnership between the state and the Alzheimer's Association is to spark conversations within families and to educate the public on warning signs and treatments. It also aims to publicize support services for family members and other caregivers.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 7 million people are living with the disease in the US, where Alzheimer's is the seventh-leading cause of death. In New Mexico, estimates put the number of people with the disease at 46,000, with another 67,000 family members providing care at home within the last year. Alzheimer's kills more people in the US than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined, according to statistics shared by the Alzheimer's Association, which is helping to fund research projects in dozens of countries around the world. One of the challenges is that only about half of the people who are living with the disease are ever diagnosed, said Jim Herlihy, a spokesperson for the association's Rocky Mountain region. The number of undiagnosed people is higher in communities of color. ĥe said.

lihy describes as a glacial pace. "People think of this as either an

old person's disease or something that happens to somebody else," Herlihy said. "And unless it's happened in your family and you have seen a loved one decline from this disease, or you have been put into the role of being a caregiver, you don't realize the impact that this has.'

The nonprofit association published a special report last year detailing the importance of families mapping out a plan for care, acknowledging that it can be a complex maze involving social services, medications and specialists

The billboards and ads are simple. One of them pictures a caution sign in the road that reads: "Honey, you've been confused." The messages urge people to talk about it and to visit a website that includes a hotline for those who don't know where to start.

A significant percentage of New Mexico's population is aging, which has spurred officials to find ways to educate and prepare state residents. In addition to the awareness campaign, the state is planning a series of community forums on the subject this spring in rural areas with high rates of the disease.

Mental health: A new report published on Thursday highlighted the growing struggles of young Australians, who are facing mounting financial stress, worsening mental health, and declining confidence in political



Self-developed humanoid robots officially debut in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province on Dec. 27, 2024. (Xinhua)

#### Elderly care, labor shortage

Robotics job fair unveils AI healthcare solutions

CHENGDU, March 13, (Xinhua): Authorities in Chengdu city, a sci-tech hub in southwest China, have unveiled their inaugural demand lists for hospital and senior care robotics at a special job fair for robots.

The pioneering event, hosted by the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology, civil affairs bureau, and health commission on Wednesday, highlighted Chengdu's ambition to become a national hub for robotics innovation while addressing labor shortages through automation.

The elderly care demand lists features 22 categories of robots spanning daily life assistance, rehabilitation nursing, safety patrols, and emotional companionship, and involves five projects across four institutions, according

healthcare demands.

Zhang described the event as a "mutually beneficial exploration," bridging tech developers and end-users.

Zhang's employer is among nine institutions piloting robots for tasks such as patient guidance and logistics.

'Opening up real-world scenarios as 'testing grounds' allows us to discover smarter robots gradually," he explained, noting that adoption starts with basic tasks like disinfection before scaling to complex roles.

Chengdu's government aims to accelerate this synergy. The municipal bureau of economy and information technology outlined plans to leverage the city's healthcare strengths to create a "demand-driven, scenario-validated" ecosystem

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Finally, TB was most ominously

called the "robber of youth" due to its historical propensity to afflict people 15 to 30 years old.

In 1865, Jean Antoine Villemin, an army physician in Paris, demonstrated that TB could be transmitted from infected animals to healthy ones through inoculation. Before these studies, the cause of TB was presumed to be primarily constitutional, by either an inherent predisposition or from unhealthy or immoral lifestyles.

The microorganism causing TB was ultimately discovered in 1882 by the German physician Robert Koch. Koch announced his findings on March 24, 1882, a day globally ism became drug resistant.

Two- and four-drug combinations are now used to treat both latent infections and active disease. Treatment of active TB requires at least six months of uninterrupted therapy. Disruptions in treatment result in further spread of TB and the emergence of multidrug resistant TB, which requires additional drugs and more than nine months of treatment.

All TB drugs are toxic; the qual-ity of life for TB patients deteriorates during treatment and remains so throughout their lives. Finding cases and treating TB illness early, before symptoms begin, is important because it not only reduces the spread of disease but also greatly reduces drug toxicity. (AP)

Neurologists say it can take 20 years from the start of the disease taking shape in the brain to when it becomes recognizable and diagnosed, what Her-

ads on

this page

The cost of living has now surpassed

all other concerns, becoming their top priority, according to the study conducted by researchers from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Curtin University

The study's report, which surveyed Australians aged 14 to 25, sheds light Australians aged 14 to 20, shous light on their biggest challenges and the changes they want to see. Alongside economic hardship, mental health, and education reform, the report also emphasizes their role in driving social change, particularly in addressing discrimination, racism, and gender inequality.

Report co-author Prof. Astghik Ma-visakalyan called for policy changes to better support young people, who are grappling with financial uncertainty and increasing mental health struggles.

Foreign Body removal

to the municipal bureau of economy and information technology.

For hospitals, needs ranged from medical assistance and drug delivery to AI-powered diagnostics and precision rehabilitation, spanning 10 projects at nine medical centers.

Zhang Long, deputy director of the Information Department at Chengdu Seventh People's Hospital, arrived with a specific request: sanitation robots.

"Traditional manual disinfection is inefficient. We need smart devices to replace repetitive, single-task jobs," he said, reflecting a broader shift toward automation in public health.

As a "scenario builder," Zhang emphasized Chengdu's growing reliance on advanced robotics like surgical and rehabilitation assistants to meet rising Earlier, it identified 87 robotics

products from 31 companies in its first supply catalog, enabling targeted match at the event.

