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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025 / RAMADAN 19, 1446 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18851 **16 PAGES 150 FILS**

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Deaf athletes shine as Amir vows more state support



Amiri Diwan photo His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister, visits the Diwaniya of Nabat

Amiri Diwan photo His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister, visits the Kuwait Sport Club for Deaf (KSCD).

Opinion

Poets

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The Amir of Justice ... 'If souls are great, bodies will tire in achieving their goals'

WITH carefully chosen words, His Highness the Amir addressed the judiciary, which issues rulings in his name.

His message was clear and open to interpretation. In his statement, His Highness the Amir defined the meaning of self-accountability, particularly for judges, who must rule based on their conscience and remain impartial, regardless of temptations, reasons, or motives.

For the first time, the Head of State has outlined the principles to be followed, placing his words in their proper context, fully convinced that no one is above justice.

His Highness was direct in his message: "Just as you are judged, you will be judged... above your authority is an overseer and a conscience. So, feel that God is watching you, speak the truth, and your affairs will be set right.' It is true that judicial rulings are based on the law, but justice is not solely dependent on written texts. Justice is primarily based on conscience and spirit. There is no room for courtesies in judicial rulings that may lead to imbalance, which is one of the gravest sins before God Almighty. Because His Highness the Amir bears the burdens of the state, he is guided by his conscience to ensure that rulings issued in his name are free from any flaws. Therefore, he emphasized, "Issuing conflicting and contradictory rulings raises doubt and suspicion." This undermines the pursuit of justice, which is the foundation of state stability. In many countries, judges are given a blank check, allowing them to specify the amount they require, to avoid any suspicion of bribery

or undue influence from parties seeking their judgment.

Justice is the foundation of governance, as His Highness's words about the most important institution in the country clearly indicate. His statement rings true: "The executive and judicial authorities are the two wings of government in the country.²

To ensure that accountability for officials and lawbreakers remains indivisible, there is a fine line between right and wrong. His Highness the Amir emphasized that this line is clear and crucial for maintaining justice.

To avoid any suspicion of bias within the judiciary, His Highness was clear in highlighting the core issue and stirring up stagnant waters in various state institutions, not just the judiciary.

Amir champions poetry role in national identity

KUWAIT CITY, March 18, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah as well as other senior state officials, paid a visit to Kuwait Sport Club for Deaf (KSCD) on Monday evening.

Upon his arrival, he was warmly welcomed by Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sport Bashar Abdullah Al-Salem and KSCD Board Chairman Anwar Manif Al-Harbi.

Greeting the audience in a speech, His Highness the Amir said, "With you we meet again. Together with my brother His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousuf Saud Al-Sabah and my brother companions, we have the pleasure of congratulating you on the holy month of Ramadan.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait readies security for Ramadan, Eid rush



'Firm action'

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The Acting

Prime Minister Sheikh

Fahad Yousef Saud

Al-Sabah held a meet-

ing with the assistant

undersecretaries of the

Ministry of Interior

and several senior se-

His Highness the Amir spoke frankly about a fundamental pillar of the state, guided by his conscience as the head of all authorities.

These are the finest practices that reflect the essence of a ruler who can accurately distinguish between right and wrong, a quality that very few are capable of embodying.

Continued on Page 5

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curity officials, in the presence of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant **General Sheikh Salem** Al-Nawaf, reports Al-Seyassah daily. According to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef praised

KUNA photo

Acting Prime Minister chairs a meeting with Assistant Undersecretaries of the Ministry of Interior to review security preparations for the last ten days of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr.

Continued on Page 5





Indian Ambassador hosts Ramadan Ghabga, celebrating shared heritage



stc General Assembly for year ended Dec 31 2024 approves cash dividend of 35 Kuwaiti fils per share

Ramadan Timings Wednesday 17:59 lftar Thursday 04:32

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call from Egyptian President Abdelfattah El-Sisi on Tuesday, to discuss bilateral ties and the recent regional and international developments. During the call, El-Sisi wished His High-

ness the Amir a long healthy life, while His Highness Sheikh Meshal, on his part, thanked him for his kind feelings that reflect the two countries' strong relations, wishing the Egyptian President a long healthy life. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: President of the Kuwaiti Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) Dr. Adel Bouresli on Tuesday convened an emergency council meeting to look into Amiri subjects and directives.

The meeting focuses on recent instructions and orders came in an address given by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his meeting with the judicial authority's members on Sunday evening, said the Justice Ministry in a press release. (KUNA)

CAIRO: The Arab Parliament strongly condemned the Israeli occupation's resumption of military operations on Gaza, which killed over 350 people and injured dozens early Tuesday. Speaker of the Arab Parliamet **Mohammad**

Al-Yamahi said in a statement that this action is a war crime and is a clear violation of the international law, noting that the Israeli occupation is destroying the international community's efforts to implement the ceasefire deal. (KUNA)

Gold prices in Kuwait break \$3,000 barrier as safe-haven demand soars

KUWAIT CITY, March 18, (KUNA): Gold prices in Kuwait surged to new highs on Tuesday as global spot gold surpassed the \$3,000 mark for the second time in a week, driven by economic uncertainty linked to U.S. tariff policies. By 05:49 Kuwait time, spot gold edged up 0.2% to \$3,008.08 an ounce, after peaking at a record \$3,012.05 earlier in the session. U.S. gold futures climbed 0.4% to \$3,017.60.

Gold has gained over 14% since the beginning of the year as geopolitical instability fueled investor demand for safe-haven assets. Since U.S. President Donald Trump took office, the precious metal has hit record highs 14 times, largely due to escalating trade tensions. Analysts attribute the rise to a weaker dollar and market uncertainty surrounding U.S. tariffs, including 25% levies on steel and aluminum imposed in February.

Meanwhile, the dollar index fell to a five-month low, making gold more attractive to foreign buyers. Other precious metals also saw gains, with silver rising 0.2% to \$33.89 an ounce, platinum up 0.5% to \$1,004.65, and palladium climbing 0.5% to \$969.60.

Day by Day

THE campaign by the Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah to "donate to pay off the debts of debtors" is commendable.

Kuwait is the only country that criminalizes issuance of a check without sufficient funds, a law that was enforced under pressure and insistence from those known as "rights holders", including usurers.

In every other country, issuing a check without funds is considered a civil misdemeanor, not a criminal offense, and is not punishable by imprisonment.

Unfortunately, our govern-ment seems to have become a collector for creditors. However, the Islamic principle states that responsibility for debt lies not with the debtor but with the negligent party, as they gave their money to someone who could not repay

Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

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Prayer Timings Fajr 04:36 Asr 15:23 Maghrib .. 17:58 Sunrise .. 05:55 Zohr 11:56 Isha 19:15



Expected weather for next 24 hrs: By Day: Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-42 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear. By Night: Rather cold and

Weather

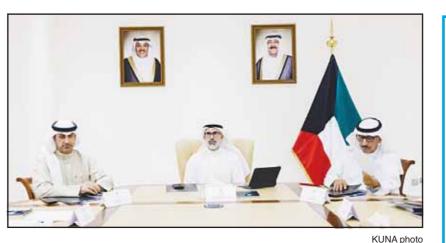
clouds will increase gradually with		Abdaly	32	17	
light to moderate southeasterly		Bubyan	25	16	
wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h		Jahra	32	18	
with a chance for scattered rain.		Failaka Island	27	20	
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	Salmiyah Ahmadi	25 26	18 14
Kuwait City	29	20	Jal Aliyah	30	17
Kuwait Airport	31	15	Nuwaisib	28	15



KUNA photo President of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Eng. Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah meets Oman Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Amer Al-Kharousi

Boost eyed in civil aviation co-op

President of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Eng. Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah met with Oman Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Amer Al-Kharousi on Monday to discuss the bilateral relation in civil aviation. The meeting explored new ways to promote tourism between the two sisterly countries and opening airlines and travel offices in both countries, according to a DGCA statement. (KUNA)



Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets the border committee

Deputy FM meets border panel

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting by the border committee on Monday.

The meeting discussed all topics on the agenda, according to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (KUNA)

KFA thanks Iraq gov't for Kuwaiti soccer fans visit

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) expressed its gratitude to the Iraqi government after Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani approved the provision of free entry visas for Kuwaiti fans attending the upcoming Kuwait vs. Iraq match, reports Al-Jarida daily

The match is scheduled for next Thursday in Basra as part of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

In a press statement, the association conveyed its appreciation to Al-Sudani and Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi for approving the request to exempt Kuwaiti fans from visa fees.

This gesture is part of broader efforts to strengthen the sporting ties between Kuwait and Iraq, while ensuring fans can easily support their national teams.

On Sunday, Al-Sudani confirmed that Kuwaiti fans will receive free entry visas for the match.

The eagerly awaited match will take place in the seventh round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

Kuwait-China renewable energy deal lauded

Chinese companies seek to 'Kuwaitize' jobs: envoy

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei has affirmed that the framework agreement for technical arrangements signed by the governments of Kuwait and China on Monday, which includes all the technical details for joint cooperation in the field of renewable energy, is good news and very important for strengthening cooperation in the field of renewable energy between the two countries.

Jianwei made this statement during a Ghabqa he hosted in honor of the members of the Chinese Muslim community in Kuwait, with a number of citizens in attendance.

He revealed the agreement was signed during the ceremony held in Beijing on the Kuwaiti side by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Adel Al-Zamel and Samih Jawhar Hayat, and on the Chinese side by Deputy Director of the National Energy Administration Ren Jingdong.

He said it is also an important step towards implementing the seven agreements between the governments of China and Kuwait, which were concluded on the sidelines of the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in September 2023, and in light of the lofty directives of the country's top political leadership to accelerate the implementation of major development projects vith Beijing

He added this framework agreement is the second of its kind, following the signing of an agreement last February for the Mubarak Port project. "The coming period will witness an acceleration of work between our two countries to implement agreements in the fields of sanitation and housing.

A new Chinese company will soon arrive in Kuwait to consult with officials on strengthening cooperation in the sanitation sector. A Kuwaiti delegation will also travel to China to explore cooperation in the field of free trade. Through this close cooperation, we can witness more business and collaboration between us. This type of work will protect the common interests of our two countries," he elaborated

He affirmed that his country has entered an important phase of modernization and development, providing economic opportunities for other countries, including Kuwait. "China will become more open and attractive to foreign investment. We

welcome investments from Kuwait. We welcome more Kuwaiti friends for tourism and trade. I believe these opportunities will strengthen cooperation between us and protect the common interests of our peoples. We are optimistic about the future

of this cooperation, especially under the patronage and leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad," he added



He disclosed that the number of Chinese companies operating in Kuwait exceeds 60, and that they have been here since the late 1970s. "They have contributed significantly to the development of the Kuwaiti economy and the improvement of the living standards of the Kuwaiti people, given their capabilities, experience and good reputation. China is the second country to invest in Kuwait. Chinese companies are interested in Kuwaitizing labor and jobs, and have brought many Kuwaitis to the

He stated that "the coming period will witness the presence Jianwei of many Chinese delegations at various high levels in Kuwait.

We will also witness the presence of Kuwaiti delegations in Beijing in the near future.'

'Maintenance schedule spans 3 years'

'Filling potholes, repairing road damages priority'

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Minister of Public Works and acting Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan has stressed the urgent need to repair potholes and road defects in a recent meeting with officials from the Ministry of Public Works and Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), reports Al-Anba daily.

She said these issues must be resolved within a clear timetable in the coming weeks, underscoring the ministry's commitment to expedite repairs to

repairs to potholes and other road damages before implementing the full program. This initiative

aims to alleviate the impact on commuters and improve overall infrastructure quality, sources added.

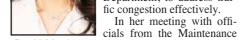
Sources disclosed that the ministry is collaborating with its Interior counterpart, specifically the General Traffic Department, to address trafPART, Al-Mashaan also called for the opening of new areas and roads for maintenance work. She unveiled the ministry's plan to gradually increase the number of maintenance teams to ensure that work progresses without disrupting traffic flow in vital areas.

In a related development, sources confirmed that a new contract is being implemented to install two types of scales - one mobile and one fixed - to monitor truck weights. The fixed scale will be managed by PART, while the mobile scales will be distributed to traffic patrols to impose fines for any vehicle exceeding the 45-ton weight limit. This is part of a broader plan to guarantee road safety and prevent further deterioration of infrastructure



2

address the difficulties faced by road users. Meanwhile, sources pointed out that while the timeline for road maintenance contracts spans three years, the ministry is prioritizing immediate



Dr. Al-Mashaan Sector in the ministry and

Other Voices

Is your eatery Michelin-rated?

By Ahmad alsarraf

FOR at least half a century, par-ticularly in Europe, I have heard about the Michelin rating system for restaurant quality, where restaurants are awarded one, two, or sometimes even three stars

I recently discovered the connection between a French tire manu-

facturer and the quality of food at a restaurant. It is difficult, however, to fully rely on the credibility of Michelin restaurant ratings, as they are not without bias and inconsistencies. That said, the benefits of the



Michelin rating system far outweigh its drawbacks.

The Michelin brothers founded their company in France in 1889 and soon after obtained the first patent for pneumatic tires. Today, Michelin is the second-largest tire company in the world, after the Japanese company Bridgestone. Interestingly, neither France nor Japan has a single rubber tree, which highlights the difference between advanced countries and others!

To boost sales of their new invention, the company came up with a brilliant idea, especially since the number of cars at the time was very small. The idea was to encourage vehicle owners to travel, which would increase tire wear. To support this, Michelin published a booklet containing road maps, information, and directions to service workshops, hotels, gas stations, and restaurants.

By 1920, the Michelin Guide had become widely circulated, not only for its valuable travel tips but also for its useful information about restaurants worth visiting outside the city, their cuisine, and the fame of their chefs. Over time, these restaurants began to be rated with stars. One star was awarded to very good restaurants in their category; two stars were given to excellent cuisine that was worth a driver making a U-turn to reach them on the highway. Three stars were reserved for exceptional cuisine that was worth a special trip!

The Michelin Guide has grown into a massive organization, staffed by a large number of food and beverage tasters who act as undercover inspectors of various restaurants. They record observations on the establishments' standards and award Michelin stars to outstanding ones. Restaurants pay a subscription fee to have their name included in the guide, ensuring increased visibility and sales.

Michelin's mission does not end with awarding the rating. It continues to monitor and ensure that the quality of food and beverages remains consistent through the use of strict evaluation criteria. This commitment has earned its rating global recognition in the culinary world, especially since the organization does not accept money for listing or rating any restaurant unless it genuinely deserves that rating.

The accusations against Michelin primarily concern its bias toward French cuisine, its limited coverage, and the psychological pressure the rating places on chefs. Some recommend comparing Michelin's ratings with those of other sources to get a more accurate picture. However, the century-old concept of the rating system remains fascinating. Americans only became aware of the Michelin Guide in 2005. Today, the Michelin Guide covers 30 countries and has established itself as the world's leading standard for culinary excellence.

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Ramadan traditions, visits bolster ties - Swiss envoy

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait Tiziano Balmelli commended the Ramadan traditions in the country, particularly the diwaniya gatherings that strengthen family and social ties.

Balmelli made the statement during the Swiss-Kuwaiti diwaniya he hosted at his residence, with Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Ma'arafi and numerous citizens in attendance.

He expressed his admiration for the diwaniya tradition.

This is my third Ramadan in Kuwait, and I have been deeply impressed by the diwaniya tradition, which I find to be very special. Since my arrival, I have loved this beautiful custom, so we decided last year to organize a Swiss diwaniya at the residence. This is due to the success of last vear's event and the growing number of Swiss friends in Kuwait."

He highlighted the warm atmosphere and expressed pride in being part of the Kuwaiti community; indicating that the spirit of

Dr. Balmelli

Ramadan promotes brotherhood and sharing, which are rare in many countries experiencing family disintegration and individualism. "In contrast, Kuwaiti diwaniyas help maintain social strength and family cohesion," he added.

Regarding the bilateral relations, Balmelli affirmed that Switzerland and Kuwait are preparing for high-level visits to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations next year. "We are also working hard to strengthen cooperation in various fields, particularly humanitarian aid and development," he revealed.

He also expressed hope for the exchange of visits by Swiss President Karin Keller-Sutter and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to further develop relations between the two countries.

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with police and engineers at the site.

Farwaniya Gov tours Ardiya to check road maintenance work

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted a field tour yesterday evening to inspect road repair and maintenance work in Ardiya, as part of his ongoing monitoring of infrastructure projects in the governorate.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the governor was received by the General Manager of Sahara Al-Rawla Company Abdulaziz Matrouk Al-Enezi, along with several officials from the Ministry of Public Works and representatives of the company implementing the

project. During the tour, the governor reviewed the progress of the ongoing work and inquired about the upcoming stages and timelines for the project's completion.

He affirmed the importance of maintaining high quality and efficiency in executing the work, which will positively enhance the comfort of both citizens and residents.

In conclusion, the governor expressed his gratitude to the technical teams and field personnel for their dedicated efforts in completing these important projects, which hold great interest for the community.

Supreme Council for Family Affairs undergoes reforms

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah has approved the new organizational structure for the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This new structure includes the appointment of a Secretary-General with the rank of Undersecretary, supported by two Assistant Undersecretaries. The Assistant Undersecretaries will oversee the Family Care, Advisory Services, Psychological Counseling, Legal, Financial, Administrative Affairs, and Information Systems sectors, in addition to managing seven departments.

According to sources from the ministry, the structure has been submitted to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for approval and will soon be integrated into the commission's automated systems

Following the issuance of Ministerial Resolution No. 49/2025, all detailed responsibilities have been transferred from the now-abolished Social Development Office to the Family Council.

The seven departments are distributed in various sectors as follows: three departments fall under the Legal, Financial, Administrative Affairs, and Information Systems sectors; two departments are part of the Family Care, Advisory Services, and Psychological Counseling sectors; and two departments are under the Secretary-General's Office. Sources revealed that the ministry, through its Planning and Administrative Development Sector, is preparing to finalize the acquisition of the Community Development Center and Family Care Unit buildings in the West Abdullah Al-Mubarak area.

The development center spans 3,000 square meters; while the care unit covers 1,000 square meters. After the handover, both buildings will be fully furnished, with a scheduled opening to provide a range of services to the local community.

The new development center will feature a multi-purpose hall, which will host various social events such as weddings, graduation ceremonies, training workshops, seminars, lectures, and other community activities organized by the ministry's development centers. The Ministry remains committed to opening new facilities in emerging residential areas to better serve their residents.

