



basketball
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'NO ONE ABOVE THE LAW, COURTS MUST ACT IMPARTIALLY'

Amir praises judiciary as Kuwait's pillar

Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The Houthis: A wasp buzzing amidst its nest's ruins

FOR the past ten years, the Houthi group has been sowing instability throughout the region, and pursuing a destructive agenda that strengthens the influence of certain countries within the axis of evil. Some international powers, particularly the United States, have turned a blind eye to these actions, either due to their unstable relations with Saudi Arabia or in pursuit of international objectives outside the Middle East.

In recent years, this situation has significantly disrupted the movement of goods and commercial vessels in the Arabian Sea, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Indian Ocean. At times, it has even led to attacks on American, British, and French military vessels, often under the pretext of the so-called "Gaza Support War." The primary aim of these attacks appears to be strengthening Iran's negotiating position in secret talks with the international community.

In the first phase, attacks on several Gulf states, including those targeting holy sites in Saudi Arabia, were met with a unified Gulf response. The Gulf states attempted to maintain a minimum level of communication, hoping to broker a long-term truce out of compassion for the oppressed Yemeni people, who have become victims of the group's control over Sana'a's decision-making.

Since October 7, 2023, the Houthi group expanded its destabilizing efforts in the vital Bab al-Mandab Strait. This move sends a clear message to the entire region: Regional peace lies in the hands of Iran and its destructive axis,

and no resolution can occur without Tehran's involvement. The four capitals that Iran boasted of controlling were merely a façade, serving as a mere mailbox for its influence.

Today, the situation has shifted dramatically, with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' influence still entrenched in Sana'a, after Beirut and Damascus were removed from Iran's sphere of control.

The arguments put forth by the Houthis, supported by international powers with narrow agendas aligned with Iran (such as Russia), will not alter the worldview. This is because there is no connection between the Ukraine conflict and the Middle East. Moreover, American interests in the region are far greater than those elsewhere.

This is why Washington is more concerned about regional affairs than Russia. The U.S. will not tolerate a terrorist group destabilizing the maritime zone within its sphere of influence.

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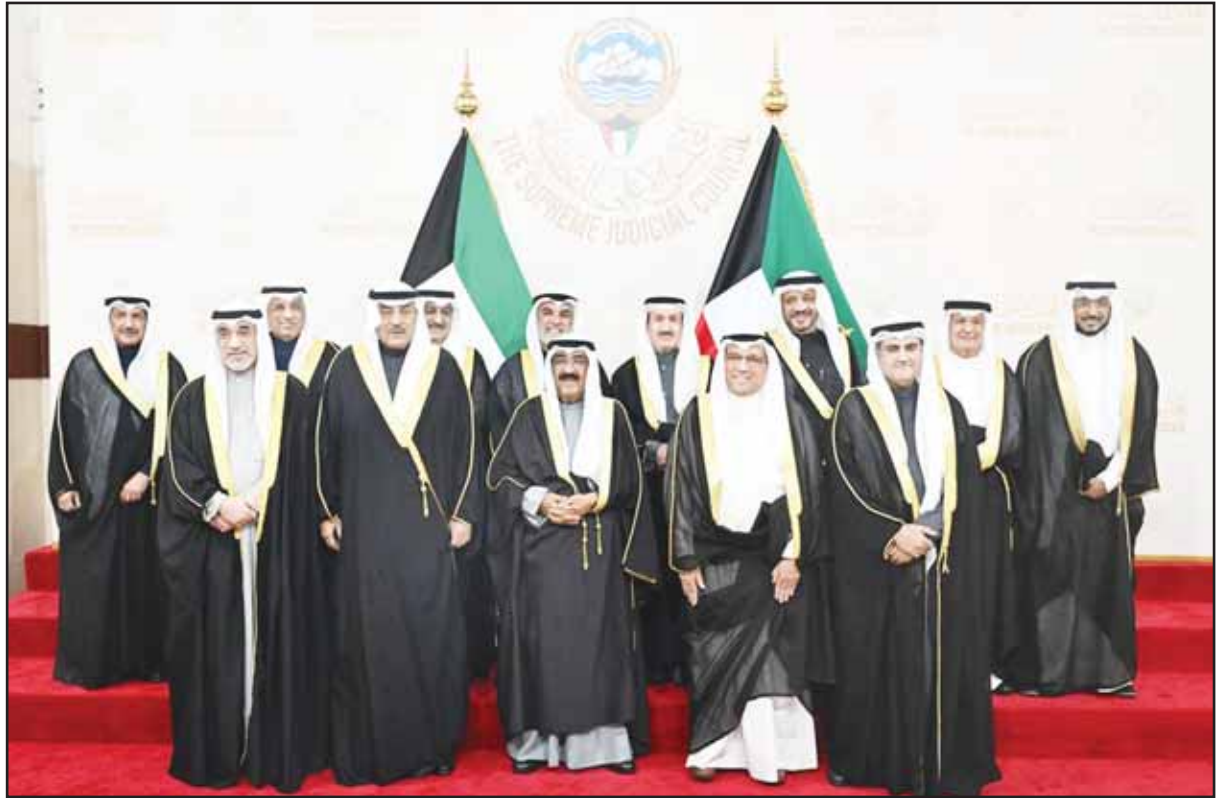
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SJC chief vows to strengthen justice system



His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and the Acting Prime Minister, pose for a group photo during a visit to the Supreme Judiciary Council.

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a visit to the Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) on Sunday evening on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.

He was accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and other senior officials.

They were warmly welcomed by SJC President and President of the Court of Cassation Dr. Adel Bouresli, Minister of Justice Nasser Yusuf Al-Sumait and Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Tareq Ali Al-Asfour.

In a speech to the judiciary top brass, His Highness the Amir said, "Together with my brother His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and my brother companions, we are pleased to visit you on a blessed night of the holy month of Ramadan."

He praised the role of the judiciary authority of Kuwait as "the mainstay of justice and stability," in the country and a source of pride for all Kuwaitis.

The cornerstone in our quest for prosperity are a comprehensive security and a credible, professional and impartial judiciary ensuring justice for everybody, he said, affirming that "nobody has authority over judges."

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Initiatives in May

'Foreign investment tied to Kuwait's economic revival'

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The government will start introducing new initiatives to boost foreign investment in May, say reliable sources who affirmed that such measures are expected to stimulate the national economy.

Economic expert Sultan Al-Jazzaf believes these initiatives are pioneering steps, hoping that the related decisions will be issued soon.

He pointed out the benefits of foreign investment for the national economy like diversifying income sources, which is crucial given the Ministry of Finance's projection of KDb6.30 billion deficit in the 2025/2026 budget.

He urged the local private sector not to fear foreign investment; as it could lead to vast local investment experience, and partnerships between foreign and local capitals.

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Kuwait DM explores stronger military ties with US, UK ambassadors



Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah meets US Ambassador Karen Sasahara (left) and British Ambassador Belinda Lewis (right).



Ministry of Defense photos

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah explored avenues of military cooperation with American Ambassador to the country, Karen Sasahara and British Ambassador, Belinda Lewis.

The Ministry of Defense, mentioned via statement, that the Minister met with each separately in his office on Monday.

Boosting bilateral relations and expanding defense cooperation were discussed during the meeting along with latest developments on regional and international fronts.

KPC CEO term renewed

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: A decree has been issued to renew Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah's term as the CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation.

The decree also appointed Yousef Al-Qabandi, Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, Yousef Al-Yateem, and Wafaa Al-Qatani as members of the board of directors for a three-year term.

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Tuesday 17:59
Imsak Wednesday ... 04:34

Newswatch

'Weekend' payment services begin April

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait issued a circular for local banks to operate the Automated Settlement System for Inter-participant Payments (KASSIP) and Kuwait Electronic Cheque Clearing System (KECCS) during the weekends and the official holidays as from early April.

The move is part of the CBK efforts to ensure the quality and sustainability of the financial services of the banking sector, and enhance the efficiency of the national economy, the CBK said in a press release on Sunday.

The move aims to meet the needs of all segments of the society, according to the statement.

KASSIP will be operational from 7:00 a.m. to 11:15 p.m. for bank clients while the interbank KECCS will be working around the clock.

The last application for a cheque clearing under the KECCS should be tabled before 7:00 p.m. and reply to it will be received within an hour later, except for CBK cheques, the statement added.

Agreement paves way for 5000 MW projects

Kuwait, China seal renewable energy deal

BEIJING, March 17, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait and China signed on Monday a framework agreement, which contains technical details on the joint cooperation on renewable energy.

Kuwait's Undersecretary at the Ministry of Electricity and Water and renewable energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel took part in the signing ceremony along Ren Jingdong, Deputy Director of the Chinese National Energy Administration.

The signing ceremony was held in the headquarters of the National Energy Administration and it was attended by Kuwait Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat who is also rapporteur of the high Kuwait-China Committee for agree-

ments and MoUs execution.

Also present were Kuwait Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem and other Kuwaiti and Chinese officials.

Undersecretary Dr. Al-Zamel spoke about the framework agreement, revealing that it came after six months of negotiations.

It resulted in setting a plan, supervised by the Chinese side, for the third and fourth zones of Al-Shagaya and Al-Abdiliya renewable projects as well as a joint production capacity of 3,500 megawatts for each project with a possible boost to 5,000 megawatts.

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo

Part of the signing ceremony of the framework agreement for joint cooperation in renewable energy between the State of Kuwait and China.

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2 'Turkiye, Kuwait share culture, traditions'



5 Talal Al-Kharafi's ghabga ... A blend of official and popular attendance



9 Markaz marks 2024 as milestone year for legacy in excellence, innovation, & visionary leadership

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:37 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 05:57 Maghrib .. 17:57
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 19:14

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

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

Weather

erate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-30 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	26	17
Kuwait Airport	29	13

Abdaly	28	12
Bubyan	29	14
Jahra	26	17
Failaka Island	26	17
Salmiyah	25	17
Ahmadi	26	13
Jal Aliyah	25	14
Nuwaisib	28	13

'Initiatives underway to integrate parentless kids in society'

Orphans will not be marginalized or deprived of anything, says minister



Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah at the event.



Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah visits a stall.



Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah talking at the event.

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah affirmed the ministry's commitment to care for orphans and provide them with a nurturing environment.

In her speech during the annual celebration of Arab Orphan Day 2025, held on Sunday under the slogan "Our Future is Promising" and organized by the Family Nursery Department of the Social Welfare Sector, the minister stated that caring

for orphans is a shared responsibility that requires collective community efforts to ensure a decent life and a promising future for them.

She highlighted that the ministry continues to develop programs and initiatives aimed at empowering orphans and enhancing their integration into society.

Regarding Arab Orphan Day 2025, Al-Huwailah said this day serves as an opportunity to reaffirm Kuwait's commitment to the principle of social solidarity and to renew the pledge to care for orphans and provide them with all necessary support. She praised the efforts of the Social Welfare Sector and the Family Nursery Department in providing comprehensive care to orphans.

Al-Huwailah emphasized their dedication to creating a supportive and safe environment that contributes to growth and development.

She stressed that the ministry will spare no effort in supporting orphans and ensuring they have access to fair educational and social opportunities, which will enable them to become active contributors to the nation's future.

The minister called on community members and institutions to embrace and support the issues faced by orphans, promote the values of compassion and social solidarity, ensure all segments of society, including orphans, are accepted and provided with a stable life that contributes to a brighter future for both them and their country.



Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez and EU ambassador.



The early morning drummer.



Diplomats and dignitaries.

Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Diplomats, dignitaries attend embassy 'ghabqa'

'Turkiye, Kuwait share culture, traditions'

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, the Turkish Embassy in Kuwait hosted a Ghabqa event at its premises on March 16th, 2025.

In her welcoming speech, Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez emphasized the shared culture and traditions observed by Turkish and Kuwaiti people during Ramadan, such as sharing meals, the strength of "togetherness," and engaging in acts of charity. Ambassador Sönmez also highlighted ongoing humanitarian tragedies across the world, including the genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, and the crisis in Sudan. She touched upon the situation in Syria and commemorated the International Day to

Combat Islamophobia, calling for constructive engagement for peaceful solutions and creating a world where everyone can practice their faith in harmony.

Following her speech, a video showcasing the spirit of Ramadan in Türkiye was screened, presenting the cultural heritage of the country.

The evening continued with a performance by four talented Turkish artists: Ms. Vedialak on the "ney," Mr. Fatih Şanver on the "qanun," Mr. Onur Gunduzer on the "guitar," and Mr. Hasan Tamer on the "baglama." Their selections of traditional Turkish folk, art, and Sufi music resonated deeply with the audience. A commemorative group photograph was taken to

mark the occasion.

Guests at the event indulged in delicacies from traditional Turkish cuisine, including sweets and desserts. A cultural pre-dawn drummer presented traditional roaming, usually performed before suhoor in the streets, adding to the festive atmosphere. Attendees also participated in a quiz show about Türkiye and were presented with special gifts.

Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez was accompanied by dignitaries from the State of Kuwait, including Deputy and Assistant Ministers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of the diplomatic corps, cultural envoys, high-level Kuwaiti officials, CEOs, and representatives of companies and NGOs.

27 mln to use new airport, likely to open in 2026 end

Kuwait on verge of major aviation renaissance

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Acting Director General of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Duaj Al-Otaibi has confirmed the completion and operation of major projects at Kuwait International Airport such as the third runway, new control tower and Air Cargo City.

In a televised interview, Al-Otaibi said the infrastructure for these projects include power and fire stations, as well as the equipment related to radar and air navigation simulation systems.

He also unveiled the plan to establish the Civil Aviation Authority, under which companies will operate, including a private company to manage airports and another to manage air navigation. He asserted "this is the ideal and most appropriate vision for the future of aviation in the country."

He expects the new Kuwait International Airport to open in the last quarter of 2026, according to the promises of the company implementing the project. He also pointed out that the Air Cargo City is one of the largest in the Middle East with a capacity for more than 77 giant cargo aircraft, indicating it is a ready-to-operate project.

He disclosed that the number of infrastructure projects has reached 13; including the reconstruction of the central and eastern runways, which will be operational once the third runway becomes operational

in the coming days. He cited other projects related to air navigation, weather equipment and ground services.

He added the airport terminals cater to about 16 million passengers annually; and that upon the opening of the new airport, the number is expected to reach 25 million passengers annually. He said the new airport can accommodate 27 million passengers annually.

He expects the construction of another airport in the northern part of the country, in conjunction with the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and Mutlaa City projects. He indicated this will be determined by the concerned government agencies, confirming that Kuwait is on the verge of a major renaissance in the aviation sector.

He stated that aviation, along with other sectors, should contribute 25 percent of the country's national income in the next 10 years.

Other Voices

Making tens of millions in honesty and honor

By Ahmad alsarraf

I BEGAN my business career more than half a century ago. It has been a rich and enjoyable journey, most of which was spent with partners with whom I established many companies in Kuwait, Dubai, and London. I earned their trust and maintained lasting friendships with all of them.

Throughout this time, I consistently generated substantial profits, and at times, fair gains for everyone involved. My partners came from various backgrounds, including Kuwaiti, Palestinian, Lebanese, Jordanian, Muslim, and Christian. Among them, Suleiman Al-Subaihi, Abdullaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, Hussein Abdullah Al-Amir, and Ghanem Saqr Al-Ghanem have passed away. Most, however, are still with me, such as Mohammad Abdul Latif Al-Mutawa, Yaqoub Al-Jouan, Samir Rahhal, Marwan Haddad, Abdul Redha Khorshid, Hisham Al-Sultan, and Moez Ali. These are the names that my memory can recall at this moment.

My experience in establishing the National Medical Company more than 35 years ago was the most exciting, successful, and long lasting one. With the necessary support of the company's partners and senior employees, particularly expatriates, I was able to achieve net profits of nearly KD 35 million, which were distributed among the partners. Also, the company was recently valued at KD 14 million by independent consulting firms, with the intention of selling shares to serious investors.

This huge achievement began with an initial capital of just KD 100,000!

Three reasons behind recounting these events: First: On the occasion of my decision to voluntarily step away from all my professional, commercial, and investment commitments after 60 wonderful years.

Second: To respond to the spontaneous comment made by a dear friend regarding something a former media figure said in a television interview.



alsarraf

In that interview, the interviewee claimed he had succeeded in imposing himself due to his eloquent speech. He said ministers used to fear him to the point where they would immediately answer his calls. He revealed that he exploited his position to advance his own interests and those of his children, attributing all of this to the ministers' fear of him, not out of respect for him personally. According to him, he holds no academic certificates, and his father came from humble beginnings. My friend's comment, "Well done... man!" pushed me to write this article to show him that success can also be achieved in other ways.

Third: To respond to the attempts of certain individuals, whom I believe may be suffering from psychiatric disorders, to tarnish my reputation and spread false, malicious accusations against me. These include claims that someone else is responsible for writing my articles, that I was involved in dubious deals during the COVID-19 crisis in collaboration with senior officials of the Ministry of Health, that I became wealthy through dealings with the American company Halliburton during the 2003 war, and other such baseless, vile accusations that are completely unsupported by any evidence.

For more than a quarter of a century, I have been the most outspoken in attacking and criticizing the leaders of religious political parties.

However, despite their moral, material, and political power, and their infiltration of many decision-making bodies, they have never been able to find any serious evidence to convict me or my business practices. Desperation led them to attempt to silence me by filing lawsuits against me for what I wrote about them in one of my articles. However, the just judiciary has acquitted me at every stage of the litigation. My humble pen triumphed over all their strength and arrogance.

Success in life does not necessarily require a person to be sharp-tongued, corrupt, or bribed. It is entirely possible, especially in Kuwait, to achieve great success without compromising one's reputation or failing to uphold integrity, both with oneself and others.

□ □ □

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

Top jobs in cooperatives for Kuwaitis soon

By Fares Al-Abdan/Abdulrahman Al-Shimmari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi revealed that the Kuwaitization of supervisory positions in cooperative societies will soon begin.

He explained that recruitment will not involve human intervention but will instead be based on tests conducted by Kuwait University. The individual who achieves the highest score will be offered the position.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the Arab Orphan Day 2025, Al-Ajmi stated that the test will be worth 90 points, with a 10-point personal interview.

He affirmed that the aim of preventing human intervention is to ensure neutrality and transparency throughout the recruitment process.

18 new majors added: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal approved a decision to add 18 new majors to the list of higher education institutions in the United States based on the recommendation of the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education.

The decision includes several new majors in various fields, such as public health, emergency and crisis management, psychology, biology, media, and information security.

In addition, several prestigious universities, such as Boston Univer-

sity, George Washington University, University of North Dakota, and University of Delaware, have been added to the list.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has launched a special barcode for the 'Gharameen 3' campaign on its website, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry explained that once the barcode is scanned, citizens can complete the registration process in accordance with the approved regulations for the campaign.

It also stated that this step aims to reduce pressure on the Central Aid Program and to facilitate the process for citizens.

It added that within 48 hours; the campaign raised more than half a million Kuwaiti dinars from more than 7,650 donors.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Opening doors ideal to solve pending Kuwait, Iraq issues

"ACCORDING to circulating news, the government has allowed Iraqis to obtain tourist visas. I believe this is the first time it happened since the unjust invasion on Aug. 2, 1990," journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"I believe, and this is my opinion, that the decision to open the doors to visits between the two countries has been delayed. Currently, Iraqis grant Kuwaitis visas for tourism, visits to holy sites, religious occasions or business visits.

"No matter how hard we try to isolate the two countries, many reasons remain that connect them. There are family reasons, as well as commercial reasons. Until recently, Iraqis visited Kuwait for trade, and Iraqi pilgrims used to and still pass through Kuwait for Hajj.

"As for the Kuwaitis, there is no doubt that they have a beautiful history in Iraqi cities like Basra, Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala. It is wrong to be stubborn with each other, but it is also wrong to be suspicious or arrogant toward each other. There are many commonalities that connect us. Iraqi arts, especially singing, are among the traditional arts that remain close and beloved by Kuwaiti tastes.

"Opening the doors of both countries is the ideal solution to all the problems that remain unresolved and should be addressed with brotherly intentions. Perhaps, it is good fortune for the Iraqis to have a man of the stature of Mr. Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani, who has proven his worth and integrity since assuming the position of Prime Minister.

"Unprecedented urban, industrial and economic progress was observed during his tenure. Many outstanding issues between Kuwait and Iraq have been resolved.

"I think Iraq is progressing, and perhaps, even becoming a competitive country in the region. The obstacles to Iraq's progress at the present time are the military militias and the chaotic and undisciplined political parties.

"Iraq possesses all the keys to progress: rivers, the sea, oil and gas. It also has a location overlooking its neighbors, capable of creating an industrial, commercial and tourism bloc. It also has a history spanning thousands of years, intelligent people, and pieces of land still awaiting development. A third of Iraq's area remains desert.

"It is not an issue for Iraqis or others to visit Kuwait for tourism. The more important question is what we should offer them. Should we stop at the traditional Mubarakiya Market and leave it at that?

"The Arab tourist is neither concerned with antiquities nor is he willing to spend his time visiting ancient schools or mosques. They have more. As for markets, they should offer tourists goods other than those offered in their own markets.