Local tech startups also seized the opportunity to pitch cutting-edge solutions.

At the job fair, Feng Rui, chairman of a local technology company, entered wearing a helmet-like brain-computer interface device.

"This equipment is primarily used for autism screening. Today, I am here to seek 'partners'," he said plainly.

"Brain-control technology is an integral part of the robotics industry chain. There are several companies here that we can collaborate with," Feng noted, expressing his desire to find more testing grounds for the company's research and development products.

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## **SPORTS**

## **Oklahoma City sweeps Celtics to clinch playoff berth**



San Antonio Spurs guard De'Aaron Fox (4) scores past Dallas Mavericks forward Caleb Martin (16) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Antonio, (AP)

#### Bid to keep boxing in the Olympics enhanced

## World Boxing adds China, 5 more to its growing membership

WASHINGTON, March 13, (AP): World Boxing has added China to its growing list of members, reaching another major goal in its quest to keep boxing in the Olympics.

The still-new governing body also announced the additions of the national federations of Turkey, Sudan, Greece, Slovakia and Montenegro on Wednesday. World Boxing now has 84 national federations among its membership after having only 37 at the conclusion of the Paris Olympics seven months ago.

The Chinese Boxing Federation's decision to join is yet another positive sign for World Boxing, which received provisional recognition from the IOC last month as the new governing body for the sport ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"The addition of six more members to our ever-increasing membership is further evidence of the widespread support that exists across our sport for the work that World Boxing is doing to deliver a better future for boxers and ensure that boxing remains at the heart of the Olympic movement," World Boxing president Boris Van Der Vorst said.

World Boxing was founded in April 2023 in an attempt to preserve the sport's Olympic future after the International Boxing Association was suspended in 2019 and banished from the Olympic movement in 2023 following decades of judging scandals, bizarre leadership decisions and innumerable financial misdeeds.

While World Boxing swiftly signed up most of the top Western federations fed up with the Russia-dominated IBA's intransigence, the breakaway body knew it would face difficulty in landing top federations who either rely financially on the banned body or align politically with its Russian leadership.

**IOC reflects on Olympic reforms ahead of 144th Session** 

China has emerged as a top boxing nation since the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Its team finished second in the medal table in Paris last year with three gold medals and two silvers.

Turkey also has a thriving federation, winning two silver medals and a bronze in Paris.

With China in the fold, World Boxing now has a robust Asian membership that includes about two dozen members - including Uzbekistan, the most powerful boxing nation in recent Olympics after winning five gold medals in Paris.

Boxing still is not officially on the program for the Los Angeles Games, but Kazakh boxing superstar Gennady Golovkin is heading a World Boxing commission to cement the body's future in the Olympic movement. The IOC ran the last two Olympic boxing tournaments, but has repeatedly said a new governing body must run future tournaments if boxing stays on the program.

#### Timberwolves extend winning streak to 6

**BOSTON, March 13, (AP):** Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 34 and Chet Holmgren had 23 points and 15 rebounds to help the Oklahoma City Thunder clinch a playoff berth by beating the Boston Celtics 118-112 on Wednesday night.

In a much-anticipated potential NBA Finals preview, the Western Conference-leading Thunder withstood a barrage of Boston 3-pointers - a franchise record 63 attempts in all - to sweep the defending NBA champions in the two-game season series and win for the 17th time in their last 18 games.

Jayson Tatum scored 33 for Boston, which had won five straight and 15 of its last 18 games. Al Horford added 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Derrick White scored 22.

#### Timberwolves 115, Nuggets 95

In Denver, Anthony Edwards scored 29 points, Julius Randle added 25 and Minnesota extended their winning streak to six games by routing Denver.

Rudy Gobert finished with 11 points and 10 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who improved to 3-0 against the Nuggets this season. The last game between these two Northwest Division foes is April 1 in Denver.

#### Hawks 123, Hornets 110

In Atlanta, Trae Young made all of his 21 free throws and scored 35 points to lead Atlanta to their fourth straight victory, over Charlotte.

Young added 12 assists on a poor shooting night from the field. He was 7 of 20 and missed all five of his

3-point attempts. The Hawks are seventh in the Eastern Conference and moved within five games of idle sixth-place Detroit as they seek to avoid the play-in tournament. Clippers 119, Heat 104

In Miami, Bogdan Bogdanovic scored a season-high 30 points and Ivica Zubac added 26 points and 14 rebounds, helping Los Angeles beat Miami.

James Harden had 24 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds for the Clippers, who won for the fourth time in five games and pulled within 1 1/2 games of idle Golden State for the No. 6 - and last guaranteed playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Tyler Herro scored 31 points and Andrew Wiggins added 22 for the Heat, who fell 2 1/2 games behind Atlanta in the race for the No. 7 spot and most advantageous play-in position in the Eastern Conference.

#### Rockets 111, Suns 104

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In Houston, Jalen Green had 29 points to lead Houston to a victory over Phoenix in a game where Houston's Steven Adams and Phoenix's Mason Plumlee were ejected for fighting.

Alperen Sengun scored 20 points and Dillon Brooks added 19 to help the Rockets extend their winning streak to four.

Bradley Beal's two free throws got the Suns within eight with about 9 1/2 minutes to go before Houston used a 9-2 run to make it 99-84 with about seven minutes remaining.