3

LOCAL



A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Vagaries of social media and mental decay in adolescents

"MENTAL rot is a modern term, resulting from some people's voracious and continuous addiction to social media. They view vulgar and ridiculous content without distinguishing between the good and the bad, which leaves them in a state of addiction, unable to stop following and monitoring what is broadcasted," Doctor of Law and Lawyer Dr. Nayef Al-Adwani wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"This infects their minds with mental rot, as they become unable to distinguish between what benefits them and what harms them. This undermines the foundations of

logic and the rules of correct reference, as these media platforms broadcast false information, fabricated scandals, inaccurate and and events.

fabricated "This includes destruc-

tive and directed intelligence centers, using artificial intelligence and photoshop, intelligent and precise algorithms that turn truth into falsehood, and falsehood into truth, altering the recipient's perspectives, contributing to their skepticism and the lack of credibility of the information.

"One of the consequences of this mental decay is that some websites lure young people into terrorist organizations, and into joining them, under false pretenses of jihad, martyrdom, paradise and its blessings. They also lure adolescents and young people to pornographic, immoral and atheist websites.

"Among the most significant signs of mental decay are an inability to concentrate, lack of sleep, social isolation, behavioral disturbances, confusion and a disconnect from reality. Therefore, the solution lies in abstaining from using these media platforms and websites for an extended period.

"This is a period of reprogramming our minds, cleansing them of this mental decay, and resting our bodies and minds during a long period of fasting that purifies them, just as fasting purifies the soul and mind.'

Also:

"People have neglected the decorations of National and Liberation Days, and the days have turned away from those elaborate and costly celebrations. Their negative consequences include the destruction of sidewalks to install decorative poles and lights, as some cooperatives and many of those interested in these manifestations have done. These manifestations have little value in strengthening patriotism; which is about values, principles and behaviors, not about appearances and celebrations,' Kuwaiti author Dr. Hamoud Al-Hat

"The book challenges the negative perspective that views failure as the end of aspirations, emphasizing the core idea that avoiding challenges, though it may seem like an easy option in the short term, denies individuals valuable opportunities for growth and innovation.

"Successful entrepreneurs and global innovators achieved their historic accomplishments only after experiencing a series of failures, from which they were determined to learn and overcome.

"The path to success is undeniably long and difficult, with failure serving as a necessary stop for reflection, learn-"For the successful, failure is a step-

ping stone but for the unsuccessful and those who give up, it becomes a final obstacle. If the inventor of the iPod had stopped after his initial failed attempts, he would never have arrived at the groundbreaking design that transformed the digital music industry.

"The author believes that constantly presenting oneself as successful does not contribute to personal development. Instead, it can place a heavy psycholog-ical burden on individuals, preventing them from confronting their mistakes.

"Handling failure positively is essential for turning it into an opportunity for growth. Manz stresses the importance of letting go of feelings of shame or the need to make excuses when faced with failure. Avoiding responsibility or shying away from failure hinders the ability to learn from mistakes. Instead, he advocates for acknowledging failure as a key learning step, emphasizing that accepting failure is essential to avoid repeating the same mistakes without real progress.

"The book offers examples, such as the early struggles of companies that later became industry giants. Amazon, for instance, started as an online bookstore and faced many challenges before evolving into a commercial powerhouse with a diverse portfolio.

"Manz argues that patience is a cornerstone of success, and considers it vital for overcoming obstacles on the path to achievement. Patience, as described in the book, is not simply about enduring difficulties; it is a tool that helps individuals reach their vision and accomplish their goals. Each step toward success requires time, effort, and perseverance in facing challenges with a positive mindset. In this context, the book cites former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, who suggested that success unfolds in three stages: vision, execution, and patience. Patience, he argues, is the hardest stage, as it requires sustained endurance in the face of challenges that may appear futile, particularly for entrepreneurs seeking quick success.

"Regarding what Manz refers to as the "honor of trying", he believes that simply making an effort to reach a goal, even if it is not achieved, is an honor worthy of recognition.

The book draws parallels with the

32,641 violations and 1,432 accidents in one week

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The General Traffic Department, operating under the Ministry of Interior and led by Assistant Undersecretary Major General Youssef Al-Khudda continued its efforts to maintain traffic discipline across the country with targeted campaigns conducted from March 8th to 14th, reports Al-Anba daily. During this period, a significant number of violations and arrests were made. The weekly statistics revealed a

total of 32,641 traffic violations. In terms of accidents, 1,432 incidents were recorded, with 207 leading to injuries or fatalities. The remaining 1,225 accidents only caused material damage.

Among the arrests, 25 juveniles were detained for driving without a valid license. These minors were referred to the Juvenile Prosecution, and the vehicle owners were fined for allowing them to drive without proper documentation. Additionally, 28 individuals were

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

and money laundering in a case in-

volving the sale of fake chalets in

The Court of Appeals had earlier sentenced

the accused to five years in prison, and or-

dered her to pay KD30 million compensation.

the appellants, appeared in court. He reaffirmed

his defense argument in both the appeal memo-

randum and the Court of Cassation, stressing

that the elements of fraud crime were not estab-

Al-Wawan also pointed out that the elements

Attorney Ali Al-Wawan, lawyer for one of

Khairan.

lished in the incident.

arrested for serious traffic viola-tions, and 55 motorcycles were impounded for security and durability-related infractions.

Å total of 27 individuals were apprehended, including 12 wanted persons, 7 expatriates violating residency or work laws, and 2 absconders. One individual was arrested for drug possession, while another was caught driving under the influence. Two street vendors were also detained and handed over to the Administrative Deportation Department.

Hawalli traffic police led the statistics with 6,255 violations. Ahmadi traffic police followed

with 5,243 violations. Other departments such as Jahra, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and the expressway police contributed significantly to the total.

The General Traffic Department also announced the completion of road maintenance on Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud Road



Traffic police conduct raid at an unidentified location.

and Fahaheel Road (30). The right

and middle lanes of these roads

have now been reopened, along

with the secondary exit to Mishref

This effort forms part of a continued initiative by the Ministry of Interior to ensure better traffic management and improve safety on the roads.

Businesswoman acquitted of real estate fraud & money laundering

area

Judge frees court staff on bail

of money laundering crime were not established, because there was no underlying crime from which the funds were obtained. He said KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The the dispute was civil in nature and it was gov-Court of Cassation acquitted a erned by the terms of the contracts between the parties. businesswoman of real estate fraud

He stated that the Court of Cassation's ruling was based on the "illuminating truth," which established the absence of a fraudulent operation and that the incident did not constitute, in any way, a crime of fraud or theft of another's property

In its ruling, the Court of Cassation considered the incident a civil dispute governed by the terms of the contracts between the seller and buyer. "Although there were some contractual obligations that the seller failed to fulfill in these contracts, the buyer had the right to file a civil suit against the seller, requesting rescission, refund of the amount paid and compensation, if justified," the court explained.

It added "this led to the denial of the crime of money laundering, since the first crime, fraud, was not established, since the construction of chalets and offering them for sale are considered a real and natural project."

Judge bails court staff: The detention renewal judge ordered the release of court clerks and other employees in Ahmadi Court at a bail of KD1,000. These court clerks and employees were accused of forging attendance records and embezzling public funds after being arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department personnel.

The Public Prosecution previously ordered the detention of seven court clerks in Ahmadi Court for 21 days in the Central Prison. They were accused of forging silicone fingerprints to record attendance and embezzling public funds

Two people meet fate in separate traffic accidents

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: A tragic morning on March 17 saw two fatal accidents in Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily.

The first incident occurred on Mutlaa Road, near the Mutlaa Police Station, heading toward Abdali. A report was received at 10:00 a.m. by the Interior Ministry Operations about a collision.

Upon arrival, emergency services found one person dead at the scene, while the other i involved was critically injured and transported to Jahra Hospital. The collision also caused damage to state property. Authorities have registered a case regarding the incident, which resulted in both a fatality and serious injury. The second accident took place on the Sixth Ring Road, where a 1970born expatriate lost his life. According to a security source, the accident occurred near the National Guard, heading toward Subiya. Upon the arrival of traffic personnel, they discovered that the collision had caused severe injuries to one person, who was subsequently taken to the hospital but was declared dead upon arrival. A case of death resulting from the accident was filed, and after the vehicles were cleared, the road was reopened.



Dr. Al-Adwani

tab wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"How many thieves of the home-land have raised decorative flags? How many monopolizers have decorated their shops? How many hypocrites who raise their children to love other countries and foster a sense of belonging to them have adorned their homes or vehicles? National education is a vision, a sincere belief in values, and principles that are either confirmed or disproved by action.

"We have discussed the role of the family in national education in general, but we need more details that cannot be covered in one article. This includes the family's preservation of the values that constitute patriotism, the most important of which are the values of Islam like loyalty to Allah and His noble Messenger, applying Allah's law to one's conscience and behavior, making Allah's sovereignty over life the general and primary guide, commanding and forbidding, and not obeying any creature in disobeying the Creator.

"These are some of the principles that families must adhere to and raise their children on. The character of a Kuwaiti citizen is linked to religion, first and foremost, and in a correct manner, without neglect, laxity, exaggeration or affectation.

"Second, preserving the nation's property and public funds, cultivating a conscience based on honesty, protecting public properties and public facilities, and refraining from stealing, tampering with, or using them for personal gain without permission, or causing harm. This is in addition to maintaining public cleanliness in government facilities and streets, and refraining from throwing waste, no matter how small, on the streets or in places other than those designated for it.

'This is not all about family education for children based on the principles and values of the nation. It is a mental and intellectual opening to what families should do to raise their children patriotically.

"The book 'The Power of Failure' by Charles Manz serves as a comprehensive guide that offers a fresh perspective on failure, and presents it as an essential element in the journey toward success. It reminds us that unsuccessful experiences are not setbacks, but rather important and necessary milestones for achieving larger goals in the long term,' author and legal advisor Dr. Bilal Aql Al-Sandeed wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"The book presents 27 ways to turn failures into learning opportunities and stepping stones to success. It emphasizes that failure can be a source of knowledge and experience rather than a hindrance to ambition. True success, as the book highlights, cannot be attained without overcoming setbacks and experiences that may sometimes be bitter but are essential for growth in both intellectual and practical pursuits.

Olympic philosophy, which values participation and effort, rather than focusing solely on winning. It suggests that life mirrors this athletic experience, where the true value lies in the struggle and effort put forth, rather than solely aiming for victory. This perspective highlights the importance of continu-ous striving and hard work, allowing individuals to feel pride in their efforts rather than regret, even if they do not fully achieve their ambitions.

"The book emphasizes the importance of acknowledging moral failures, which involve causing harm to others or



acting unethical-ly. This type of failure requires the courage to oneself and admit mistakes in order to grow and correct flaws. Not all failures can be viewed as valuable lessons if one

does not recog-Dr. Al-Sandeed

nize their errors. In fact, continuing to make the same mistakes without confronting the truth and avoiding moral failure only hinders an individual from gaining the maturity needed to overcome future obstacles. Honest self-reflection contributes to building a strong, resilient character capable of facing life's challenges.

"Manz emphasizes a core idea: success and failure are not permanent or final states but rather part of a long journey filled with life's challenges. Embracing failure as an inseparable part of one's path strengthens the ability to change direction and shape the future by transforming setbacks into opportunities for progress. Just as a child takes small steps and stumbles naturally before embarking on longer paths throughout life, determination, perseverance, learning, reconciliation with failure, and true selfawareness are the keys to overcoming challenges and moving forward.

"With this advanced and realistic perspective, 'The Power of Failure' offers a comprehensive read that encourages a shift in mindset toward failure and success. It motivates individuals to develop themselves by constructively investing in their setbacks, turning mistakes and challenges into tools that help achieve personal and professional goals without succumbing to despair or helplessness.

"In conclusion, self-development and management books or theories may seem like idealistic concepts that impress readers on paper, but they can also provoke those who adhere to the saying, "Those whose hands are in the fire are not like those whose hands are in the snow.

- Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh /Simi K. Kutty rushed to Al-Adan Hospital after sustaining injuries in a rollover accident on Wafra Road. Social media users shared a photo of the overturned vehicle on the roadside. Traffic patrols and emergency teams from the Wafra Fire Department were dispatched to handle the situation.

Al-Anba photo

Ban on 'niqab' old decision.

Funds embezzled

Ban on 'nigab' while driving

based on old gov't decision

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The Ministry of Interior

clarified that the information circulating on some so-

cial media platforms regarding the violation of wear-

ing niqab while driving refers to an old ministerial de-

cision issued in 1984 and is not an active law, reports

at that time for security reasons, as some women

driving vehicles on public roads wore niqab that ob-

structed their facial features and created difficulties

for security personnel when verifying the identity of

female drivers. This was especially problematic as

some drivers refused to show their faces, even though

their photos were displayed on their driver's licenses.

ers, the identities of female drivers can be easily veri-

some inquiries, referred to Article 139, which states:

"It is not permissible to drive a vehicle within cities

and residential areas on a part of the road repetitively,

both ways, and without a definite purpose, especially

Funds embezzled: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption

Authority (Nazaha) announced that it has referred the

head of a sports federation and others to the Public

Prosecution on charges of suspected embezzlement

of public funds and causing unintentional damage to

efforts and procedures to examine, gather evidence,

and investigate all credible information it receives

Nazaha affirmed its commitment to continuing its

public funds, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

However, with the presence of female police offic-

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior, in response to

The ministry explained that the decision was made

Al-Seyassah daily.

fied without any problems.

if doing so disturbs others.'

through any means.

KFF photo

Fire brigade at the site of accident on Al-Mutla'a road.



LOCAL

Humanitarian legacy recognized

Kuwait Ambassador to Belgium praises Kuwait's efforts in Syria

BRUSSELS, March 18, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to Belgium and head of its missions to the EU and NATO. Nawaf Al-Enezi said on Monday that Kuwait contributed to the establishment of donor conferences to support the humanitarian situation in Syria since 2013.

This came in during Al-Enezi's speech during the Ninth Brussels Conference on Syria in the presence of Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani, as well as a number of international and Arab participation

He pointed to the success of Ku-wait by hosting the first three donor conferences, in reaching generous

international pledges and fulfilling them by more than 90 percent.

He stressed that Kuwait is keen on respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, and rejecting foreign interference in its internal affairs.

Al-Enezi pointed out that since the fall of the former regime in Syria, Kuwait sent an air bridge loaded with tons of aid and medical relief needed to secure supplies for the Syrian people, and will continue to stand by and support them.

He thanked the EU for convening this meeting, which confirms the Union's keenness to providing appropriate conditions to Syria.



Brussels 9th Conference 2025

Kuwait Relief Society hosts Ramadan Ghabqa to 'advance' Gaza aid efforts

Over 75 charities collaborate to address crises

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The Kuwait Relief Society organized a Ramadan Ghabqa at the Regency Hotel recently, showcasing the expertise of charitable organizations and charities in providing relief to the people in Gaza Strip.

This gathering serves as a model of effective charitable work and a shining example in the humanitarian journey.

In a speech delivered on behalf of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah; Director of the Charitable Organizations and Charities Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Ájmi, said "we praise and thank Allah for providing relief to the afflicted and affected, and for serving humanity wherever it may be. These efforts have been one of the reasons behind raising Kuwait's flag high among nations and for it to be on the path of humanitarian giving. We are proud of the contributions made by more than 75 Kuwaiti charitable organizations in the fields of humanitarian work in and outside the country."

He explained that Kuwaiti humanitarian work -- both public and official -- demonstrates the inherent



Among the honored organizations.

crises and wars. "It also strengthens bonds between Kuwait's leadership, government and people; and our

He stated that Kuwaiti charitable organizations -- by showcasing their field experience in urgent and aim to achieve a certain degree of integration; identify the most important risks, obstacles and challenges; ways to confront them; and exchange experiences in these areas.

He also emphasized that such events aim to exchange experiences and come up with successful recommendations in the field of humanitarian and charitable works, especially in the field of rapid intervention in disasters, crises and wars, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

He added "we thank His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his generous directives, which have greatly facilitated and accelerated the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of the Gaza Strip; as well as His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, the supervising and organizing bodies, and State institutions supporting Kuwaiti humanitarian work."

In the first symposium entitled, "Experiences in the Field," the charitable organizations reviewed field efforts and observations recorded by relief workers. This provided a clearer picture of the nature of the urgent needs in Gaza, as they explored ways to achieve early recovery and alleviate the suffering of affected families.

The second symposium entitled, "Observations of the Medical Team," discussed direct observations from relief teams regarding the situation in Gaza and identified projects in need of urgent funding.

Minister Al-Mutairi appoints new acting Director General of KUNA

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi issued a decision appointing Deputy Director General for the Administrative, Financial and Communications Sector at Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Mohammad Al-Mannai as acting Director General of KUNA.

Sources told the newspaper that the appointment decision was issued after the resignation of KUNA Director General Dr. Fatima Al-Salem, indicating that the minister accepted the resignation in the interest of the public.

Over 7,800 donors back effort

800 requests filed for debt aid in nat'l donation drive

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: In the past two days, approximately 800 assistance requests have been submitted for participation in the third national campaign to collect donations aimed at repaying the debts of eligible citizens, say sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Sources told the daily that citizens whose civil identification cards are invalid or who need to update personal information; such as residential address, civil identification number or photo, will be unable to participate in the campaign.

So far, the campaign has raised around KD1.57 million from 7,800 donors. Launched last Friday in collaboration with prominent charitable organizations in the country, the campaign is dedicated to providing assistance to Kuwaiti citizens struggling with financial obligations.

The ministry emphasized that applications will only be accepted from those who meet the following criteria: in default on non-criminal financial obligations, and they must provide official documentation proving their inability to pay. Furthermore, the participating charitable organizations will carefully review these applications to ensure compliance with campaign requirements.

Contributions raised by the campaign will be directed to the relevant authorities for debt settlement. This includes the Civil Enforcement Department at the Ministry of Justice for individuals facing enforcement measures such as travel bans, vehicle seizures or salary deductions, and the General Department for the Implementation of Criminal Judgments at the Ministry of Interior for those incarcerated due to debt. This process will be carried out with utmost transparency

The campaign will not cover debts arising from illegal activities or transactions, nor will it address debts to telecommunications companies or informal lenders (subcontract financing), as these are not deemed humanitarian priorities.

The campaign is expected to raise more millions of Kuwaiti dinars in the coming weeks. It will continue for a month and aligns with the government's commitment to support citizens in need. A structured system has been put in place to ensure aid reaches and standards enforced in cooperation with recognized charitable organizations. These organizations will collect donations through their own channels, while ensuring fair and transparent distribution of funds.

love for charity and the desire to help people affected by disasters, Strip.'

people in Palestine and the Gaza rapid

humanitarian interventions during the recent war on Gaza --



Guest speakers at the symposium.

Report outlines key steps for unified design

Kuwait moves to standardize public carports

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah has submitted a report to the Cabinet on the progress of the work of the committee tasked to develop standardized specifications for the establishment of carports in public facilities, reports Al-Anba daily.

The report included recommendations and actions taken to initiate the project; while urging the dissemination of technical and engineering specifications, as well as a unified color scheme, to all ministries to ensure consistent implementation throughout the country in line with a unified vision.