"Our problem to date is that we remain a closed country despite Kuwaitis being the most traveled and touristic people in the region. They were the first tourists to discover regions of the world that had not been visited, or were unknown to the people of the region.

"The tourist seeks places where he can find comfort and companionship, and for various types of art -- singing, theater and cinema -- as well as adventure and entertainment.

"All of these things are prohibited, and if they exist, they are subject to the censorship of extremists. So, you have to imagine who these people are, while government censorship is no less than that of the extremists.

"There is no doubt that Iraqis' visits to Kuwait for tourism, before they are tourism itself, represent an opening of hearts between two peoples united by a common nature.

"Generations change, and ideas change, and neither side, Kuwait and Iraq, should be stuck at an unfortunate stage that must be overcome. There are peoples who have gone to war, and their relations have grown stronger."

Also:

"We do not remember when the General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI) first planned to establish a medical city for retirees. What matters is completion and implementation, even if it comes late. However, the delay is unjustifiable, and its reasons are not convincing!" **Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Was the plan implemented before the establishment of Al-Razi Medical Company, or after its sale or transfer by the GOSI to a private company? Only Allah knows.

"The reasons for the delay in completion, or perhaps, negligence in follow-up and lack of interest in the pace of project completion, are not a public matter, as we understand with great humility.

"However, what is rumored about the project's history can be considered plausible. It may date back to several lean years at the expense of public funds and waste.

"Perhaps it stems from the so-called consulting studies and the discovery of construction obstacles that prevented implementation and completion throughout that single period!

"It could be five years, or more than 10 years, or more than we imagine and expect, but we know that the project has been delayed. It has been said that GOSI focused on the advisory aspect, assigning one consultant after another, without completing the Retirees Medical City project!

"The government was forced to replace the Retirees Medical City project with the Afya insurance due to non-human and human shortcomings; regardless of which comes first, second or both!

"The Retirees Medical City project is not a mirage, as evidenced by the recent statement in 2025 about accelerating implementation!

"The long-awaited medical city project has appeared to be a financial mystery and a construction illusion. The important thing is not to delve into the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS). The delay may be due to the magic of former Di-

rector General Fahad Al-Rajaan, who was convicted in absentia. We do not know the details, except for the government, the Legal and Legislation Authority, and PIFSS, all of which know, directly or indirectly, the mysteries of the Al-Rajaan case and the conflict of interests of some within PIFSS. The executive management insists on 'legal competence', as previously stated in the National Assembly's Public Funds Protection Committee despite the State Audit Bureau's explicit objection to the conflict of interest.

"However, some legal and executive parties are knowledgeable. They are the 'experts' in PIFSS' interests, public funds issues and international disputes.

"On behalf of the Fourth State, through the platform of *Al-Seyassah* daily, out of concern for public interest, and in an effort to cooperate with the new executive team of PIFSS, with thanks to the former acting Director General, who worked hard to secure his position and exhausted himself defending the 'legal conflict of interest' violation -- however, not everyone who works hard is right -- please direct the following questions to the Minister of Finance:

1. When did planning begin for the Retirees Medical City project? What is the estimated value of the project, and what is the difference in implementation compared to the current estimate of KD243 million?

2. What are the reasons behind the delay in completing the project, other than the presence of a prayer room, infrastructure such as sewage systems, and other human and non-human obstacles on the project site?

3. How many consulting studies have been conducted since the project's inception, including the obstacles and studies that followed the first consulting study? What is the name and details of the consulting company or companies, and what is the total cost of the studies?

4. Has an executive team or board of directors been formed for project? How many nails have been installed on the site designated for the project to date? Has a site been rented for members of the team or board of directors? If so, please provide the total rental value, address of the assigned team's headquarters, and owner's information about the headquarters property?

5. Have bonuses been paid to the board of directors or the team assigned to oversee the project? If so, what is their total value to date?

6. What are the State Audit Bureau's observations and opinions on the project to date?

7. Does the medical city include one or more hotels, investment, commercial, and entertainment facilities? If so, please provide all details and the reasons, if any!

"Questions may be answered without submitting relevant documents. Answers may be submitted to the editor-in-chief of *Al-Seyassah* daily or his representative.

"Thank you for your understanding of the public interest sought by the Fourth State."

"Atheist philosopher Michel Onfray is one of the most well-known figures in France and Europe. Several years ago, he appeared on France's most popular television program, during which he was expected to criticize Islam and Muslims. To everyone's surprise, Onfray stated, 'Muslims have an ethic of honor, while we have lost any sense of honor'. In that interview, Onfray was face-to-face with Eric Zemmour, a right-wing, racist, and Islamophobic French figure who was then running for the French presidency," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The interview was intended to attack Islam and Muslims, including native French citizens who had converted to Islam. However, Onfray surprised viewers by saying, 'I believe Muslims are teaching us an important lesson in how to confront materialism because, regardless of what we see in them, they have lofty ideals; they believe they can transcend materialism. Muslims have a spirituality, a moral code they adhere to, and values they live by. We should be ashamed of how we dispose of the elderly in our society by consigning them to nursing homes. Muslims forbid extramarital sex and consider it dishonorable for women. The issue here is not about possessing material things, but rather about a sense of dignity.'

"Some believe that Michel Onfray may follow in the footsteps of the late French philosopher and former communist intellectual Roger Garaudy, who converted to Islam and wrote two books - 'The Promises of Islam' and 'Islam Lives in Our Future'.

"We know that God Almighty divided inheritance and specified the shares of each heir (both male and female) in Surah An-Nisa in the holy Quran. This inspired Robert Crane, an advisor to the late US President Nixon, to convert to Islam. Crane explained his reason for converting, saying: 'I studied law at Harvard University, and I did not find the word 'justice' in its laws. I found this word frequently in Islam.'

"Crane was having a conversation with a law professor when he asked him, 'Do you know the size of the inheritance law in the US Constitution?' The law professor replied, 'Yes, eight volumes.' Crane then said, 'If I bring you an inheritance law that doesn't exceed ten lines, will you believe that Islam is the true religion?' The professor responded, 'That can never be true.'

"Crane then presented him with the verses on inheritance from the Holy Quran. Several days later, the professor returned to Crane and said, 'No human mind can account for all family relationships with such comprehensiveness that no one is forgotten, and then distribute the inheritance among them with such justice that no one is wronged.' After this realization, the professor accepted Islam."

— **Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/ Simi K. Kutty**



Firefighters worked tirelessly to extricate the driver's body from the wreckage.

Expatriate driver meets tragic end

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (Agencies) : An expatriate driver tragically lost his life in a collision involving a gas tanker and a bulldozer on Seventh Ring Road. The accident resulted in significant traffic disruptions on the Seventh Ring Road, particularly towards Jahra, prompting the deployment of multiple traffic patrols to manage the situation. The tanker involved was carrying highly flammable materials, which added to the complexity of the incident.

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior Operations received a report early Sunday morning about the

crash, which took place near a gas station heading towards Jahra. Upon arrival, it was confirmed that the collision involved a bulldozer loaded with sand and a gas tanker carrying highly flammable substances.

The General Fire Force was immediately alerted, and teams specializing in hazardous materials, along with the Al-Bairaq team, were dispatched to carefully remove the body of the deceased from the wreckage and transfer it to the forensic medicine department. The second driver involved in the crash was detained, and a case has been filed regarding the collision.



Fire-fighters at the accident site.

KFF photos

Acquittal of Dr. Al-Suwaidan upheld

Sports club president absolved as ruling overruled

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Court of Cassation upheld the acquittal of Dr. Tariq Al-Suwaidan in a State Security case filed against him for allegedly committing a hostile act against Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan by using offensive language on the X platform in media campaigns aimed at damaging Kuwait's relations with those countries through misuse of social media.

The court ruled that the posts in question

did not constitute a hostile act but rather represented criticism in the context of the events in Gaza, which were widely recognized as an international issue primarily concerning Muslims. In addition, the accused identified himself as a supporter of Palestine and the children of Gaza.

Club president acquitted: The Court of Cassation, headed by Justice Sultan Buresli, has overturned the prison sentence imposed on Al-Arabi Club President Abdulaziz Ashour and acquitted him of insulting and questioning the integrity of a member of the judiciary.

The Court of Appeals had earlier upheld the six-month prison sentence with hard labor imposed on Ashour for insulting judges.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant and others with breaching the respect due to a

judge at the Court of First Instance by publishing a video clip of an interview conducted with the defendant on the social media platform Instagram, which included language and phrases undermining his integrity and commitment to the provisions of the law.

Attorney Abdul-Mohsen Al-Qattan on Sunday appeared in court on behalf of Ashour; during which he pleaded orally, requesting that the ruling be overturned and his client be acquitted.

Ex-MP absolved: The Criminal Court acquitted former MP Muhammad Al-Sayer of charges related to challenging the powers of His Highness the Amir, broadcasting false news, and misusing his telephone.

The Public Prosecution released Al-Sayer on January 7 on a bail of KD 1,000. Al-Sayer had denied all the accusations leveled against him.

Decoders, receivers importers must get ministry nod

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi recently issued a ministerial decision regulating the import of decoders and receivers.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision, which mandates those involved in the device trade to obtain permission from the competent authority in the ministry before importing receivers for audio and video channels equipped with separate decoders, or any device that incorporate decoder technology.

The decision also stipulates that it is prohibited to import or sell decoders or receivers, which in-

corporate decoders for audio and video channels, or any device with decoder technology, without obtaining a license to engage in this activity from the concerned authority in the ministry.

It requires the submission of an import license application by entities or companies that hold the rights to encrypted audio or visual media content using the form prepared for this purpose to the competent authority at the ministry.

The application must specify the applicant's name, address, capacity as the content rights holder, and the type and number of devices for which an import license is requested.

The competent authority will then refer the application to the competent technical authority for a technical opinion to grant the license or not.

The competent technical authority must express its opinion on the license application within 10 working days of receiving the application, and that the concerned authority must decide on the license application within one month of the application submission date by accepting, rejecting or amending it.

Customs clearance of authorized import devices is not permitted until a certificate is obtained from the competent authority, stating that the imported devices are permitted to enter the country.

The ministry neither imposes obligations or rights on third parties as a result of granting or denying the import license, nor does it grant the license prejudicing the rights of interested parties related to the circulation or sale of such devices.

According to the same decision, the permit will be valid for one year from the date of issuance. If the competent technical authority requests a sample of the equipment for which an import or release permit is required, the party requesting the permit shall be obligated to pay the ministry a fee of KD10 inspect the equipment.

The decision allows employees to appeal the refusal to grant the permit or renew it within 10 days from the date the applicant is notified of the decision. The appeal shall be submitted to the undersecretary of the ministry and a decision shall be made within 10 days of its submission. The decision issued in the appeal shall be final.

Drugs found on man

Kuwaiti wanted in 3-year jail term nabbed by cops

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: A young man in an abnormal condition was arrested along King Fahad Road with narcotics in his possession.

A security source revealed that while patrolling along the road, securitymen spotted a vehicle whose driver committed traffic violations.

They signaled for the driver to stop, leading to the discovery that his companion was in an abnormal condition. After investigating, the officers found narcotics in his possession. He was referred to the concerned authorities, along with the confiscated narcotics.

In another development, detectives arrested a citizen who evaded a three-year prison sentence in Sulaibikhat.

According to a security source, the detectives received information about the location of the citizen who is wanted by law. They rushed to the location, arrested the citizen and referred him to the concerned authorities.

Fire in Shuwaikh shop: A fire broke out in a shop in Shuwaikh Industrial Area recently.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), firefighters from Shuwaikh Industrial and Al-Shaheed fire stations rushed to the location and successfully controlled the fire. No casualties were reported.

Pakistani dies in accident

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: A Pakistani expatriate died when his vehicle collided with another on Subiya Road. According to a security source, the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report about the collision.

Security and ambulance personnel rushed to the site, where they discovered that the accident claimed the life of the Pakistani. A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances that led to the fatal accident.

Meanwhile, rescue police patrols referred seven individuals to the Drug Control General Department in the Interior Ministry for the possession of narcotics.



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Second asphalt layer being applied; drainage work finished

Al-Mashaan confirms ongoing road maintenance in Abdullah Al-Mubarak

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan has confirmed the continuation of radical road maintenance works in Abdullah Al-Mubarak; as part of the new radical maintenance contracts for highways and internal roads, which include 18 major road maintenance projects in the six governorates.

In a press statement, Al-Mashaan disclosed that the maintenance works in the area are proceeding according to the plans and phases established for radical road maintenance work; starting with the most affected areas and then moving on to the least affected areas, with full commitment to ensure quality



KUNA photo

The Ministry of Public Works continues radical maintenance work in Abdullah Al-Mubarak suburbs.

and achieve international standards.

Meanwhile, Maintenance Work Supervisor Eng. Abdullah Al-Mutairi said the current phase of maintenance work in the area consists of scraping and putting the second layer of asphalt (Type Two), which precedes the final layer.

He also revealed that maintenance works are currently being carried out between Blocks One and Three, affirming these works are proceeding as per the timetable.

He added the scraping work is going on between Blocks One and Two, as well as the civil work in Block Eight; while the rainwater drainage lines in Blocks Eight and Nine, which precede the asphalt work in the area, have been completed.

Capital Committee approves Qurtoba transformer station

Council defers key projects

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Capital Governorate Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Dr. Hassan Kamal, held its 13th meeting for the third legislative term on Sunday.

The committee approved only one out of nine items on its agenda – request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate a secondary transformer station in Qurtoba (Block Four, Site Five).

Three items were returned to the executive branch for an update in accordance with applicable rules and regulations as follows:

■ Request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to use an administrative building for the site located in Shuwaikh Two;

■ Request of the Ministry of Justice to renew the allocation of land for the Family Court building project in the Capital Governorate (Granada, Block Three);

■ Request of a citizen to specify the entire investment property in Plot No. 64, Block Five, Sharq measuring 867.75 square meters for commercial office use.



Dr. Kamal

The committee also recommended coordinating with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) to expedite the implementation of the parks project in Qurtoba. This recommendation is the result of the discussion of a letter submitted by Qurtoba Mayor Abdul Mohsen Al-

Hussaini regarding the designated parks in the area's cadastral plan.

A company's request regarding the installation of an elevator for the elderly, people with special needs, and people of determination was referred to the executive body for the latter to present its technical opinion.

The committee deferred the item related to amending the Municipal Council decision taken on July 10, 2023; approving the acceptance of a donation from Al-Shaab National Real Estate Company to construct a multi-storey parking building and beautify the adjacent public parks in Sharq, Block Seven. It then invited the Projects Sector in Kuwait Municipality and Al-Shaab National Real Estate Company to a discussion of the decision, while it reserved the special transaction for the Injaz project for deliberation in another meeting.

Mutlaa City water supply 15% complete

MEW on track with storage tanks, awaits pumping station approval

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: As the residents of Mutlaa City await the date for the connection of water supply to their plots; reliable sources revealed that the Water Projects Sector in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has completed approximately 15 percent of the work in underground water tanks and overhead water towers.

Sources stated that the delivery of water to Mutlaa City plots is contingent upon the implementation of the entire water system, including the pumping station, for which the ministry is awaiting approval for the tender and awarding procedures. They also affirmed the ministry's commitment to complete all projects within a unified timeline to ensure water is delivered to the city.

Sources explained that the ministry is currently completing the main water pipeline project supplying Mutlaa City, stressing that "implementation of this contract is proceeding according to schedule."

Sources added the implementation of the contract to construct three underground tanks -- with a capacity of 115 million gallons each -- will increase Kuwait's fresh water storage capacity to approximately 345 million gallons. They said the ministry has completed about 15 percent of the project.

In a related development, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) approved the request of the ministry to award the tender for the repair, maintenance and exterior painting of underground tanks and fresh and brackish water towers made of reinforced concrete in various parts of the country to the company with the lowest bid of around KD1.949 million.

DGCA and KIJLS ink MoU to enhance legal training for aviation personnel

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies (KIJLS) to enhance cooperation in qualifying and training national legal personnel, exchanging expertise, and implementing training programs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The MoU was signed by DGCA Chairman Sheikh Humoud Al-Sabah and KIJLS Director Counselor Hani Mohammed Al-Hamdan.

Sheikh Humoud Al-Sabah explained that this MoU represents an important step in preparing and qualifying DGCA employees, and aligning their skills with the nature of their roles and the legal

awareness and specialized training required by their duties.

The MoU will support DGCA employees in carrying out their oversight responsibilities over relevant entities in the civil aviation sector. It also aims to meet the requirements of international organizations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), to achieve the highest standards of air safety and civil aviation security.

He affirmed that cooperation with the institute will be valuable in supporting air transport market inspectors from a legal perspective, ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, and circulars issued by DGCA, and contributing to the protection of travellers' and investors' rights in the sector.

Requests via portal or phone only

CSC automates fingerprint exemption

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has officially announced that exemption from fingerprint attendance and departure, or both, for employees assigned to external missions is processed automatically or by telephone; and that paper forms will not be accepted, reports Al-Anba daily.

Applications must be submitted either three days or one month prior to the assignment and no later than 72 hours after its completion, the bureau stressed.

It clarified that employees in all of its units who are assigned to external missions can apply for exemption through the electronic portal (Mission/CSC Portal) or by telephone.

The daily obtained a copy of the official circular in which the bureau stated that applications must be submitted within three days or one month before the mission begins, and no later than three days after it ends. The application should include details of the assignment, including its content and location, as well as the type of exemption being requested.

The circular also emphasized that paper forms will not be accepted, and applications submitted after the specified deadlines will be rejected.

This process aims to ensure the smooth implementation of CSC procedures in the best interest of work efficiency.

Also, sources from the CSC affirmed that the central employment registration system is designed to be flexible and fair. Registered citizens seeking employment have the option to decline their first job offer, after which they will be provided with a different opportunity in another government agency. The nomination process for those who decline the first opportunity follows a structured pattern: one rejection leads to a second chance, then a third, and so on, sources added.

However, sources clarified that those who reject an opportunity will not be prioritized when new citizens are registered after the 90-day employment period opens.

The CSC's decision stipulates that priority will be given to citizens who have not yet received any job offer. When a new batch of nominations is announced, priority will be given to newly qualified applicants; followed by those who have been rejected by government agencies, with their rejection count reset to zero, sources elaborated.

Regarding the waiting period for citizens who reject a nomination, sources reiterated that second opportunity is given after the newly registered applicants and those previously rejected. If there are sufficient openings, these individuals will be considered without delay. If the needs are not immediately met, their nominations will be announced later when positions become available, sources added.

MoE must approve school materials

Al-Mutairi revises book censorship rules

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi issued a ministerial decision amending Article Eight of the Regulations for the Censorship of Books, Novels and Printed Materials (Ministerial Resolution No. 22/2017).

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision, stating that the amended text will read as follows: "If the director of the department determines that the publication does not contain the prohibited contents stipulated in Chapter Three of Law No. 3/2006 referred to; he shall issue a decision to authorize it, taking into account that the authorization of school publications must be approved by the Ministry of Education."

Al-Mutairi called on the concerned authorities to implement this decision, which takes effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Al-Mutairi called on the concerned authorities to implement this decision, which takes effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Authority pledges continued support for athletes

Youth Affairs Minister Al-Mutairi commends Kuwait team in Turin 2025 Special Olympics

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi on Sunday commended the great achievements of Kuwaiti athletes at the Special Olympics World Winter Games, which concluded Saturday evening in the Italian city of Turin, with the participation of more than 1,500 athletes from 100 countries.

The Minister affirmed to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the distinction of the "Blue Team" comes as a result of the care and attention of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh

Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, highly appreciating this generous support for Kuwaiti athletes.



Al-Mutairi

lah Al-Ali, who secured a silver and a bronze medal, reflects the high spirits and strong determination of Kuwaiti champions with intellectual disabilities.

He also praised the efforts of player Maryam Diab, who achieved advanced results in her competitions and came close to winning, congratulating the players, the administrative and technical staff, and the accompanying delegation on this great achievement, which promises further success in upcoming sporting events.

Minister Al-Mutairi emphasized that the Public Authority for Sports, in line with its strategy to provide full support to athletes with disabilities, will continue its support for Kuwaiti disabled sports -- whether mental, motor, deaf, or blind -- to achieve more accomplishments, especially since these champions have a rich history of raising Kuwait's name in major international sporting events.

PAFN Chairperson meets Brazilian envoy to discuss halal certification

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Chairperson and Director General of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Dr. Reem Al-Fulajj recently held a meeting with the Brazilian Ambassador to Kuwait Rodrigo Daraugo Gabès to discuss the requirements for health and halal certification for the export of animal products to Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a brief statement, PAFN explained that both sides expressed their desire to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries for continued progress and prosperity.



PAFN photo
Dr. Reem Al-Fulajj with Ambassador Rodrigo Daraugo Gabès.

The meeting focused on enhancing food security in Kuwait.

Ministry of Awqaf abolishes paper exit permits

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Mosques Sector in the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs issued a circular stating that the paper exit permits previously used by expatriates traveling abroad have been completely abolished at all ports of entry -- sea and land, and are no longer valid; as they have been replaced by the exit permit certificate available on Sahel app, reports Al-Anba daily.

The circular stipulates that the exit permit must be obtained by visiting the administration well in advance of the travel date, registering the permit in the ministry's system, and submitting a letter to the integrated systems. The integrated systems must also be reviewed at the ministry building to activate the exit permit on the Sahel app.