#### Grizzlies 122, Jazz 115

In Memphis, Luke Kennard scored 30 points and Ja Morant had 28, helping Memphis top Utah.

Kennard went 7 for 9 from 3-point range, and Morant was 4 for 7 from deep. Desmond Bane added 17 points as Memphis posted its fourth straight win.

Utah lost its seventh consecutive game. Collin Sexton had 22 points, eight rebounds and seven assists, and John Collins also scored 22 points.

#### Spurs 126, Mavericks 116

In San Antonio, De'Aaron Fox had 32 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds and San Antonio snapped a three-game skid, beating injurydepleted Dallas.

Dallas (33-34) remained 10th in the Western Conference, holding the final spot for the play-in tournament by 2 1/2 games over Phoenix.

Fox was 12 for 25 from the field in his highest-scoring game since joining San Antonio in a trade with Sacramento on Feb. 5.

Knicks 114, Trail Blazers 113, OT In Portland, Mikal Bridges hit a 25-foot 3-pointer at the buzzer to give New Ŷork an overtime win over Portland.

Bridges finished with 33 points and AG Anunoby had 23 as New York won its second in a row and improved to 2-2 on its five-game West Coast

trip with one game remaning. Scoot Henderson led Portland with 30 points, while Deni Avdija had 27 points - including a threepoint play with three seconds left in overtime to give the Trail Blazers a brief 113-111 lead - but Portland lost its fifth in a row. Avdija also had 15 rebounds.

#### Raptors 118, 76ers 105

In Toronto, AJ Lawson scored 28 points, Jared Rhoden set career highs with 25 points and 12 rebounds and the Toronto Raptors beat the Philadelphia 76ers 118-105 on Wednesday night in a matchup of short-handed teams.

Orlando Robinson scored a careerhigh 25 points and matched his career high with 12 rebounds to help the Raptors win for the fifth time in six games.

#### Mercedes chief opens up

## We're not looking to sign Verstappen for 2026: Wolff

PARIS, March 13, (Xinhua): As the International Olympic Committee (IOC) prepares for its 144th Session in Greece, where a new president will be elected, the organization has taken a moment to reflect on a decade of transformation under Thomas

Bach's leadership. Since the adoption of Olympic Agenda 2020 in 2014 and its expansion into Olympic Agenda 2020+5 seven years later during the COV-ID-19 pandemic, the IOC has revolutionized the Games, reinforced athlete empowerment, embraced digital innovation, and laid the foundation for a more sustainable and financially resilient Olympic Movement.

One of the most profound changes has been the way the Olympic Games are awarded and organized. The old competitive bidding process - which often left losing cities with heavy financial burdens - has been replaced by a more collaborative, dialogue-based approach, cutting bidding costs by 80 percent. The result has been a renewed enthusiasm for hosting the Games, with Olympic sites confirmed through 2034 and interest in 2036 and beyond growing.

Paris 2024 was a showcase of this new vision, blending sustainability, urban integration, and mass participation. The Games ran on 100 percent renewable energy, with a 54.6 percent reduction in carbon footprint compared to previous editions. Events were brought into the heart of the city, with iconic landmarks providing dramatic backdrops for competition.

Meanwhile, new initiatives such

#### as the public marathon and expanded Olympic education programs helped create an Olympic experience that extended far beyond the stadiums.

The IOC has strengthened its commitment to athlete empowerment, ensuring they are not just participants but key stakeholders in the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Scholarships for Athletes -Paris 2024 program provided direct support to 1,560 athletes from 195 member committees, leading to 75 Olympic medals. Additionally, the Olympic Solidarity fund has seen a 67 percent increase in budget, reaching 167 million U.S. dollars for 2025-2028, benefiting over 250,000

athletes.

Ensuring a clean and fair competition environment has also been a priority. The establishment of the International Testing Agency (ITA) has helped make anti-doping efforts more independent and effective, with 90 percent of athletes tested before Paris 2024 - a notable increase from previous Games.

Paris 2024 was the most digitally engaged Olympics in history, underscoring the growing importance of social media, AI, and new digital experiences in shaping the Games. The IOC reported a staggering 412 billion digital engagements, a 290 percent increase from Tokyo 2020. The



In this file photo, Barbara Matic of Croatia, the judo women's 70kg gold medalist at the Paris Olympics, poses for selfies with the Eiffel Tower at the Champions Park, for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France. (Xinhua)

Olympic Web and App attracted 325 million unique monthly users, solidifying Olympics.com as one of the largest digital platforms in sports.

In addition to expanding digital access, the IOC is taking its first major step into esports. In July 2024, it announced the creation of the Olympic Esports Games, with the inaugu-ral edition set to take place in Saudi Arabia in 2027 under a 12-year partnership. This move signals a shift toward engaging younger audiences and recognizing the evolving landscape of competitive sports.

Amid global economic fluctuations, the IOC has maintained strong financial stability, securing 7.4 billion U.S. dollars in revenue for the 2025-2028 cycle, with 6.5 billion dollars already lined up for 2029-2032. With 90 percent of its revenue reinvested into global sports development, the IOC's daily contribution to athletes and sports organizations has risen to 4.7 million dollars - up from 3.25 million dollars in 2014.

Governance reforms have also been a focus, with the IOC voluntarily adopting International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) to enhance transparency and leading efforts to combat corruption and match-fixing in sports.