In response to the directives and mandate of the Council of Ministers, the report affirmed that a specialized committee was formed to establish uniform foundations, standards and specifications for carports in public facilities.

This initiative is in line with Kuwait's broader vision to enhance its cultural identity and urban aesthetics, ensuring that public spaces harmonize with the visual character of the nation.

The committee, chaired by the undersecretary

of the Ministry of Social Affairs, consists of representatives from various organizations like the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Ministry of Education, Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Public Works and Ministry of State for Housing Affairs.

The committee's tasks, as outlined in the report, include conducting comprehensive field studies

to assess the current designs in terms of aesthetic appeal, functionality, and compatibility with engineering and environmental standards. It also prioritized collaboration between relevant entities, holding numerous coordination meetings to exchange insights and technical proposals, ultimately developing a shared vision grounded in quality and sustainability.

The report revealed that the committee recommended the phased implementation of the unified specifications; starting with cooperative societies, followed by mosques and then the schools. The implementation priorities were set based on factors such as population density and the significance of the sites.

Furthermore, the committee emphasized that standardizing the color of carports will contribute to creating a cohesive urban landscape that reflects Kuwait's cultural identity and improves the visual appeal of public spaces. By choosing a carefully selected uniform color, the project aims to give public facilities a modern yet elegant appearance, further highlighting the country's uniqueness and urban aesthetics.

In conclusion, the report confirmed that the committee has started the project's implementation. The project is based on standardized technical and engineering specifications for carports in public facilities, with a uniform color scheme serving as a visual symbol of Kuwait's urban identity. The necessary budgets have been allocated for various phases of the project, and field monitoring teams have been established to ensure the quality and sustainability of the implementation.

'No more math in final period'

MoE deploys 400 fingerprint devices to enhance security

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Acting Director of the Information Systems Department at the Ministry of Education Mona Salem has confirmed the supply, installation and operation of 400 fingerprint devices and their accessories in various educational districts and external departments affiliated with the ministry, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a letter addressed to the undersecretary of the ministry, Salem stated that the first change order for Contract No. 103, which is part of Tender M.A./7/2021-2022, was issued for the procurement, installation, operation and maintenance of fingerprint attendance devices and their accompanying software for public schools; in compliance with the directive of the undersecretary.

Salem affirmed that the department is overseeing and managing this project. She also requested the issuance of a circular to all sectors in the ministry to ease the implementation of the project. This initiative includes the supply, installation and operation of 400 fingerprint devices and accessories for the educational districts and external departments. It aims to re-fingerprint employees currently enrolled in the outdated system, as part of an effort to standardize the fingerprint system, phase out older system and adopt more modern solutions.

Following are the main points of the project:

1. The contractor is responsible for supplying, installing, operating and maintaining the fingerprint devices and accessories, in close coordination with the Information Systems Department.

2. Educational districts and external departments must ensure their full cooperation, facilitating the contractor's adherence to the terms of the contract, and to work alongside the Information Systems Department to ensure the smooth and timely completion of the project.

3. All employees are required to use the fingerprint devices properly, avoid damaging or disabling any projectrelated devices, and refrain from tampering with or making false statements regarding the devices or systems.

In conclusion, the Information Systems Department called for the full cooperation of all ministry sectors to guarantee the project's success and eficient implementation.

In another development, in response to the ministry's directive to school administrations not to schedule Science classes in the last period of the school day; the General Technical Guidance for Mathematics made a similar request, asking that Mathematics lessons not be held during the final period.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Mansour Al-Dhafiri communicated this request to school administrations, referencing the focus and mental skills required for studying Mathematics. "It was noted that scheduling Mathematics lessons in the last period of the day was detrimental to student performance, which led to the directive for school administrations at all educational levels to avoid scheduling Mathematics in the final period. Previous directives on this matter should also be implemented,' the request stated.

New acting PIFSS chief appointed

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam issued a decision appointing the acting director general of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), reports Al-Anba.

Article One of the decision states

that Khalid Jassim Ibrahim Al-Mudhaf is appointed as acting Director General of PIFSS until a new director general is appointed. Article Two mandates the concerned authorities to implement this decision, which takes effect from the date of its issuance and publication in the Official Gazette.



Dr. Al-Huwailah

KUNA photo

Ministry launches 3rd debt relief drive

MoSA disburses performance bonuses to eligible employees

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Ajmi revealed that the excellent performance bonus for eligible ministry employees has already been transferred to their bank accounts.

He revealed that the bonus was disbursed based on a new standard that ensures only those who truly deserve it benefit.

Meanwhile, in a press statement issued on the sidelines of the recent annual 'Arab Orphan Day 2025' celebration, Dr. Al-Ajmi explained that the third campaign to support debtors was launched on Friday under clear conditions and criteria. These include that it be limited to Kuwaiti debtors facing huge financial difficulties.

One of the most important criteria for the campaign is that the amount owed by beneficiaries is less than KD 20,000, and the beneficiary must have a final court ruling.

He indicated that all details would be announced in a press release within the next two days.

Al-Ajmi revealed that the total amount of donations to the campaign has reached KD 1.5 million, with expectations of larger donations to be announced soon.

Regarding the signing of a cooperation protocol with the Public Authority for Manpower on the Kuwaitization of cooperative sector workers, Al-Ajmi said, "We are in the final stages, and the final signing may take place this week. The committee has met and established the criteria, and this will be an important and significant step forward in the Kuwaitization process."

كرتونة

KUNA photo Kuwait's Namaa Charity distributes hundreds of food baskets in Egypt as part of its iftar project

Namaa Charity distributes food baskets to Egypt's needy families

CAIRO, March 18, (KUNA): Kuwait's Namaa Charity Society announced on Monday the distribution of hundreds of meals and food baskets to needy families in Egypt as part of its Ramadan Iftar project, in cooperation with Misr El Kheir Foundation.

Director of Namaa Charity's Relief Department, Khaled Al-Shamri, told KUNA that the project included the distribution of 1,530 Ramadan baskets in Qena and Sohag governorates in southern Egypt, in addition to meals and fresh meat to ensure that needy families receive complete food rations.

He added that the Iftar project focuses on helping residents of villages and areas most in need.

The project in Egypt is part of a series of Ramadan initiatives implemented by Namaa Charity to support needy families and alleviate their suffering during the holy month.

Al-Shamri explained that the project comes in response to the call of humanitarian duty and embodies the values of social solidarity urged by the true Islamic religion, praising the level of cooperation with Misr El Kheir Foundation in the field of charitable work.

He also appreciated the efforts of the work team and volunteers who contributed to delivering aid to needy families in Qena and Sohag in Upper Egypt and alleviating the hardships of fasting for them.

Indian Ambassador hosts Ramadan Ghabqa, celebrating shared heritage

Dr Swaika highlights unity in diversity during holy month

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Ambassador of India to Kuwait Dr. Adarsh Swaika hosted a Ramadan Ghabqa at India House on Monday night to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan.

Present at the gathering were members of the Indian community and the diplomatic corps; as well as the oil minister, Farwaniya governor, Amiri Diwan advisor, Ministry of Defense undersecretary, Ministry of Information undersecretary, chief executive officer of the National Bank of Kuwait, chief executive officer of Kuwait Finance House, prominent Kuwaiti businesspersons and others.

The ambassador conveyed his heartfelt greetings on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan to all those present at the event and the entire Kuwait.

He said this tradition, which is observed by the Indian Embassy, symbolizes the shared cultural heritage between the two countries. He disclosed that in India, a land of diverse religions and cultures, the month of Ramadan holds great significance highlighting country's vibrant pluralism, as it is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world. He added "it also symbolizes the spirit of unity in diversity, where people of different religions and backgrounds live in harmony.'

He continued "in Kuwait, the Indian community maintains the tradition of hosting Iftar and Ghabqa banquets during Ramadan, reflecting the strong cultural and popular ties between the two countries.

He stated that this event high-











Photos by Samer Shaqir Photos from the Ramadan Ghabqa hosted by the Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Dr. Adarsh Swaika, at India House

lighted the Indian way of celebrating Ramadan through Indian music and cuisine.

He also reiterated the depth of the relationship between the two countries in all fields, citing the historic visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait, which he described as "very successful".

Indian artists presented live musical performances; featuring classical Indian instruments such as the flute, tabla and violin -- set to the tunes of famous Bollywood songs. The kitchen featured live cooking of delicious Indian cuisine, including some popular dishes in India and Kuwait.

PAHW reports over 100,000 pending applications

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) announced that the number of pending housing applications as of end of February reached 100,541, which reflects the continued growing demand.

According to a recent statistic, South Saad Al-Abdullah City has 23,551 residential plots and 957 housing units. A total of 16,643 units have been distributed, and 4,593 units have been allocated to eligible citizens.

PAHW revealed significant progress in many ongoing projects. The statistics reveal that the East Sabah Al-Ahmad City project, which includes 597 homes, has reached 100 percent contractual completion, with the actual completion rate standing at 96.81 percent. The project is near completion.

The main road projects have achieved a contractual completion rate of 34.89 percent and an actual completion rate of 44.19 percent. Infrastructure projects reached 6.06 percent of the contract for 7,623 plots, and 5.25 percent of the contract for 6,189 housing units. Also, the contract for the implementation of 6,568 plots is still in its initial stages, with an actual completion rate of 2.14 percent.

PAHW confirmed that the contractual completion rate for the main roads project in South Saad Al-Abdullah City reached 8.42 percent, while the actual completion rate stood at 26.02 percent, reflecting the project's progress in line with the timeline.

Řegarding services, PAHW revealed that it handled 24.513 electronic services through the Sahel app and website, in addition to receiving 9.097 telephone inquiries, as well as 1.545 direct transactions.

5

Awgaf Minister advocates orphan welfare at 'Asad Tasaad' event

KUWAIT CITY, March 18, (KUNA): Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi said on Monday that the "Asad Tasaad for Orphans" event is a comprehensive civilizational message aimed at raising the living standards of orphans through individuals, governmental, and civil institutions.

In a speech delivered during the opening ceremony of the 23rd edition of the event, organized by the General Secretariat of Awqaf at the Hassan Abul Sports Center, Al-Wasmi emphasized that supporting orphans and raising community awareness of their role is integral to social responsibility. He stressed efforts to integrate orphans into society, protect them from negative phenomena and risky behaviors, and promote Islamic values.

He further stated that the General Secretariat of Awqaf has achieved significant accomplishments in many fields, both locally and internationally, particularly those related to community service and alleviating the burden on its members. This marks a qualitative shift for endowment work in Kuwait and represents a pioneering government initiative to advance and upgrade it in various fields. The Minister expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the General Secretariat of Awqaf for organizing and preparing the event in cooperation with the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charitable Society and the Iman Initiatives Team.

For his part, Acting Secretary General of the General Secretariat of Endowments, Nasser Al-Hamad, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this event is held annually by volunteer teams until the General Secretariat of Endowments adopted it this year, out of its belief in its role and responsibility towards orphans. Al-Hamad noted that this event is distinguished by offering a variety of activities through the participation of government agencies and volunteer teams, which encouraged large attendance and interaction through the accompanying exhibition and purposeful plays designed to bring joy to the participating children.

He added that the Minister of Endowments is keen to support and sponsor this event, showing his dedication to the welfare of orphaned children, both socially and psychologically. He emphasized Kuwait's distinguished role in caring for orphans through its institutions and in encouraging public benefit societies to include everything that brings happiness to this deserving segment of society.

Continued from Page 1

The Amir

We have long asserted that the judiciary governs itself. We reaffirm this through His Highness's directive: "We have no authority over judges, but we observe matters and issues that affect justice and create doubt and confusion.'

Since judgments are issued in His Highness's name, as we have mentioned, it is imperative that judges remain impeccable, and free from any blemish.

His Highness's statement to those working in the judicial system is written in gold and stands as a beacon to be revisited for guidance from time to time. It serves as a roadmap for good governance based on human justice, in line with the words of God Almighty: "Therefore, call [to Him] and stand firm as you have been commanded. and do not follow their inclinations. and say, 'I believe in what God has revealed of the Book. and I am commanded to do justice between you...

This confirms what we previously stated about the head of state's oversight of all public institutions, especially the judiciary. Such oversight is practiced in only a small number of countries. In those countries, achieving justice, no matter how difficult, forms the foundation of their civilization and humanity

This explains His Highness's statement in one of his speeches: "We will not allow democracy to destroy the state.'

The experiences of some Arab countries in this regard are clear. Everyone sees and hears what happens in their courts and how this has led to their ruin, or at least to endless crises.

Our Amir... the Amir of Justice, Your Highness's words are a judicial constitution. May God bless you and support you in this great responsibility. The poet Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutan-

abbi was right when he said: "If souls are great, bodies will tire in achieving their goals.

The struggle of the soul is great. May God support you.

Kuwait readies

the efforts of the ministry's sectors in enhancing security performance and upholding national security.

He affirmed the importance of intensifying security and traffic efforts to ensure the comfort of citizens and residents, and providing a safe environment that facilitates worship, shopping, and smooth transportation.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stressed the need to deal with any security or traffic violations firmly and take the necessary measures to maintain public safety.

He reviewed the prominent aspects of the work plans, as well as the security and traffic presence across the governorates and regions. He also assessed the Ministry of Interior's preparations for the last ten days of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr holidays

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received detailed reports on the security and traffic plans aimed to secure mosques and regulate traffic in vital areas that experience high traffic density during this period.

He directed the need to strengthen cooperation and coordination between various security departments to ensure the effective implementation of the established plans and to deal promptly with any developments that might impact security and public order.

Deaf athletes

"We pray for Allah, the Almighty, to repeat this holy month several times and grant you, the dear homeland and the Arab and Muslim nation abundance of blessings and boons," he said.

His Highness the Amir praised the KSCD leaders for their dedication in providing the necessary care for "the people with strong will and endurance.

He reaffirmed the state's support for the club, appreciating the achievements recently made by its members in regional sports events, citing as an example the bowling player who was able to reach the quarterfinal of the 10th Asia Pacific Deaf Games in Malaysia last December.

He stated support to the Club's bid to host an international shooting championship and a regional Arabian Gulf chess championship.

His Highness the Amir instructed the competent state authorities to give more care for the deaf in the health, education, sports, training and social areas, and introduce the latest technological devices such as smart glasses.

He wished the members of the Club success in all international sports events to raise Kuwait's national flag high.

KSCD Chairman Anwar Al-Harbi delivered a speech to extol His Highness the Amir for his visit and care for the Club.

His Highness the Amir received a souvenir as a token of appreciation, and then signed his name at the Club's register of honor.

The President of Kuwait Sport Club for Deaf (KSCD) Anwar Al-Harbi hailed on Monday the visit to the club by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah, and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

In his speech on the occasion, Al-Harbi said "on behalf of my esteemed brothers, members of the club's Board of Directors, and all members, both male and female, I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan." "We ask Allah Almighty to have

many returns of this blissed occasion, on the generous Kuwaiti people, and our Arab and Islamic nation with goodness, blessings, and prosperity,' Al-Harbi said.

"This visit, which we eagerly and lovingly await during this blessed month, is a great honor and a testament to Your Highness's keenness to check on your children and address their needs, which motivates us to elevate the level of deaf sports locally and internationally," Al-Harbi added.

"In previous speeches, you emphasized the importance of investing in hu-

man resources to prepare young people capable of competing and achieving success in international forums.

They are the true and enduring wealth of Kuwait. In fulfillment of Your Highness's vision, the club has participated in many international championships, achieving advanced positions.

We are honored to raise Kuwait's flag high in international forums, and we wish Your Highness continued health and wellness," Al-Harbi added.

Also on Monday evening, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, visited Nabat Poets' Diwaniya.

Upon arrival, His Highness the Amir was warmly welcomed by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and secretary of Nabat Poets' Diwaniya's Nassar Al-Khamsan.

In his speech, His Highness the Amir said: "From the minaret of poetry, we meet again with you. Together with my brother His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah and my brother companions. We all congratulate you on the holv month of Ramadan."

"We pray to Allah, the Almighty, to repeat this holy month several times and grant you, the dear homeland and the Arab and Muslim nation abundance of blessings and boons," he said. "We proudly remind you of the founder of this Diwaniya, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who realized the outstanding position of this poetry in making history and heritage," His Highness the Amir noted.

His Highness the Amir referred to the directives of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, who attended the inauguration ceremony of the Diwaniya and loved Kuwait so much.

His Highness the Amir expressed pride that Kuwait has a Nabat Poets' Diwaniya, a symbol of history and heritage, and a bridge linking last with present, that aims to maintain Nabat poetry heritage.

His Highness the Amir appreciated the efforts of Diwaniya's officials to back poets to achieve national spirit and allegiance to the dear homeland and the leadership.

His Highness the Amir urged poets to preserve fathers and grandfathers' identity, and benefit from senior poets.

On naming Kuwait as the capital of Arab culture for 2025, His Highness the Amir also instructed intensifying holding several symposiums and meetings in the country to be a chance to help poets learn and share expertise.

Meanwhile, Al-Khamsan delivered a speech in which he warmly welcomed His Highness the Amir and expressed pride for this visit, which showed His Highness the Amir's much attention to heritage, culture and communication with society.

He stressed that Diwaniya's message will continue, noting that it is inspired by His Highness the Amir's directives, which confirm the key role of culture and poetry in boosting national identity.

INTERNATIONAL



US President Joe Biden signs a presidential memorandum that will establish the first-ever White House Initiative on Women's Health Research in the Oval Office of the White House, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023, in Washington. (AP)

US President Trump ends Secret Service protection for Biden's adult children

WASHINGTON, March 18, (AP): US President Donald Trump said he was ending "immediately" the Secret Service protection details assigned to Democrat Joe Biden's adult children, which the former president had extended to July shortly before leaving office in January.

The Republican president on social media objected to what he said were 18 agents assigned to Hunter Biden's protective detail while in South Africa this week. He said Ashley Biden has 13 agents assigned to her detail and that she too "will be taken off the list." There was no immediate reaction

from the former president's office. Former presidents and their spouses

receive life-long Secret Service protection under federal law, but the protection afforded to their immediate families over the age of 16 ends when they leave office. But outgoing presidents can extend protection for those who might otherwise not be eligible for up to six months after they leave office, something Biden did for his children and Trump did for his family after leaving office in 2021. Former Presi-dents Barack Obama and George W. Bush also extended protection for their families for a period.

'We are aware of the President's decision to terminate protection for Hunter and Ashley Biden," the agency said in a statement. "The Secret Service will comply and is actively working with the protective details and the White House to ensure compliance as soon as possible.'

While touring the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Monday afternoon, a reporter asked Trump if he would revoke the protection for the former president's son.

"Well, we have done that with many. I would say if there are 18 with Hunter Biden, that will be something I'll look at this afternoon," Trump said, who added this was the first time he heard about the matter. "I'm going to take a look at that," he said.