The exit opened at exactly 4:00 am on Monday, March 17. Meanwhile, The General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry has confirmed the opening of the entrance to Messila intersection, going towards Fahaheel; in addition to the right lane and the right emergency lane, reports Al-Anba daily.

Entrance to Messila intersection opened

Secondary exit on 4th Ring Road towards Hawally opened

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (Agencies): The General Traffic Department announced the opening of the secondary exit on Hussein Bin Ali Al-Roumi Road (Fourth Ring

Road) towards Hawally for those coming from Salmiya via Morocco Street (Road 40) in the direction of Kuwait City, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The exit opened at exactly 4:00 am on Monday, March 17. Meanwhile, The General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry has confirmed the opening of

the entrance to Messila intersection, going towards Fahaheel; in addition to the right lane and the right emergency lane, reports Al-Anba daily.

LOCAL

MoCI rolls out new 'online service' on Sahel Business app

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched a new online service via the Sahel Business app called "Print the Beneficiary Owner Report", reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This service allows users to view the companies registered under their names and print an official report directly through the app.

\$98 million project to start in 2025

KFAED signs deal for 4 Tunisian hospitals

TUNIS, March 17, (KUNA): The Tunisian Ministry of Public Works and Housing has signed an agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to finance the construction of four hospitals in central and northern Tunisia. According to a statement by the Tunisian Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the project's total cost exceeds USD 98

million (approximately 358 million Tunisian dinars) and is co-financed by the Tunisian government and KFAED.

Tunisian Minister of Public Works and Housing, Sara Zafarani stated that each hospital will have a capacity of 105 beds and will offer a range of specialized medical services, including internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, medical laboratories, a blood

bank, radiology, emergency and medical assistance, surgical units, and anesthesia and resuscitation departments. Construction of the four hospitals is set to begin in April 2025 and will continue for a period of 26 months, each facility will include departments for internal medicine, general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, and a central sterilization unit.

Kuwait's HH Amir congratulates Ireland's President on Nat'l Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins Monday to congratulate him on his country's national day, wishing him good health and for the Irish people progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable to President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins Monday to congratulate him on his country's national day, wishing him good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable to the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins Monday to congratulate him on his country's national day.



Photos from the Ramadan ghabga hosted by Talal Jassim Al-Kharafi at the Al-Kharafi family diwaniya in Al-Bida'a, attended by members of the ruling family, senior officials, and citizens.

Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Talal Al-Kharafi's ghabga ... A blend of official and popular attendance

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: In the presence of a number of ruling family members, senior officials, and citizens, Talal Jassim Al-Kharafi hosted his Ramadan ghabga at

the Al-Kharafi family diwaniya in Al-Bida'a.

The diverse gathering reflected the cohesion and solidarity that have been a hallmark of Kuwaiti society

since ancient times. Attendees engaged in friendly conversations and exchanged heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, emphasizing

the significance of such gatherings in strengthening the bonds of communication and brotherhood among the people of the nation.

Municipal Council weighs proposals for new marinas

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Municipal Council's Environmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Alia Al-Farsi, held its fifth meeting for the third legislative term on Monday.

The main item in the agenda of the meeting is a letter from the residents of Jaber Al-Ahmad, Saad Al-Abdullah, Northwest Sulaibikhat, Granada and Doha; requesting for the construction of two

marinas for their boats -- one in Ashirj and another in the vacant area near the North Doha chalets.

The committee decided to return the request to the executive branch for further action and consultation with relevant authorities. It prepared a comprehensive report detailing the locations of existing public marinas in the country and clarified the executive branch's stance on constructing new marinas.

In response to the request, the Kuwait Municipality informed the committee that there are two

ongoing projects in the areas mentioned in the letter.

One is the Jahra waterfront development project (the Corniche), which the Municipality is implementing through the private sector and does not include a marina. The other is the Sulaibikhat Bay master plan development project, which includes a proposed marina site. This proposal was submitted for approval by the Municipal Council on Oct 19, 2023 and is currently awaiting a decision.

Sabah Al-Ahmad Medical City project moves ahead

Local firm wins contract

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Ministry of Public Works has obtained approval from the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to award the contract for the Sabah Al-Ahmad Medical City project to a local consulting firm.

This is a confirmation of the report that the newspaper published on March 7 with the headline, "Extension of Initial Insurance for Bidders to Design the Medical City Project."

The contract was awarded to the firm with the lowest bid of KD 7.692 million. The firm will design, obtain a license, prepare plans, documents and records for the medical city and supervise its implementation.

Sources pointed out that the approval of the award is considered a step towards

establishing the medical city. They said the ministry will soon refer the tender documents to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review, study and approval of the contract; then work will commence as stipulated in the contract.

Sources stated that the project will be implemented through the Construction Projects Sector at the Ministry of Public Works, which is focusing project; especially since it is one of the important health services projects implemented by the State in the southern part of the country, serving a large number of citizens.

Sources indicated that the proposed area for the project is approximately 300,000 square meters and the main building will accommodate 500 beds.

Sources added the medical specializations and facilities for the project include an integrated dental building (100 clinics), a doctors residence building, a nurses residence building, an outpatient clinic building, a physiotherapy building, a medical storage and warehouse building, a parking building, and an emergency air transport services building.

Continued from Page 1

The Houthis:

In response to Houthi terrorism, the previous U.S. administration carried out operations over the past months, taking into account the complicated relationship between the U.S. and some Gulf states. However, under President Donald Trump's administration, the approach shifted significantly, as he dealt with the region more pragmatically than his successor, President Joe Biden.

Therefore, the disciplinary operation launched by the "Prosperity Guardian Alliance" to protect commercial waterways in the region was necessary for protecting world peace, especially as there are some who dream of reshaping the world through terrorism. This situation inevitably echoes the events leading up to World War II, when a madman named Hitler dominated German decision-making. His ambition to rule the world with an iron fist ultimately led to his downfall and the destruction of Germany.

Those who support the Houthis, Hezbollah, and the remnants of the Iraqi sectarian gangs have failed to learn from the lessons of the past. Today, the situation is collapsing upon them, with the Houthis being the latest to face this downfall. Their fate will likely be similar to that of Hezbollah in Lebanon. The calculations of the great powers extend far beyond "a wasp gnawing at the ruin of its nest".

Amir praises

His Highness the Amir urged the judicial authority to act impartially, uphold the rule of law, and ensure the rights and freedoms of everybody, away from any personal considerations.

He outlined three main requests for the judiciary to work on as early

as possible;

First, to speed up the Kuwaitization of the judicial and the subordinate jobs.

Second, to put fear of Allah, the Almighty, above all considerations while making verdicts.

And third, to shorten the period of a prosecution and settling the disputes.

His Highness the Amir took pride in the growing participation of women in the judiciary, saying it is a historic stride in the way to woman empowerment which reflects Kuwait's commitment to ensuring gender equality.

He voiced hope for adopting legislations that could modern the judicial work, facilitate litigation and prosecution, and speed up the digitization of the judicial authority and the Public Prosecution.

He lauded the roles of the judicial and the executive authorities as "two wings of the leadership" helping realize the aspirations of the people and protecting their interests in the framework of the Constitution.

Concluding, His Highness the Amir expressed best wishes for the judiciary people and all sons of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the President of Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and the Court of Cassation Dr. Adel Bouresli has vowed to proceed with boosting and cementing the rules of truth and justice to integrate all judiciary bodies in all fields.

Bouresli gave a speech during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to the SJC on Sunday evening on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.

His Highness the Amir was accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and other senior officials.

Bouresli expressed his honor and

pride for His Highness the Amir's visit that showed strong support and follow legislative authority and its bodies.

Upon the directives of His Highness the Amir, Bouresli vowed to apply law upon all as a push for the country's sustainable development path to maintain Kuwait as home for security, justice and safety.

He stressed working on all levels to remove all obstacles facing individuals through facilitating access to get services, in line with a developed inclusive judiciary system.

Bouresli prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow perpetual good health on His Highness the Amir, and further security, stability, progress and prosperity to Kuwait.

He dedicated His Highness the Amir a souvenir on this occasion.

'Foreign investment

He then highlighted the role of foreign investment in addressing the employment problem, considering the private sector's capacity to absorb university graduates.

He stressed the importance of providing special facilities for foreign investment, including tax breaks and land provision. He also suggested that opening projects through partnerships between foreign investments and the State could diversify income sources and generate profits.

He thinks that increased foreign investment will create a competitive environment among investment companies in the country; thereby, enhancing the local economic environment.

He hopes that Kuwait will regain its former economic leadership, and called for amending commercial laws to keep pace with current economic developments.

The annual report of Kuwait Direct Investments Promotion Authority (KDIPA) revealed that Kuwait

attracted foreign investments worth no more than KD1.47 billion within eight years since it began operating on Jan 1, 2015 until the end of fiscal 2022/2023.

Meanwhile, data published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) showed that Gulf markets attracted \$169.8 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) over the past three years.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) led the Gulf countries in attracting FDI over the past three years with \$74 billion, followed by Saudi Arabia with \$63.5 billion, Sultanate of Oman with more than \$19 billion, Bahrain with \$11.4 billion, Kuwait with \$3.4 billion, and Qatar with total FDI inflows declining by \$1.49 billion.

Kuwait, China

Meanwhile, Ambassador Hayat affirmed that the framework agreement came in line with the Kuwaiti leadership's directive concerning major joint projects, adding that more details on grand projects signed with China would come into light soon including the agreement signed back in February to execute the Mubarak Al-Kabeer port.

He said that Chinese-Kuwaiti ties were witnessing huge leaps on several domains, reflecting the strong and robust relations linking the two countries. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's previous visit to China and his meeting with President Xi Jinping had solidified ties further and led to the mutual agreement on boosting ties on all possible levels, affirmed the diplomat.

Kuwait and China will celebrate on March 22nd the 54th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations, which began back in 1971.

KU's aptitude test registration opens

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Office of the Assistant Vice President for Evaluation and Measurement at Kuwait University announced the dates for online registration for the Academic Aptitude Tests (third chance) for Grade 12 students as follows: May 10 and 31 and June 28.

Registration for the tests is open to non-Kuwaiti students and children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, starting on March 19 at 10:00 am and ending on March 25 at 1:00 pm.

The office stated that registration for all categories of non-Kuwaiti students will be open from March 24 at 10:00 am to March 25 at 1:00 pm (or while seats are available).

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INTERNATIONAL



A row of RVs smolder Saturday, March 15, 2025, at the entrance to Fox Run at Lake Carl Blackwell near Stillwater, Okla. (AP)

Oklahomans survey devastation after damaged by wildfires

As Oklahomans assessed the devastation from wildfires that whipped across the state, damaging or destroying hundreds of homes, officials in both Oklahoma and Texas warned Sunday of an increased risk of fire danger in the coming week.

"We're going to be back into a critical area," Oklahoma Forestry Services spokesperson Keith Mer-

ckx said Sunday.

Wildfires fueled by high winds swept across the state on Friday. The Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management said Sunday evening that over 400 homes were damaged statewide. Officials said Sunday that at least four people had died because of the severe weather in Oklahoma.

Jeremy Cook was among the residents in Stillwater, a city of about 50,000 located about 65 miles (100 kilometers) northeast of Oklahoma City, who returned home Saturday morning to find that his house was gone. Cook told The Oklahoman that when his family fled Friday, they loaded up three cars with photographs, pets, books and paintings. (AP)

Kremlin confirms plans

'Trump, Putin to speak on Tuesday about war in Ukraine'

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): US President Donald Trump said he would speak to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday as he pushes to end the war in Ukraine.

The US leader disclosed the upcoming conversation to reporters while flying from Florida to Washington on Air Force One on Sunday evening.

"We will see if we have something to announce maybe by Tuesday. I will be speaking to President Putin on Tuesday," Trump said. "A lot of work's been done over the weekend. We want to see if we can bring that war to an end."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday morning confirmed the plans for the two leaders to speak on Tuesday, but refused to disclose what the conversation will be about, saying that "we never get ahead of events" and "the content of conversations between two presidents are not subject to any prior discussion."

Any such conversation could be a pivot point in the conflict and an opportunity for Trump to continue



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow, Russia on March 14. (AP)

reorienting American foreign policy. European allies are wary of Trump's affinity for Putin and his headline stance toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who faced sharp criticism when he visited the Oval Office a little more than two weeks ago.

Although Russia failed in its initial goal to topple Ukraine with its invasion three years ago, it still controls large swaths of the country.

Trump said land and power plants are part of the conversation about bringing the war to a close.

"We will be talking about land.

Wisconsin voters to elect education leader and decide on voter ID amendment

MADISON, Wis., March 17, (AP): The high-stakes race for Wisconsin Supreme Court has gotten most of the attention leading up to the April 1 election. But it is not the only issue voters will decide when early voting begins Tuesday.

Also on the ballot is a race for the battleground state's top education official who will guide policies affecting K-12 schools during President Donald Trump's second term.

There is also a measure that would place the state's voter ID law into the state constitution.

Both of those contests have sharp partisan divisions, even though the spending and national attention have been far less than those for the race for control of the state's highest court.

Here is a closer look at what's at stake as voting begins Tuesday:

The race to lead the state education department pits the teachers' union-backed incumbent, Jill Underly, against consultant Brittany Kinser, a supporter of the private school voucher program who is endorsed by Republicans.

A third candidate lost the February primary, unable to chip away enough at Underly's key support. The day after her victory, the state teachers' union, which did not endorse in the primary, came out in support of Underly.

Underly's education career began in 1999 as a high school social studies



A man walks by the Wisconsin Capitol on Oct 10, 2012, in Madison, Wis. (AP)

teacher in Indiana. She moved to Wisconsin in 2005 and worked five years for the state education department. She also worked as principal of Pecatonica Elementary School for a year before becoming the district administrator.

Underly was elected as state superintendent in 2021 and is endorsed by the Wisconsin Education Association

Council, which is the state teachers union, as well as the Wisconsin Democratic Party and numerous Democratic officeholders.

Kinser, who is backed by the Wisconsin Republican Party, touts her past as a public school principal in her first television ad. But she doesn't mention it was a charter school.

Trump administration deports hundreds of immigrants

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): The Trump administration has transferred hundreds of immigrants to El Salvador even as a federal judge issued an order temporarily barring the deportations under an 18th century wartime declaration targeting Venezuelan gang members, officials said Sunday. Flights were in the air at the time of the ruling.

US District Judge James E. Boasberg issued an order Saturday temporarily blocking the deportations, but lawyers told him there were already two planes with immigrants in the air - one headed for El Salvador, the other for Honduras. Boasberg verbally ordered the planes be turned around, but they apparently were not and he did not include the directive in his written order.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, in a statement Sunday, responded to speculation about whether the administration was flouting court orders: "The administration did not 'refuse to comply' with a court order. The order, which had no lawful basis, was issued after terrorist TdA aliens had already been removed from US territory."



Members of the Maritime Security Response Team participate in an assault boat demonstration as Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, (not pictured), watches on board the US Coast Guard Cutter Elm on March 16, 2025, in San Diego. (AP)

The acronym refers to the Tren de Aragua gang, which Trump targeted in his unusual proclamation that was released Saturday.

Tensions with Trump administration persist

Canada's Carney meets with European allies

PARIS, March 17, (AP): New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney met with French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, seeking support from one of Canada's oldest allies as U.S. President Donald Trump continues to attack Canada's sovereignty and economy.

This is Carney's first official foreign trip since he was sworn in on March 14. He will next land in London where he will sit down with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and King Charles III, the head of state in Canada.

Carney has deliberately chosen the two European capital cities that shaped Canada's early existence. During his swearing-in ceremony, he noted the country was built on the bedrock of three peoples, French, English and Indigenous, and said Canada is fundamentally different from America and will "never, ever, in any way shape or form, be part of the United States."

"I want to ensure that France, and the whole of Europe, works enthusiastically with Canada, the most European of non-European countries, and at the same time resolutely North American, determined, like you, to maintain the most positive relations possible with the United States," Carney said Monday, standing next to Macron.

Macron and Carney appeared in front of reporters before the talks but did not take questions, a sign the French president might not want to upset Trump by siding with Canada.

Macron said tariffs only bring inflation but did not address Trump's attacks on Canada.

"We both believe that fair trade which respects international rules is a good thing for the prosperity of everyone and is certainly more effective than



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney arrives for a tour of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris on March 17. (AP)

tariffs, which create inflation and damage supply chains and our economic integration," Macron said.

Since Trump came to office, he has imposed whopping tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum and repeatedly commented on turning Canada into the 51st state, infuriating Canadians and sparking a call to boycott US products across the country. He is threatening to impose tariffs on all Canadian products on April 2.

Carney visited the Notre-Dame Cathedral before meeting with Macron at the Palais de l'Élysée. Macron did recall Canada's soldiers who fought in France in both world wars.

"The choice of this itinerary for Prime Minister Carney's first official trip emphasizes the strong connection of Canada with the Arctic as well as with the two former colonial powers Canada remains attached to, through

the Commonwealth on the UK side and La Francophonie on the France side, said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

"The fact that Canada never broke away from the UK in a violent fashion is a key historical and institutional difference between the United States and Canada, a constitutional monarchy rather than a republic that has adopted and retained a UK-style parliamentary system."

The trip to London will be a bit of a homecoming, as Carney became the first non-British governor in the Bank of England's 319-year history when he took over the top job on July 1, 2013. He served until March 15, 2020.

Carney, a former central banker who turned 60 on Sunday, has said he's ready to meet with Trump if he shows respect for Canadian sovereignty.



Police in riot gear walk down a street during a major anti-corruption rally led by university students in Belgrade, Serbia on March 15. (AP)

Serbian officials deny illegal sonic weapon attack on protesters at anti-govt rally

BELGRADE, Serbia, March 17, (AP): Serbian officials denied Sunday that security forces used a military-grade sonic weapon to disperse and scare protesters at a huge anti-government rally in the capital.

Opposition officials and Serbian rights groups claimed the widely banned acoustic weapon that emits a targeted beam to temporarily incapacitate people was used during the protest Saturday. They say they will file charges with the European Court of Human Rights and domestic courts against those who ordered the attack.

Serbia has not denied that it has the acoustic device in its arsenal.

At least 100,000 people descended on Belgrade on Saturday for a mass rally seen as a culmination of months-

long protests against Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic and his government.

The rally was part of a nationwide anti-corruption movement that erupted after a concrete canopy collapsed at a train station in Serbia's north in November, killing 15 people.

Almost daily demonstrations that started in response to the tragedy have shaken Vucic's decade-long firm grip on power in Serbia where many blame the crash on rampant government corruption, negligence and disrespect of construction safety regulations, demanding accountability for the victims.

Footage from the rally show people standing during 15 minutes of silence for the rail station disaster while sud-

denly experiencing a whooshing sound that immediately triggered panic and a brief stampede.

An Associated Press photographer at the scene said people started scrambling for cover, leaving the middle of the downtown street almost empty as they started falling over each other.

Those exposed to the weapon experience sharp ear pain, disorientation and panic, military experts say. Prolonged exposure can cause eardrum ruptures and irreversible hearing damage.

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, a non-governmental organization, condemned "the unlawful and inhumane deployment of prohibited weapons, such as acoustic devices, against peaceful protesters."

America

Ex-US rep Lowey dies: Former US Rep Nita Lowey, a long serving New York Democrat who was the first woman to chair the powerful House Appropriations Committee, has died. She was 87.

Lowey's family, in a statement shared by the Westchester County Democratic Committee, said she died Saturday after battling metastatic breast cancer with the "same tenacity and strength that she fought throughout her 32-year career in Congress for women, children and families."

The family said she passed away peacefully in her home in Harrison, New York, surrounded by her husband,

children and grandchildren. Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat



Lowey

pairing the world," the family's statement read. "She was an indefatigable fighter and worked across the aisle to

deliver results for her constituents and all Americans." (AP)

Police seek man: Police in New York City are searching for a person they say set a man on fire near Times Square shortly before 4 a.m. Sunday morning near West 41st Street and 7th Avenue.

Officers spotted the 45-year-old victim and extinguished the flames. He was taken to a nearby hospital in stable condition, police said.

Law enforcement officials say they believe the victim, who they have not named, knows the man who set him on fire. They declined to comment further, saying the case remains under investigation. (AP)

KYIV, Ukraine, March 17, (AP): Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday appointed Andrii Hnatov as the new chief of the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces, as the country looks to restructure and strengthen its military while its engaged in combat in Russia's Kursk region and facing increasing pressure in Donetsk.

Hnatov replaced Anatoliy Barhylevych, who held the position since February 2024. The appointment was announced by the general staff via its Telegram channel Sunday.

"We are systematically transforming the Armed Forces of Ukraine to enhance their combat effectiveness," Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said.

Barhylevych will now serve as the general inspector of Ukraine's Defense Ministry. Umerov emphasized that Ba-



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks during a briefing in Kyiv, Ukraine on March 15. (AP)

rhylyevych would "remain part of the team," overseeing military standards and strengthening discipline in the army.

Oleksandr Syrskiy remains in place as commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces.

Zelenskyy has made frequent personnel changes within the Ukrainian government and military since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022.