As the IOC moves forward, its decade of reform has reshaped the Olympic landscape, making the Games more sustainable, more digital, and more accessible than ever before. The 144th Session, which to take place in Greece from March 19 to 21, will not only mark the election of a new IOC president but also set the course for the next phase of Olympic transformation.

MELBOURNE, Australia, March 13, (AP): Mercedes team principal and chief executive Toto Wolff has denied rumors on the eve of the Australian Grand Prix weekend that he's still seeking to sign reigning F1 world champion Max Verstappen for 2026.

Mercedes, which has a new driver lineup this year that sees rookie prospect Andrea Kimi Antonelli join George Russell, is hoping to emerge from its recent lean spell in F1 that has seen it score just five wins from the last three seasons, four of which came in 2024.

But while Verstappen was reportedly on Mercedes' shopping list last year as a top-gun replacement for its then-outgoing star Lewis Hamilton, Silver Arrows' team boss Wolff says extending Russell's contract beyond 2025 is the priority.

"I think we've said it pretty clearly last year, and (Verstappen) said the same, we need to concentrate on our driver line-up, we need to do (the best with) that we have," Wolff said Thursday in Melbourne.

Wolff's future driver lineup came into focus this week after McLaren extended its deal with Australian Oscar Piastri, which puts him out of reach during the sport's next big expected grid shuffle in 2027.

"These three (including reserve driver Valtteri Bottas) are the combination that I want to go forward with Mercedes, and I have no reasons to doubt that. We're going to find some time, I guess, before the summer."

Russell, a long-time Mercedes protégé who joined the works team in 2022 fresh from three years at Williams, is keen to stay in silver.



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands poses during the drivers portrait photo session ahead of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park, in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Hamilton made it clear in Melbourne that he's moved on, following his record-breaking stint with Mercedes, with the seven-time F1 world champion enjoying life at Ferrari as he prepares for his maiden start with the Scuderia.

Hamilton, who'd been powered by Mercedes for his entire F1 career from 2007 to 2024, made a shock switch to Ferrari starting this year, following negotiations with Mercedes in 2023 that saw him offered a shorter tenure to future proof the operation.

Hamilton signed the one-plus-one (option year) deal in August 2023, but made a swift u-turn in January last year to join the Prancing Horse from 2025.

#### Change Name

I, Mohammad Rahul Current name is passport N9590270 holder of Indian passport No N9590270 Vill,Fulachodh, Post-Chodhadaragah, Ps-Chaunr Dargah-Dist,Sheikhpura - Having permanent Address, State (Bihar), Country. (India) and Pin- 811304 Residing in kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given (name) Mohammad Rahul And Surname, Mohammad Ruhul.

## England to host first Kabaddi World Cup outside Asia

GENEVA, March 13, (Xinhua): England is set to host the first Kabaddi World Cup outside of Asia, reflecting the growing global popularity of the ancient Indian sport.

During an online media briefing Wednesday, organizers from World Kabaddi and local officials discussed preparations for the seven-day tournament, which will take place in England's West Midlands from March 17 to 23. Nearly 50 matches will be held across Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

"With less than one week to go until the Kabaddi World Cup, excitement is building among players, coaches and fans around the world for this historic moment for our sport," said Ashok Das, president of World Kabaddi. "To take the Kabaddi World Cup outside of Asia for the first time is testament to the growth of our sport. Kabaddi is an immensely popular and investable global proposition, and we are hopeful that it can serve as a catalyst for further growth within the Olympic Movement." Kabaddi, which has a history spanning more than 4,000 years, was included as a demonstration sport at the 1936 Olympic Games and has been a medal sport at the Asian Games since 1990.

World Kabaddi, the international governing body, is seeking recognition from the International Olympic Committee. It is working with five continental organizations - representing Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and the Americas - as well as more than 50 national federations.

"We are getting closer to fulfilling a decadeslong dream of thousands of Kabaddi players by bringing the Kabaddi World Cup to the West Midlands," said Prem Singh, chief executive of the British Kabaddi League.

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## **SPORTS**

## Kuwait sports family unites for annual Ramadan Ghabga at Al-Shuhoumi Diwan

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: In a warm and festive Ramadan atmosphere, former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Honorary President of Al-Qurain Club, Ahmed Khalifa Al-Shuhoumi, alongside the Chairman of Al-Qurain Club, Abdulkarim Al-Shuhoumi, hosted the annual Ramadan Ghabga for the sports community at Al-Shuhoumi Diwan.

The gathering saw the attendance of many prominent sports figures, including His Highness the former Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf, former Speaker of the National Assembly and Honorary President of Kuwait Club, Marzouq Al-Ghanim; Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser, former Minister of Foreign Affairs; Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, Bashar Abdullah; Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah, President of the Arab Tennis Federation; Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, President of the Football Association; as well as many federation and club heads, athletes-both former and currentand members of the diplomatic corps.

Ahmed Al-Shuhoumi expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all attendees, emphasizing the importance of such gatherings during Ramadan, particularly for the sports community across various disciplines.

He stressed that Kuwaiti athletes deserve such recognition and support, highlighting the necessity of backing them in order to represent Kuwait with pride on the international stage.



Al-Shuhoumi welcomes officials to his Diwan.

## **Kuwait strengthens sports 'reputation'** with hosting of 10th Arab Handball Cup

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Qaid Al-Adwani, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Handball Association, confirmed that Kuwait will host the 10th Arab Handball Cup next May, aligning with the political leadership's vision to make Kuwait a hub for Arab, continental and international sports events. This move is part of ongoing efforts to develop Kuwaiti sports, particularly handball.