Meanwhile, Jack Teixeira, the Massachusetts Air National Guard member who caused an international uproar when he leaked highly classified docu-ments about the war in Ukraine, used his court-martial to describe himself as a "proud patriot" who was only "exposing and correcting the lies perpetuated by the Biden administration.'

After pleading guilty to military charges of obstructing justice, the 23-year-old acknowledged he knew his actions were illegal but felt he needed to share the truth about how the Biden administration was misleading the American public about the war in Ukraine.

"If I saved even one American, Russian or Ukrainian life against this senseless money-grab war, my punishment was worth it," he said, his politicized comments a stark contrast to the contrite apology he issued at his federal sentencing.

Teixeira suggested that he, like Trump, was a victim of a weaponized Department of Justice. Teixeira, who said he acted alone when he shared the documents in a geopolitical chat room on Discord, a social media platform popular with online gamers.

'American people deserve answers'

Top House Dems seek DOGE details under Freedom of Information Act

WASHINGTON, March 18, (AP): Top Democrats on the House Judiciary and House Oversight committees have filed a lengthy Freedom of Information Act request questioning whether the Trump administration's DOGE Service is operating "outside the bounds of federal law," The Associated Press has learned.

Rep Jamie Raskin of Maryland and Rep Gerald Connolly of Virginia are seeking detailed information about the authority of the Department of Government Efficiency Service, including billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk and some 40 other people, to carry out firings of federal workers and dismantling of federal agencies.

They also are requesting detailed information about DOGE's access to sensitive data, its use of artificial intelligence, the resumes and training of its staff and its communications related to Musk-held entities including SpaceX, Starlink and Tesla.

The Administration and Mr Musk have hidden behind a veil of secrecy as they systematically dismantle the federal government of the United States," the Democrats wrote in a letter to DOGE administrator Amy Gleason accompanying the FOIA request, which was obtained by the AP.

"The American people deserve answers, and we are committed to using every tool at our disposal to expose the truth about DOGE's operations." They are seeking expedited review

of the request, with a response within 20 days. The FOIA request is the latest in an

escalating confrontation between Congress and the executive branch as President Donald Trump is rapidly slashing routine aspects of the federal government by doing away with thousands of workers and unwinding various longstanding agencies and services.

The Oversight Committee Democrats have already issued a formal request for information from the Republican president's administration on Musk's potential conflicts of interest, which is pending. Their attempt to subpoena Musk was rejected by committee Republicans, who hold the majority in Congress.

While generally anyone can file a FOIA request, the Democrats on the panels are utilizing the avenues at their disposal as the minority party to press for oversight of the Republican administration any way they can. It's also a potential step toward more binding measures, including legal action



House Committee on the Judiciary Ranking Member Rep Jamie Raskin, D-Md., speaks during a news conference at the Department of Justice on March 14, in Washington. (AP)

In the FOIA request, Raskin and Connolly, who are the ranking Democrats on the committees, wrote that the information is necessary "to provide answers to the many open questions and an explanation to the public.'

They said, "There exist possible questions concerning the government's integrity regarding DOGE's operations, formation, and activity, which form the basis of this request, as many of DOGE's actions may be outside the bounds of federal law." It's unclear if the Trump adminis-

tration will respond. Trump and Musk have shown little

regard for the protests coming from

Democrats - and some Republicans - in Congress as their teams march across the federal government. Musk has vowed transparency, but the Democrats noted he has met privately with House and Senate Republicans.

The Trump administration is purging employees, shuttering federal agencies and otherwise disrupting operations in the name of rooting out waste, fraud and abuse. Some 100 lawsuits have been filed, with judges slowing and stopping some actions, while allowing others.

In the sweeping request, the Democrats seek four main types of information about the authority involved with DOGE's activity: its access to sensitive data; the guidance and decision-making around its firings of federal employees; the potential conflicts of interest around its leadership; and its internal communications.

They seek the names, job titles and qualifications of DOGE staffers who have "been granted access to personally identifiable or sensitive information" since inauguration day, Jan. 20, and their purpose for doing so.

Additionally, they want to know about the various computer programs, including but "not limited to, artificial intelligence (AI) and large cy is using to store, process or analyze personally identifiable or sensitive information or data.

The request seeks all DOGE directives, guidance and analyses around the firing of federal workers, including the dismissal of inspectors general, and the undoing of various government agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Department of Education and others.

Democrats are also requesting information about DOGE's authority to direct and execute these directives as well as details around the funding of DOGE operations.

Musk, DOGE administrator Gleason and some 40 other employees are listed in the FOIA request, which seeks information about their resumes, salaries, any conflict of interest waivers and any non-disclosure agreements involving their employment.

The request also seeks all communication from those workers, including via text message, and various messaging platforms, and specifically around key words including Muskrelated entities SpaceX, Starlink, Twitter, Tesla and others.

Zelenskyy skeptical that Russia ready for peace

Putin and Trump to hold call on ceasefire

WASHINGTON, March 18, (AP): US President Donald Trump is to hold talks on Tuesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin as he looks to get buy-in on a US ceasefire proposal he hopes can create a pathway to ending cussing "dividing up certain assets" between Ukraine and Russia as part of a deal to end the conflict.

Trump, who during his campaign pledged to quickly end the war, has at moments boasted of his relationin Ukraine but added that there are also a "large number of questions" regarding normalizing U.S.-Russia relations. The call will take place between 1 p.m. GMT and 3 p.m. GMT, Peskov said. Trump has said that swaps of land

language models (LLMs), your agen-

Russia's devastating war on Ukraine.

The White House is optimistic that peace is within reach even as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy remains skeptical that Putin is doing much beyond paying lip service to Trump as Russian forces continue to pound his country.

The engagement is just the latest turn in dramatically shifting US-Russia relations as Trump made quickly ending the conflict a top priority - even at the expense of straining ties with longtime American allies who want Putin to pay a price for the invasion.

"It's a bad situation in Russia, and it's a bad situation in Ukraine," Trump told reporters on Monday. "What's happening in Ukraine is not good, but we're going to see if we can work a peace agreement, a ceasefire and peace. And I think we'll be able to do

In preparation for the Trump-Putin call, White House special envoy Steve Witkoff met last week with Putin in Moscow to discuss the proposal. Secretary of State Marco Rubio had persuaded senior Ukrainian officials during talks in Saudi Arabia to agree to the ceasefire framework.

The US president said Washington and Moscow have already begun dis-

ship with Putin and blamed Ukraine for Russia's unprovoked invasion, all while accusing Zelenskyy of unnecessarily prolonging the biggest land war in Europe since World War II.

Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday that Trump and Putin will discuss the war and power plants will be part of the conversation. Witkoff and White House press

secretary Karoline Leavitt suggested that U.S. and Russian officials have discussed the fate of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant - Europe's largest - in southern Ukraine.



US President Donald Trump, (right), shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin, (left), during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Osaka, Japan, June 28, 2019. (AP)

Poland, three Baltic nations recommend leaving antipersonnel land mine treaty

WARSAW, Poland, March 18, (AP): Poland and the three Baltic nations said Tuesday that they want to withdraw from an international convention that bans antipersonnel land mines due to the growing threat from Russia to front-line NATO states.

The defense ministers of Poland,

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia said in a joint statement that they "unanimously recommend withdrawing from the Ottawa Convention" - the international antipersonnel mine ban convention that went into effect in 1999

They argue that the security situa-



President Andrej Duda speaks during a media conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels on March 6. (AP) Poland's

tion along NATO's eastern flank has "fundamentally deteriorated" since they signed on to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. and that "military threats to NATO member states bordering Russia and Belarus have significantly increased."

'With this decision, we are sending a clear message: Our countries are prepared and can use every necessary measure to defend our territory and freedom," they wrote.

Despite the intention to leave the treaty, they said they would remain committed to humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians during armed conflict.

The Ottawa Convention was signed in 1997 and went into force in 1999. Nearly three dozen countries have not acceded to it, including some key current and past producers and users of land mines such as the United States. China, India, Pakistan, South Korea and Russia.

In a report released last year by Landmine Monitor, the international watchdog said land mines were still actively being used in 2023 and 2024 by Russia, Myanmar, Iran and North Korea.



German opposition leader and Christian Democratic Union party chairman Friedrich Merz, (right), speaks during a debate and voting about loosen the country's debt rules and change constitution in the German Parliament Bundestag in Berlin, Germany on March 18. (AP)

Germany's likely next leader seeks approval for huge defense and infrastructure package

BERLIN, March 18, (AP):Germany's would-be next chancellor, Friedrich Merz, asked lawmakers Tuesday to loosen the nation's strict debt rules to enable higher defense spending as doubts mount about the strength of the trans-Atlantic alliance, and to authorize an enormous fund for investment in its creaking infrastructure, financed by large-scale borrowing.

Merz faced a major test in the outgoing parliament, which met for a final time to vote on the plans as his centerright Union bloc works to put together a governing coalition with the centerleft Social Democrats of outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz after winning last month's election.

The plans need a two-thirds majority in parliament's lower house, the Bundestag, because they involve changes to Germany's strict self-imposed borrow-

ing rules - the so-called "debt brake," which allows new borrowing worth only 0.35% of annual gross domestic product and is anchored in the constitution. That forced the prospective coalition partners into negotiations with the environmentalist Greens, whose votes will be needed to get enough support.

The package would exempt from the debt rules spending on defense and security, including intelligence agencies and assistance to Ukraine, of more than 1% of GDP. It also foresees setting up a 500 billion-euro (\$544 billion) fund, financed by borrowing, to pour funding into Germany's infrastructure over the next 12 years and help restore the stagnant economy - Europe's biggest - to growth.

At the Greens' insistence, 100 billion euros from the investment fund will go into climate-related spending. The plans amount to an about-turn for Merz, whose party had spoken out against running up new debt before the election without entirely closing the door to future changes to the "debt brake." The Social Democrats and Greens had long argued for a reform of the borrowing rules.

Recent weeks have brought new urgency to efforts to further strengthen Germany's long-neglected military. The outgoing government created a special 100 billion-euro fund to modernize it, which also helped Berlin meet the current NATO target of spending 2% of GDP on defense. But that pot will be used up in 2027, and doubts have grown recently about the Trump administration's commitment to European allies.

Merz said earlier this month that Germany and Europe must quickly strengthen their defense capability and that "whatever it takes' must also go for our defense now."

Authorities in N.Macedonia appeal for calm

overturned

van and hurled

rocks at a mu-

nicipal building.

"We must call

once again for

reason," Interior

Minister Panche

Toshkovski said

in an interview

"We

KOCANI, North Macedonia, March 18, (AP): Authorities in North Macedonia are appealing for calm as student groups called for fresh protests on Tuesday following the horrific night-club fire that killed 59 people and injured more than 150 over the weekend.

The disaster, which occurred early on Sunday at Club Pulse in the eastern town of Kocani after pyrotechnics were used during a concert there, has sparked outrage over alleged corruption and safety violations. Demonstrations took place Monday in both Kocani and the capital, Skopje, with some turning violent - protesters in Kocani



with private Si-Toshkovski tel television late Monday.

must allow the prosecuting authorities to do their job so that in the end we can finally normalize the state."

Investigations have so revealed that the club was operating at at least double its 250-person capacity without proper licensing. Official say there were numerous safety violations - no emergency exits, insufficient fire equipment, the use of flammable cladding and no sprinkler system. Many victims were trampled as panicked concertgoers rushed toward a single exit.

Neighboring Serbia and Bulgaria, which immediately offered assistance following the tragedy, are observing a day of national mourning Tuesday in solidarity with North Macedonia.

INTERNATIONAL

No confrontations reported

China conducts air, sea drills near Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan, March 18, (AP): An unusually large number of Chinese military ships, planes and drones entered airspace and waters surrounding Taiwan between Sunday and Monday, the self-governing island republic's Defense Ministry said.

China said the drills were a response to recent statements and actions by the US and Taiwan.

The ministry on Tuesday published on its social media several images of Chinese drones and ships and said 43 out of 59 of them entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone but that no confrontations were reported. Taiwan monitored the situation and deployed aircraft, navy ships and coastal antiship missile defenses in response, the ministry said.

China launches such missions on a daily basis in hopes of wearing down Taiwanese defenses and morale, although the vast majority of the island's 23 million people reject Beijing's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan and its threat to use force to assert its control.

It's unclear what prompted the large Chinese deployment. Daily figures often vary widely based on statements by the Taiwanese authorities or their U.S. partners.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Monday the drills were "a resolute response to foreign connivance and support to Tai-



This photograph released by Taiwan Ministry of National Defense taken from a Taiwan Air Force P-3C Orion anti-submarine aircraft, shows a Chinese Cloud Shadow WZ-10 drone near Taiwan on March 17. (AP)

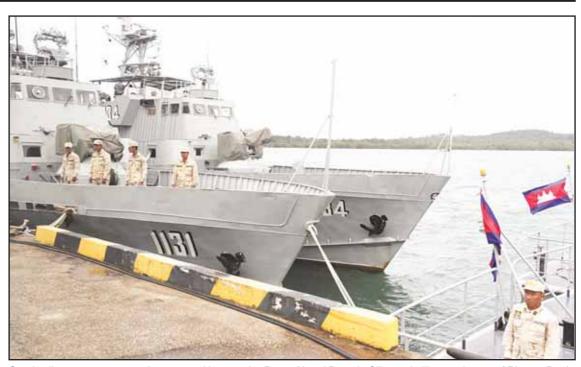
wan independence, and a serious warning to Taiwan separatist forces.

China's military actions are "necessary, legal and justified measures to defend national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity," Mao said.

"In particular, the United States deleted the literal expression that reflected the one-China principle and that did not support Taiwan independence on the website of the U.S. Department of State, which indicates wrong signals to Taiwan separatist forces," Mao was quoted as saying.

Taiwanese President William Lai Ching-te also raised Beijing's hackles last week when he said that Taiwan law designates mainland China as a "foreign hostile force" and said tougher measures were being taken to prevent Chinese subversion through the media and civic exchanges. Lai also warned of the danger of influential figures and current and retired military members selling secrets to China.

The Taiwan Strait is an international body of water and one of the most important channels for global trade.



Cambodian navy crew stand on a patrol boat at the Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville, southwest of Phnom Penh, Cambodia on July 26, 2019. (AP)

Cambodia's expanded port funded by China opening next month

A Cambodian naval port expansion funded by China that has raised concerns over Beijing's growing military reach in the region has been completed. The port will host a Japanese vessel as the first foreign warship to make a port call, officials said Tuesday.

The Ream Naval Base - with a

new pier to accommodate much larger ships, a dry dock for repairs and other features - will be inaugurated on April 2 by Prime Minister Hun Manet, according to Maj Gen Thong Solimo, spokesman for Cambodia's armed forces.

"Giving priority to Japanese warships ... is a tribute to the high level

of openness in cooperation, relations and mutual trust," Thong said China and Cambodia broke ground on the port project in 2022, prompting the United States to express concerns that it could be-

come a strategically-important out-post for the Chinese navy on the Gulf of Thailand. (AP)



United States Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, (left), talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting in New Delhi, India on March 17. (AP)

Gabbard: There's huge opportunity in expanding India-US relationship

NEW DELHI, March 18, (AP): US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard said President Donald Trump is committed to ensuring peace and security through "realism and pragmatism," in remarks Tuesday before the US leader speaks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Gabbard did not refer to a particular country or conflict, but said securing peace required "commitment to fostering cultural and economic ties that reduce the likelihood of an escalation to conflict" and "courage to engage directly with both friends and adversaries alike.

Also in her address. Gabbard said there is "huge opportunity" in expanding the India-US relationship. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump met last month in Washington.

UN expert blasts impact of US aid cuts on Myanmar

Andrews calls on world community to do more

GENEVA, March 18, (AP): Myanmar's people are already feeling the "crushing impact" from the "sudden, chaotic withdrawal" of US and other humanitarian aid, an independent hu-man rights expert said Monday, calling on the world community to do more.

Tom Andrews, a monitor on rights

"Action that includes funding vital, life-sustaining programs that are being slashed and burned and jeopardized,' he told reporters on Monday, before addressing the council on Wednesday. 'If the Human Rights Council does not (take action), then who will?"

Andrews, a former Democratic congressman from the US state of Maine, acknowledged that the specific fallout wasn't clear so far. The American embassy in Myanmar said on its website, in a statement dated Oct. 25, that the US had provided \$141 million in humanitarian aid since Oct. 1, 2023. Andrews said the cut in aid was

"unnecessary and cruel" and ill-timed:



A Rohingya woman travels with a bag of rice that her family received through World Food Program close to Bawda Pa refugee camp, outskirts Sittwe, Rakhine state, Myanmar on Jan 15, 2014. (AP)

A strong movement of national resistance and a weakening of Myanmar's military rulers has raised hopes of its people.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021, triggering widespread popular opposition. After peaceful demonstrations were put down with lethal force, many opponents of military rule took up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict.

The violence is continuing: An airstrike Friday reportedly killed and in-jured dozens in a village held by resistance forces.

Tuberculosis and HIV patients have been missing their medication for weeks; disabled children have been

Africa's ambassador to the United

States, who was declared "persona

the U.S. and posted his decision Fri-

day on social media, South African

embassy staff were summoned to the

State Department and given a for-

mal diplomatic note explaining the

decision, department spokesperson

She said Rasool's diplomatic

privileges and immunities expired

Monday and that he would be re-

quired to leave the United States

Rasool

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After Sec-

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that Ambas sador Ebra-

him Rasool

was no longer

welcome in

Tammy Bruce said.

the country.

locked out of rehabilitation centers; rights groups have faced cuts in their ability to distribute food and water to people, he said.

"The sudden, chaotic withdrawal of support - support principally by the government of the United States - is already having a crushing impact on the people of Myanmar," Andrews said

The Trump administration and many of its supporters have argued that the United States, the world's single largest humanitarian aid provider, has shouldered too much of the burden for too long.

Andrews alluded to efforts by a chainsaw-wielding Elon Musk through the Department of Government Efficiency to reduce waste and spending in the U.S. government, including at the U.S. Agency for International Development, known as USAID - which has distributed many billions of dollars in foreign aid over the years.

"You have this incredible rhetoric that is based upon nothing except creating headlines," Andrews said, to show how "this entire program is go-ing to be thrown into a wood chipper Well, it's innocent people who are

being tossed into that wood chipper." 'We need to take a stand about this," he added.

South African ambassador has to

M23 withdraws

in Myanmar commissioned by the UN-backed Human Rights Council, said he would appeal to its 47 member countries to issue a "declaration of conscience against this unfolding disaster" - a humanitarian crisis - "and I will urge them to follow up those words with action."



King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands reviews the honor guard after arriving to meet with Kenya's President William Ruto at State House in Nairobi, Kenya on March 18. (AP)

Kenya hosts Dutch royals as allegations of rights abuses mount

Kenya is hosting the Netherlands king and queen as allegations of human rights abuses are mounting, with Kenyans writing hundreds of emails and petitioning the Dutch royals to cancel their visit. Kenya's government has been accused of arresting and detain-

ing critics, especially after the June 2024 anti-government protests during which demonstrators stormed the parliament and torched a section of it angry over new taxes passed by legislators.