This change in personnel comes as fighting continues in Russia's Kursk region, where Ukraine's General Staff said that Ukrainian troops had been involved in eight combat clashes on Sunday.

Ukraine is also battling under growing pressure in its eastern Donetsk region, where Russian troops have been advancing for months.

INTERNATIONAL

Military drone, copter crash at S.Korea army airfield

DPRK slams G7's rhetoric on N-program

SEOUL, March 17, (Agencies): The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) condemned G7 (Group of 7) over its statement on the country's nuclear program, state media said on Monday.

The denunciation came after G7 foreign ministers made a statement Friday at a meeting in Charlevoix, Canada, demanding the DPRK abandon all its

nuclear weapons and any other weapons of mass destruction as well as ballistic missile programs.

The DPRK expressed its serious concern over the statement, saying the country "will never tolerate any encroachment upon its sovereignty and internal affairs," the official Korean Central News Agency reported, citing a press statement issued by the DPRK

Foreign Ministry a day earlier.

The G7 member states regard nuclear weapons as the main means for realizing their "aggressive and hegemonic political and military purposes," while being "hell-bent on illegal and malicious nuclear proliferation act under the pretext of 'nuclear sharing' and 'offer of extended deterrence,'" the DPRK statement said.

Also:

SEOUL: A military drone and a helicopter crashed at an army airfield in South Korea Monday, without any casualty, according to local broadcaster YTN and Yonhap news agency.

It was reported at around 1:00 p.m. local time (0400 GMT) that the drone crashed into the helicopter, which landed at the airfield in Yangju, about 30 km north of the capital Seoul.

The drone and the chopper were destroyed after catching fire, but no casualty was reported.

The authorities were investigating the cause of the accident. South Korea and the US conducted air drills with advanced fighter jets over a US aircraft carrier this week as part of a major ongoing allied exercise, Yonhap News Agency reported Friday, citing the US Air Force.



In this undated photo provided on March 8, by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (center) visits a shipyard to construct warships at an undisclosed place in North Korea. (AP)

Asia

Indonesia's Semeru erupts: Semeru Volcano in East Java erupted seven times on Monday morning, throwing ash up to 1,000 meters, according to a Mount Semeru Observation Post officer.

"The ash column was observed to be white to grey with thick intensity, moving towards the southeast and south," said Mukdas Sofian, Mount Semeru Observation Post officer.

The eruption of the 3,676-meter-high volcano happened between 2:38 a.m. and 9:27 a.m. local time, with southwesterly winds. The Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation has warned people to avoid activities within a 3 km radius of the peak and 8 km to the southeast.

People are also urged to avoid rivers that originate from Semeru, as they may be affected by growing pyroclastic flows and lahar floods. (Xinhua)

Ishiba's cabinet rating drops:

The approval rating of Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's cabinet has plummeted to 26 percent after the gift scandal, down significantly from 40 percent in the previous February poll, local media reported.

According to a nationwide telephone survey conducted by Asahi Shimbun over the weekend, the cabinet's disapproval rating rose to 59 percent from 44 percent. The data has marked the



Fireworks illuminate the sky over Lake Burley Griffin during a fireworks show in Canberra, Australia on March 15. (Xinhua)

lowest approval rating since the cabinet was formed in October last year as the controversy surrounding the distribution of gift certificates worth 100,000 yen (about 673 U.S. dollars) each to 15 Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers from Ishiba's office has sparked a public backlash.

Speaking to reporters last Friday, Ishiba apologized but reiterated that the vouchers were paid out of his own pocket and were intended as tokens of appreciation, not donations, for the families of the lawmakers. (Xinhua)

CPC delegation in Panama: A

delegation of the Communist Party of China (CPC), led by Ma Hui, vice minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, visited Panama from Friday to Saturday.

During the visit, Ma met with leaders of Panama's major political parties, and exchanged views with think tank scholars.

Ma said that China is willing to strengthen exchanges with Panamanian political parties and think tanks, enhance mutual understanding and trust, and solidify public support for friendly relations between China and Panama. (Xinhua)

3 suspected rebels killed in clashes

Philippine senator calls for urgent probe into ex-president Duterte's arrest

MANILA, March 17, (Xinhua): Philippine senator Imee Marcos, the elder sister of President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, on Monday called for an urgent investigation into the arrest of former president Rodrigo Duterte, saying the issue has "deeply divided" the Southeast Asian country.

"It is imperative to establish whether due process was followed and to ensure that his legal rights were not upheld but protected, especially given the involvement of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) and the International Criminal Court (ICC)," said Imee Marcos, chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

She stressed the need for the Senate to address "these critical concerns to uphold the country's jurisdiction and to clarify policies governing our law enforcement agencies and their engagement with international tribunals."

"Our sovereignty and legal processes must remain paramount," she added. To shed light on this matter, Marcos said she would invite key officials and agencies, including officials from the national police, justice department, and foreign affairs department, among others, as resource persons and witnesses.

The Philippine authorities arrested and flew Duterte, 79, out of the country to The Hague in the Netherlands on March 11. The Philippines surrendered Duterte to the custody of the ICC on March 12.

Duterte is being detained in an ICC jail to face trial over his controversial "war on drugs" campaign.

Over the weekend, Duterte's supporters in the Philippines have staged protest rallies to urge the government to bring the former president home. In Davao City alone, local media estimated that 30,000 people gathered on Sunday to support the former city mayor.

Meanwhile, anti-Duterte supporters, including the relatives of the alleged extrajudicial killings, also held rallies urging the ICC to arrest Duterte's former police chiefs, Ronald de la Rosa and Oscar Albayalde, for their alleged involvement in Duterte's drug war.



An activist holds a photo of former President Rodrigo Duterte, center, as policemen blocked their march towards Malacanang palace in Manila, Philippines on March 17, during a rally calling on the government to rejoin the International Criminal Court (ICC) following the recent arrest of Duterte. (AP)

The Philippines' decision to detain Duterte and transfer him to The Hague, Netherlands, has sparked significant controversy, prompting his supporters to hold rallies across multiple cities in recent days.

Duterte's supporters gathered outside the Supreme Court in the Philippine capi-

tal on afternoon, lighting candles in hopes of Duterte's return to the Philippines.

Supporters held a prayer vigil outside Duterte's house in Davao City, a southern metropolis, conveying their message of support for the former president.

Over 100 supporters gathered for a rally in the City of San Fernando in Pampanga province. They carried placards and banners with Duterte's face and the words "Justice for PRRD (President Rodrigo Duterte)" and held a motorcade-style rally in the city, local media reported.

Veronica Duterte, daughter of the former president last Friday called on Filipinos to "light a candle" and stand in solidarity.

"I am calling unto you, not as his supporters, but as Filipinos, to stand for what is right and light a candle, whether you are in the Philippines or abroad. Let us be one in prayer and one in upholding our rights to this sovereignty," she wrote in an Instagram story.

Also:

MANILA: Three suspected rebels have been killed in a series of clashes with government troops in Northern Samar province in the central Philippines, the Philippine military said Monday.

In a report, the military said the three New People's Army (NPA) rebels were slain during gunfights that started around 6 a.m. local time in Mapnas town on Sunday.

Troops recovered two M16 rifles, an anti-personnel mine, and assorted ammunition from the encounter sites, the report added.

No government soldier was killed or wounded in the fighting. NPA rebels have been fighting against government troops since 1969. Military data showed that the NPA's personnel strength has declined since its peak of around 25,000 armed members in the 1980s.

Despite its dwindling fighters, the NPA continues to launch small-scale attacks in the countryside.

'It left residents on edge'

Crocodile attacks in Indonesia on rise

BUDONG-BUDONG, Indonesia, March 17, (AP): Nearly seven months after a crocodile attack almost took her life, Munirpa walked to the estuary outside her home with her husband and her children, ready to brave a re-encounter.

Munirpa, who like many Indonesians only uses one name, recounted how one early morning in August, she threw her household garbage into a creek about 50 meters (164 feet) away from her house, as she normally would.

She didn't see what was coming next.

By the time she realized a crocodile had attacked her, the four-meter-long (13-foot) beast had already sunk its teeth into most of her body, sparing only her head. She fought hard, trying to jab its eyes. Her husband, hearing her screams, ran over and tried to pull her by the thigh out of the crocodile's jaws. A tug-of-war ensued; the reptile whipped him with its tail. Fortunately, he saved Munirpa in time, eventually dragging her out of the crocodile's grip.

People have long feared the ancient predators in the Central Mamuju district of Indonesia's West Sulawesi, where the Budong-Budong River meets the sea. For Munirpa, 48, that



A crocodile nicknamed Karossa, after the name of a village it was captured from following the fatal attack of a man, rests with others inside an enclosure in Budong-Budong, West Sulawesi Island, Indonesia on Feb 24. (AP)

fear turned into a brutal reality when she became one of nearly 180 recorded crocodile attack victims in Indonesia last year. Residents like her are learning to coexist with the crocodiles, a legally protected species in Indonesia, as they balance conservation with looking out for their safety. But as attacks rise, several residents and experts have

called for better government interventions to stop the problem from getting even worse.

The farm has four ponds and around 50 reptiles. Some have names: Tanker, the largest, shaped like a ship, or Karossa, named after the sub-district the animal was caught after fatally attacking someone.



Supporters of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro take part in a rally on Copacabana Beach in support of a proposed bill to grant amnesty to those arrested for storming government buildings in an alleged coup attempt in 2023, in Rio de Janeiro on March 16. (AP)

Supporters of Bolsonaro protest on Copacabana Beach

Thousands of backers of Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro poured onto Copacabana Beach on Sunday to express their support for the far-right politician as he faces charges he plotted a coup.

Bolsonaro and close allies attended the demonstration in which protesters also called for Congress to grant amnesty to those in jail for their roles in the Jan. 8, 2023 riot, when government buildings in the capital Brasilia were ransacked.

A sea of people wearing Brazil's yellow-and-green national soccer jersey chanted and held placards reading "Amnesty, now!" Local media reported that around

18,000 people attended, based on figures from a monitoring project linked to the University of Sao Paulo. Bolsonaro's allies had hoped to draw a crowd of 1 million.

Copacabana has regularly been the site for rallies called by Bolsonaro at times when he has sought to demonstrate his political strength. Last month, Brazil's prosecutor-general formally charged Bolsonaro with attempting a coup to stay in office after his 2022 election defeat to current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Part of that plot allegedly included plans to poison Lula and shoot dead Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who oversees several cases against him. (AP)



Residents spend time at sunset at the Malecon during a general blackout in Havana on March 15. (AP)

Power restored in Cuba

Electricity service in Cuba was gradually restored Sunday, more than 36 hours after a substation failure left the entire island in the dark. Union Electrica, the state agency responsible for the electric grid, reported that most of the capital, Havana, and eastern parts of the country had power. It expected service to return to western areas on Sunday, too. The massive blackout that began Friday night was the fourth in the last six months as a severe economic crisis plagues the Caribbean country. The Ministry of Energy and Mines attributed it to a failure at a substation in the suburbs of Havana.

The latest power outage affected phone, internet and water services. Many families also could not cook because they use electric equipment to prepare their meals. Cuba suffered similar blackouts in October, November and December. The latest was the first of 2025 but in mid-February authorities suspended classes and work activities for two days due to a shortage of electricity generation that exceeded 50% in the country. (AP)



Former members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and police officers who allegedly surrendered to M23 rebels arrive in Goma, Congo on Feb 23. (AP)

Congo to join talks

Congo's government will participate in peace talks in Angola on Tuesday with the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group that has captured key areas of Congo's mineral-rich east, a spokesperson said Monday.

A delegation representing Congo is currently in the Angolan capital, Luanda, for the talks, Tina Salama, the spokesperson for President Felix Tshisekedi, told The Associated Press. Tshisekedi had earlier refused direct negotiations with the rebels.

M23 also sent a delegation to Luanda, the group's spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka said on X Monday.

The conflict in eastern Congo escalated in January when the Rwanda-backed rebels advanced and seized the strategic city of Goma, followed by Bukavu in February. Angola, which has acted as a mediator in the conflict, announced last week that it will host direct peace negotiations between Congo and M23 on Tuesday. (AP)

'Reviving free trade talks'

India, New Zealand look to bolster ties

NEW DELHI, March 17, (AP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his New Zealand counterpart, Christopher Luxon, met Monday seeking to deepen their defense and economic ties, a day after the countries announced the revival of negotiations for a free trade agreement.

Modi and Luxon met in New Delhi and signed agreements on enhancing cooperation in areas of defense, food processing, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy and critical minerals.

Luxon said he held "highly productive meetings"



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, (left), greets visiting New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon before their meeting in New Delhi, India on March 17. (AP)

with Modi and other Indian leaders that will improve ties between India and New Zealand, adding the defense relationship between the two sides includes joint military training.

"New Zealand is committed to doing more with India across a wide range of areas - defense and security, trade and economics, people-to-people ties, education, tourism, sports and culture," Luxon said at joint press conference with Modi.

Luxon, who was accompanied by key business leaders and several parliamentarians, is leading a high-level delegation as part of his five-day visit to India.

Modi said the two countries will also prepare a roadmap "for mutual cooperation in defense industries," including initiating negotiations on a "mutually beneficial" free trade agreement.

India and New Zealand on Sunday agreed to revive free trade negotiations that have been stalled for more than 10 years.

The announcement was made after discussions between New Zealand Trade and Investment Minister Todd McClay and his Indian counterpart, Piyush Goyal. It follows India's recent efforts to broker trade deal agreements with other nations after US President Donald Trump's decision to impose reciprocal tariffs on imported goods from countries including India.

India and the European Union last month agreed to finalize a long-pending free trade agreement by the end of this year. A similar trade deal between India and the United Kingdom is also in the works.

CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD (240) million for (3) months with Rate of Return (4.125%).

Bank promotes sustainability with solar-powered event arches for 'Ramadan Challenge'

NBK encourages physical activity with 'NBK Ramadan Challenge' at Al-Shaheed Park

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: As part of its commitment to community engagement and promoting a healthy lifestyle, the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) supports Suffix's sports event "NBK Ramadan Challenge", a 10-day sports and social event at Al-Shaheed Park from 7th of March to 17th of March 2025.

This initiative aims to encourage physical activity among all segments of society, including children, women, and men, through running, walking or jogging or any engaging activity. Participants can register online through suffix website. The entire Phase 1 of Shaheed Park feature solar-powered arches that counts the total Kilometers for every participant. The arches collect the total number of kilometers determining their progress through the next stage of the challenge.

The NBK Ramadan Challenge is designed to promote health and wellness in the spirit of Ramadan, fostering a sense of community and encouraging a balanced approach to physical activity during the holy month.

Mr. Talal Al-Turki, Executive Manager, Head of Public Relations and Event Management at NBK, commented on the initiative, stating: "At NBK, we believe in the importance of encouraging a healthier lifestyle, especially during Ramadan. The NBK Ramadan Challenge is an opportunity for everyone to stay active in a way that suits them, reinforcing our commitment to social wellbeing and strengthening community bonds through sports and wellness activities."

Al-Turki added: "We have expanded our Ramadan program this year to include more interactive initiatives that engage with the community, and reinforce values of social solidarity. Our goal is to create a meaningful and lasting impact throughout the holy month."

Al-Turki emphasized NBK's long-term dedication to sustainable initiatives, stating: "We believe that community work is an investment in the future. That's why we



Part of the event attended by officials from the National Bank of Kuwait and Suffix.

continue to introduce initiatives that foster generosity, awareness, and social cohesion—solidifying NBK's role as a key contributor to Kuwait's society."

Mr. Wissam Terro, Chief Business Officer at Suffix, stated: "We are delighted to collaborate with NBK in de-

living an exceptional sports experience during Ramadan. The NBK Ramadan Challenge aims to create a motivating and enjoyable environment that supports fitness for all. At Suffix, we are committed to providing innovative and sustainable solutions that enhance the partici-

Al-Turki:

■ The Challenge is organized by Suffix and NBK as a title sponsor

■ The initiative is for everyone to stay active reinforcing our commitment to social wellbeing and strengthening community bonds

Terro:

■ We are delighted to collaborate with NBK in delivering an exceptional sports experience during Ramadan

pant experience. The arches installed at Al Shaheed Park are solar-powered, and we are using reusable electronic chips, reflecting our dedication to sustainability and reducing environmental impact."

He added: "We look forward to seeing the community come together for this event, where people of all ages and backgrounds can participate and enjoy the Ramadan atmosphere in a healthy and vibrant setting."

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

NBK remains dedicated to social responsibility and wellbeing, reinforcing its role in supporting a more active and healthier society through innovative and inclusive initiatives.

Mabaneer reports strong performance in 2024 with KD 65.2 million net profit

AGM approves 14% cash dividends

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mabaneer Company Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Shaya confirmed the outstanding performance of the company in 2024; citing its financial results, significant project development and a net profit that increased to KD65.2 million.

During his speech at the Annual General Assembly for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 held Sunday with a quorum of 77.27 percent, Alshaya pointed out that at the strategic level; the company continued to achieve high occupancy rates across its projects, reflecting its vision for sustainable growth by pursuing a well-thought-out strategy that includes diversifying investments and targeting new sectors.

He confirmed the company's efforts to continue expanding its brand through its investments and strategic partners in every geographic location in which it operates. He said the Board of Directors and Executive Management are working hard to strengthen commitment to the highest environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards and practices, as per the company's sustainability strategy and vision for existing and future projects.

On the operational front, Alshaya stated that the occupancy rate at The Avenues-Kuwait reached 98 percent; thereby, remaining as one of the largest and most successful shopping and entertainment destinations. He revealed the occupancy rate at The Avenues-Bahrain also reached 97 percent; with the second phase of the project being developed to add 42,000 square meters of leasable area and new elements to provide a unique and distinctive experience for visitors.

He also affirmed that the operating contract for the former Hilton Beach 13 Hotel and Resort was signed with the Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) in 2024. "The resort enjoys a strategic location overlooking the sea in Kuwait. After the land acquisition phase, there will be a 16-month period to complete the renovation work, followed by a 17-year investment period," he elaborated.

He then pointed out that the design of the 'Aventura' project in Jaber Al-Ahmad City, which is the first public-private partnership project, followed by the 'Souq Sabah' project in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City, through a partnership agreement with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, has received initial approval for LEED Gold certification from the US Green Building Council. "Development work is underway on the commercial component -- Aventura Mall, and the residential component -- Aventura Residences. The expected completion date is in mid-2025," he added.

Regarding the current projects in Saudi Arabia, he stated "we are now working on the construction phase of the 'Avenues-Riyadh' project, which is valued at more than 16 billion Saudi Riyals, equivalent to around \$4.3

billion. Construction has reached 65 percent completion and contractors have been appointed to develop the towers within the project, which will begin in April 2025. As for the 'Avenues-Khobar', construction work began last year, reaching 16 percent of the total construction phase."

In a related development, the General Assembly approved the following:

- Report on transactions with related parties for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024. It authorized the Board of Directors to conduct transactions with related parties in fiscal 2025 until the date of the Annual General Assembly for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2025.

- Board of Directors' proposal to deduct 10 percent -- equivalent to KD6,912,275 -- from the net profits for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 and put this amount to the legal reserve account.

- Deduction of 10 percent -- equivalent to KD 6,912,275 -- from the net profits for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 and put this amount to the voluntary reserve account, to be allocated for addressing potential risks or crises that the company may face in the coming fiscal years.

- Board of Directors' proposal to distribute cash dividends for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 at a rate of 14 percent of the company's total capital, excluding treasury shares, i.e., 14 fils per share, for a total amount of KD19,532,166.

- Board of Directors' proposal to distribute free bonus shares for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024, to shareholders registered in the company's records on the due date, at a rate of six percent of the company's total capital, i.e., six shares for every 100 shares, equivalent to 83,709,339 shares with a nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils per share, for a total amount of KD8,370,933,900.

- Schedule for the entitlement and distribution dates for cash dividends and free bonus shares for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024. The share acquisition date is April 7, 2025; the non-entitlement trading date is April 8, 2025; the entitlement date is April 10, 2025; and the distribution date is April 23, 2025.

- Authorize the Board of Directors to implement the decision to distribute free bonus shares and dispose of fractional shares, if any.

- Authorize the Board of Directors to amend the schedule for the entitlement and distribution dates in accordance with the relevant resolutions and regulations. This should occur in the event of a delay in the procedures for registering the General Assembly resolutions.

The Board of Directors' proposal to approve remuneration for the board members for the year ending Dec 31, 2024, totaling KD 724,000, was also discussed.

The new Board of Directors was elected as follows: Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Shaya (non-executive), Mohammad Abeer Al-Latif Al-Shasa' (non-executive), Abdullah Abdullatif Al-Shaya (non-executive), Ayman Abdullatif Al-Shaya (non-executive), Azzam Abdul Aziz Al-Fulajj (independent), Mohammad Rashid Al-Mutairi representing Pillars Financial Investments Company (non-executive), and Dr. Rana Abdullah Abdul Rahman Al-Fares (independent).

The reserve members include Hamoud Abdullah Abdullatif Al-Shaya and Sara Ayman Abdullatif Al-Shaya.