The announcement followed the Arab Handball Federation's approval to hold the 10th edition of the Arab Handball Cup for men's national teams in Kuwait from May 4 to 12, coinciding with the International Handball Federation Week.

Al-Adwani expressed his gratitude for the tremendous support of Kuwaiti sports from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. This support



INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 13, (AP): Ben Shelton became the youngest American man since Andy Roddick in 2004 to reach the quarterfinals at the BNP Paribas Open, beating Brandon Nakashima in straight

tory. After a 61-minute opening set, he took a 5-0 lead in just 20 minutes in the deciding set. The 11th-seeded Shelton hasn't dropped a set in five career matches against Nakashima, a 23-year-old American.

Second-seeded Carlos Alcaraz hasn't dropped a set on his way to the quarterfinals. The four-time Grand Slam champion breezed to a 6-1, 6-1 victory over No. 14 seed Grigor Dimitrov.

On the women's side, No. 3 seed Coco Gauff was upset in the round of 16 by unseeded Belinda Bencic. The 28-year-old wild card from Switzerland rallied for a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory.

### Shelton reaches quarterfinals

**Alcaraz breezes past Dimitrov** 

sets. The 22-year-old Shelton cruised in the second set of a 7-6 (6), 6-1 vic-

Bencic returned the favor from the Australian Open in January, when Gauff won after dropping the first set. The defeat came the day before Gauff's 21st birthday as the 2023 U.S. Open champion was broken at 4-4 in the final set after going up 40-0.

Gauff struggled with her serve throughout the tournament and had eight double-faults against Bencic, with just four aces.

Australian Open champion Madison Keys, the No. 3 seed, rallied for a 4-6, 7-6 (7), 6-3 victory over 19th-seeded Donna Vekic. The 30-yearold American extended her winning streak to 15 matches after trailing 5-3 and being two points from defeat in the second set.

Top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka cruised to a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Sonay Kartal, who was facing an opponent ranked in the top 10 for the first time.

Jack Draper of Britain beat thirdseeded American Taylor Fritz - a past champion at Indian Wells - 7-5, 6-4. Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina topped Australian Alex de Minaur 7-5, 6-3.

### **Best of the Rest**

FENIFOOT chief elected to FIFA Council: Nigerien Football Federation president Djibrilla Hima Hamidou was elected Wednesday to the FIFA Council representing the West African zone, as reported by Nigerien media.

Hamidou, who has served as president of the Nigerien Football Federa-tion (FENIFOOT) since 2009, secured his position with 35 votes, defeat-ing rivals from Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, who received 18 and 13 votes respectively.

Born on March 7, 1965, Hamidou is also a member of the Executive Council of the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

The FIFA Council consists of 37 members, including a president elected by the FIFA Congress, eight vice-presidents, and 28 other members elected by FIFA's member associations, each serving a four-year term. The president and council members are limited to a maximum of three consecutive or non-consecutive terms. (Xinhua)

Kuwait targets new coach to drive success

has driven Kuwait's decision to host international tournaments that will showcase the country's bright image. He also thanked the Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, Bashar Abdullah, for their ongoing commitment to bringing these events to fruition.

Al-Adwani also highlighted Kuwait's recent success in securing the bid to host the 2026 Asian Cup, set to begin on January 20. The announcement of hosting the Arab Handball Cup comes after a 23-year gap, with the last edition held in 2002.

Khaled Talib, Treasurer of the Kuwait Handball Association, explained that the Association's decision to bid for the Arab Championship was fueled by the national



A file photo of players in action.

team's strong performance at the He assured that the Kuwaiti national recent World Cup finals. He added team is fully prepared for the tournathat hosting the tournament in Kument wait would boost the country's pro-

Additionally, Talib confirmed that the Kuwait Handball Association is in the process of hiring a new coach for the national team to better understand the players' strengths and strategies ahead of the upcoming Asian Championship. This step is part of the Federation's goal to elevate the national team to the highest level. The Arab Handball Cup has been held nine times previously. Egypt won the first and second editions, Kuwait claimed victories in the third and fifth editions, Tunisia won the fourth and sixth editions, Saudi Arabia triumphed in the seventh, and Algeria took the eighth. Bahrain is the most recent titleholder, having won the tournament in 2002 in Jor-

#### 

Castano secures River Plate move: River Plate has reached a deal to sign Colombia international midfielder Kevin Castano from Russia's Krasnodar, the Argentine top-flight club said on Wednesday

Castano arrived in Buenos Aires for a medical on Wednesday and is expected to sign a contract that runs until December 2028. Local media "You've arrived at the top, Kevin. Welcome to your new home," River

Plate said in a statement posted on social media. (Xinhua)

#### 

**Cerro Porteno advances:** Paraguay's Cerro Porteno scored three second-half goals to advance to the Copa Libertadores group stage with a 4-2 home win over Peruvian side Melgar.

Sergio Araujo opened the scoring with a 12th minute strike but the hosts squandered a chance to double their lead when Cecilio Dominguez missed a penalty attempt on the half hour.

Tomas Martinez equalized from the penalty spot on the stroke of halftime following a Gaston Gimenez handball.

Cerro Porteno took control after the interval, netting three times in 24 minutes through Federico Carrizo, Francisco da Costa and Alexis Farina before Percy Liza struck a late goal that merely served as a consolation. (Xinhua)

#### Bayern faces another tricky test against Union

dan.