Along with cracking down on demonstrators and curbing free

speech, the country also saw statelinked abductions of young men for social media posts deemed offensive to the president. In December, during protests against widespread kidnappings and abductions, dozens of peaceful protesters were arrested. (AP)

Peru declares an emergency and deploys military as violence surges in capital

LIMA, Peru, March 18, (AP): Peru's president declared a state of emergency in the capital Monday and ordered the deployment of soldiers to help po-lice address a surge of violence, amid widespread outcry a day after the killing of a popular singer.

President Dina Boluarte's government published a decree saying that the state of emergency will last 30 days, and authorities will restrict some rights, including the freedom of assembly and movement. That means the police and the army would be able to detain people without a judicial order.

Peru has seen an increase of killings, violent extortion and attacks on public places in recent months. Police reported 459 killings from Jan 1 to March 16, and 1,909 extortion reports in January alone. But outrage crested after the killing Sunday of Paul Flores, the 39-year-old lead singer of the cumbia band Armonia 10.



Peruvian President Dina Boluarte speaks to the press during a visit by Ven-ezuela's opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia at the government palace in Lima, Peru on Jan 29. (AP)

from peace talks

DAKAR, Senegal, March 18, (AP) The Rwanda-backed rebels who captured key areas of Congo's mineral-rich east said Monday they were withdrawing from peace talks this week with the Congolese government, saying that international sanctions on the

group's members have undermined such dialogue.

The talks scheduled to start in the Angolan capital of Luanda on Tuesday "have become impracticable" as a result of the sanctions announced by the European Union Tshiseked

against some of its members on Monday, M23 rebel group's spokesman Lawrence Kanyuka said in a statement. Congo's government, after initially rejecting such talks, said Monday it would participate in the dialogue

in Angola. A delegation representing Congo already had traveled to Luanda for the talks, Tina Salama, the spokesperson for President Felix Tshisekedi, told The Associated Press.

Subcontinent

Sri Lanka detains boat: The

Sri Lnkan navy said on Tuesday that it seized an Indian fishing boat on Monday night for poaching in the waters off Delft Island in Sri Lanka's Northern Province. The navy said in a statement that

three Indian fishermen onboard were also arrested.

The seized boat and the detained fishermen were brought to Kankesanthurai Harbor, where local fisheries officials will take legal action against them, the navy said.

The navy conducts operations against foreign vessels engaged in poaching, citing the impact of such activities on the livelihoods of local fishermen. (Xinhua)

Police burn drugs: The counternarcotics police burned 7.5 tons of illicit drugs in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province on Monday, provincial police spokesman Mullah Ez-atullah Haqqani said Tuesday.

The contraband, which included opium poppy, hashish and objects used in manufacturing heroin, had been collected over the past five months during a series of operations from the provincial capital Lashkar Gah and several districts. and were set on fire on Monday, the official added. (Xinhua)

leave US by Friday: White House

WASHINGTON, March 18, (AP): The State Department says South

by Friday. South African Foreign Ministry spokesperson Chrispin Phiri said in a television interview on Monday that Rasool was still in the U.S. but would be leaving as soon as possible.

Rubio announced his decision in a post on X as he was flying back to the United States from a Group of 7 foreign ministers meeting in Canada. In it, he accused Rasool of being a "race-baiting politician" who hates President Donald Trump.

His post linked to a story by the conservative Breitbart news site about a talk Rasool gave earlier Friday in Johannesburg as part of a South African think tank's webinar. Rasool, speaking by videoconference, talked about actions taken by the Trump administration in the context of a United States where white people soon would no longer be in the majority.

It is highly unusual for the US to expel a foreign ambassador, although lower-ranking diplomats are more frequently targeted with persona non grata status.



Leader of Mali's ruling junta Lt Col Assimi Goita, (center), attends an In-dependence Day military parade in Bamako, Mali, on Sept 22, 2022. (AP)

18 killed in Mali airstrike

At least 18 people have been killed in an airstrike in northern Mali, a separatist group said. The army said it had mounted an attack tar-

geting armed militants. The Collective for the Defence of the Rights of the Azawad People, which is part of a Tuareg separatist coalition, said Monday the Malian army bombed a market 50 km (30 miles) north of Lerneb, in the Timbuktu region.

Seven people were also injured in the strike on Sunday, the group said in a statement, denouncing a "barbaric act from another age" and "flagrant human rights violation."

Mali's army said Monday in a statement on X it carried out air strikes on a "refuge" in the same area cited by the

separatist group, killing 11 "terrorists." Mali, along with its neighbors Burkina Faso and Niger, has for more than a decade battled an insurgency fought by armed groups, including some allied with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. (AP)

Kuwaiti oil price rises to \$75.06 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti oil price rose 71 cents to USD 75.06 per barrel in Monday's trading compared to Friday's USD 74.35 pb, reported Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

In global markets, Brent futures increased by 49 cents to USD 71.07 per barrel, as West Texas Intermediate also increased by 40 cents to reach USD 67.58 pb.

New currency withdrawals available at Gulf Bank branches and ITMs

Gulf Bank launches 'Ayadi' service for Eid Al-Fitr celebrations

KUWAIT CITY. March 18: Gulf Bank is celebrating Eid Al-Fitr with its customers by offering the 'Ayadi' service across all branches (except Airport branch) until the end of Ramadan. Starting March 28, 2025, the service will also be available through Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs).

For added convenience, Gulf Bank is offering the "Ayadi" service at most of its branches across Kuwait, as well as through ITMs at key locations, including the Head Office on Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street, Crystal Tower, Al-Adan, Shaab, Al-Salam, FahaheelXcite, Kuwait International Airport (T1), Mishref, Al-Fanar Mall, Abdullah Al-Salem, Jabriya, and Sabah Al-Ahmad.

This service enables customers to withdraw new banknotes in denominations of KD 20, KD 10, KD 5, and KD 1, as well as KD 0.250 and KD 0.500, from various branches. Additionally, the first four denominations are available through Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs) to meet the high demand for new currency during Eid celebrations.

Gulf Bank also provides seamless digital payment solutions, including 'WAMD' and 'Pay Link,' accessible through its mobile application. These features offer customers a quick and convenient way to send and receive money, ensuring a smooth banking experience.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

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



GDP growth forecasted at 3.5% GCC banking sector set for

GCC economies projected to grow strong performance in '25 4% in 2025 amid global challenges

DUBAI, March 18: According to the EY GCC Banking Sector Out-look 2024 report, GCC banks will continue to benefit from strong capital levels, supporting their overall performance in 2025. The expansion of gas production in Qatar, implementation of economic transformation projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and non-oil economic growth in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates(UAE) will underpin the resilience of GCC banks this year. In addition, the Brent crude price is expected to stay above US\$74per barrel for 2025-27, which will help uphold banking sector resilience.

Credit growth in most GCC countries is broadly based on a strong project pipeline, with aggregate contract awards driven by infrastructure development, especially in KSA and the UAE. The positive trajectory is expected to continue in the near future. This outlook is supported by rising lending volumes, increased fee income, stable margins and effective cost management. As the cost of lending turns more favorable, GCC countries might expand their investments globally.

Mayur Pau, EY MENA Financial Services Leader, says:

"As we go into the first quarter of 2025, the GCC banking industry should remain strong due to considerable capital cushions, healthy asset quality indicators and adequate profitability. Furthermore, resilient economies, the region's economic diversification efforts and enabling policies will support higher consumption and investment, further boosting the sector's performance. The upcoming financial year looks to be a transformative period, with advancements in technology, shifts in consumer behavior and regulatory changes shaping the future of banking.



delayed effects.

GCC banks have shown sustained growth in credit facilities during 2024, supported by economic transformation plans, robust project pipeline, healthy demand and resilient economic conditions. The banks are well-capitalized with strong asset quality indicator and are likely to uphold this strong performance trajectory throughout 2025.

Banks in the UAE are anticipated to maintain robust growth in their lending activities, bolstered by relaxed monetary policies and a favorable economic environment. Further, growth in deposits consistently outpaced lending, supported by corporate and retail segments. Asset quality will remain strong, as the banks capitalized on high profits to provision for legacy loans. Credit demand and reduced borrowing costs are expected to boost credit growth during 2025.

KSA banks reported healthy credit growth in 2024, backed by a

Saudi Arabia and UAE lead regional growth

Busines

DUBAI, March 18: The GCC economy is expected to show resilience in the face of rising global protectionism and geopolitical tensions, according to the latest ICAEW Economic Insight report prepared by Oxford Economics. Despite the uncertain global outlook, the report forecasts Middle East GDP growth of 3.3% in 2025, with GCC economies set to grow by 4%, up from an estimated 1.8% in 2024.

GCC: Regional growth will withstand tariff headwinds

While President Trump's tariff policies have created uncertainty over external demand, the GCC remains largely sheltered from direct tariff impacts. The region's non-energy sectors are projected to grow by 4.4% this year, up from an estimated 3.9% in 2024, with regional PMI data firmly in expansionary territory

Following recent OPEC+ policy shifts, oil production will gradually increase from April, boosting oil-sector growth to 3.2% after two years of contraction. Saudi Arabia's, oil output is expected to reach 9.3 million barrels per day, driving oil sector growth of 1.9%, while the UAE's higher quota of 3.5 million barrels per day will support 4.8% growth.

Oil prices have fallen sharply in recent weeks due to tariff threats and increased OPEC+ supply, with prices forecast to average \$70.5 per barrel this year, down from \$80.5 in 2024.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are expected to lead non-oil sector growth with 5.8% and 4.8% respectively. Tourism - the fastest-growing sector across the region in 2024 – will remain a vital engine for growth, with Saudi Arabia expecting continued expansion supported by the GCC-wide visa.

Qatar: GDP growth will gain pace despite external headwinds

Qatar's GDP is forecast to expand by 2.1% this year, with growth expected to more than double in 2026 as additional LNG capacity comes online. The non-energy economy is projected to grow by 2.9% this year, remaining the primary growth engine.

Tourism has provided significant support to Qatar's non-energy growth, with overnight arrivals reaching 5 million by end-2024, a 23% increase on 2023. The launch of the pan-GCC visa, is expected to push visitor numbers to 5.3 million in 2025.

The fiscal surplus is forecast at QAR27.3bn (3.3% of GDP) in 2025, significantly better than the deficit of QAR13.2bn pencilled into this vear's budget

Bahrain: The non-oil economy will continue

to lead growth

Bahrain's economy is set to double its growth rate to 2.8% this year, with the non-oil economy expandingby 3.1%. The oil sector, after contracting by an estimated 2.4% in 2024, is expected to see a modest 0.9% recovery.

As part of its diversification efforts, Bahrain is establishing new industrial free zones and developing tourism infrastructure, including a \$427 million waterfront project. However, persistent budget deficits and a rising debt burden above 100% of GDP pose downside risks to growth.

Hanadi Khalife, Head of Middle East, ICAEW, said:"The business landscape across the GCC continues to demonstrate resilience and adaptability in the face of global economic uncertainty. We're seeing strong investment in key sectors like tourism and infrastructure, which are creating new opportunities for growth.'

Scott Livermore, ICAEW Economic Advisor, and Chief Economist and Managing Director, Oxford Economics Middle East, said: "The GCC's projected 4% growth in 2025 highlights the region's ability to withstand external pressures while advancing its diversification efforts. Despite softer oil prices, the gradual easing of OPEC+ production cuts will support energy sector growth after two years of contraction."

Americans shop more cautiously amid economic uncertainty

Non-oil growth remains a bright spot

GDP growth in the GCC is projected at 3.5% in 2025.Interest rate cuts, together with further investment and structural reform initiatives, will mean non-oil growth of over 3.4% in the region's two largest economies -KSA and the UAE. As per the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the current account surplus is expected to be 8.2% of the GDP in 2025. On the fiscal front, a surplus of 3.9% of the GDP is forecast for 2025.

Global oil demand is forecasted to increase by 1.6 mbpd to 104.5 mbpd in 2025, reflecting the end of the post-COVID-19 pandemic release of pent-up demand, challenging global economic conditions and clean energy technology deployment. Non-OPEC+ producers are likely to account for the bulk of the increase if OPEC+ voluntary cuts remain in place. High oil prices – with the average for 2024 estimated at US\$81 per barrel - and favorable economic growth have supported the GCC banks' healthy finances.

GDP growth in the GCC is forecast to rebound to 3.5% in 2024, up from 1.4%, as oil production gradually increases, providing a boost to the region's economies. Hydrocarbon growth is likely to be 3.3%, while non-hydrocarbon sectors are forecast to grow at 3.4%, supported by strong domestic investment momentum.

Banking sector growth fueled by resilient economic conditions

In November 2024, the US Federal Reserve reduced interest rates by 50 bps. GCC economies have begun following the Fed's lead, which, along with domestic policies, has helped lower inflation from the high rates seen in 2022. During 2024, major central banks entered their cycle of monetary policy easing to support growth, as inflationary pressures have waned. This year, banks will pursue higher yields, as rate cuts tend to be reflected in their books with

broad-based loan growth, especially in the private sector. This was primarily due to various project developments in line with Vision 2030. The country's planned megaprojects will play arole in creating enormous business and lending opportunities for banks this year.

Banks in Qatar exhibit sufficient profitability and robust capital strength, with both Tier 1 and capital adequacy ratio (CAR) surpassing the mandated regulatory thresholds. Domestic funding avenues are predicted to adequately finance credit expansion this year with the completion of major infrastructure projects and increased liquefied natural gas (LNG) production.

In Oman, the robust growth in the lending sector aligns with the nation's expanding non-oil economic activities and the steady progress of Oman Vision 2040 initiatives, which aim to diversify the economy. The credit environment is expected to remain conducive, supporting lending growth in the near term

Bahrain is poised for robust economic growth, with the completion of refinery upgrades and a pick-up in the private sector supporting greater private investment.Backed by cheaper borrowing costs, credit growth is projected to further edge up this year, giving a boost to consumers and corporates.

Kuwait's banking sector has enjoyed high profitability, supported by slow rate cuts and stronger lending growth. The industry is anticipated to sustain its stability, underpinned by substantial capital reserves and a formidable net external position, with foreign assets accounting for 30.4% of total local bank assets at the end of December 2024.

Mayur adds:

"To fortify their profitability and improve cost optimization in the current landscape, GCC banks should consider how to best tonavigate a new normal that not only addresses regulatory fragmentation and national interests, but fully harnesses the power of technology and its multiple scopes such as digitization, generative AI (GenAI), open banking and APIs, and the digital currency revolution - all while committing to a sustainable future. This will ensure they remain competitive and agile to better counteract the pressure of contracting margins.'

US retail sales rise modestly by 0.2% in Feb

WASHINGTON, March 18, (AP): U.S. shoppers stepped up their spending just a bit in February after a sharp pullback the previous month, signaling that Americans are shopping more cautiously as concerns about the direction of the economy mount.

Retail sales rose just 0.2% in February, a small rebound after a sharp drop of 1.2% in January, the Commerce Department said Monday. Sales rose at grocery stores, home and garden stores, and online retailers. Sales fell at auto dealers, restaurants, and electronics stores.

The small increase suggests Americans may be growing more wary about spending as the stock market has plunged and President Donald Trump's tariff threats and government spending cuts have led to widespread uncertainty among consumers and businesses.

Some economists were relieved the numbers weren't worse. Still, many expect consumer spending will grow just 1% to 1.5% at an annual rate in the first three months of this year, far below the 4.2% gain in the final quarter last year.

"Consumer spending is on track to slow sharply this quarter, but not by as much as we previ-ously feared," Stephen Brown, an economist at Capital Economics, a consulting firm, said in an email.

On Friday, a measure of consumer sentiment fell sharply for the third straight month and is now down more than 20% since December. Respondents to the University of Michigan's survey cited policy uncertainty as a leading reason for the gloomier outlook. While the respondents were divided sharply by party - sentiment about the current economy fell among Republican by much less than for Democrats - Republicans' confidence in the economy's future dropped 10%.

Consumers from all income levels are feeling more strained.

Hunter Simmons of Austin, Texas, who is a lawyer and journalist, said that the uncertainty around the economy because of the stock market turmoil and tariffs has made him more cautious about spending. He said he used to buy the more expensive farm fresh eggs, but now he's going for the cheapest eggs he can find. He's also been buying fewer fresh vegetables and fruits and has turned to frozen versions. And lately Simmons started to pay for gas in cash and is joining fuel rewards programs.

"I am not a big spender in general, but I have been cutting back in small ways," he said.

A slew of earnings reports over the past few weeks from major retailers including Walmart, Macy's and Dollar General have cited a slowdown in spending.

Walmart, the nation's largest retailer and a bellwether for the retail sector, released a weak outlook last month citing uncertainty around tar-

February sales also fell last month at gas stations, clothing stores, and sporting goods stores. The figures aren't adjusted for prices, and the cost of gas also declined in February, which likely accounts for most of the drop. Excluding gas and autos, retail sales rose 0.5%, a healthier figure but still modest after a plunge of 0.8% in January.

Also Monday, the National Association of Homebuilders said its index measuring builder sentiment fell three points to 39, the lowest level in seven months, as economic uncertainty dimmed builders' outlook and fewer potential buyers visited homes.

"Economic uncertainty, the threat of tariffs and elevated construction costs pushed builder sentiment down in March," the group said. The homebuilders estimate tariffs will add \$9,200 to the cost of a new home.

Macy's says its customers, even at its upscale chains Bluemercury and Bloomingdale's, are feeling angst and its financial outlook this month reflects that.

"I think the affluent customer that's shopping Macy's is just as uncertain and as confused and concerned by what's transpiring," Macy's CEO Tony Spring said at the time.

Hiring has mostly held up and there are no signs that companies are laying off workers. As long as Americans have jobs, spending could remain resilient. But that is not assured.

Dollar General CEO Todd Vasos said Thursday that the overall economic picture for his customers is not ideal and the company said it would close around 100 stores.

"Our customers continue to report that their financial situation has worsened over the last year as they have been negatively impacted by ongoing inflation "Vasos said during an earnings call. "Many of our customers report that they only have enough money for basic essentials, with some noting that they have had to sacrifice even on the necessities.'

Spending patterns at Costco have changed to accommodate a soured view of the economy, including a shift toward ground beef and poultry instead of more expensive cuts of meat, said to Gary Millership, the company's chief financial officer.

American Eagle Outfitters CEO Jay Schottenstein said angst is particularly high among younger customers.

"Not just tariffs, not just inflation," said Schottenstein. "We see the government cutting people off. They don't know how that's going to affect them. And when people don't know what they don't know - they get very conservative."

The retail sales report mostly just covers goods purchases - as well as restaurant sales - but there are signs Americans are cutting back spending on services as well.

Airline executives at JP Morgan's airline industry conference last week said bookings have fallen.