Gulf Bank celebrates Gargee'an with Neo account holders & special needs children

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Over two days, Gulf Bank celebrated Gargee'an with children as part of its ongoing Ramadan campaign, "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together." The festivities brought joy to Neo account holders and children with special needs, bringing smiles and joy to the children. In addition, the Bank commemorated Arab Orphan Day, further highlighting its commitment to social responsibility and community engagement. Members of the "Sawa'ed Al-Khaleej" volunteer team also participated, adding to the spirit of the occasion.

On the first day, Gulf Bank organized a special event at 360 Mall for Neo account holders, filled with engaging activities, competitions, games, and entertainment. The highlight of the event was the appearance of the Neo mascot, bringing added excitement and joy to the children.

On the second day, Gulf Bank sponsored an event at the Scientific Center, organized by the "Friends of the Disabled" team under the Public Authority for Disability Affairs. The initiative aimed to advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities, raise awareness, and promote equal opportunities in education and community participation.

Established under the Disability Law (Law 8/2010), the "Friends of the Disabled" team plays a vital role in protecting the rights of people with disabilities through media campaigns, awareness events, and training programs that enhance their

quality of life and integration into society.

On the third day, Gulf Bank was the main sponsor of Arab Orphan Day 2025 celebration, held under the theme "Our Future is Promising." The event was attended by the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, along with other esteemed guests.

These initiatives reflect Gulf Bank's ongoing dedication to supporting diverse community groups, promoting awareness, and fostering inclusivity for children and individuals with special needs. The events are part of Gulf Bank's "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together" Ramadan program, which encompasses a wide range of charitable, social, and sports activities that promote humanitarian values and bring joy to the community.



Part of the Gargee'an celebration with children with special needs.

Delivery available for premium and VIP customers

Kuwait Finance House offers 'Eidiyah' at branches, online, & via KFH Express

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced the availability of the new "Eidiyah" banknotes in various denominations through ATMs, branches across Kuwait, and delivery services for certain customer segments.

This service will be accessible through KFHOnline app, designed to reflect the bank's commitment to community engagement during various occasions and holidays. By providing diverse and accessible communication channels, KFH aims to remain close to its customers, wherever they are.



Meshal Mandani

KFH Senior Manager Digital Channels, Meshal Mandani said that "Eidiyah" service will be available at all bank branches starting March 18th, catering to all customer segments.

Furthermore, Eidiyah withdrawal service Available at KFH Express e-Branches (Ishbiliya, Jabriya, Al Salam, Abu Futaira, Kuwait Airport), from March 28th to March 30th.

As of March 16th, Mandani announced that Eidiyah delivery will be available for private banking clients and Premium (Al Ruwwad) customers, facilitated by their respective account managers.

Commercial Real Estate Company (Al-Tijaria) achieves 2024 net profit growth of 8.11%

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Commercial Real Estate Company ("Al-Tijaria") announced its financial results for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024, demonstrating growth in net profits and affirming the strength and efficiency of its operational and investment strategies. The company reported net profits of 15,594,104 Kuwaiti Dinars, marking an increase of 8.11% compared to the previous year. This growth underscores Al-Tijaria's ability to enhance its market position and increase value for its shareholders.

Mr. Abdulfatah Marafie, Chairman of Al-Tijaria, highlighted that in 2024, the company achieved revenue growth from operational activities and investment income, showcasing the company's success in diversifying its income and investment sources efficiently.

Mr. Marafie also drew attention to other key performance indicators such as return on equity, the aggregate return on total assets, and return on paid-up capital, which all showed improvements,

emphasizing Al-Tijaria's commitment to continuing growth and enhancing returns for its shareholders in the coming years. The return on equity was 5.26% with an increase of 6.29% the aggregate return on total assets was 3.04% with an increase of 5.76% and the return on paid-up capital was 8.47 % with an increase of 8.11% compared to the previous year.

Based on these results, the company's board of directors recommended a cash dividend distribution of 3% of the nominal share value and a bonus share distribution of 3% (3 shares for every hundred shares held).

This announcement serves as a strong testament to Al-Tijaria Real Estate's ability and its commitment to the shareholders for seeking to achieve sustainable growth and further solidifies its leading position in the real estate market.

Marafie also emphasized that the company continues to implement and develop its balanced strategies and plans in accordance with the current circumstances. The company's management always



Abdulfatah M. R. Marafie, Chairman of Al-Tijaria Real Estate Company

seeks to improve performance and enhance the results by creating new opportunities, developing existing assets, and diversifying sources of income locally, regionally, and internationally, keeping in mind achieving the desired goals, in-

cluding sustainable growth, and enhancing shareholders' rights, and ensuring the strength of the financial position by focusing on the growth of operating profits and increasing the company's cash flows. Al-Tijaria and its Subsidiaries, along with its strategic investors, have invested in Houston and Chicago, United States of America, in the multifamily and commercial real estate sectors.

Mr. Marafie announced a new strategic partnership for Al-Tijaria Group (its subsidiaries and an associate company) with other strategic partners to invest in Domus Real Estate Fund, with a total value of AED 100 million. This investment aims to acquire, develop, and operate investment properties to provide accommodation for hospitality sector employees in the United Arab Emirates.

Recently, one of Al-Tijaria's subsidiaries has been awarded an investment opportunity in Qairawan (Q1), Kuwait, by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare to develop and operate the commercial project for 22 years over the plot

area of 12,575 square meters.

Mr. Marafie emphasized that despite challenges, Al Tijaria remained committed to social responsibility, guided by corporate governance principles. Under the "We Care" banner, the company marked the ninth edition of "Ishraqet Amal", celebrating the talents of determined children through artistic and theatrical performances that highlighted their role in societal progress.

As part of its ongoing commitment to sustainability, Al Tijaria continues to drive environmental action through the "Plant a Tree in My Country" campaign. This initiative brings together volunteers, schools, and hospitals for tree-planting efforts at Boulevard Park. The Blood Donation Drive, held across Al Tijaria properties in collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, promoted voluntary blood donation.

Additionally, the "Arabic Is My Language" initiative enriched children's Arabic skills through educational and cultural activities, while the Beach Cleanup

Campaign at Kuwait Towers Beach, conducted with Spread the Passion, raised awareness on marine pollution. Extending its social outreach, Al Tijaria also visited NBK Children's Hospital, organizing activities and gifting young patients to bring them joy and comfort.

Mr. Marafie expressed profound thanks to the shareholders, board of directors, executive team, and employees for their steadfast support and dedication. He concluded with a prayer for the safety and prosperity of Kuwait, its rulers, its people, and the global community.

Marafie concluded his statement by praying to God to protect Kuwait and its people from all harm and for Kuwait to enjoy security, safety and stability under the wise leadership of His Highness, the Emir of the country, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may God preserve and protect them.

AGM approves 7% cash dividend per share

Markaz marks 2024 as milestone year for legacy in excellence, innovation, & visionary leadership

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" held its ordinary Annual General Assembly meeting on Sunday, 16 March 2025, with a (73.1%) attendance.

The assembly approved all items of the agenda, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 7% per nominal value of the share or 7 fils per share.

In 2024, Markaz recorded Total Revenues of KD 20.31 million, compared to KD 26.32 million in 2023. Net profit attributable to shareholders rose to KD 4.46 million, compared to KD 4.15 million in the previous year.

Assets under management (AUM) increased by 16% y-o-y since 31 December 2023, reaching KD 1.41 billion.

Commenting on the results, Markaz's Chairman, Mr. Diraar Y. Alghanim, said: "The year 2024 marked the 50th anniversary of Markaz, a significant milestone reflecting five decades of dedication to excellence, innovation, and creating value for stakeholders."

"Over the years, Markaz has adapted effectively to changing market dynamics, ensuring stability and growth through strategic initiatives and prudent decision-making."

"In recognition of its capabilities, Markaz earned nine prestigious awards in 2024 from leading organizations such as EMEA Finance, MEEED, Euromoney, and Global Finance."

"These recognitions span categories like wealth management, investment banking, real estate, and digital transformation, reflecting Markaz's consistent leadership and commitment to maintaining industry excellence."

Mr. Alghanim added: "GCC economies demonstrated resilience throughout the year, with the MSCI GCC Countries Domestic Index rising by 5.9%. Although this growth was modest, it reflects stable market sentiment and the region's capacity to effectively manage global economic challenges."

The global economic environment in 2024 presented a blend of opportunities and challenges. Global GDP growth was projected to be 3.2%, bolstered by easing inflation in advanced economies due to effective monetary policies. Resilient emerging markets benefited from gradual improvements in supply chains and labor markets.

However, geopolitical uncertainties and tariff driven measures pose significant risks to a sustained global recovery."

Business Strategy

Mr. Alghanim stated: "Markaz has consistently focused on driving growth in its core business areas, which include asset management, investment banking, and real estate. The company has invested significantly in enhancing its digital platform through the launch of iMarkaz."

"This initiative has improved its competitive position by automating reporting and optimizing processes."

"By engaging leading digital service providers, Markaz has begun implementing front-end solutions to enhance clients' experience. Additionally, the company has introduced an innovative digital platform designed to simplify investment processes and improve accessibility for its clients."

"These efforts streamline operations, enhance client engagement, and provide greater transparency. By continuously adopting advanced fintech solutions, Markaz continues to meet the evolving demands of tech-savvy investors while ensuring the delivery of innovative and efficient services."

Mr. Alghanim mentioned: "Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles have



Diraar Y. Alghanim, Chairman



Ali H. Khalil, Chief Executive Officer

remained central to Markaz's operations. In 2024, the company expanded its ESG initiatives by allocating resources to sustainable assets and enhancing its corporate social responsibility programs.

"These initiatives demonstrate Markaz's commitment to fostering positive impacts within the communities it serves."

He added: "Markaz continued to expand its product offerings to cater to evolving client needs. In 2024, Markaz launched the Private Credit Portfolio (for professional and qualified investors), diversifying its investment solutions to address the growing demand for alternative credit opportunities."

Outlook

Mr. Alghanim stated: "The economic outlook in the GCC remains positive. However, fluctuating oil prices may challenge fiscal planning but encourage regional economic diversification efforts. Sustained investments in infrastructure and technological advancements will strengthen the region's economic foundation, supporting its long-term growth and stability in 2025."

"Advanced economies are expected to maintain cautious monetary policies, implementing rate cuts later in the year to support economic growth. Notably, real estate mar-

kets in developed economies demonstrate resilience, supported by robust fundamentals. Despite anticipated volatility, these markets are expected to attract investors, given their capacity to deliver stable returns and hedge against inflation. Geopolitical tensions and supply chain realignments are anticipated to remain critical factors shaping global trade and investment."

"Moreover, we await the economic impact of policies proposed by the new administration in the United States, which may include tax reforms, fiscal incentives, and deregulation measures designed to stimulate growth and enhance competitiveness in key industries."

Mr. Alghanim commented: "Markaz demonstrates adaptability and innovation across its core divisions. Asset Management addresses changing global interest rates by leveraging regional credit opportunities and expanding tailored products like the GCC Momentum Fund."

"The Investment Banking department is enhancing its capabilities in IPOs, mergers and acquisitions, advisory services, listings, and bond issuances. Additionally, Markaz is positioned in the real estate sector to capitalize on demographic and economic shifts in the GCC, ensuring ongoing value creation."

Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Ali H. Khalil, Chief Executive Officer at Markaz, said: "Recognizing that our clients' success is inseparable from our own, we continue reinforcing Markaz's reputation as a trusted partner in wealth creation and growth by aligning our solutions with their goals and aspirations."

"We prioritize enhancing client experiences, broadening our product offerings, and improving operational efficiency to strengthen market leadership. A significant milestone in 2024 was our expansion into new markets, including executing plans to increase our presence in the GCC region and Europe."

"Furthermore, we initiated direct investment activities to take advantage of opportunities within the GCC. We improved our distribution capabilities by launching a dedicated real estate reporting portal, introducing electronic fund top-ups, and expanding our client portal."

"We enhanced our digital systems with modular infrastructure, created an internal data warehouse for better decision-making, and developed an AI-powered assistant to improve efficiency and automate tasks which marks just the beginning of our planned AI use cases. Additionally, we identified a best-in-class system to further digitize client engagement."

He added: "Markaz's wealth management services, designed for high-net-worth clients and family offices, facilitate the implementation of multi-generational endowments."

"Markaz established partnerships with leading global wealth and fund managers to broaden their product offerings to clients, including private debt, private equity investments, and infrastructure."

"In response to evolving market dynamics, Markaz introduced advanced investment solutions that meet the growing demand for innovative and diverse opportunities."

Mr. Khalil said: "Our equities team successfully capitalized on the emerging opportunities, with our MIDAF and Forsa mutual funds outperforming their benchmarks."

"In investment banking, Markaz demonstrated expertise in debt and equity capital markets, whereby they have managed several issues for corporate clients."

"Markaz's contributions to capital restructuring and mergers and acquisitions underscored the company's role as a trusted advisor, highlighting its expertise in managing complex financial transactions."

He highlighted: "Markaz has made significant progress in local and regional real estate initiatives by focusing on build-operate-transfer (BOT) opportunities and collaborating with family offices to establish regulated Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)."

"In 2024, the company expanded its international real estate investment program by establishing new partnerships with prime developers in Europe and the United States and introducing additional product types, such as senior living and self-storage."

On his outlook for the regional and global markets, Mr. Khalil stated: "With a solid foundation and the vision of its experienced leadership team, Markaz is well-positioned to navigate uncertainty and seize future growth opportunities."

"Looking ahead, Markaz remains focused on building a stronger foundation for the future, creating long-term value, adapting to market dynamics, and contributing to sustained growth and resilience in line with the economic development plans of the State of Kuwait."



Markaz at the annual general assembly meeting.

Fed likely to pause rates as inflation expectations surge

Stagflation concerns rise for Fed amid weak economy and high inflation

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP) - When Federal Reserve officials last met in late January, things looked pretty good: Hiring was solid. The economy had just grown at a solid pace in last year's final quarter. And inflation, while stubborn, had fallen sharply from its peak more than two years ago.

What a difference seven weeks makes.

As the Fed prepares to meet Tuesday and Wednesday, the central bank and its chair, Jerome Powell, are potentially headed to a much tougher spot. Inflation improved last month but is still high and tariffs could push it higher. At the same time, ongoing tariff threats as well as sharp cuts to government spending and jobs have tanked consumer and business confidence, which could weigh on the economy and even push up unemployment.

The toxic combination of still-high inflation and a weak or stagnant economy is often referred to as "stagflation," a term that haunts central bankers. It is what bedeviled the United States in the 1970s, when even deep recessions didn't kill inflation.

Stagflation, should it emerge, is hard for the Fed because typically policymakers would lift rates - or keep them high - to combat inflation. Yet if unemployment also rises, the Fed would usually cut rates to reduce borrowing costs and lift growth.

It's not yet clear the economy will sink into stagflation. For now, like businesses and consumers, the Fed is grappling with a huge amount of uncertainty surrounding the economic outlook. But even a mild version - with the unemployment rising from its current low level of 4.1%, while inflation stayed stuck above the Fed's 2% target - would pose a challenge for the central bank.

"That's the tangled web they're in," said Esther George, former president of the Federal Reserve's Kansas City branch. "You have inflation stickiness on the one hand. At the same time, you're trying to look at what impact could this have on the job market, if growth begins to pull back. So it is a tough scenario for them for sure."

Fed officials will almost certainly keep their key rate unchanged at their meeting this week. Once the meeting concludes Wednesday, they will release their latest quarterly economic projections, which will likely show they expect to cut their rate twice this year - the same as they projected in December.



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell speaks during the annual U.S. Monetary Policy Forum, in New York, Friday, March 7, 2025. (AP)

The Fed implemented three cuts last year and then signaled at the January meeting that they were largely on pause until the economic outlook becomes clearer.

Wall Street investors expect three rate reductions this year, in June, September, and December, according to futures prices tracked by CME Fedwatch, in part because they worry an economic slowdown will force more reductions.

One development likely to unnerve Fed officials is the sharp jump in inflation expectations this month in the University of Michigan's consumer sentiment survey. It showed the biggest increase in long-term inflation expectations since 1993.

Such expectations - which basically measure whether Americans are worried inflation will get worse - are important because they can become self-fulfilling. If businesses and consumers expect higher costs, they may take steps that push up inflation, like demanding higher wages, which in turn can force companies to raise prices to offset higher labor costs.

Some economists caution that the University of Michigan's survey is preliminary and for now based on only about 400 responses. (The final version to be released later this month typically includes about 800.) And financial market measures of inflation expectations, based on bond prices, have actually declined in recent weeks.

The most recent inflation readings have been mixed. The consumer price index dropped last week for the first time in five months to 2.8% from 3%, an encouraging change. But the Fed's preferred price gauge, to be released later this month, is likely to be unchanged.

The jump in inflation expectations is also a problem for the Fed because officials, including Powell, have said they are willing to let inflation gradually return to their 2% target in 2027, because expectations have generally been low. If other measures show inflation worries rising, the Fed could come under more pressure to get inflation down more quickly.

"I do worry when I see consumer expectations moving in the opposite direction," George said. "I think you just have to keep an eye on that."

The last time President Donald Trump imposed tariffs - in 2018 and 2019 - overall inflation didn't rise by much, in part because they weren't nearly as broad as what he is currently proposing and some duties, such as those on steel and aluminum, were watered down with loopholes. Now that Americans have lived through a painful inflationary episode, they are likely to be more skittish about rising prices.

Powell referred such concerns in remarks earlier this month. He said tariffs could just have a one-time impact on prices without causing ongoing inflation. But that could change "if it turns into a series" of tariff hikes, he said March 7, or "if the increases are larger, that would matter."

"What really does matter is what is happening with long-term inflation expectations," Powell added.

A week after his comments, those expectations shot higher in the University of Michigan survey.

Trade wars threaten trend

Feb US wholesale prices unchanged showing inflation easing

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): U.S. wholesale inflation decelerated last month, suggesting that price pressures are easing for now. But the progress may not last as President Trump intensifies his trade wars.

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.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core wholesale prices fell 0.1% last month from January, first drop since July. Core producer prices rose 3.4%, lower than the 3.8% year-over-year gain in January. The numbers were all lower than economists

had expected.

The readout comes as 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. And on Thursday the president threatened a 200% on European wine, champagne and spirits if Europe goes ahead with a tariff on U.S. whiskey.

Major retailers have warned that they expect U.S. consumers to pull back spending this year in the face of higher costs, partially from Trump's tariffs.

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.

Wholesale gasoline prices fell 4.7% last month. Food prices rose 1.7% from January to February, led by a 28% surge in the price of eggs.

After cutting its benchmark rate three times in late 2024, the Federal Reserve is expected to leave the rate unchanged at its meeting next week. "The Fed will not see any argument for pushing interest rates lower or sooner in today's figures," Carl Weinberg and Mary

Chen of High Frequency Economics wrote in a commentary Thursday. "The Fed is focused now on the impact of tariffs on future food prices much more than it is focused on the impact of egg prices on prior (producer price) increases."

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Economists also watch it because some of its components, notably health care and financial services, flow into the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge - the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, index. Thomas Ryan of Capital Economics noted that some of the wholesale prices that feed into the PCE measure, including hospital costs and international airfares, came in hotter than expected in February.

With Trump's zigzag actions on trade, March came in like a lion and won't be going out like a lamb

US leader's ultimate goal is: to revive American manufacturing

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): A gobsmacked planet is wondering what's next from President Donald Trump on the tariff spree he's set in zigzag motion.

In recent weeks, Trump has announced punishing tariffs against allies and adversaries alike, selectively paused and imposed them, doubled and then halved some, and warned late in the week that he'll tax European wine and spirits a stratospheric 200% if the European Union doesn't drop a 50% tariff on U.S. whiskey.

His ultimate stated goal is clear: to revive American manufacturing and win compromises along the way. But people and nations whose fortunes rise and fall on trade are trying to divine a method to his machinations. So far, he's spurred fears about slower growth and higher inflation that are dragging down the stock market and consumer confidence.

"His tariff policy is erratic, more erratic than April weather," Robert Halver, head of capital markets analysis at Germany's Baader Bank, said from the floor of the Frankfurt stock market. "So, there is no planning certainty at all."

The same goes for Exit 9 Wine & Liquor Warehouse in Clifton Park, New York, where owner Mark O'Callaghan is waiting to see if the prohibitive taxes on European wine - over a third of his business - really happen. He's mindful of Trump's seemingly whack-a-mole approach on which countries and



Canadian Prime Minister-designate Mark Carney, second right, speaks to steel workers after touring the Arcelor-Mittal Dofasco steel plant in Hamilton, Ont., on Wednesday, March 12, 2025. (AP)

goods to hit and how hard.

"It changes by the hour now, right?" O'Callaghan said. "You know, it's hard to navigate and manage, and everything changes so quickly."

In Canada, generations of political leaders took it as a point of pride that their country and the U.S. share the "world's longest undefended border," as they liked to say. No more.

Trump's sweeping taxes on Canadian imports come in the context of his wanting the U.S. to absorb

its neighbor, an ambition that has united Canadians of the left and right in seething anger. A recent Nanos poll found that the vast majority of Canadians say their opinion of the United States has sunk from a year ago.

"The Americans want our resources, our water, our land, our country," Prime Minister Mark Carney said days before his swearing-in Friday. "Think about it. If they succeed, they will destroy our way of life."