## Dortmund aims to bring some of its CL success to disastrous league campaign

DUESSELDORF, Germany, March 13, (AP): The two German teams in the Champions League quarterfinals are having very different Bundesliga seasons.

While Bayern Munich is eight points clear at the top and confirmed its domestic supremacy with a 5-0 aggregate win over Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League, Borussia Dortmund is 10th and will likely need a big lateseason surge to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Beating Lille in the Champions League on Wednesday eased some of the pressure on new coach Niko Kovac but Dortmund takes on Leipzig on Saturday with both teams desperate for a win.

Dortmund's game against Leipzig on Saturday is a crucial test for Leipzig, too. Two wins from 10 Bundesliga games since the new year have seen Marco Rose's team slide to sixth.

Bayern's Champions League exertions took their toll last week in a shock 3-2 home loss to Bochum. A trip to Union Berlin on Saturday is another tricky test, given Union surprised Eintracht Frankfurt 2-1 last week.

Leverkusen has lost three

games in a row for the first time under coach Xabi Alonso. The injury-hit squad can turn things around with a win on Sunday over Stuttgart, itself on a fourgame losing run.

file as a capable organizer of major

Talib emphasized the high level

of competition in the tournament,

which will feature top teams such as

Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Bahrain,

and other Arab teams with star play-

ers and experienced technical staff.

sporting events.

When Manuel Neuer hurt himself celebrating last week, it gave 21-year-old Jonas Urbig an opportunity as Bayern goalkeeper. The loss to Bochum last week was a rocky start but Urbig won praise for some solid saves against Leverkusen.

Michy Batshuayi's first Bundesliga goal in seven years wasn't enough as Frankfurt lost to Union last week. Frankfurt could need more goals from the new signing to halt a slide since Omar Marmoush left for Manchester City. Frankfurt plays Bochum on Sunday.

The pressure is on Stuttgart striker Deniz Undav after seven Bundesliga games without scoring. Undav was a star last season as Stuttgart finished second but now risks being dropped.

Star attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz is a big absence for Leverkusen with an ankle ligament injury. Defender Mario Hermoso was sent for scans on his

shoulder after the Bayern loss, while defender Edmond Tapsoba and midfielder Nathan Tella are doubtful to recover from injuries for Sunday.

Joshua Kimmich looks set to extend his contract at Bayern after all after a contract offer was reportedly withdrawn last month in frustration at the long-running talks. Kimmich said on Tuesday he was looking forward to "getting the ball over the line."

Serbia defender Milos Veljkovic will leave Werder Bremen for Red Star Belgrade after nine years, Bremen said on Tuesday.

Holstein Kiel captain Lewis Holtby is set to leave as a free agent.

"It's difficult and we aren't satisfied either. It's hard for us to get a result like this in the Bundesliga almost every week and play our best in the Champions League. We're trying everything to make it work in the Bundesliga too." - Dortmund forward Karim Adeyemi.

"I won't surf on a hype wave, no chance . My focus is absolutely on the Union Berlin game on Saturday and nothing is won until it's won." - Bayern coach Vincent Kompany.



Lille's Benjamin Andre tackles Dortmund's Julian Brandt during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Lille and Borussia Dortmund in Villeneuve-d'Ascq. (AP)



Aston Villa's Marcus Rashford, right, kicks the ball during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Aston Villa and Club Brugge at the Villa Park stadium in Birmingham, England. (AP)



## **Al-Arabi books Challenge League semis spot**

#### **By Hassan Mosa**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MUSCAT, March 13: Al-Arabi clinched its place in the semi-finals of the AFC Challenge League after overcoming Omani club Al-Seeb in a dramatic quarter-final clash at Seeb Sports Stadium in Muscat.

Having won the first leg 1-0, Al-Arabi faced a strong challenge in the return fixture, as Al-Seeb secured a 2-1

victory, forcing the match into extra time. Moroccan professional Sofiane Bouchar emerged as the hero, netting the decisive goal in the 102nd minute to send Al-Arabi through to the next round.

The match saw Al-Arabi take the lead early through Hussein Ashkanani in the 23rd minute, but Al-Seeb responded with an equalizer from Abdulrahman Al-Mushafri in the 41st minute. Camara then put Al-Seeb ahead in the 87th minute, setting the stage for a tense fin- tion, expressing confidence in its ability ish before Bouchar's crucial extra-time strike.

Al-Arabi will now face Turkmenistan's Arkadag in the semi-finals on April 9 and 16. The two sides previously met in the preliminary round of the tournament last year, with Al-Arabi securing a 3-2 victory.

Al-Arabi Club President Abdulaziz Ashour praised the team's determination and efforts in securing qualificato maintain this momentum in the upcoming rounds.

As a token of appreciation, Ashour awarded each player 1,000 dinars following the hard-fought victory.

Meanwhile, Al-Arabi's Youssef Majed is undergoing treatment at Turkish club Galatasaray's medical clinic for a shoulder injury sustained late last year. He is expected to return to training in early April.



Sofiane Bouchar celebrates with teammates after scoring the decisive goal.

## Madrid keeps title defense alive as **Atletico endures heartbreaking loss**

Arsenal, Villa, Dortmund also advance to quarterfinals

MADRID, March 13, (AP): Real Madrid beat Atletico Madrid in a Champions League penalty shootout - again - to keep its title defense alive and advance to the quarterfinals.