"There was something going on with economic sentiment, something going on with consumer confidence," said Delta CEO Ed Bastian at the industry conference.

Bowman opposed 2023 plan to tighten big bank regulations

Trump names Bowman as top Federal Reserve bank regulator

WASHINGTON, March 18, (AP): US President Donald Trump on Monday nominated Michelle Bowman to oversee the Federal Reserve's financial regulatory efforts, a move that could lead to looser rules for large banks.

Bowman was appointed by Trump in 2018 to serve on the Fed's governing board. She replaces Michael Barr as the Fed's Vice Chair for Supervision, after Barr stepped down last month to avoid a legal fight that could have ensued had Trump carried out his threat to fire him. Barr, however, stayed on the seven-member Fed board, forcing Trump to pick from one of the existing governors.

Her nomination was welcomed by banking industry lobbying groups, including the American Bankers Association and the Independent Community Bankers of America.

As Vice Chair, Bowman will be the most powerful federal bank regulator, and will coordinate with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and

the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency on developing bank rules.

The position requires Senate confirmation, though analysts expect she'll easily be confirmed.

Bowman voted against a 2023 proposal by Barr to tighten rules on big banks such as JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America, in particular to require them to hold more capital in reserve to offset potential losses. The proposed rule attracted fierce opposition from the financial industry, but also from some nonprofit organizations concerned that it could have limited mortgage lending.

Prior to joining the Fed, Bowman was the state bank commissioner in Kanas in 2017-2018, after serving as vice president at a local bank. She also had previous stints in Washington working for Senator Bob Dole, a Kansas Republican, and at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.

BUSINESS

Net profit reaches KD 31.4

stc General Assembly for year ended Dec 31 2024 approves cash dividend of 35 Kuwaiti fils per share

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, held its Ordinary General Assembly (AGM) at the Company's Headquarters - Olympia Mall/West Office Towers on Tuesday, 18 March, 2025, where the attendance represented 77.991% from the total shareholders. The AGM was held physically and virtually using the online platform provided by Kuwait Clearing Company.

The AGM approved the Board of Directors' and Financial Position's report, the Auditors' report and the Sharia Committee's report for the fiscal year ended on 31 December 2024. The AGM also approved the Audit Committee report and the Corporate Governance report including the Board of Directors' and the Executive Management's remuneration and benefits report for the year ended on 31 December 2024 along with approving all the other items in the AGM agenda. Furthermore, the AGM included the election of the Board of Directors members for a three-year tenure.

The AGM also approved the Company's financial statements and the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 35 Kuwaiti fils, representing 35% of the share's nominal value for the year ended 2024, for shareholders registered in the Company's shareholders register as at the end of the record date set for it on Tuesday corresponding to 15 April 2025. The cash dividends will be distributed to the shareholders who are entitled to it at payment date, as of Sunday, corresponding to 20 April 2025.

Furthermore, driven by stc's commitment to retain its top talent, reward them, motivate them and create a long-term value, the AGM also approved granting the company's competent employees the right to purchase company shares in accordance to the share purchase option "Long-Term Incentive (LTI)" program.

Commenting on the announcements of these results, Dr. Mahmoud Ahmad Abdulrahman, stc's Chairman, stated: "Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) achieved a series of notable financial and operational milestones in 2024, further strengthening its leadership position in Kuwait's ICT sector. This success reflects the strength of stc's strategic vision, which prioritizes enhancing internal capabilities, strengthening the core, capitalizing on its ICT expertise, expanding its infrastructure, and capitalizing on emerging opportunities within a rapidly evolving market. With a firm commitment to innovation, stc continues to align its offerings with global digital transformation trends by integrating advanced technologies across its services and operations. By embracing this strategy, stc is well-positioned to adapt to the changing needs of individuals, businesses, and the wider community. stc's continued focus on driving sustainable growth is supported by its dedication to improving the customer experience and delivering lasting added value to its shareholders. The solid performance that has been



Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer during the General Assembly.

demonstrated this year is a testament to the strength of the company's core operations and its vital role in advancing Kuwait's digital future and economic development.'

Commenting on the company's financial position as at 31 December 2024 Dr. Abdulrahman, stated: "stc's total assets reached KD 462.2mn by the end of December 2024, while total shareholders' equity reached KD 240.5mn. Additionally, the company has a strong solvency position among telecommunications companies in the Middle East.

Dr. Abdulrahman commented on the cash dividend recommendation of 35% of the Company's total capital for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, saying: "stc has demonstrated its capacity by maintaining good cash flows resulted from adopting its successful business model as well as financial planning that ensure good financial returns and results that would enable the company to distribute sustainable cash dividends on an annual basis, and in the best interest of the company's valued shareholders.'

With regards to offering the Long-Term Incentive (LTI) program to stc's employees, Dr. Abdulrahman stated: "As our company continues to grow and evolve in a competitive market, it is crucial to align our employees' contributions with our strategic goals. This initiative ensures that our key talent is recognized and rewarded for their sustained efforts in driving business success.

Additionally, the introduction of this program reflects our commitment to maintain our competitive position in the telecom market by offering attractive rewards that enhance employee engagement and loyalty. By launching the LTI in 2025, we are strengthening our position as an employer of choice in Kuwait and investing in the longterm success of both our people and the company."

Commenting on stc's achievements in 2024, Eng. Muataz Bin Abdullah Aldharrab, stc's CEO stated: "With divine blessings of Allah,stc showed its resiliency through adapting to the rapid changes in the telecom sector, achieving several operational and financial achievements in 2024. Supported by the execution of its corporate strategy "LEAD", stc implemented strategic changes to improve internal operations, foster innovation, and create sustainable value including, but not limited to, launching its new and agile operating model. Not to mention the critical role of our Transformation and Synergies sector, that was established in early 2024 specifically to identify synergies across stc Kuwait, empowering us to lead in an ever-evolving industry. Driven by the importance of stc's infrastructure and 5G network which form the backbone of our ability to deliver innovative technical solutions and customized corporate database services, stc has also started the preparation for the rollout of the 5G Advanced. This milestone will not only refine stc's 5G services through achieving higher speeds in a short

- The General Assembly approved a cash dividend of 35 Kuwaiti fils per share
- Net profit reached KD 31.4
- Solid revenues reaching KD 336.5mn
- EBITDA reached KD 85.3m

period of time but also ensures seamless integration of AI, machine learning, and other emerging technologies. Our commitment to excellence has enabled us to exceed expectations consistently, strengthening our leadership position in Kuwait's digital transformation. As we continue to shape the future of the industry, stc remains focused on providing exceptional value to the telecommunications sector and paving the way for future innovation."

Aldharrab noted: "Moreover, our strong performance has been greatly supported by our subsidiaries, Solutions by stc and e-Portal, which specialize in delivering integrated telecommunications and networking solutions. These solutions include advanced technical services, fixed services, broadband, integration systems, and cloud services for both individuals and enterprises. By expanding our operations and strengthening our position as a leading company in the ICT sector, stc is on a clear path for a sustainable growth, driven by an integrated business system that supports the strategic goals of digital transformation."

Commenting on the announcement of company's financial results for the year ended December 31, 2024, Eng. Aldharrab said: "stc achieved good financial results in 2024, with total revenue reaching KD 336.5mn with a growth rate of 2.8% in 2024 reflecting the continued growth and stability of the company compared to KD 327.4mn in 2023. The main reason for this growth is attributed to the increase in the Consumer sector revenues, which constitute 76% of total revenues. Meanwhile, Business Sector revenues accounted for 24% of the company's total revenue during the financial year ended December 31, 2024. This is the result of efforts to enhance the company's business model, develop digital services, and provide in-tegrated technological solutions for businesses across various sectors. Accordingly, EBITDA witnessed a growth of 0.3% to reach KD 85.3mn in 2024 which resulted in a net profit of KD 31.4mn (earnings per share 31 fils) during 2024."

Aldharrab noted: "driven by stc's commitment to support Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and contribute to a more sustainable future, we have been keen to embed sustainability and ESG standards across our operations. Accordingly, we published stc's first standalone sustainability report in 2024, demonstrating our dedication to sustainability and corporate social responsibility.'

Other Voices

Tariffs turmoil influences

Global GDP growth projected to slow down to 3.1% in '25, 3% in '26: OECD

markets worldwide

By Hassan F. Beidas

The new tariffs that were announced by President Donald Trump beginning of February has already generated economic turbulence, imposing a 25% additional tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and a additional 10% tariff on imports from China; while the implementation of these tariffs, originally

scheduled for March, faced potential delay of a month. Despite the tariff's intended purpose, the US imports and the trade deficit have



been surg-

ing since last November, with a particularly big leap in January, negatively impacting US GDP estimates.

Concurrent with the tariff rollout, US inflation has spiked in January for a fourth consecutive year, while this could partially reflect pre-existing economic factors, the sheer scale of the current tariffs threats, exceeding those of 2018 strongly suggests a more substantial impact on consumer prices by the second quarter of 2025.

The uncertainty surrounding the

precise size and scope of future US tariffs have created unease in the global markets. Germany for instance, is freeing its defense spending from budgets rules, exemplifies the international efforts to adapt to the evolving geopolitical landscape.

Furthermore, Canada and Mexico have announced tariff retaliation steps, escalating the trade conflict.

The US markets have reacted sharply to these developments. By the end of February, the S&P 500 sank 1.7% ,the Dow Jones industrial dropped 1.7% as well and the Nasdaq composite tumbled 2.2%.

The Treasury yields in the bond markets reacted as well by pulling back as investors herded in to safer investment, the 10 year Treasury declined to 4.42% from 4.51%.

Notably, there was a jump of 10% in US imports in January as an attempt to get a head of tariffs. However, this a source of globule trade volatility and distortions that is highly unlikely to last.

We can observe larger impacts on US assets than broader global markets from the US actions. This is consistent with the fact that tariffs are generally paid by US taxpayers.

In my view, taking all of the US polices in account including measures such as federal job cuts, the impact appears to be widening beyond market fluctuations. They are fundamentally reshaping the nearterm US economic performance.

Bid to boost food security

Experts, policymakers call for tackling trade barriers

ADDIS ABABA, March 18, (Xinhua): Experts and policymakers have called on African countries to address persistent challenges and trade barriers to improve food security on the continent.

They made the call on Sunday during a continental meeting on food security organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNE-CA) under the theme of "Food Security and Cross-Border Trade: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities Amid the Implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)" at the UN Conference Center in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa.

Noting the urgent need for a more coordinated regional strategy to fasttrack Africa's quest for food security, experts and policymakers at the meeting emphasized the critical need to boost intra-African trade by removing existing trade barriers.

Addressing the meeting, Farayi Zimudzi, sub-regional coordinator for Eastern Africa at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, warned of the pressing food security challenges posed by Africa's low agricultural productivity and rapid population growth.

Organization warns against further increase in trade barriers

PARIS, March 18, (Xinhua): Global GDP growth is projected to moderate from 3.2 percent in 2024 to 3.1 percent in 2025 and 3 percent in 2026, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said on Monday in its latest Economic **Outlook.**

The downward revision from its previous forecast reflects "higher trade barriers in several G20 economies and increased geopolitical and policy uncertainty weighing on investment and household spending," the OECD noted.

The organization warned that further increases in trade barriers would dampen global growth and contribute to inflationary pressures. In its December 2024 forecast, the OECD had projected global GDP growth at 3.3 percent for both 2025 and 2026.

Economic growth is expected to slow in major economies. In the United States, GDP growth is projected to decline to 2.2 percent in 2025 and 1.6 percent in 2026 as tariff hikes take effect. In the euro area, GDP growth is forecast at 1 percent in 2025 and 1.2 percent in 2026, with heightened uncertainty keeping expansion subdued. Germany, France, and Italy are all expected to see economic growth below 1 percent in 2025, while Spain's economy is projected to expand by 2.6 percent in 2025 and 2.1 percent in 2026.

Inflation is expected to remain higher than previously anticipated, though still moderating as economic growth softens. In G20 economies, headline inflation is projected to decline from 3.8 percent in 2025 to 3.2 percent in 2026. In the euro area, inflation is forecast to drop from 2.3 percent in 2024 to 2.2 percent in 2025 and 2 percent in 2026. However, in the United States, inflation is expected to rise from 2.5 percent in 2024 to 2.8 percent in 2025.

Nikkei 225 gained 1.2%

Core inflation in more than half of the advanced G20 economies, including the United States, is projected to remain above central bank targets in 2025 and 2026.

The OECD cautioned that a resurgence of inflation or weaker-than-expected economic growth could lead to financial market volatility. It also warned that new bilateral tariff measures and rising policy and geopolitical uncertainty would weigh on business investment and trade, while increased trade costs could put further upward pressure on consumer prices.

To mitigate the negative effects of trade tariffs, the OECD urged central banks to remain vigilant in managing inflation risks and called for ambitious structural reforms to support economic growth. "Rising protectionism, geopolitical uncertainty and weak growth prospects all serve to reinforce the need for ambitious structural policy reforms that ensure healthy domestic markets," the OECD added.

Asian shares mostly rise, cheered by another WS rally

TOKYO, March 18, (AP): Asian shares mostly rose Tuesday as investors were encouraged by another rally on Wall Street.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 1.2% to finish at 37,845.42.

The Bank of Japan was expected to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged at a monetary policy board meeting due to wrap up Wednesday.

The U.S. Federal Reserve also is due to announce its latest decision on interest rates Wednesday.

Shares in major Japanese trading companies rose after Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway reported increases in its ownership of those companies. Itochu Corp. rose 2.5%, Marubeni Corp. added 3.5%, and Mitsubishi Corp. gained 3.6%, while Mitsui & Co. shares were up 3.1%. The investments, although still under 10% in each company, are seen as an expression of confidence in the Japanese economy.

Elsewhere in Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 2.2% to 24,670.80, led by buying of tech-related stocks. The Shanghai Composite inched up 0.1% to 3,431.06.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose nearly 0.1% to 7,860.40. South Korea's Kospi inched up less than 0.1% to 2,612.34.

Trading on Indonesia stock exchange was suspended temporarily as the benchmark JSX tumbled as much



An electronic board displays Jakarta composite index at Indonesia Stock Exchange in Jakarta, Indonesia, Tuesday, March 18, 2025. (AP)

as 6%. But it bounced back a bit, fallagain on Monday as the wild rollering 3.5%. Investors have been sellcoaster ride veered upward. ing shares in state-owned banks after The S&P 500 rose 0.6% to 5,675.12, the government launched a sovereign for a second straight gain after it fell 10% wealth fund, called Danantara, that so far has not proven popular. Worries

below its record late last week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 0.9% to 41,841.63, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.3% to 17,808.66.

On Wall Street, Intel climbed 6.8% to extend its gains after the chip company named former board member and semiconductor industry veteran Lip-

Bu Tan as its CEO last week. PepsiCo added 1.9% after saying it had agreed to buy Poppi, a prebiotic soda brand, for a net \$1.65 billion.

They helped offset a 4.8% drop for Tesla. The electric-vehicle company's stock has been struggling this year amid worries that its brand has become too intertwined with Elon Musk, who has been leading efforts to cut spend-ing by the U.S. government. Tesla vehicles and dealerships have become targets of people unhappy with Trump and his policies.

Stocks have been mostly tumbling on worries that Trump's rat-a-tat announcements on tariffs and other policies are creating so much uncertainty that they'll push U.S. households and businesses to freeze their spending, which would hurt the economy. Surveys have shown sharp drops in confidence, and some companies are already warning about changes in behavior from their customers.

A report Monday said U.S. retailers broadly saw weaker revenue last month than economists expected. But that mainly was due to weaker-thanforecast sales of automobiles and lower fuel costs.

The U.S. economy closed last year running at a solid rate. Excitement at the time was also building about policies coming from Trump to accelerate growth.

over U.S. President Donald Trumps

tariff increases and other risks have

also shaken confidence in the econo-

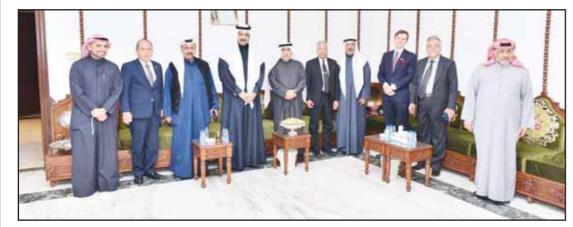
my, said Budi Frensidy, a professor at

On Wall Street, stocks climbed

the University of Indonesia.

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What's On



Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah, Cambodian Ambassador Sman Manan, Nepalese Ambassador Ghana Shyam Lamsal, Dr. Walid Al-Basri, Dr. Mohammad Al-Awadhi, Faisal Al-Hassawi, and Stuart Summers



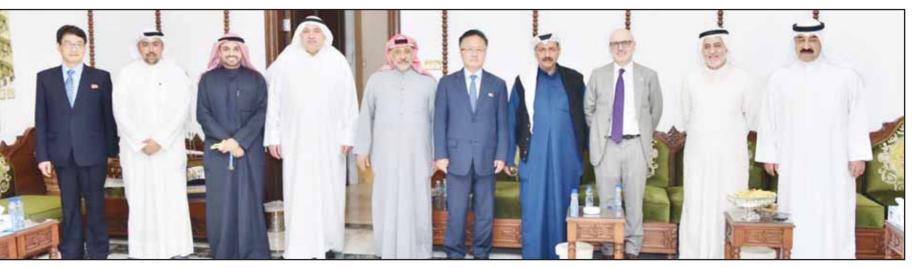
Sheikh Ahmed Jaber Al-Abdullah offering congratulations.

Ramadan greetings and prayers shared at Al-Qattan family Diwan

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The sons of the late Abdul Hamid Al-Qattan received wellwishers for the holy month of Ramadan at their Diwan in Surra.

In a warm and welcoming atmosphere, attendees exchanged greetings and prayers for a blessed month for all.

They also expressed their hopes for continued prosperity and progress for Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Italian Ambassador Lorenzo Morini and North Korean Ambassador Zho Myong Chol extending their congratulations.