Canadian Foreign Affairs Min-

ister Mélanie Joly said: "If the U.S. can do this to us, their closest friend, then nobody is safe."

Trade wars sparked by retaliatory and escalating tariffs typically form in the grind of legislation, as happened with the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act nearly a century ago. This round comes from Trump's executive actions, with Congress passive, and can change like the weather, or perhaps even his moods.

That's how March came in like a lion.

Personal pique is part of it all, suggests Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. "If you make him unhappy, he responds unhappy," he told Bloomberg TV, explaining that Trump didn't like it when a variety of countries targeted with new U.S. tariffs retaliated with tariffs of their own.

Nor was Trump content when Canada did not show "immeasurable respect" for his trade grievances, Lutnick told CBS News. "Say, 'Thank you, I want to work it out with you,'" he added, as if advising Ottawa on how to be properly deferential. "I want you to be happy."

Trump himself said of Canada, "We don't need anything that they have." Canada is the largest foreign supplier of steel and aluminum to the U.S. and a key source of energy, cars and car parts via the integrated North American auto industry, food, critical minerals, fertilizer, lumber and more.

His stop-and-start tariffs have shaken the stock market, yielded some concessions and induced whiplash across industries and countries:

- Heavy taxes on Canadian and Mexican products were announced, shelved for a month - one day away from taking effect - imposed, then two days later adjusted to exempt, for now, a range of goods covered under the North American trade pact renegotiated in Trump's first term. Trump's aides say the reason for those tariffs is to end fentanyl smuggling and illegal immigration, though the president also wants to close the trade deficit with America's two largest trade partners.

- Trump stuck with his new tariffs on China, imposing a 10% penalty then doubling it, drawing retaliatory tariffs of 15% on U.S. farm goods this past week. The U.S. tariffs are also about fentanyl.

- The prevailing tensions between Canada and the U.S. flared when Ontario, the most populous province, retaliated against the U.S. duties with an announcement that it would add a 25% surcharge on electricity it exports to several states.

Trump, who now belittles Canadian sovereignty at every turn, immediately threatened to slam Canada with a 50% tax on steel and aluminum. He then pulled back to a still-hefty 25% when Ontario backed down, in a drama that played out over mere hours.

But Wednesday, the global U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum kicked in, and Europe responded. The EU announced duties on U.S. textiles, home appliances, motorcycles, peanut butter, jeans and more. American whiskey, popular overseas, was marked for a 50% tariff.

Trump's response: 200% on European wine and spirits and on Champagne.

"We want toasts, not tariffs," said Chris Swonger, president and CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council in the U.S.

But escalation appears to be the toast of the day. The U.S. has a new wave of reciprocal tariffs in line against Europe in early April, and exemptions for the auto industry and other industries are set to expire.

There's not much chance March will go out like a lamb.

Financial sector is among hardest hit

Trade war turmoil topples Canada's main financial market from its all-time high

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): Trade war turmoil is weighing heavily on financial markets in Canada.

Canada's main stock index has been tumbling along with U.S. indexes since President Donald Trump initiated a trade war with his North American neighbors.

Mexico's main stock index has remained relatively steady following measures from the Mexican government to stabilize financial markets.

The Toronto Stock Exchange's S&P/TSX composite index reached an all-time high on Jan. 30.

It started sliding a day later following the first salvo in the form of announced 25% tariffs on all goods from Canada and Mexico.

Since then, Trump has rattled markets with uncertainty as he changes his mind on implementing or delaying tariffs on a seemingly daily basis.

The S&P/TSX composite has shed about

5% since Trump opened the trade war on Jan. 31. The financial sector is among the hardest hit, with a 8.6% drop.

The industrial sector is down 7.4%, while the energy sector has shed 5.4%.

U.S. markets have also been tumbling, with the S&P 500, a key benchmark for the market's health, notching a 10% decline from its all-time high set in February.

Investors have slightly different concerns depending on which side of the border they're standing.

In Canada, the concerns are focused on the impact to growth, said Frances Donald, chief economist at RBC. Specifically, investments could stall and unemployment could rise.

"This uncertainty, in and of itself, is already creating pain," she said.

In the U.S., though, there are rising concerns about inflation.

The Federal Reserve helped cool rising

inflation by raising interest rates and it felt comfortable enough with the downward trajectory to start cutting rates at the end of 2024.

The rate of inflation in the U.S. has eased close to the central bank's goal of 2%, but the Fed might have trouble dousing a reignition.

A survey released Friday by the University of Michigan showed that consumers are bracing for higher inflation in the future, with expectations for the long term jumping to 3.9% from last month's prediction of 3.5%.

That's the biggest month-over-month jump since 1993.

The rate of inflation in Canada is already below 2% and its central bank could have an easier time dealing with an increase.

The Bank of Canada recently trimmed its overnight interest rate a quarter-point to 2.75%, marking its 7th consecutive rate cut.

Development signals a still-healthy US labor market

Fewer Americans file for jobless claims last week

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits fell slightly last week, indicating a still-healthy U.S. labor market.

U.S. jobless claims filings fell by 2,000 to 220,000 for the week ending March 8, the Labor Department said Thursday. That's fewer than the 226,000 new applications analysts forecast.

It's not clear when job cuts ordered by the Department of Government Efficiency will show up in the weekly layoffs report, though some analysts expect them to surface in data in the coming weeks.

Those layoffs are part of the Trump administration's efforts to shrink the size of the federal workforce through billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

Senior U.S. officials set the government downsizing in motion weeks ago via a memo dramatically expanding President Donald Trump's efforts to scale back the workforce. Thousands of probationary employees have already been fired, and now the Republican administration is turning its attention to career officials with civil service protection.

Despite showing some signs of weakening during the past year, the labor market remains healthy with plentiful jobs and relatively few layoffs.

The Labor Department reported that U.S. employers added a solid 151,000 jobs last month, with employment rising in health-care, finance and transportation and warehousing. The unemployment rate ticked up to a still-healthy 4.1%.

Overall, while layoffs remain low by historical standards, some high-profile companies have announced job cuts already this year.

Workday, Dow, CNN, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines and Facebook parent company Meta have all trimmed their workforces already in 2025.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are considered a proxy for layoffs, and have remained mostly in a range between 200,000 and 250,000 for the past few years.

The four-week average, which evens out some of the week-to-week swings, ticked up by 1,500 to 226,000.

The total number of Americans receiving unemployment benefits for the week of March 1 fell by 27,000 to 1.87 million.

Corrections are frightening

10 pct drop for stocks is scary, but isn't that rare

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): The U.S. stock market has just dropped 10% from its high set last month, hurt by worries about the economy and a global trade war.

The fall for the S&P 500 is steep enough that Wall Street has a name for it: a "correction." Such drops have happened regularly for more than a century, and market pros often view them as potentially healthy wipeouts of overdone euphoria, which could send stock prices too high if unchecked.

But corrections are frightening in the moment, particularly for every new generation of investors that gets into the market at a time when it seems like stocks only go up.

The S&P 500 is coming off two straight years with gains of more than 20%. Such stellar gains left the market looking too expensive to critics, who pointed to how prices rose faster than corporate profits.

Culling too-high enthusiasm among day traders is one thing. The larger fear always accompanying a correction is that it could be a warning sign of a coming "bear market," which is what Wall Street calls a drop of at least 20%.

Here's a look at what history shows about past corrections, and what market watchers are expecting going forward.

The U.S. stock market initially jumped after President Donald Trump's election in November on hopes he'd bring lower taxes, less regulation for businesses and other policies that would drive corporate profits higher. All those gains have since disappeared, as Wall Street faces the potential downsides of Trump's White House for the economy.

The president has been making announcements on tariffs at a dizzying pace, first placing them on trading partners, then exempting some and then doing it all over again. The tariffs could hit every country that trades with the United States, which would raise prices for U.S. households and businesses when high inflation has already proven stubborn to fully subside.

The fear is that tariffs could slow or even halt the solid growth the U.S.

economy was showing when it ended 2024. Even if Trump ultimately goes forward with less painful tariffs, all the uncertainty around the will-he-or-won't-he rollout could prove damaging by freezing economic activity. Such concerns have shown up in the latest readings on consumer confidence, as well as companies' forecasts for future profits.

Trump himself has acknowledged his plans could affect the U.S. economy's growth.

All the uncertainty is also making things more complicated for the Federal Reserve, which had been cutting interest rates after getting inflation nearly all the way down to its 2% target. Cutting rates further would help the economy, but it could also put upward pressure on inflation.

The brunt of this sell-off has also hit stocks that critics were saying looked the most expensive after running wild through the frenzy around artificial intelligence. Nvidia, for example, has already dropped roughly 14% in 2025 so far after surging more than 800% through 2023 and 2024.

Most of the other big stocks in the "Magnificent Seven" that have dominated the market recently have also been lagging the rest of the S&P 500. Those seven stocks alone had accounted for more than half the S&P 500's total return last year.

Every couple years, on average. Even during the historic, nearly 11-year-long bull run for U.S. stocks from March 2009 to February 2020, the S&P 500 stumbled to five corrections, according to CFRA. Worries about everything from interest rates to trade wars to a European debt crisis caused the pullbacks.

The U.S. market's last correction was in 2023, when the S&P 500 dropped 10.3% from the end of July into October. At the time, high Treasury yields were undercutting stock prices as traders accepted a new normal where the Fed would keep rates high for a while. But stocks would quickly turn higher as optimism revived that cuts to rates were on the horizon.



Photos from the launch of LuLu Hypermarket's new summer collection.

Lulu brings trendy fashion at unbeatable prices

'Slip Into Summer 2025' in style with LuLu Hypermarket's new collection

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: LuLu Hypermarket's 'Slip Into Summer 2025' collection has arrived, bringing a wave of fresh fashion choices at unbeatable prices. The official launch event saw popular fashion influencers and vloggers in attendance, all eager to check out the latest summer styles. The collection, available across all LuLu Hypermarket outlets, includes a wide range of trendy outfits, stylish handbags, and fashion pieces for men, women, and kids. The best part is that LuLu is offering incredible promotional deals from 13

March to 5 April. Shoppers can take advantage of the 'Half-Pay-Back' special offer on fashion, ladies' bags, and baby accessories at all outlets with the exception of LuLu Hyper Hawally and LuLu Center Fahaeel. This means that for every KD20 spent, customers get a KD10 shopping voucher to use on their next purchase. The summer fashion lineup features an impressive array of well-known brands, including Louis Philippe, Allen Solly, Peter England, Van Heusen, Kill-

er, Sunnex, Riverblue, Ruff, Eten, Marco Donateli, Cortigiani, Tom Smith, and Reo. Whether you are looking for something casual, elegant, or bold, LuLu has a variety of options to refresh your summer wardrobe. With stylish new arrivals and great deals, there is no better time to upgrade your look for the season. Do not miss out—head to your nearest LuLu Hypermarket before 5 April to take advantage of the offers and step into summer with style.

Pakistani dignitaries attend Shaukat Hospital event

SKH&RC Kuwait chapter hosts iftar dinner

By M. Irfan Shafiq

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital & Research Center (SKH&RC, Kuwait chapter) hosted an Iftar Dinner. Dr. Asif Loya, Consultant Pathologist & Medical Director, Shaukat Khanum Hospital & Research Center was special guest from Pakistan. The event was attended by large number of respectable Pakistani community members, Engr. Obed Ur Rehman Arain, Pir Amjad Hussain President PTI Kuwait Chapter, and dignitaries of Pakistani community among them were Kashif Khan, Dr. Shuja Uddin President SPDK, Sajid Ashraf Director Kuwait Cricket, Muhammad Shahzad Ur Rehman Butt Chairman PTI Kuwait Chapter, Asif Jamal Senior Vice President, Atiq ur Rahman vice chairman PTI Kuwait Chapter, Shahid Directors Wajda group, Javed Iqbal President IEC, Naser Saifi, Rana Ijaz President KPFA, Saqib Mirza, Khaled Amin Vice President KPFA, Masood CFO Commercial bank and many other Pakistanis were present.

Muhammad Tahir Bashir, Shaukat Khanum Overseas Community Ambassador in Kuwait (SKOCA) delivered his welcome speech. The program was commenced by recitation of the holy verses from Quran. Afterwards, Muhammad Tahir invited Mr. Aziz Mamuji DMD Gulf Consult who was master of the ceremony and conducted the event. Mamuji then invited Dr. Asif Loya on the stage to present the overview on Shaukat Khanum Hospital & Research Center.

Dr. Loya's presentation was followed by a brief speech by Mamuji and patient testimonial documentary, Mamuji in his speech highlighted the role of Shaukat Khanum in treating the needy patients and he also briefed on the role of the Friends of Shaukat Khanum hospital and a TVC



Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital & Research Center, Kuwait chapter welcomes chief guest of the event.



Guests at the event

was played afterwards at SKH&RC. Second segment of the program was started with the speech of Engineer Obed Ur Rehman.

In his speech Engr Obed expressed his views on the initiative of Imran Khan in 1994 and also informed audience that how he initially contributed towards the noble cause and he expressed very high views about Imran Khan. Lastly, he prayed for the prosperity of the beloved homeland.

Later, Peer Amjad Hussain (President PTI Kuwait Chapter) was invited on the stage for expressing his views. In his speech, Peer Amjad

Hussain mentioned that he always supported this noble cause and even he visited Imran Khan and always offered his full support. He then appreciated and thanked Dr. Asif Loya for coming all the way from Pakistan for today's event. He then appreciated and thanked the role of Muhammad Tahir (SKOCA) for organizing such a great event for the very noble cause. Sultan Aikandari was invited later on the stage to express his views.

He appreciated the Pakistani community. The program ended with serving sumptuous dinner to the guests.

Event highlights anti-drug pledge

OICC Kuwait organizes iftar gathering

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The iftar gathering organized by the OICC National Committee was held on Saturday, the 15th, at Abasiya United Indian School. The event was inaugurated by OICC National President Varghese Puthukulangara. Vice President Samuel Chacko Katturkaleackl presided over the function, while writer and Chandrika newspaper's Kuwait editor Farooq Hamadani delivered the Ramadan message.

A pledge against drug use, particularly targeting students and youth, was led by Joint Treasurer Rishi Jacob, who administered it to the audience.

Rev. Father Biju Parakkal of Saint Gregorios Orthodox Maha Edavaka, Azeez Thikkodi, Benny Orma, and National General Secretaries Varghese Joseph Maraman, Joy John Thuruthikkara, and Binu Chembalayam extended their greetings.

As part of the 10th anniversary celebrations of OICC Kuwait, the raffle coupon for the mega event "Venu Pournami 2025" was launched by National President Varghese Puthukulangara. Raffle



A photo from the event.

coupon coordinators Joy Karavaloor and Suraj Kannan were also present at the event. The poster for the painting competition "Nirakkootu," organized by the OICC Ernakulam District Committee on April 4, was unveiled during the gathering.

OICC Organization General Secretary B.S. Pillai delivered the welcome address, while Sec-

retary Joy Karavaloor expressed gratitude. The event saw the participation of political, social, business, and media leaders.

National Secretaries Nissam Thiruvananthapuram, Suresh Mathur, various district committee leaders, youth wing activists, and representatives of affiliated organizations coordinated the iftar gathering.

We aim for holistic banking services: Johair Marafi

ABK announces winner of the final A+ Student account quarterly draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce the successful completion of its A+ Student account final quarterly draw, where one lucky winner, Abdullah Mohammad Al-Khaldi, has won a KD 2,000 trip to his preferred destination. This exemplifies ABK's commitment to rewarding its A+ Student customers while providing valuable benefits to enhance their banking experience.

Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, expressed her enthusiasm, stating, "We are thrilled to celebrate the success of our draw and congratulate Al-Khaldi on his win. The A+Student account not only rewards our customers but also enriches their experiences."

By simply transferring their educational allowance to ABK, A+ Student account holders had the opportunity to take advantage of exclusive benefits that add significant value to their banking experience.

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

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

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign.

Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

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



Marafi



ABK reveals winner of final A+ Student Account quarterly draw.

175 volunteers join life-saving camp

Pak Donors successfully hosts Emergency Ramadan Blood Donation drive in Kuwait

By M. Irfan Shafiq

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Pak Donors, a leading voluntary blood donation initiative in Kuwait, successfully organized its 27th Blood Donation Camp - Emergency Ramadan Blood Donation Drive, reinforcing its unwavering commitment to saving lives.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Hamza Tauqir, Community Welfare Attaché (CWA) from the Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait, and Dr. Asif, a senior doctor from Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital, Pakistan, who made a special visit for this noble cause. Their support and encouragement further strengthened the spirit of volunteerism among the donors.

Led by camp leader Imran Zafar, the camp witnessed an overwhelming response, with approximately 175 donors stepping forward to contribute to this life-saving mission. Their generous donations will play a crucial role in replenishing blood supplies and helping patients in urgent need of transfusions. Pak Donors extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Pakistani dignitaries for their visit and valuable support in making this initiative a success. Their presence not only uplifted the morale of the donors but also highlighted the importance of community service.

A special thanks also goes to the media representatives for their coverage and continuous support in spreading awareness about the sig-



A combo photo from the event.

nificance of blood donation. Their efforts help in reaching a wider audience and encouraging more people to participate in such humanitarian causes. Pak Donors remains com-

mitted to promoting regular blood donation and fostering a culture of social responsibility. We look forward to more successful donation drives in the future.

Lowest-grossing weekend of the year

'Novocaine' leads slow weekend at the American box office

LOS ANGELES, March 17, (AP): Five new movies opened wide in North American theaters this weekend including a starry spy picture from Steven Soderbergh, an A24 thriller, a Looney Tunes movie and a high concept action-comedy with "The Boys" star Jack Quaid. But the myriad options did not result in box office gold. When final receipts are tallied Monday, it's likely going to be the lowest-grossing weekend of the year to date with around \$54 million in total ticket sales.

"Novocaine" led the pack with \$8.7 million, according to studio estimates Sunday, which was slightly lower than expected. The film starring Quaid as a man who literally can't feel pain was released by Paramount Pictures in 3,365 locations this weekend. The studio also had early access showings the weekend prior, which are included in the total.



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Jack Quaid in a scene from 'Novocaine.' (AP)

The R-rated movie, directed by Dan Berk and Robert Olsen, got generally positive reviews with

an 82% on Rotten Tomatoes. Exit polls were a bit more tempered with 4/5 on PostTrak and a B Cine-

maScore. It also made \$1.8 million from 19 international territories bringing its total weekend to \$10.5 million.

The Bong Joon Ho and Robert Pattinson sci-fi "Mickey 17" and the spy pic "Black Bag" were neck and neck for second and third place, both reporting \$7.5 million weekends. "Mickey 17" had the slight edge. It's still playing in 3,807 theaters, was down a steep 60% from its opening. That brings its domestic total to \$33.3 million and its global total to \$90.5 million against a reported \$118 million budget.

"Black Bag," the well-reviewed Soderbergh film with Cate Blanchett and Michael Fassbender, opened in 2,705 theaters to take third place. Audiences skewed male (56%) and over 35 (59%). The film, released by Focus Features, currently carries a 97% on

Rotten Tomatoes. It also got a B CinemaScore.

Other new openers included "The Day the Earth Blew Up: A Looney Tunes Movie," an animated film starring Porky Pig and Daffy Duck originally intended for the streaming service Max, and the faith based "The Last Supper." Ketchup Entertainment handled the Looney Tunes theatrical release in 2,827 theaters where it earned \$3.2 million. Pinnacle Peak Pictures released "The Last Supper" in 1,575 theaters to \$2.8 million in ticket sales. Both came in behind Disney and Marvel's "Captain America: Brave New World," which earned \$5.5 million in its fifth weekend in theaters.

The new A24 movie, "Opus," opened outside of the top 10 with an estimated \$1 million from 1,764 screens. Starring Ayo Edebiri and John Malkovich as a legendary pop

star who has suddenly reemerged on the scene after decades away, "Opus" premiered at the Sundance Film Festival to generally poor reviews. It's the first film from writer-director Mark Anthony Green.

After a strong start to the year in which the box office was up 22%, several slow weekends that haven't surpassed \$60 million in total ticket sales have left the domestic box office at a 5% deficit.

"It's a momentum business," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "It'll ratchet up with 'Snow White' next weekend. And the good news is we probably won't see the 50s again until August."

With final domestic figures releasing Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at US and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore.

Film



This image released by Netflix shows Chris Pratt, (center), with Herman, voiced by Anthony Mackie, in a scene from 'The Electric State'. (AP)

Russo brothers' sci-fi drama misses the mark

'The Electric State' is big, ambitious and dull

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): If an algorithm designed a classic, big-screen spectacle for the small-screen age, "The Electric State" probably wouldn't be too far off the mark.

This is an Amblin-inspired, big-budget adventure with dystopian, science-fiction wonder, nostalgic callbacks, well-liked stars (Chris Pratt! Millie Bobby Brown! Stanley Tucci! Giancarlo Esposito! Ke Huy Quan!) and the directors (Joe and Anthony Russo) behind some of the highest-earning movies of all time.