Defender Antonio Rüdiger scored the decisive spot-kick in a 4-2 shootout win after two Atletico players missed. Marco Llorente's shot struck the bar after Julián Álvarez's score despite slipping was disallowed on video review because he touched the ball twice.

Madrid also beat Atletico in a shootout to win the 2016 final - part of a streak of eliminating its city rival in the knockout rounds for four straight years. That hard-luck run started with the 2014 final when Atletico gave up an equalizing goal in stoppage time.

Madrid moves on to the quarterfinals to face Arsenal, which also advanced Wednesday along with Aston Villa and Borussia Dortmund. The quarterfinals lineup was completed with Madrid's win in a tense derby that had ended 2-2 on aggregate score.

Atletico led 1-0 after 90 minutes and extra time in a typically tenacious performance at its Metropolitano Stadium to cancel out Madrid's 2-1 advantage from the first leg last week. "When you get knocked out, it is not easy to digest," Atletico coach Diego

Simeone said, "but I go out with a feeling of peace."

Two key incidents defined regulation time. Atletico Madrid scored within 30 seconds and Real Madrid missed a penalty in the 70th minute.

Atletico took the lead with its first attack when England midfielder Conor Gallagher pounced on the ball from close range when a cross by Rodrigo De Paul was deflected into the goalmouth.

Madrid star Vinícius Júnior blazed a penalty kick high over the Atletico goal when he could have sent the 15-time champion through. He was substituted in extra time for his teenage fellow Brazilian, Endrick.

Kylian Mbappé and Jude Bellingham stepped up to score Madrid's first two spot-kicks, and Fede Valverde also scored before Lucas Vazquez's kick was saved by Jan Oblak.

It was more relaxed in London, where Arsenal rested some regulars in a 2-2 draw with PSV Eindhoven to run up a 9-3 aggregate score.

Aston Villa also had a stress-free evening at home to ensure England has two teams in the quarterfinals, one night after Premier League leader Liverpool was beaten at Anfield by Paris Saint-Germain in a shootout.

Villa won 3-0 against Club Brugge, which played with 10 men from the

17th, after a 3-1 win in Belgium last week. Brugge defender Kyriani Sabbe was sent off for pulling back Marcus Rashford when running clear on goal. Substitute Marco Asensio, on loan at Villa from PSG, scored twice in the

second half to ensure his temporary club will meet his parent club next. Borussia Dortmund rallied with two second-half goals to win 2-1 at Lille and advance 3-2 on aggregate. The beaten finalist last season now faces Barcelona.

The quarterfinals pairings are: Arsenal vs Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain vs. Aston Villa, Barcelona vs. Borussia Dortmund, Bayern Munich vs. Inter Milan

First-leg games are on April 8-9 and return games are one week later. There's only one former European champion from England left in the

Champions League. Villa's unbeaten home record has driven its run to the quarterfinal, with wins against Bayern, Bologna, Celtic and now Brugge.

Liverpool's exit to PSG followed Manchester City being pushed out of the knockout playoffs last month by Real Madrid. Without the Champions League winners in 2019 and 2023, respectively, England's challenge halved to just two.

Villa's 1982 European Cup title is perhaps a less-remembered one in the competition's 70-year history. Arsenal's only time in the final was a loss to Barcelona in 2006.

Villa manager Unai Emery now goes back to Paris where his two seasons as coach there until 2018 seemed to be unsatisfactory for both parties.

Just like last season, Borussia Dortmund is better in the Champions League than the German league.

The Bundesliga's 10th-place team trailed Lille from the fifth minute to Canada forward Jonathan David's shot, before rallying in the second half for a decisive 2-1 win. Dortmund leveled in the 54th from Emre Can's penalty and Maximilian Beier sealed the victory nine minutes later with a rising shot. Dortmund was the beaten finalist last June - losing 2-0 to Real Madrid at Wembley Stadium - and got into this Champions League only because Germany earned a bonus entry for fifth place in the Bundesliga.

Niko Kovac, the club's third coach in the Champions League this season, now takes Dortmund to face former star forward Robert Lewandowski at Barcelona.

Expected exits for Brugge and PSV - after Benfica and Feyenoord were eliminated Tuesday - leaves only the five wealthiest leagues in Europe are now represented.

No team from outside England, Spain, Germany, Italy or France has reached the Champions League final since Porto coached by Jose Mourinho won in 2004.

## Kuwait faces China in friendly ahead of crucial WC qualifiers



Kuwaiti players training for the friendly and World Cup qualifiers.

#### **By Khaled Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, March 13: Kuwait will take on China in a friendly match this Friday at 8:30 pm at Al Maktoum Stadium, Al Nasr Club, as part of its training camp in Dubai, UAE. The match serves as preparation for its upcoming Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, where it will face Iraq and Oman on March 20 and 25, respectively, in Group B.

Head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi aims to assess the readiness of his squad before traveling to Basra. He will also test new call-ups to evaluate their ability to integrate into the team and perform their roles effectively.