'Best account of its kind'

Iftar event reinforces Lulu's commitment to workplace unity

KIB announces winners of Lulu Kuwait hosts special Ramadan iftar for staff

Al Dirwaza account's draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2025 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest expected annual return and winning chances. The third weekly draw in March, based on customers' February deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Hussain Mohammad Naser Bo Abbas, Said Loutfy Said Abdullah, Hussin Ramadan Mohammed Qotb, Anfal Hameed Sayed Mostafawi, Hanan Abdulaziz Khaled Alghrair, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Bader Haif Saad Alhajraf, Abdullah Ali Mohammad Alhaddad. Biad Ahmad Biad Alhajri, Eid Radaan Habeeb Mater, Ibrahim Ismaeal Hasan Alabdullah, Fahad Malehan Abdulmohsen Farhan, Rasha Mahmoud Saved Ibrahim, Basheer Mazyad Helal Alotaibi, Nama Abdulmohsen Fahad Altemeemi. It is worth noting that the Al Dirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, which was launched by KIB as part of its suite of banking products intended for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first three months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month. In addition to being a savings account, eligibility for the Al Dirwaza draws requires a minimum balance of KD 100, which must remain in the account for a full month before the weekly and monthly draws, with chances calculated based on the lowest balance of the previous month. As for the quarterly and annual draws, the amount must be maintained for two full months, with chances based on the lowest balance of the two preceding months. A key feature of the 2025 campaign is the doubling of winning chances to encourage customers to increase their deposits in the Al Dirwaza account. Customers will receive one chance per KD 1 if their lowest monthly balance is less than KD 2,000, two chances per KD 1 for balances between

KD 2,000 and less than KD 5,000, three chances per KD 1 for balances between KD 5,000 and less than KD 10,000, and four chances per KD1 for balances of KD 10,000 or more. Terms and conditions apply.

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

Additionally, the Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2.000 ATM daily withdrawal limit. as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.



About KIB

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

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

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





Photos during the iftar gathering.

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait organized a special iftar gathering for its staff on 16th March at Crowne Plaza Hotel, celebrating the spirit of togetherness and gratitude during the holy month of Ramadan.

The event brought together employees from various departments, reinforcing Lulu's commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive workplace culture. The evening featured a delightful spread of traditional Ramadan delicacies, creating a warm and festive atmosphere.

Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait continues to prioritize employee well-being and engagement, recognizing the hard work and dedication of its team members. Such gatherings serve as a token of appreciation and a platform to strengthen camaraderie among staff.

Draws offer KD 1000 weekly for 10 winners

KFH announces AI-Hassad winner of KD 100,000

KUWAIT CITY. March 18: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced Mozah Al-Maayeef as the Monthly winner of Al-Hassad draw, winning KD 100,000 for the month of February 2025.

Al-Hassad account is based on the Wakala investment principle. The Bank invests the entire account balance at an expected profit rate agreed upon in advance with the customer.

Al-Hassad offers weekly, monthly, and quarterly draws, a total of more than 400 prizes. The draws offer KD 1000 weekly, for 10 winners, KD



Al-Hassad banner

100,000 monthly and KD 250,000 quarterly in addition to prizes between 100 to 250 thousand Kuwaiti Dinars worth of value, as well as the year-end profits distribution. The account meets the aspirations of a wide segment of customers who wish to invest their funds through a multi-featured banking account.

To facilitate customer access and provide opportunities to a wider segment of clientele, Al-Hassad account can be opened in KFH branches, KF-Honline, and ATMs

Customers must hold the balance for a period of 15 days for an opportunity to enter the draws. The customer will have one chance for every KD 50. If the balance is held for 90 days before the draw date, the customer will get two chances for every

KD 50, and three chances for every KD 50 if the balance is held for a period of 180 days prior to the draw date. The customer will have a maximum of 30 thousand chances in one draw. Accordingly, KFH will deposit the value of prizes in the winning customers' accounts.

Al-Hassad represents an excellent addition to KFH's comprehensive suite of financial products, offering a unique opportunity for customers in which the deposited amounts are invested in Al-Hassad based on the Wakala principle.

Dr. Samer Al-Rais extends Ramadan greetings at Alumni event

American University Alumni Committee holds Ramadan Ghabga

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The American University Alumni Committee - Kuwait branch held a Ramadan Ghabga at the Arjan Hotel, attended by diplomats, alumni, their families, and friends in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Dr. Samer Al-Rais, the committee's president, began his speech by extending heartfelt congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid, the Kuwaiti people, and the Islamic world on the occasion of Ramadan, wishing for blessings and prosperity.

Al-Rais emphasized that the event aimed to strengthen ties among alumni in Kuwait and foster communication in a family-friendly environment. He expressed his happiness with the turnout and appreciated their engagement. He also affirmed the committee's commitment to organizing more social activities for alumni.

The evening included a raffle for entry tickets, with prizes distributed to winners. Participants left with fond memories after an evening filled with warmth and connection.





Photos during the iftar gathering



ARAB C TIMES WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025

Obituary

Iconic 'Rosetta' star and Cannes winner

Belgian actor Émilie Dequenne dies at 43 of rare cancer

BRUSSELS, March 18, (AP): Émilie Dequenne, the Belgian actor who won a top Cannes Film Festival prize for her breakout role in "Rosetta," has died, a news report says. She was 43.

Her family and agent told the news agency Agence France-Presse that Dequenne died Sunday of a rare cancer in a hospital outside of Paris. In 2023, Dequenne revealed she had been diagnosed with adrenocortical carcinoma. Representatives for Dequenne did not immediately respond to inquires from The Associated Press on Monday.

Dequenne was only 18 when she was selected as best actress at Cannes in 1999. In "Rosetta," from Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, she portrayed a teenager trying to escape her difficult life in a caravan park with an alcoholic mother. The film also won the Palme d'Or that year.

Born in Belœil, Belgium, in 1981, Dequenne had a performance streak from a young age. She studied drama at the Académie de Musique de Baudour.

She became well-known in France after starring

alongside Catherine Deneuve in "The Girl on the Train," in 2009, based on the true story of a woman who falsely claimed she was the victim of an antisemitic attack. Dequenne also portrayed police officer Laurence Renauld on the French series "The Missing.

In 2012, she won the Un Certain Regard actress prize from Cannes for "Our Children," a dark psychological drama inspired by the real story of a Belgian woman who killed her five children. She was also nominated for several César Awards throughout her career, finally winning best supporting actress in 2021 for the romantic comedy "Love Affair(s)."

Speaking to The Guardian in 2013 about the difficult role in "Our Children," she said, "For my part I went home every weekend, and stayed with my family, which is a very safe place. Making a film like that is something that you have to survive.

More recently, she co-starred in "Close," Lukas Dhont's tender boyhood drama, which brought her back to Cannes again in 2022. She saw similarities between her young co-star and her own breakout role with "Ro-

setta.' "For me to be here and to come back here after 23 years, it's very emotional and there is like a reflection between Eden (Dambrine) and myself because I remember when I was here the first time with 'Rosetta,' she told The Associated Press. "It was like a very pow-

erful movie with this main character, which is in every scene, every, every shot. And that's the same for him. Dequenne returned to the festival again in 2024 for

the 25th anniversary of "Rosetta." Her last film was Frédéric Jardin's post-apocalyptic thriller "Survive," which came out earlier this year.

While she loved taking on work in England, France and Belgium, she had little interest in Hollywood.

"I have been to Hollywood and had meetings, but really they don't do the kind of films I like to make. And everything is kind of boring, no?" she said in the interview with The Guardian. "Honestly, it's not a fun place, or at least not my kind of fun."

She is survived by her husband, director and producer Michel Ferracci, and daughter, Milla Savarese.



Émilie Dequenne appears at the awards ceremony during the 76th international film festival, Cannes, southern France on May 27, 2023. (AP)

Protect family privacy

Court halts release of records in Hackman, wife deaths case

SANTA FE, N.M., March 18, (AP): A New Mexico court granted a temporary restraining order Monday against the release of certain records related to the investigation into the recent deaths of actor Gene Hackman and his wife, Betsy Arakawa.

The order is in response to a request by Julia Peters, a representative for the couple's estate. She urged in

motion filed last week that the court seal records in the case to protect the famright ily's to privacy in grief under the 14th Amendment to the US



Constitution.

Peters emphasized the possibly shocking nature of photographs and video in the investigation and poten-

tial for their dissemination by media. A hearing has been scheduled for later this month to argue the merits of the request. For now, the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office and the state Office of the Medical Investigator cannot release photographs and videos showing the couple's bodies or the interior of their home, autopsy reports or death investiga-

tion reports. Hackman and Arakawa were found dead in their Santa Fe home in late February. Authorities have confirmed that Hackman died of heart disease with complications from Alzheimer's disease about a week after hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - a rare, rodent-borne disease - took the life of his wife. The request to seal the records notes that the couple placed "a significant value on their privacy and took affirmative vigilant steps" to safeguard their privacy over their lifetime, including after they moved to Santa Fe and Hackman retired. The state capital is known as a refuge for celebrities, artists and authors

"The personal representative seeks to continue to preserve the privacy of the Hackmans following their tragic death and support the family's constitutional right to remembrance and desire to grieve in peace," the document states.

New Mexico's open records law blocks public access to sensitive images, including depictions of people who are deceased. Experts also say that some medical information is not considered public record under the state Inspection of Public Records Act.

Still, the bulk of death investigations by law enforcement and autopsy reports by medical investigators are typically considered public records under state law in the spirit of ensuring government transparency and accountability.

Privacy likely will play a role as well as the couple's estate gets settled. According to probate court documents filed earlier this month, Hackman signed an updated will in 2005 leaving his estate to his wife while the will she signed that same year directed her estate to him in the event of her death. With both of them dying, management of the estate is in the hands of Peters, a Santa Fe-based attorney and trust manager.

A request is pending to appoint



Awards

Benson Boone, winner of the award for song of the year for 'Beautiful Things,' poses in the press room during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)





FINNEAS, (left), and Billie Eilish perform during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, on Monday, March 17, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)





Kenny Chesney performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



a trustee who can administer assets in two trusts associated with the estate. Without trust documents being made public, it's unclear who the beneficiaries are and how the assets will be divided.

Attorneys who specialize in estate planning in New Mexico say it's possible more details could come out if there were any legal disputes over the assets. Even then, they said, the parties likely would ask the court to seal the documents to maintain privacy.

'Wizard of Oz' mystery

Court dismisses ruby slippers theft case after accused dies

ST. PAUL, Minn., March 18, (AP): A federal judge dismissed the charges Monday against a Minnesota man accused of hiding a stolen pair of ruby slippers that Judy Garland wore in the 1939 musical "The Wizard of Oz' after prosecutors informed the court that he died on Sunday.

Jerry Hal Saliterman, 77, of Crystal, who had been in poor health with lung disease and other ailments, had been scheduled to change his plea to guilty in January but that hearing was postponed indefinitely after he was hospitalized.

Federal prosecutor Matthew Greenley notified the court in a one-page motion Monday that Saliterman died Sunday but did not say how or where US District Judge Patrick Schiltz granted the request and dropped the charges.

Defense attorney John Brink confirmed Monday that his client had died but declined to give details. A spokesman for the US Attorney's Office in Fargo, North Dakota, which is handling the case, did not immediately return a phone call seeking further information.

According to court filings, Saliterman was hospitalized in early January "for inability to walk and sepsis," an infection that can be life-threatening. He attended his arraignment three days later via video from what looked like a hospital room. In an update to the court late last month, Brink told the court that his client had been discharged to a hospice facility and that his prognosis was poor. An accompanying letter from his doctor listed severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease requiring supplemental oxygen and Parkinson's disease.



The original ruby slippers worn by Judy Garland in the classic 1939 film The Wizard of Oz are displayed in London ahead of being offered for auction on Dec. 7, at Heritage Auctions in the US, Nov. 27, 2024. (AP)



Mariah Carey accepts the icon award during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



Gracie Abrams, winner of the award for breakthrough artist of the year, poses in the press room. (AP)



Lady Gaga accepts the innovator award during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, March 17, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Bad Bunny performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, on March 17, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

Tori Kelly performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Ariana Madix arrives at the iHeart-Radio Music Awards, March 17. (AP)

'is' shines with catchy, psychedelic rock

My Morning Jacket's 10th album delights fans, newbies

LOS ANGELES, March 18, (AP): My Morning Jacket likes to hide some of its best music behind unassuming titles.

Twenty years ago, the Louisville-based jam-infused rock band led by Jim James released "Z," one of its most heralded records. And now comes "is," their 10th full-length record.

So, is "is" any good?

Yes, "is" is.

Nearing their third decade as a band, My Morning Jacket's veterancy shines on "is." They continue to improve on their ability to write melodic and focused psychedelic rock songs.

And for that reason, seemingly every track on "is" could be a single for the band, a highlight of their live set or a launching pad for improvisation on stage.

For "is," My Morning Jacket handed the producer duties over to Brendan O'Brien, who has worked with Phish, Bruce Springsteen and Pearl Jam - a rarity for a band that prefers to self-produce and has for nearly a decade.



This album cover image released by ATO Records shows 'is' by My Morning Jacket. (AP)

It's paid off. O'Brien doesn't mess with the sound that My Morning Jacket fans love and expect. Instead, he seems to have focused the band in a way that allows them to deliver a unified, 10-song collection. The songs are meant to communicate "a sense of presence in the now," as James described the album titled in a press release.

"Hopefully those songs will be helpful to people and give them some kind of peace as they try to deal with the insanity of the world," James said. "Because that's what music does for me.'

That happens at the jump. Opener "Out in the Open" leads with a catchy guitar riff.

"I'm realizing what's at stake now," James sings. "I can't pretend that I'm not scared/But I'll live while I'm still free.'

On the love song "Everyday Magic," James finds transcendence in the mundane. "Everyday magic/A ripple in the fabric," he sings. "Of all space time/Oh you have it/In your heart."

"Time Waited," another love song, seems destined to become a standard for the band, with its easy-going melody and inventive sample of pedal steel giant Buddy Emmons' "Blue Jade."

NEWS/FEATURES

EU debates ways to keep Radio Free Europe afloat

Trump slams the brakes on VOA, other media outlets

NEW YORK, March 18, (AP): President Donald Trump's administration on Saturday began making deep cuts to Voice of America and other government-run, pro-democracy program-ming, with the organization's director saying all VOA employees have been put on leave.

On Friday night, shortly after Con-gress passed its latest funding bill, Trump directed his administration to reduce the functions of several agencies to the minimum required by law. That included the US Agency for Global Media, which houses Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Asia and Radio Marti, which beams Spanish-language news into Cuba.

On Saturday morning, Kari Lake, the failed Arizona gubernatorial and US Senate candidate whom Trump named a senior adviser to the agency. posted on X that employees should check their email. That coincided with notices going out placing Voice of America staff on paid administrative leave.

"For the first time in 83 years, the storied Voice of America is being si-lenced," Michael Abramowitz, the organization's director, said in a state-ment. He added that "virtually" the entire 1300-person staff was placed on

today." The

this

"VOA promotes freedom and democracy around the world by telling America's story and by providing objective and balanced news and information, especially for those living under tyranny," Abramowitz said. One reporter, who spoke under the

condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press, said: "We expected something



Trump

a defender of free information and calls on the US government to restore VOA and urges Congress and the international community to take action against this unprecedented move.

The Agency for Global Media also sent notices terminating grants to Radio Free Asia and other programming run by the agency. Voice of America transmits United States domestic news into other countries, often translated into local languages. Radio Free Asia, Europe and Marti beam news into countries with authoritarian regimes in those regions like China, North Korea and Russia.

"The cancellation of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's grant agreement would be a massive gift to America's enemies," said the network's President and CEO, Stephen Capus, in a statement.

Combined, the networks reach an estimated 427 million people. They date back to the Cold War and are part of a network of government-funded organizations trying to extend U.S. influence and combat authoritarianism that includes USAID, another agency

targeted by Trump. The reduction is a dramatic blow at a staple of post-Cold War order that has long had bipartisan support. Voice of America's directors have included Dick Carlson, the father of conservative commentator Tucker Carlson.

Meanwhile, European Union government ministers on Tuesday debated ways to keep Radio Free Europe afloat after the Trump administration stopped grants to the pro-democracy media outlet over the weekend.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty started broadcasting during the Cold War. Its programs are aired in 27 languages in 23 countries across Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Sweden's European Affairs Minister Jessica Rozencrantz insisted on the need to ensure that "Radio Free Europe really continues to be an important voice for freedom and democracy, especially in those places where it is most needed."

"Sweden encourages all countries and the (European) Commission to really look into what we can do in terms of financing, to make sure that we continue to have a strong Radio Free Europe," she told reporters in Brussels ahead of the meeting.

The outlet got caught up as Presi-dent Donald Trump's administration on Saturday began making deep cuts to Voice of America and other government-run, pro-democracy program-

ming. "The cancellation of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's grant agreement would be a massive gift to America's enemies," the network's President and CEO, Stephen Capus, said in a statement in reaction to the move.



Sting, (left), and Shaggy pose for a portrait on Tuesday, March 11, in New York. (AP)

'A joyful anthem'

Sting, Shaggy offer new hit to heal a fractured world

NEW YORK, March 18, (AP): The affection between Sting and Shaggy is palpable from the moment they sit down together. When the two prolific record-ing artists are asked where the chemistry comes from, Shaggy simply says they make each other laugh.

The pals have worked together on several projects, including their Grammy-winning reggae album "44/876" in 2018 and on Shaggy's 2022 album "Com Fly Wid Mi," where Sting encouraged Shaggy to depart from his trademark "toasting" on reg-gae/dancehall hits to sing Frank Sinatra songs.

Their latest collaboration is "Til A Mawnin" - an upbeat reggae track showcasing some of the pair's playful-ness released Feb. 27. Sting, 73, and Shaggy, 56, spoke to The Associated Press recently about the new song and finding friendship and musical inspiration in each other. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity

AP: Sting, you stretched your voice in a different way for this song. Is it fun to still do that at this point in your career?

Sting: Absolutely. I - like him - am a student of music. I will be until my dying day and I'm here to learn. So I could teach him something and he can teach me something.

Shaggy: And he's taught me a lot. I'm a singer now. Did I mention that? (laughs)

AP: How did Sting do with the song?

Shaggy: He has always had energy. There's such a huge cultural background with him and with the Jamaican culture and the reggae culture, you know, obviously with the undertones of The Police, those reggae undertones from back then where he lived in Notting Hill. A lot of West Indian community, strong

calypso and stuff like that. Sting: Ska, blue beat, rock-

Variety

NEW YORK: Actor and comedian Tracy Morgan got sick in the sec-ond half of Monday night's Heat-Knicks game, interrupting the action at Madison Square Garden.

There was a pause in play with 6:09 left in the third quarter while workers cleaned up the area around Morgan's seat. The delay lasted for more than 10 minutes.

A spokesperson for Madison Square Garden said they hope Morgan feels better soon, and they were looking forward to seeing him back in his

courtside

seat. Mes-

sages were

left by the

AP seeking

comment

from Mor-

gan's repre-

sentatives.