In theory, it should work. A kid on a dangerous, cross-country journey with a robot that may or may not be her brother whom she thought was dead? A reluctant, jaded adult companion who's quick with a one-liner? "The Electric State" should be some future Spielberg's new favorite movie, the one that they'll reference in their Oscars speech as the thing that made them want to make movies. And yet it's lacking a spark and a soul that might distinguish it as memorable or special. Worse, considering everything it has going for it (including a reported budget that may have exceeded \$300 million), "The Electric State" is kind of dull.

"The Electric State" was loosely based on an illustrated novel by Simon Stalenhag that was released in 2018 and quickly scooped up for movie adaptation purposes with Marvel veterans Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely writing the script. Set in the early 1990s, this is a world in which service robots have risen up and demanded rights and freedom. The humans respond by going to war.

This four-year war is skimmed over in a montage at the

start of the film and, by 1994, Mr. Peanut (Woody Harrelson) is signing a peace treaty with Bill Clinton and the remaining robots are exiled to rot in the desert. The human victory was attributed to the drone creations of a Steve Jobs-ian tech billionaire Ethan Skate (Tucci), who is soon hawking his "Neurocasters" to the public. They scoop it up and soon society is just a bleak wasteland of screen zombies content to let their avatars work while they relax and fantasize a way out of their downtrodden existence.

Derivative

There are shades of "The Creator," "WALL-E," "Ready Player One" and many, many more films in here. But no one gets mad that something is derivative if it's also good. It's only when the kitchen sink references are so clear and come up so short that it becomes a real problem.

Brown plays Michelle, an angry, orphaned teenager who lost her entire family not in the war, but in a car wreck. The one she misses the most is her little brother Christopher (Woody Norman, giving the best, most emotionally authentic performance in the film), a reluctant child prodigy. One day, a robot of a cartoon character they used to watch together turns up at her foster home, speaking only in the character's catchphrases. But after some gestures toward a photograph, she starts to believe that this robot is, somehow, Christopher, or at least someone who can lead her to the real Christopher. And thus starts their journey across America, and into the robot "exclusion zone" to figure out this puzzle.

They soon team up with a war veteran/smuggler Keats (Pratt) and his snarky robot sidekick (Anthony Mackie, for your Marvel bingo card) and try to evade Esposito's robot bounty hunter.

The robots they find in the exclusion zone are voiced by an army of celebrities you'll go insane trying to place before angrily resorting to IMDb, including Harrelson, Hank Azaria, Brian Cox and Jenny Slate. Their designs are thoughtful and remarkable and should evoke a sense of awe in the viewer at the sheer ingenuity behind this film, where many of the most impressive shots seem to be the recreations of Stalenhag's illustrations of dismantled, decaying robots. The action, however, gets mind-numbingly repetitive by the end of the bloated runtime.

Pratt and Brown, while fine individually, don't really find their groove as partners on this journey either. Pratt is kind of just doing his thing and gets the few clever one-liners in the script. Brown, meanwhile, seems a little bored by yet another teen adventure role. And both ultimately look like movie stars in '90s cosplay, which might be a metaphor for the larger failure of the movie.

"The Electric State" was, of course, not made by algorithm, which is an admittedly cheap shot for a Netflix original. Unfortunately, it just feels that way.

"The Electric State," a Netflix release currently streaming, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "sci-fi violence/action, language and some thematic material." Running time: 128 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

New lesson

'Ted Lasso' is coming back

LOS ANGELES, March 17, (AP): Jason Sudeikis' mustache is making a comeback. "Ted Lasso," the dramedy about a fiercely optimistic American soccer coach in London, is set to return for a fourth season, Apple TV+ announced Friday.

The streamer did not say when the new episodes would be available or where they are in the production process. In a statement, Sudeikis, the show's star and an executive producer, hinted the new episodes would be about taking chances.

"In season four, the folks at AFC Richmond learn to Leap Before They Look, discovering that wherever they land, it's exactly where they're meant to be."

Ted Lasso the character was first introduced by Sudeikis in 2013 to promote NBC Sports' coverage of the England Premier League. In a short film, Lasso was the coach of London's Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. It was quickly clear that he knew little - if anything - about soccer.

"They're gonna play hard for all four quarters," Lasso said of the players in a mock press conference. "Do we have any goals this season? Absolutely. We're gonna win a lot of games and we're gonna get in the playoffs." "There's no playoffs" a reporter corrected from the audience. The bit was so popular that Sudeikis was tapped to reprise the character again the following year.

The idea came up to write a show around the character but it didn't come to fruition until Bill Lawrence ("Scrubs," "Cougar Town") helped get it picked up by Apple TV+.



Sudeikis

Variety

LIMA: Renowned Peruvian singer Paul Flores, a member of the cumbia orchestra "Armonia 10," died early Sunday morning, shortly after assailants attacked the band's tour bus in Lima, local daily El Comercio reported.

The attack occurred at around 2:35 a.m. local time (0735 GMT) on an avenue in the capital's El Agustino district, as the band was headed for the Casa Real de Santa Clara nightclub after performing at the El Palomar Stadium, said the report.

Flores, 39, apparently suffered two shots before being rushed to a local hospital, where he died of his wounds. His bandmates were unharmed.

Preliminary information suggests the attackers were members of an extortion ring who had previously threatened the orchestra members. (Xinhua)

NEW YORK: Deshaun Watson's future with Cleveland Browns might be in doubt. However, another part of his future is more secure. Watson and his longtime girlfriend, Jilly Anais, announced in a joint Instagram post

on Sunday that they got engaged. The caption reads "Mrs. Watson loading ..." while showing off Anais wearing a large diamond ring as Watson hugs and looks at her.

Watson commented on the post, writing "More Glory" followed by a prayer emoji.

Watson and Anais have been dating since 2019, after first meeting in Los Angeles. They are both 29. Anais - who has nearly 2.5 million followers on social media - is a singer, actress and cookbook author.

The couple stayed together amid accusations in 2021 and '22 by more than two dozen women that Watson sexually assaulted and harassed them during therapy sessions in Houston, when he played for the Texans. Two grand juries declined to indict him and he has settled civil lawsuits in all but one of the cases. (AP)

LONDON: John Lennon is being honored in a specially minted British coin collection to mark the year the Beatles great and peace advocate would have turned 85, the Royal Mint said recently.

The coin, which was to go on sale on Monday, features a portrait of Lennon that is based on a famous image taken by music industry photographer Bob Gruen in 1974.

It depicts a side profile of Lennon, taken on the roof of his penthouse in New York. Lennon was shot dead by Mark David Chapman in the city on Dec. 8, 1980 at the age of 40.

Lennon's name appears to the left of the portrait, while the word "Imagine" features



Lennon

on the right side of the design in a reference to his single and album, released in 1971, the year after the Fab Four - Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr - effectively went their own way, having left their indelible mark at the heart of the 1960s.

"Arguably one of the greatest singers and songwriters of all time, Lennon's achievements as an artist, activist and advocate for peace continue to live on and will now be forever remembered on a coin," said Rebecca Morgan, director of commemorative coin at the Royal Mint.

The Royal Mint, which has struck the coins of monarchs from Alfred the Great in the ninth century through to King Charles III, has an ongoing "music legends" coin series, celebrating singers and songwriters. Lennon follows the likes of McCartney, David Bowie, Queen, the Rolling Stones and Shirley Bassey in being honored on a Royal Mint coin. (AP)

JAKARTA: Chinese animated blockbuster "Ne Zha 2," the highest-grossing animated film of all time, premiered here on Saturday, with a packed theater of eager moviegoers.

Throughout the screening, Indonesian moviegoers were fully immersed in the movie, responding with laughter, gasp, and applause. Notably, the audience was moved and hailed spontaneously, showing their excitement and appreciation.

After the screening, many young viewers gathered near the "Ne Zha 2" posters to film videos, eagerly recommending the movie to others.

Oscar Prajnaphalla, head of marketing at Warner Bros. Indonesia, the movie's local distributor, expressed his admiration. "This is the first Chinese movie we have distributed, and I must say, 'Ne Zha 2' left a strong impression. The animation is top-notch, the production quality is outstanding, and the story is deeply engaging. It's a film that truly captivates the audience." (Xinhua)

4baseCare earns CAP accreditation, enhancing cancer care in UAE

Scientists uncover new way using cells to prevent cancer

SYDNEY, March 17, (Agencies): Researchers have identified a surprising mechanism that helps cells defend against cancer, a new study by the Sydney-based Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) said on Monday.

Telomeres, the protective caps at the ends of chromosomes, play a key role in aging and cancer prevention. Over time, these structures naturally shorten, signaling aging cells to stop dividing -- a crucial safeguard against cancer, according to the study.

"Our data shows telomeres are much more active. They can acutely respond to stress and actively open up to turn on a cellular response that looks like aging. They do this to avoid cancer," said Tony Cesare of the Genome Integrity Unit at CMRI.

Cesare and his team worked with their collaborators at the University of Kyoto to understand the "active" role that telomeres can play in avoiding cancer.

Published in Nature Communications, the study re-

vealed that telomeres do more than just passively shorten with age. They actively respond to stress by triggering cellular aging processes to prevent cancer from developing.

"Most people think of telomeres as a passive entity that shortens with cell division. This is a passive fail-safe used during aging," Cesare said.

By inducing cell cycle arrest or programmed cell death, telomeres help eliminate cells with chromosomal damage before they can divide uncontrollably, he said, adding this discovery introduces a previously unknown anti-cancer function of telomeres.

Beyond its significance for telomere biology, Cesare suggests that this breakthrough could open new avenues for cancer treatment -- targeting telomeres to trigger cell death in cancerous cells may offer a promising therapeutic strategy. Enditem

4baseCare, a leader in precision oncology, has achieved a major milestone with CAP (College of American Pathologists) accreditation for its genomics lab at Dubai Science Park, established in partnership with Innovate Life Sciences Fz-LLC. This accreditation ensures that cancer patients in the UAE now have access to world-class genomic profiling locally, meeting the highest international standards of quality and accuracy.

By securing CAP accreditation, 4baseCare reaffirms its commitment to advancing cancer care through data-driven, personalized treatment decisions. The Dubai-based facility bridges a critical gap in precision oncology, eliminating the need for patients to seek genomic testing solutions outside of the UAE.

"Our mission is to democratize access to high-quality genomic insights, empowering oncologists with cutting-edge molecular data to drive better patient outcomes," said Dr. Sudharshan Elangovan, VP of Global Opera-

tions, 4baseCare.

Syed Hussaini, General Manager, Innovate Life Sciences, added, "This achievement underscores our dedication to quality and innovation, strengthening our mission to make precision medicine more accessible and affordable across the Middle East and beyond."

About 4baseCare

An Illumina Accelerator company backed by Infosys Innovation Fund, 4baseCare pioneers precision oncology solutions through advanced genomics and digital health technology. 4baseCare boasts of a stellar advisory board which includes Lip Bu Tan (CEO, Intel Corporation), Francis deSouza (COO, Google Cloud and ex-CEO Illumina) and Prof George Church (Professor, Harvard Medical School).

With CAP accreditation, the company further cements its position as a trusted global partner in precision oncology, supporting healthcare providers in delivering targeted and effective cancer treatments.



This photo taken on March 14, 2025 shows a surgical robot demonstration during the 2025 China Medical Equipment Conference & Medical Equipment Exhibition held at Chongqing International Expo Center in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality. The four-day exhibition kicked off here on Thursday with a total of 34 professional exhibition areas, including medical imaging, radiotherapy, medical examination, surgical equipment, hospital Internet of Things construction, artificial intelligence and medical robots, etc., showcasing over 10,000 new products, new technologies, new applications and new methods in the field of medical equipment. (Xinhua)

HKUST to build lunar robot

China designs robot inspired by insects for space mining

NANJING, March 17, (Xinhua): A team of Chinese scientists has created a six-legged "space mining robot" inspired by insects, which could be used for prospecting and mining on the moon or asteroids in the future.

Unlike drilling on Earth, a robot's surface-penetrating operations on the moon, where gravity is just one-sixth of Earth's, or on low-gravity asteroids, present significant challenges.

The researchers from the China University of Mining and Technology (CUMT) drew inspiration from insect locomotion, woodpecker climbing dynamics, and origami techniques to design an innovative bionic robot for asteroid exploration.

"The robot features an arrayed claw-spine structure that enhances its attachment and grip in microgravity," said Liu Xinhua, the team's leader from CUMT.

The robot is equipped with three wheel legs and three claw legs. The wheels can handle relatively smooth asteroid terrain, while the anchor structures tackle rocky and loose-soil areas.

Its wheels are made of nickel-based titanium memory alloy, allowing them to quickly regain their shape after external force. This design is expected to withstand the extreme temperature fluctuations and radiation of space effectively.

The team has also constructed a specialized testing site mimicking the sandy soil of near-earth asteroids and employed a suspension system to replicate microgravity conditions. The research team has already applied for a patent for the prototype of this space mining robot.

Lunar robots: China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government Sunday announced that it has established the Hong Kong Space Robotics and Energy Center which plays a major role in the country's Chang'e-8 mission.

Led by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), the center under the InnoHK Research Clusters will develop a multifunctional lunar surface robot as part of an international collaboration project.

Yu Hongyu, director of HKUST Space Science & Technology Institute, said that the robot is equipped with dual robotic arms and is capable of deploying and installing instruments, collecting lunar surface samples and more.

The robot is designed to perceive the topography of the Moon as well as plan and change its paths. Another key feature of the robot is its ability to serve as a mobile charging station to charge various lunar surface equipment.

"In response to the Moon's low gravity and harsh environmental conditions, we are developing a software to ensure that the robot can autonomously adapt its posture and functions based on the environmental changes," Yu added.

Replacing nurses or enhancing their role?

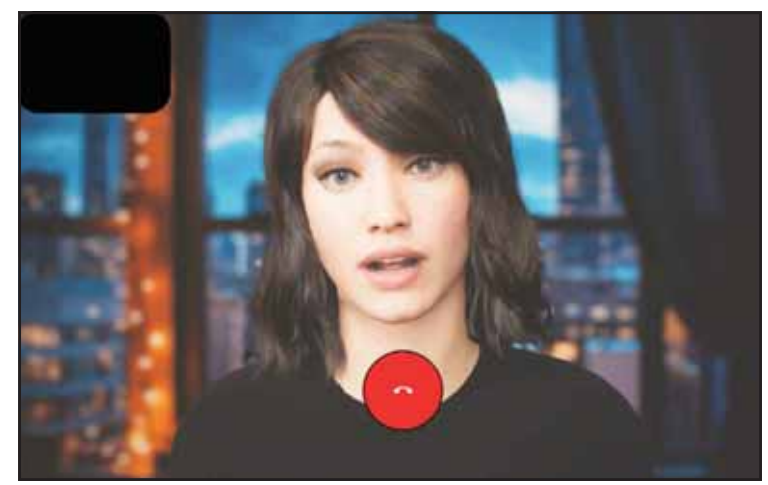
As AI nurses reshape hospital care, human caregivers are pushing back

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): The next time you're due for a medical exam you may get a call from someone like Ana: a friendly voice that can help you prepare for your appointment and answer any pressing questions you might have.

With her calm, warm demeanor, Ana has been trained to put patients at ease - like many nurses across the US. But unlike them, she is also available to chat 24-7, in multiple languages, from Hindi to Haitian Creole.

That's because Ana isn't human, but an artificial intelligence program created by Hippocratic AI, one of a number of new companies offering ways to automate time-consuming tasks usually performed by nurses and medical assistants.

It's the most visible sign of AI's inroads into health care, where hundreds of hospitals are using increasingly sophisticated computer programs to monitor patients' vital signs, flag emergency situations and trigger step-by-step action plans for care - jobs that were all previously handled by nurses and other health professionals.



This March 2025 image from the website of artificial intelligence company Xoltar shows a demonstration of one of their avatars for conducting video calls with patients. (AP)

Efficiently

Hospitals say AI is helping their nurses work more efficiently while addressing burnout and understaffing. But nursing unions argue that this poorly understood technology is overriding nurses' expertise and degrading the quality of care patients receive.

"Hospitals have been waiting for the moment when they have something that appears to have enough legitimacy to replace nurses," said Michelle Mahon of National Nurses United. "The entire ecosystem is designed to automate, de-skill and ultimately replace caregivers."

Mahon's group, the largest nursing union in the U.S., has helped organize more than 20 demonstrations at hospitals across the country, pushing for the right to have say in how AI can be used - and protection from discipline if nurses decide to disregard automated advice. The group raised new alarms in January when Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the incoming health secretary, suggested AI nurses "as good as any doctor" could help deliver care in rural areas. On Friday, Dr. Mehmet Oz, who's been nominated to oversee Medicare and Medicaid, said he believes AI can "liberate doctors and nurses from all the paperwork."

Hippocratic AI initially promoted a rate of \$9 an hour for its AI assistants, compared with about \$40 an hour for a registered nurse. It has since dropped that language, instead touting its ser-

vices and seeking to assure customers that they have been carefully tested. The company did not grant requests for an interview.

Hospitals have been experimenting for years with technology designed to improve care and streamline costs, including sensors, microphones and motion-sensing cameras. Now that data is being linked with electronic medical records and analyzed in an effort to predict medical problems and direct nurses' care - sometimes before they've evaluated the patient themselves.

Adam Hart was working in the emergency room at Dignity Health in Henderson, Nevada, when the hospital's computer system flagged a newly arrived patient for sepsis, a life-threatening reaction to infection. Under the hospital's protocol, he was supposed to immediately administer a large dose of IV fluids. But after further examination, Hart determined that he was treating a dialysis patient, or someone with kidney failure. Such patients have to be carefully managed to avoid overloading their kidneys with fluid.

Concern

Hart raised his concern with the supervising nurse but was told to just follow the standard protocol. Only after a nearby physician intervened did the patient instead begin to receive a slow infusion of IV fluids.

"You need to keep your thinking cap on - that's why you're being paid as a nurse," Hart said. "Turning over our thought processes to these devices is reckless and dangerous."

Hart and other nurses say they understand the goal of AI: to make it

easier for nurses to monitor multiple patients and quickly respond to problems. But the reality is often a barrage of false alarms, sometimes erroneously flagging basic bodily functions - such as a patient having a bowel movement - as an emergency.

Focus

"You're trying to focus on your work but then you're getting all these distracting alerts that may or may not mean something," said Melissa Beebe, a cancer nurse at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. "It's hard to even tell when it's accurate and when it's not because there are so many false alarms."

Even the most sophisticated technology will miss signs that nurses routinely pick up on, such as facial expressions and odors, notes Michelle Collins, dean of Loyola University's College of Nursing. But people aren't perfect either.

"It would be foolish to turn our back on this completely," Collins said. "We should embrace what it can do to augment our care, but we should also be careful it doesn't replace the human element."

More than 100,000 nurses left the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to one estimate, the biggest staffing drop in 40 years. As the U.S. population ages and nurses retire, the U.S. government estimates there will be more than 190,000 new openings for nurses every year through 2032. Faced with this trend, hospital administrators see AI filling a vital role: not taking over care, but helping nurses and doctors gather information and communicate with patients.

Rabies cases

Measles cases in Mongolia surge

ULAN BATOR, March 17, (Xinhua): Mongolia has recorded 24 new cases of measles infection over the past 24 hours, bringing the national caseload to 51, according to the country's National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) on Monday.

According to Mongolian doctors, measles is caused by a single-stranded, enveloped RNA virus with one serotype.

In view of this, the NCCD urged parents to pay attention to the symptoms of measles at an early stage among their children and seek emergency medical care immediately.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease transmitted by respiratory droplets and direct contact.

Rabies: The Philippines recorded 426 rabies cases and deaths in 2024, the Philippines' Department of Health (DOH) said Saturday.

"All confirmed rabies cases are fatal," the agency said on social media.

Forty-five percent of the rabies cases in 2024 were from pet animal bites.

The DOH continues to urge the public to remain vigilant and proactive in preventing rabies transmission.

First-aid: The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Tanzanian government on Friday launched a project to provide capacity-building training for communities on how to deliver first-aid services to road accident victims.

The 485,350-US-dollar three-year project, Strengthening Post-Crash Care in Tanzania, will implement and evaluate the impact of six components of the WHO emergency care toolkit in pre-hospital and hospital settings along Tanzania's busy highways, connecting the north and south of the country.

The project, funded by the United Nations Road Safety Fund, is a cooperation between the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), the National Road Safety Council of Tanzania, and the WHO.

Mpox: More than 200 community health agents have already been trained in Burundi to help control the spread of mpox as the country continues to face an influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In a meeting held on Wednesday by the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Olivier Nijimbere, permanent secretary at the Burundian Ministry of Public Health and AIDS Control, said the role of community health agents is crucial in the fight against mpox.

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Teen Andreeva rallies past Sabalenka in women's final

Draper dominates Rune for a first Masters 1000 title and a top 10 debut

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 17, (AP) — Jack Draper overwhelmed Holger Rune 6-2, 6-2 in a little more than an hour in the final of the BNP Paribas Open, achieving two big milestones by claiming his first Masters 1000 title and earning his debut in the top 10 of the ATP rankings.

Draper, a 23-year-old from Britain who was seeded 13th at the hard-court tournament in the California desert, built up a 21-7 advantage in winners against Rune while also making fewer unforced errors.

Draper's left-handed serve was particularly important: He hit 10 aces, won 21 of his 23 first-serve points and never allowed Rune to earn a single break point.