Pizzi has named a 28-player roster for the camp:

Goalkeepers: Saud Al-Hoshan, Khaled Al-Rashidi, Suleiman Abdul-Ghafoor

Defenders: Fahad Al-Hajri, Sami Al-Sanea, Mohammed Daham, Reda

Hani, Moaz Al-Dhafiri, Khaled Ibrahim, Eid Al-Rashidi, Jassim Al-Matar, Mubarak Al-Fenini, Hassan Hamdan, Mohammed Khaled, Khaled Al-Marshad, Salman Al-Awadhi

Midfielders: Hussein Ashkanani, Ali Khalaf, Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli, Moaz Al-Aseema, Fawaz Ayed, Hamad Al-Harbi, Fawaz Mubailesh, Salman Burmiah, Sultan Al-Enezi

Forwards: Yousef Nasser, Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Ahmed Al-Zanki (replacing the injured Meshari Ghannam)

Kuwait may be without several players from Al-Qadsiya and Al-Arabi, as they had been unavailable since the camp began on March 9 due to club commitments in the Gulf Champions League and AFC Challenge League, respectively. However, they rejoined the squad in the past after both teams advanced in their respective tournaments.



Atletico Madrid's Rodrigo De Paul, left and Real Madrid's Raul Asencio fight for the ball during the Champions League round of 16, second leg, soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid at the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

## France chases Six Nations title against Scotland

PARIS, March 13, (AP): France enters the Six Nations finale against Scotland with the title at stake and a host of records up for grabs at Stade de France on Saturday

Prolific wingers Louis Bielle-Biarrey and Damian Penaud eye record-breaking tries, and kicker Thomas Ramos will aim to convert as many as possible for a France side which has its mojo back after a painful defeat to England.

But beating England's points difference record from 2001 is a long shot, even more so without injured scrumhalf Antoine Dupont.

Here's a look at the records that could be broken: Bielle-Biarrey's scorching pace down the left wing has helped him to seven tries in four matches. The 21-year-old needs two more against Scotland to become the record-holder in the tournament's 142-year history.

The record is eight by England's Cyril Lowe in 1914 and Scotland's Ian Smith in 1925 when the tournament was the Five Nations.

Bielle-Biarrey burst onto the scene at the 2023 Rugby World Cup where, instead of studying for university mid-term exams, he became France's youngest World Cup player at 20 years, 87 days. He has scored in a French record seven consecutive tests, and has 17 international tries from 18 tests

Right winger Damian Penaud - who also plays with Bielle-Biarrey at Bordeaux Bègles - needs one try to overtake Serge Blanco and stand alone as France's all-time top men's try-scorer. They are on 38.

Penaud probably would have got there by now but he missed the 43-point rout of Wales because of a toe injury, and the 73-point rout in Italy after being dropped following his below-par match in the defeat to England.

Penaud has 38 in 55 games compared to 93 games for Blanco, who was also a decent kicker. Blanco slotted 22 penalties, six conversions and two drop goals as one of the game's greatest fullbacks.

Vincent Clerc, who has become a matchday pundit, was third on France's list with 34 tries followed by fellow winger Philippe Saint-André (32) and standout center Philippe Sella (30).

### Al-Qadsiya to face Duhok in final

#### By Hassan Mosa Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

RIYADH, March 13: Iraqi side Duhok has secured its place in the Gulf Champions League final against Al-Qadsiya after repeating its 1-0 victory over Saudi Arabia's Al-Ettifaq in the second leg of the semifinals. The two-leg final between Al-Qadsiya and Duhok is set for April 9 and 16.

Al-Qadsiya owes its qualification to team captain Bader Al-Mutawa, who played a pivotal role in orchestrating the team's comeback against UAE's Al-Nasr. After trailing 2-0, Al-Mutawa took control of the game, organizing attacks and dictating play before scoring the crucial equalizer. His leadership helped force a penalty shootout, where Al-Qadsiya triumphed 4-3.

Following the dramatic win, Al-Qadsia's players and staff celebrated Al-Mutawa by lifting him and parading him in front of the passionate fans, which had rallied behind the team with a major support campaign before the match.

Several Qadsia supporters announced special rewards for Al-Mutawa, while former club president

#### **Best of the Rest**

Five Chinese into quarters: Cai Yan secured a 4-1 victory over Liudmila Vorontsova of Russia, advancing to the quarterfinals alongside four other Chinese boxers at the IBA Women's World Boxing Championships, hosted at Cair Sports Hall in Nis, Serbia.

Cai, China's national featherweight champion with two wins already under her belt in the tournament.

In other quarterfinal matchups, Hu Meiyi will take on Thailand's Chuthamat Raksat in the light flyweight division, while Wang Xiaomeng will compete against ElizaFawaz Al-Hasawi also pledged a bonus to honor the team's achievement.

Sheikh Fahad Talal Al-Fahad congratulated the players, highlighting their determination and spirit. He noted that the team had overcome opponents with greater financial resources and stronger professional squads, stating, 'They may surpass Qadsiya in market value, but they do not surpass us in spirit, determination, and resolve."



Players carry the hero Bader Al-Mutawa as they celebrate with fans.

beth Adhiambo Andiego of Kenya in the light heavyweight category. Zhan Yilian is set to face Russia's Maria Kuchmanova in the heavyweight division, and Wang Lina will meet Patricia Mbata of Nigeria in the middleweight class.

On the other hand, three Chinese boxers were eliminated in Wednesday's contests, all losing by unanimous 5-0 decisions. Zhong Xueyun was bested by Farzona Fazilova of Uzbekistan in the minimum weight division, Wei Sitong lost to Turkey's Busenaz Cakiroglu in the flyweight category, and Li Shu was defeated by Milena Matovic of Serbia in the light middleweight division. (Xinhua)



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