"You never know when it's your time," said Draper, a U.S. Open semifinalist in September. "I lost first round here last year, so I didn't get to experience the tournament too much. ... But I'd say this is one of my favorite tournaments now, of course."

Rune is a 21-year-old from Denmark who was seeded 12th at Indian Wells. Their matchup was the first ATP Masters 1000 final anywhere between two men born in the 2000s and the first at Indian Wells between two aged 23 or younger since Rafael Nadal, 22, beat Andy Murray, 21, in 2009.

"Tough day for me, but I have to start with congratulating Jack," Rune said. "You've been showing some incredible tennis and, for sure, you deserved to win today."

Draper got to the final by eliminating two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz in the semifinals on Friday.

Earlier, Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva came back to beat No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the BNP Paribas Open to make the 17-year-old the tournament's youngest champion since Serena Williams in 1999.

The 11th-ranked Andreeva improved to 19-3 this season - the most wins by a woman on tour - and collected her second Masters 1000 title of 2025. The other came at Dubai in February, which earned her a top-10 ranking for the



Jack Draper, of Britain, returns to Holger Rune, of Denmark, during the final match at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

first time. Andreeva will return to that upper tier in Monday's WTA rankings. Revisiting a theme from her Dubai victory speech that referred to something rapper Snoop Dogg said when he received a star on the Hollywood



Mirra Andreeva, of Russia, poses with the winner's trophy at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

Walk of Fame, Andreeva told Sunday's crowd: "I would again like to thank myself for fighting until the end and for always believing in me and for never quitting."

Inter takes big step to retaining crown with 2-0 win at Atalanta



Inter Milan's Denzel Dumfries and Atalanta's Raoul Bellanova, left, vie for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Atalanta and Inter at the Gewiss Stadium in Bergamo, Italy. (AP)

Juventus slips out of the top four

MILAN, March 17, (AP): Inter Milan took a significant step to keeping its Serie A crown with a 2-0 win at title rival Atalanta.

Carlos Augusto and Lautaro Martinez scored in the second half to lift the league leader three points above second-placed Napoli and six points above third-placed Atalanta.

Napoli had earlier been held 0-0 at relegation-threatened Venezia.

The fight for the final Champions League spot is also tight, with just six points separating six teams in the race for fourth place after more misery for Juventus, which lost 3-0 at Fiorentina.

It was a head-to-head clash for top spot in Bergamo, with Atalanta knowing that victory would move it level on points with Inter and Napoli.

Both sides had great chances in an entertaining first half, with Inter going closest with less than seven minutes on the clock.

Marcus Thuram was on the verge of wheeling

away in celebration as he swept a finish past Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi and toward the far corner, following good play with Lautaro Martinez. But his effort bounced off the base of the right post.

At the other end, Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer pulled off a fantastic save to fingertip Mario Pasalic's header over the bar.

Inter broke the deadlock in the 54th minute, immediately after play resumed following a delay of several minutes as a fan got medical treatment in the stands.

It was only his third goal for Inter in two seasons at the club.

Lautaro thought he had doubled Inter's lead in the 71st but the whistle had already been blown for a foul by him on Berat Djimsiti.

Atalanta's chances of getting back into the match diminished nine minutes from time. Ederson was booked for dissent and then sarcastically applauded the referee, who showed the Atalanta midfielder a second yellow card and then a red.

Lautaro sealed the match six minutes later. Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini was still protesting the Ederson decision and he was also sent off.

Inter defender Alessandro Bastoni was also sent off following a second yellow card.

It was another draw for Napoli - its fifth in its last seven matches.

Napoli almost got off to the perfect start in Venice but Giacomo Raspadori's effort came off the left post in the fourth minute.

Venezia also had plenty of chances, with the best opportunity coming three minutes from the break. Alex Meret did well to parry from Kike Pérez and Daniel Fila's follow-up was cleared off the line by Napoli defender Amir Rrahmani.

Napoli went even closer on the stroke of halftime but Ionut Radu pulled off a superb save to grasp Romelu Lukaku's header on the goal line.

It was a fourth straight draw for Venezia - with two of those coming against Atalanta and Lazio - but it remained in penultimate position in the standings, five points from safety.

Juventus coach Thiago Motta is under even more pressure after his team slipped out of the top four, shipping seven goals in two matches and scoring none.

Frankfurt cements fourth place

Leverkusen 'stuns' Stuttgart, stays in Bundesliga title hunt

BERLIN, March 17, (Xinhua): Patrik Schick's stoppage-time winner sealed a 4-3 comeback win for Leverkusen at Stuttgart to stay in contention for the Bundesliga title.

The match started at a fast pace, and Stuttgart broke the deadlock in the 15th minute when Ermedin Demirovic was quickest to pounce on a rebound and calmly slot home after goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky had initially denied Jamie Lewelling.

Stuttgart doubled its lead shortly after the break, Nick Woltemade combined well with Enzo Millot before finishing with composure and precision past Hradecky.

Jeremie Frimpong threw Leverkusen a lifeline in the 56th minute when he collected a loose ball on the edge of the area and unleashed a low drive into the bottom corner.

Stuttgart restored its two-goal advantage six minutes later. A dangerous cross from the right was deflected by Granit Xhaka, catching Hradecky wrong-footed.

Leverkusen once again showed its comeback qualities as Piero Hincapié nodded in from close range to make it 3-2 and set up a thrilling finale in the 68th minute.

Stuttgart suddenly looked nervous as Leverkusen pressed forward. The equalizer came in the 88th minute when Victor Boniface whipped in a cross that Angelo Stiller turned into his own net under pressure.

With all the momentum in its favour, Leverkusen stormed forward in search of a winner, and it came deep into stoppage time. Frimpong whipped in a pinpoint cross from the right and Schick rose highest to power a header past



Leverkusen's Granit Xhaka reacts during the German Bundesliga soccer match between VfB Stuttgart and Bayer Leverkusen at the MHP Arena in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

goalkeeper Alexander Nudel.

With the win, Leverkusen has closed the gap on Bayern Munich to six points with eight rounds to play. Stuttgart, meanwhile, will be left to rue its fifth successive game without a win.

"It's a very, very important win for us. There are still eight games to go, a lot can happen," said Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso.

Elsewhere, Eintracht Frankfurt cements its fourth place in the table after beating relegation-threatened Bochum 3-1, and Heidenheim moved past Holstein Kiel 3-1 in a clash of bottom sides.

Best of the Rest

Zhan wins heavyweight gold: China's Zhan Yilian clinched gold in the heavyweight category at the IBA Women's World Boxing Championships, while Hu Meiyi secured the light flyweight silver medal.

Zhan, national champion in 2024, defeated Kazakhstan's Yeldana Talipova with a 4-1 decision in the final, while Hu fell to Kazakhstan's Alua Balkibekova in a 5-0 bout.

With one gold, one silver and three bronze medals, China ranked fourth in the overall standings, behind Russia, Kazakhstan and Türkiye.

Three Chinese boxers also earned bronze medals, namely Cai Yan in featherweight, Wang Xiaomeng in light heavyweight, and Wang Lina in middleweight.

A total of 12 Chinese boxers competed in the event held from March 8 to 16 in Nis, Serbia, across 12 weight categories. (Xinhua)

Kenyan runners dominate 2025 Rome Marathon

Los Angeles Marathon sees home winner for the 1st time in 30 years

LOS ANGELES, March 17, (Agencies): Matt Richtman won the 40th annual Los Angeles Marathon on Sunday, becoming the first American man to take the title in 31 years.

He set a personal-best time of 2 hours, 7 minutes, 56 seconds over the course that began at Dodger Stadium and went through downtown LA, Hollywood, Beverly Hills and Brentwood before ending in the Century City neighborhood.

Athanas Kioko of Kenya was second in 2:10.55. Moses Kurgat of Kenya took third in 2:13.13.

It was just Richtman's second marathon, following his debut last fall at the Twin Cities Marathon with a time of 2:10.47 to finish fourth.

"I didn't really have a super big plan coming into this. It's always so tough, the marathon, just because so much can happen," Richtman said. "I just told myself to stay in that pack until about the halfway mark and then if I felt good I could make a move. Ended up going a little bit to the lead and no one really came with me." Richtman, of Elburn, Illinois, was a member of the Montana State cross-country team, earning All-America honors as a junior in 2022-23.

American Paul Pilkington won

the 1994 edition in 2:12.13.

In the women's race, Tejinesh Tulu of Ethiopia took the title in 2:30.16.

Antonina Kwambai of Kenya was second in 2:30.19. Savannah Berry of Orem, Utah, was third in 2:30.31. Berry finished 12th at last year's U.S. Olympic trials.

□ □ □

Kenyan runners showcased their dominance at the 30th edition



Participants compete during the 2025 Los Angeles Marathon in Los Angeles, the United States. (Xinhua)

of the Rome Marathon on Sunday, securing the top seven spots in the men's category and four of the top five positions in the women's division.

The 42.2-kilometer race, which took participants through the historic streets of the Italian capital under cool and overcast conditions, delivered fast finishing times, though none surpassed the course records.

Kenya's Robert Ngeno claimed victory in the men's race, crossing the finish line in 2 hours, 7 minutes, and 35 seconds, improving his personal best by more than two minutes. He surged ahead of fellow Kenyan Brian Kipsang in the final kilometers to secure the win by 23 seconds.

"It is an honor to win such a prestigious race in Rome," Ngeno said after the race. "I hope this marks the beginning of more success in my career." In the women's division, Betty Chepkwony of Kenya successfully won the title, finishing in 2:26:16, with Ethiopian runner Selam Fente Gebre finishing second at 2:28:22.

This marks the second consecutive year that Kenyan runners have won both the men's and women's categories in Rome, a feat that had not been achieved since 2021.

African athletes dominated the podium, with runners from Kenya and Ethiopia taking the top seven spots in the men's race and the top six in the women's competition.

The highest-placed non-African male runner was Italian Daniele Meucci, who finished eighth. In the women's race, Czech runner Petra Pastorova emerged as the highest-placed non-African, finishing seventh.

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Chelsea's Wesley Fofana, centre, challenges for the ball with Arsenal's Leandro Trossard during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Chelsea at Emirates stadium in London. (AP)

Sports

Newcastle wins first major domestic title in 70 yrs

Liverpool endures a painful week

LONDON, March 17, (AP): After 70 long years the wait is over for Newcastle.

The Saudi-backed club beat Liverpool 2-1 to win the English League Cup and end an agonizing trophy drought.

Dan Burn and Alexander Isak scored either side of halftime to seal victory at Wembley. And even though Liverpool substitute Federico Chiesa set up a tense finish to the final with a goal in added time, nothing was going to stand in Newcastle's way.

"After 70 years we can now say we are the champions again," a tearful Newcastle captain Bruno Guimaraes said. "It's one of the best days of my life." Newcastle's last major domestic trophy was the FA Cup in 1955. It won the now-defunct Inter-Cities Fairs Cup in 1969.

This was its first piece of silverware since being bought by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund in 2021 - a deal that was expected to transform the fortunes of one of English soccer's most iconic clubs.

Burn's powerful header opened the scoring just before halftime and Isak doubled the lead in the 52nd minute with a sweeping shot from close range.

Chiesa raced through to pull a goal back in the fourth minute of added time, but Newcastle held on to spark raucous celebrations from its long-suffering fans.

While Liverpool is 12 points clear of Arsenal at the top of the Premier League and looks on course to win a record-equaling 20th English title this season, coach Arne Slot was forced to wait for his first trophy since succeeding Jurgen Klopp last year.

The defeat ended a painful week for the Merseyside club, which was also knocked out of the Champions League on Tuesday after losing to Paris Saint-Germain in a penalty shootout.

There have been near misses and painful lows during Newcastle's trophy wait, including back-to-back FA Cup final losses in 1998 and '99 and defeat to Manchester United in the League Cup final two years ago.

On this occasion, Eddie Howe's



Newcastle players celebrate after winning the EFL Cup final soccer match between Liverpool and Newcastle at Wembley Stadium in London. (AP)

team was a worthy winner against a Liverpool team that has been too good for its top-flight rivals this season - losing just once in the league.

Newcastle fans, whose joyous singing dominated Wembley, will hope this is the start of things to come under its new owners.

Despite being backed by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund which counts its assets at around \$925 billion, soccer's financial fair play restrictions have limited Newcastle's spending, meaning it has not been able to make

the type of lavish signings seen by Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City and Qatar-backed PSG. Last summer it only spent around \$36 million and recouped around \$100 million in sales.

Burn and Isak were two of the big signings of the Saudi era and they delivered at Wembley.

Mikel Merino led Arsenal to a 1-0 win against Chelsea in the Premier League to close the gap on Liverpool to 12 points.

Arsenal's title hopes have faded in recent weeks, but Merino's first-half

header settled the London derby at the Emirates Stadium.

Merino rose in the 20th minute to flick Martin Odegaard's near post corner beyond Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez. It was enough to secure a first league win for Arsenal since Feb. 15.

Defeat for fourth-placed Chelsea means it missed the chance to extend its one-point lead over Manchester City in fifth and boost its chance of qualifying for the Champions League next season.

Arsenal, on 58 points, is 10 clear of

four-time defending champion City.

Three days after beating Real Sociedad 4-1 in the last 16 of the Europa League, Manchester United enjoyed a 3-0 win at struggling Leicester in the Premier League.

Rasmus Hojlund ended his goal drought to open the scoring for United at the King Power Stadium and, after having a goal disallowed, Alejandro Garnacho doubled the advantage.

Bruno Fernandes wrapped up three points with a late goal as the visitors climbed to 13th and inflicted a sixth

successive loss on the relegation-threatened Foxes.

United's win was marred by a serious-looking injury to teenager Ayden Heaven. The 18-year-old arrived from Arsenal last month and gave an impressive first-half display on Sunday.

But Heaven's full Premier League debut came to an agonizing end shortly after halftime, with the United center back taken off on a stretcher after lengthy treatment, having been hurt stopping Patson Daka from reaching a cross.

Al-Qadsiya aims for final spot against Al-Ittihad in Jeddah

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

JEDDAH, March 17: Al-Qadsiya faces a pivotal challenge tonight as they take on Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad at 10:00 pm in Jeddah. This marks the second encounter between the two teams in the AFC West Basketball League playoffs for the Gulf region, with both sides vying for a spot in the final round.

In their first matchup in Kuwait, Al-Qadsiya secured a commanding 82-69 victory.

Under the tournament's playoff format, the first team to win two out of three games advances. Should Al-Ittihad emerge victorious tonight, a decisive third match will be held in Kuwait on March 25.

Riding the momentum of three consecutive wins against Al-Ittihad this

season, Al-Qadsiya aims to seal its place in the final with a fourth triumph. American head coach, Anthony Stebbing, is banking on a mix of talented local and professional players to deliver another strong performance.

Meanwhile, Al-Ittihad, led by head coach Slobodan Subotic and assistant Abdullah Hejazi, is in a must-win situation to keep its playoff hopes alive. Backed by its passionate home crowd, it will rely on key players to shift the balance in its favor and force a deciding game.

In other basketball action, Kuwait Club dominated Al-Yarmouk 122-46 victory in the second division of the Youth League (merger). This win boosted Al-Abyad's total points to 21, while Al-Yarmouk stands at 13. Additionally, Al-Sulaibikhat edged out Al-Nasr 109-93, raising its tally to 15 points, while Al-Nasr sits at 16.



Al-Qadsiya player controls the ball as Al-Ittihad looks on.

Best of the Rest

Antonio says he came 'close to dying': West Ham striker Michael Antonio is "100%" confident he will play again as he recovers from a car crash that left him with a "completely shattered" leg and a realization "how close I was to dying." Antonio crashed his Ferrari into a tree just outside London on a wet and windy day on Dec. 7.

In an interview with the BBC, the Jamaica international said he broke his femur bone in four places and required an operation where surgeons "put a pole in my thigh with four bolts."

Antonio, who turns 35 this month, recently went to see the remains of his car at a scrapyard. He said: "It gave me a weird feeling in my stomach. It just made me realize how close I was to dying."

He has been told his rehabilitation will take "between six-to-12 months" before his leg heals properly, and feels he is "already two-to-three months ahead of where I should be. Yes, 100%. I will play again," he said.

"The most difficult part is that I almost wasn't there for my children," added Antonio, who has six kids. "It's just made me happy, positive about life, because I've got another chance at life." (AP)

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, March 17: Kuwait will depart from Dubai, UAE, for Basra, Iraq, ahead of its match against Iraq next Thursday in the seventh round of Group B in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

The Blues have been based in the UAE since March 9, where they played a single friendly against China, which ended in a 3-1 defeat. Currently, Kuwait sits in fifth place in the group with 5 points. South Korea leads the group with 14 points, followed by Iraq with 11 points, Jordan with 9, Oman with 6, and Palestine with 3 points.

Kuwait's first training session in Basra is scheduled for this evening, Tuesday, at the Sports City Stadium. This session will play a crucial role in determining the lineup that Argentine coach Juan Pizzi will field against Iraq.

Iraq started its training on Sunday at Basra Sports City.

The Iraqi Football Association announced that eight players will join the national team's training the following day: Zidane Iqbal, Hussein Ali, Ali Al-Hammadi, Mirkhas Doski, Frans



A file photo of Kuwaiti players preparing for a friendly against China.

Diaa, Marco Faraj, Adam Talib, and Mohammed Al-Taie.

The team will hold two training sessions each day—morning and evening. Adnan Dirjal, President of the Iraqi Football Association, and Ahmed Al-Moussawi, Executive Committee member, were present at the training

sessions, which saw the participation of players such as Jalal Hassan, Ahmed Basil, Ali Kazim, Kamil Saadi, Ahmed Yahya, Manaf Younis, Akam Hashim, Muhammad Ali, Ali Jassim, Lucas Shlimon, Al-Ay Fadhil, Amir Al-Ammari, Ali Youssef, Haroun Ahmed, Youssef Amin, Ibrahim Bayesh, Peter Korkis,

Amjad Atwan, Rebin Sulaqa, Ayman Hussein, and Osama Rashid.

Meanwhile, Oman medical staff is working urgently to treat players dealing with various injuries ahead of their match against South Korea next Thursday. Coach Rashid Jaber is preparing to test alternatives for significant absences in his squad.

Oman will be without its captain, Mohammed Al-Musalmi, who recently announced his retirement from international football. His absence is a major blow to the defense, as he played a key role in Oman's lineup during their last Gulf Cup appearance.

Oman will also miss midfielder star Hareb Al-Saadi, who is suspended for accumulating yellow cards. Additionally, the team faces potential suspensions in their next match against Kuwait, as four players—Ahmed Al-Khamisi, Ali Al-Busaidi, Abdullah Fawaz, and Nasser Al-Rawahi—are at risk of being suspended if they receive another yellow card.

However, the return of Salah Al-Yahyai from injury is a welcome boost for Oman, strengthening the squad for the upcoming matches.

Bilbao takes eight-point cushion in fourth place

Barca fights back against Atletico to regain top spot

MADRID, March 17, (Xinhua): Lamine Yamal and Ferran Torres scored injury-time goals as FC Barcelona came back from two goals down away to Atletico Madrid to win 4-2 and return to the top of La Liga.

Julian Alvarez and Alexander Sorloth looked to have won the game for Atletico, who went into the match a point behind Barca, but once again Diego Simeone's side sat deep to close the game out and ended up paying the price as its rival scored four goals in the last 20 minutes.

Alvarez put Atletico ahead on the stroke of halftime after an intelligent assist from Giuliano Simeone, with the goal coming a minute after Robert Lewandowski hit the bar at the other end.

Barca pressed but didn't really make Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak work, and Atletico doubled its lead in the 70th minute when Sorloth, who had just entered the game, swept home Conor Gallagher's cross.

Lewandowski pulled a goal back moments later when he spun and shot past Oblak, and it was 2-2 in the 78th minute when nobody picked up the run

of Torres before he headed Raphinha's cross into the net.

Yamal had a stroke of fortune in his goal as it took a deflection off Reinildo

to put Barca ahead in the 92nd minute, and Torres netted another goal with the last kick of the game after robbing the ball outside the Atletico area.

Yeray Alvarez scored the only goal of the game with an 84th-minute header as Athletic Bilbao won 1-0 in Sevilla to take an eight-point cushion in fourth place.

Mikel Vesga missed a first-half penalty for the Basque side who had the best chances despite less than 72 hours since its last game.

Real Betis fought back from 2-0 down away to Leganes to win 3-2 and take three vital points as it looks to qualify for Europe next season.

Goals from Dani Raba in the 29th and 44th minutes looked to have set Leganes on the way to a win, but Isco's 64th-minute penalty got Betis back into the match, before goals from Cedric Bakambu and Cucho Hernandez after 78 and 82 minutes turned the match on its head and left Leganes back in the bottom three.

Rayo Vallecano and Real Sociedad drew 2-2 with Oscar Trejo and Pedro Diaz scoring for the home side, while Martin Zubimendi and Arkaitz Mariezkurrena netted for the visiting team.

Ramon Terrats scored twice as Getafe fought back from Ante Budimir's penalty to win 2-1 away to Osasuna.



Atletico Madrid's Robin Le Normand, left, challenges Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski during a La Liga soccer match between Atletico Madrid and FC Barcelona at the Metropolitan stadium in Madrid. (AP)