The

56-year-old

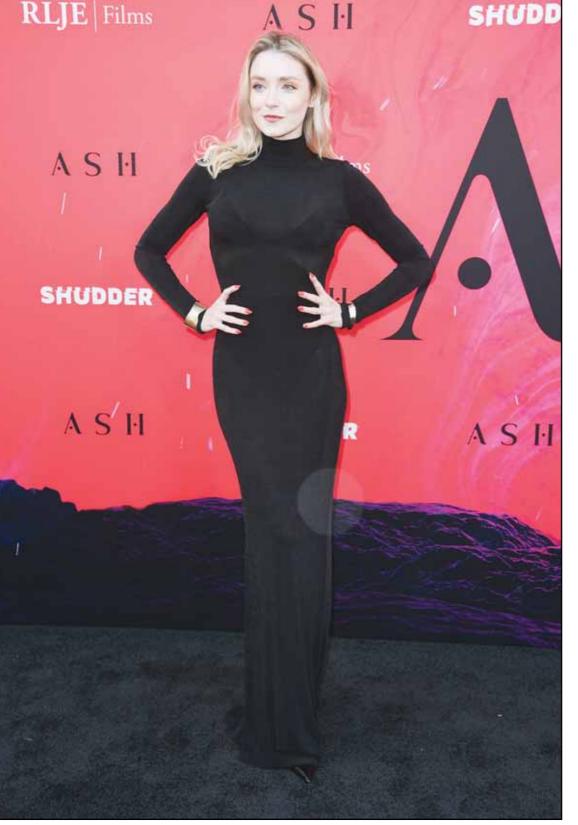


Morgan, a longtime Knicks fan,

was featured prominently during the "Saturday Night Live" 50th anniversary weekend events, at both the "SNL50: The Homecoming Con-cert" and the live "SNL50: The An-niversary Celebration" special. (AP)

KOCANI, North Macedonia: Authorities in North Macedonia are appealing for calm as student groups called for fresh protests on Tuesday following the horrific nightclub fire that killed 59 people and injured more than 150 over the weekend.

The disaster, which occurred early on Sunday at Club Pulse in the eastern town of Kocani after pyrotechnics were used during



Films

concert there, has sparked outrage over alleged corruption and safety violations. Demonstrations took place Monday in both Kocani and the capital, Skopje, with some turning violent - protesters in Kocani overturned a van and hurled rocks at a municipal building. "We must call once again for reason," Interior Minister Panche Toshkovski said in an interview with private Sitel television late Monday. "We must allow the prosecuting authorities to do their job so that in the end we can finally normalize the state." (AP)

NEW YORK: Masih Alinejad, the charismatic Iranian dissident and journalist who prosecutors say was targeted by her former homeland's government for assassination, is set to testify Tuesday at the trial of two men accused in the plot.

Alinejad, an author and contributor to Voice of America, is scheduled to take the witness stand at midday at a Manhattan federal trial that has already featured testimony from the man who says he was hired to kill her in the summer of 2022.

She fled Iran following the country's disputed 2009 presidential election and became a US citizen in October 2019. In an opening statement last week, a prosecutor said she will testify about why she stands up to the Iranian regime and why she "refuses to back down." (AP)

NEW YORK: The band Semisonic is pushing back at the White House for using their hit song "Closing Time" over a social media post that shows a shackled deportee

The White House added the song in a post of a man with his wrists handcuffed to his waist as he is patted down at an airport. The video was captioned with the song's lyrics: "You don't have to go home but you can't stay here.

"We did not authorize or condone the White House's use of our song in any way. And no, they didn't ask. The song is about joy and possibilities and hope, and they have missed the point entirely," the power pop trio from the Twin Cities said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Asked about the post Monday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said "our entire government clearly is leaning into the message of this president." US Customs and Border Protection retweeted the White House's post on X with the caption "It's closing time. We are making America safe again.

"Closing Time" is from Semi-sonic's 1998 album, "Feeling Strangely Fine," which peaked at No. 43 on the Billboard 200 album chart. (AP)

Sarah Bolger arrives at the premiere of 'Ash' on Monday, March 17, at the Vista Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

Books

Tsushima's final work is riveting

'Wildcat Dome' explores war, trauma

NEW YORK, March 18, (AP): Japan's three historic nuclear events the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the closing days of World War II and the 2011 nuclear plant meltdowns in Fukushima - form a key backdrop for "Wildcat Dome," a novel by Yuko Tsushima.

Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda's English translation of the book by the Kawabata and Tanizaki awards-winning writer is now out from Farrar, Straus and Giroux, going on sale this month.

As fitting of a catastrophic theme, the writing rambles, although intentionally and in a delightfully mesmerizing style, meandering from a description of a scene to a dialogue, only to be interrupted by a sound, an image or an action, like memories of a dream, or a nightmare.

Among the main characters are children born to Japanese women and American servicemen, who grow up in an orphanage. They embody the human costs of war, and the suffering of living in a discriminatory society.

The layering of the subplots involving radiation and racism, as well as personal conflict, leads always to the big question: Why?

The author never gives us a real answer or pretends to try.

The book has references to sweeping social themes like Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X, and the Vietnam War, as well as the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. And they are



This cover image released by Farrar, Straus and Giroux shows 'Wildcat Dome' by Yuko Tsushima. (AP)

The characters live through the Fukushima disaster, the fear of radiation, witnessing crowds of people

juxtaposed with personal catastrophe.

wearing masks, then forgetting to wear them, followed again by more fear. In another segment, a mother is taking care of a son who has "turned into a cold stone," haunted by a child's drowning.

"The mother sighs and opens the door. The floorboards squeak like a cat's helpless meow, drawing her inside," a passage reads.

"Raindrops, glimmering white, slide off each leaf, the sound of the drip, drip striking his eardrums like a song, a quietness that could only be called a raindrop song, a cheerful song," goes another passage typical of Tsushima's language.

Traveling across time, back and forth, as well as geographically, to Europe at one point, as well as Japan and the US, the storytelling may be easily called a bit chaotic. But one wouldn't expect a nuclear disaster, war or murder to be too orderly.

In the hands of Tsushima, the daughter of famed novelist Osamu Dazai, who wrote "No Longer Human," it's strangely riveting. "Wildcat Dome" is Tsushima's final work. She died in 2016.

AP: How did this friendship come about?

Sting: You know, you meet people sometimes and you recognize them immediately. I don't know, chemistry maybe, but I recognized him as a kindred spirit. And yeah, we're both students. We're both curious about music. We're both dads.

Shaggy: Husbands!

Sting: Good citizens! AP: Describe this new song and what you were aiming for.

Sting: The first time I heard it, I started to smile. There's a lot of joy in this song, and I feel it's kind of necessary at this time in the world. ... The world is fractured and so we need music to be a medicine. We need something that makes us smile.

Shaggy: It's a feel-good track. But it's a little deeper for me. There's a cultural undertone here with this song. The original riddim track was from an old Yellowman song, "I'm Getting Married," produced by a legendary producer by the name of (Henry) "Junjo" Lawes. He's arguably the guy that was responsible for a whole genre, which is dancehall, because he did reggae music, but he voiced "toasters" on these reggae beats. And what he did was sound system music, which is these huge speakers they used to block the streets, and that sound system music was part of a deep part of the ghetto sound. Culturally, it's the soundtrack to almost every inner-city person's life in Jamaica.

AP: How have reggae fans received the song?

Shaggy: The reggae community and the Jamaican communities have embraced this track solid and they're very, very proud of it. I like the fact that it's going beyond just the range. There's a lot of international eyes on it and ears on it. You know, people are really sending their comments in and you could feel it. There's an energy with this record that we haven't felt in a long time, and it's just sunshine and joy.

steady, reggae.

Shaggy: On paper, it looks weird, Shaggy and Sting. But you come and catch a show or see us together, it actually works. We're still surprised! (laughs)

AP: How do you listen to music now?

Shaggy: I'm in the digital age. At his house, he has a very expensive record player...

Sting: I like the ritual of selecting an album, taking it out of the cover, out of the inner sleeve and then putting it down on the turntable and then hearing that lovely noise as the needle goes onto the vinyl and then the music starts. There's something religious about that ritual, which I miss. I missed - for the CDs and the cassette era - I really missed that ritual. And then looking at the album cover and reading all the credits. Who played the bass on it? Who engineered it? I miss that information. I think modern music has become commodified by being just, you switch it on, you switch it off, so you don't really know where it comes from.

Shaggy: It makes you less interested in it, to be honest, the fact that I can't read that anymore. Makes me not want to really buy full body of works like I used to.

AP: You both go by stage names. Does anyone ever call you by your real names (Gordon and Orville)?

Sting: No one calls me by my real name.

Shaggy: Really? Well, that's my new name for you. I'm going to start calling you that, Gordon (laughs as Sting sticks his tongue out playfully). My wife calls me Orville.

Sting: Only when you're in trouble. (laughs)

AP: What's the best way to listen to this song?

Shaggy: With something rolled up. (laughs)

Sting: That is such a cliche. Shaggy: Is it? Why not?! Sting: You've never smoked weed in your life!

Shaggy: I know, but you never tell them that. Never let the truth get in the way of a good story. (laughs)

HEALTH/SCIENCE

Bioelectricity could revolutionize wound healing treatments

Skin, organ cells generate electricity to aid in wound healing

By Sun-Min Yu and Steve Granick **UMass Amherst**

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

 \mathbf{Y} our cells constantly generate and conduct electricity that runs through your body to perform various functions. One such example of this bioelectricity is the nerve signals that power thoughts in your brain. Others include the cardiac signals that control the beating of your heart, along with other signals that tell your muscles to contract.

As bioengineers, we became interested in the epithelial cells that make up human skin and the outer layer of people's intestinal tissues. These cells aren't known to be able to generate bioelectricity. Textbooks state that they primarily act as a barrier against pathogens and poisons; epithelial cells are thought to do their jobs passively, like how plastic wrapping protects food against spoilage.

To our surprise, however, we found that wounded epithelial cells can propagate electrical signals across dozens of cells that persist for several hours. In this newly published research, we were able to show that even epithelial cells use bioelectricity to coordinate with their neighbors when the emergency of an injury demands it. Understanding this unexpected twist in how the body operates may lead to improved treatments for wounds.

Don't laugh: Our interest in this topic began with a gut feeling. Think of how your skin heals itself after a scratch. Epithelial cells may look silent and calm, but they're busy coordinating with each other to extrude damaged cells and replace them with new ones. We thought bioelectric signals might orchestrate this, so our intuition told us to search for them.

Almost all the vendors we contacted to obtain the instrument we needed to test our idea warned us not to try these experiments. Only one company agreed with reluctance. 'Your experiment won't work," they insisted. If we made the attempt and found nothing worthwhile to study, they feared it would make their product look bad

But we did our experiments anyway - with tantalizing results.

We grew a layer of epithelial cells on a chip patterned with what's called a microelectrode array - dozens of tiny electric wires that measure where bioelectric signals appear, how strong the signals are and how fast they travel from spot to spot. Then, we used a laser to zap a wound in one location and searched for electric signals on a different part of the cell layer.

Several hours of recording confirmed our intuition: When faced with the emergency need to repair themselves, bio-electrical signals appear when epithelial cells need a quick

way to communicate over long distances. We found that wounded epithelial cells can send bioelectric signals to neighboring cells over distances more than 40 times their body length with voltages similar to those of neurons. The shapes of these voltage spikes are also like those of neurons except about 1,000 times slower, indicating they might be a more primitive form of intercellular communication over long distances.

But how do epithelial cells generate bioelectricity?

We hypothesized that calcium ions might play a key role. Calcium ions show up prominently in any good biology textbook's list of major molecules that help cells function. Since calcium ions regulate the forces that contract cells, a function necessary to remove damaged cells after wounding, we hypothesized that calcium ions ought to be critical to bioelectricity.

To test our theory, we used a molecule called EDTA that tightly binds to calcium ions. When we added EDTA to the epithelial cells and so removed the calcium ions, we found that the voltage spikes were no longer present. This meant that calcium ions were likely necessary for epithelial cells to generate the bioelectric signals that guide wound healing.

We then blocked the ion channels that allow calcium and other positively charged ions to enter epithelial cells. As a result, the frequency and strength of the electrical signals that epithelial cells produce were reduced. These findings suggest that while calcium ions may play a particularly crucial role in allowing epithelial cells to produce bioelectricity, other molecules may also matter.

Further research can help identify those other ion channels and pathways that allow epithelial cells to generate bioelectricity.

Our discovery that epithelial cells can electrically speak up during a crisis without compromising their primary role a barrier opens doors for new ways to treat wounds.

Previous work from other researchers had demonstrated that it's possible to enhance wound healing in skin and intestinal tissues by electrically stimulating them. But these studies used electrical frequencies many times higher than what we've found epithelial cells naturally produce. We wonder whether reevaluating and refining optimal electric stimulation conditions may help improve biomedical devices for wound healing.

Further down the road of possibility, we wonder whether electrically stimulating individual cells might offer even more healing potential. Currently, researchers have been electrically stimulating the whole tissue to treat injury. If we could direct these electrical signals to go specifically to where a remedy is needed, would stimulating individual cells be even more effective at treating wounds?

Our hope is that these findings could become a classic case of curiosity-driven science that leads to useful discovery. While our dream may carry a high risk of failure, it also offers potentially high rewards. (AP)



In this photo provided by NASA, Boeing Crew Flight Test astronauts Butch Wilmore, (left), and Suni Williams pose for a portrait inside the vestibule between the forward port on the International Space Station's Harmony module and Boeing's Starliner spacecraft on June 13, 2024. (AP)

Marathon mission ends

NASA's stuck astronauts are finally heading back to Earth

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 18, (AP): NASA's two stuck astronauts headed back to Earth with SpaceX on Tuesday to close out a dramatic marathon mission that began with a bungled Boeing test flight more than nine months ago.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams bid farewell to the International Space Station - their home since last spring - departing aboard a SpaceX capsule alongside two other astronauts. The capsule undocked in the wee hours and aimed for a splashdown off the Florida coast by early evening, weather permitting.

The two expected to be gone just a week or so after launching on Boeing's new Starliner crew capsule on June 5. So many problems cropped up on the way to the space station that NASA eventually sent Starliner back empty and transferred the test pilots to SpaceX, pushing their homecoming into February. Then SpaceX capsule issues added another month's delay. Sunday's arrival of their relief crew meant Wilmore and Williams could finally leave. NASA cut them loose a little early, given the iffy weather forecast later this week. They checked out with NASA's Nick Hague and Russia's Alexander Gorbunov, who arrived in their own SpaceX capsule last fall with two empty seats reserved for the Starliner duo.

(418 kilometers) above the Pacific. Their plight captured the world's

attention, giving new meaning to the phrase "stuck at work." While other astronauts had logged longer spaceflights over the decades, none had to deal with so much uncertainty or see the length of their mission expand by so much.

Wilmore and Williams quickly transitioned from guests to full-fledged station crew members, conducting experiments, fixing equipment and even spacewalking together. With 62 hours over nine spacewalks, Williams set a new record: the most time spent spacewalking over a career among female astronauts.

Both had lived on the orbiting ab before and knew the ropes. brushed up on their station training before rocketing away. Williams became the station's commander three months into their stay and held the post until earlier this month.

Novel hydrogel to fight arthritis

Breakthrough

TIANJIN, March 18, (Xinhua): A research team from north China's Tianjin University has developed a new type of injectable hydrogel that can regulate immune cell metabolism, helping to reduce inflammation and slow down rheumatoid arthritis.

The findings were recently published in Advanced Functional Materials

Rheumatoid arthritis is a painful and relentless chronic disease. It occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy joints, leading to deformities and disabilities, making everyday life a struggle for millions of people.

Scientists have discovered that a key factor in this process is the metabolism of immune cells, particularly macrophages. When these cells' metabolic pathways go off balance, they release excessive inflammatory signals that worsen the disease. If this metabolism could be controlled, it might open up a new way to treat rheumatoid arthritis.

by the researchers is made from biodegradable alginate and has a special dual-network structure, making it easy to inject and allowing for the controlled release of therapeutic agents. Once inside the joint, the hydrogel reacts to the acidic environment of the inflamed area, gradually releasing zinc ions and small interfering RNA.

Cholera: The World Health Or-

'Don't make beef a habit'

Grass-fed beef 'no greener' than industrial beef for climate: study

NEW YORK, March 18, (AP): For cattle fattened in fields instead of feedlots, the grass may be greener, but the carbon emissions are not.

A study out Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences finds that even in the most optimistic scenarios, grass-fed beef produces no less planet-warming carbon emissions than industrial beef. The finding calls into question the frequent promotion of grass-fed beef as a more environmentally friendly option. Still, other scientists say grass-fed beef wins out on other factors like animal welfare or local environmental pollution, complicating the choice for

"I think that there is a large portion of the population who really do wish their purchasing decisions will reflect their values," said Gidon Eshel, a research professor of environmental physics at Bard College and one of the study's authors. "But they are being misled, essentially, by the wrong

When it comes to food, beef contributes by far the most emissions fueling climate change and is one of the most resource- and land-intensive to produce. Yet demand for beef around the world is only expected to grow. And carefully weighing the benefits of grass-fed beef matters because in most parts of the world where beef production is expanding, such as South America, it's being done by deforesting land that would otherwise store carbon, said Richard Waite of the World Resources Institute.





Cattle graze on a ranch in Lufkin, Texas, April 18, 2023. (AP)

makes sense because it's less efficient to produce grass-fed cattle than their industrial counterparts. Animals that are fattened up in fields instead of feedlots grow more slowly and don't get as big, so it takes more of them to produce the same amount of meat.

The researchers used a numerical model of the emissions produced across the process of raising beef, then simulated many herds of industrial and grass-fed cattle. It compared differences in how much food they would eat, how much methane and carbon dioxide they would emit and how much meat they would produce. Those differences mirror real-life scenarios; cattle in arid New Mexico and lush northern Michigan have different inputs and outputs.

Êshel and his team also analyzed previous studies that examined how much cattle grazing promotes carbon storage, but found that even in the best-case scenarios, the amount of carbon that grasses could sequester didn't make up for the emissions of the cattle.

"I have a hard time imagining, even, a situation in which it will prove environmentally, genuinely wise, genuinely beneficial, to raise beef," Eshel said.

For consumers who truly want to be environmentally conscious, he added, "don't make beef a habit."

conscientious consumers.

information.'

The novel hydrogel developed

"We'll miss you, but have a great journey home," NASA's Anne Mc-Clain called out from the space station as the capsule pulled away 260 miles

Their mission took an unexpected twist in late January when President Donald Trump asked SpaceX founder Elon Musk to accelerate the astronauts' return and blamed the delay on the Biden administration. The replacement crew's brand new SpaceX capsule still wasn't ready to fly, so SpaceX subbed it with a used one, hurrying things along by at least a few weeks.

Even in the middle of the political storm, Wilmore and Williams continued to maintain an even keel at public appearances from orbit, casting no blame and insisting they supported NASA's decisions from the start.

ganization (WHO) and the international medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) have called for concerted efforts to contain the rapidly spreading cholera outbreak in western Ethiopia.

The MSF, in a statement issued Friday, said a cholera outbreak is "rapidly spreading" across western Ethiopia's Gambella Region, endangering thousands of lives, as regional health authorities reported over 1,500 cases and 31 deaths.

Noting the worsening violence in South Sudan's Upper Nile State, it warned that thousands are being displaced, losing access to healthcare, safe water, and sanitation.

Extreme heat to double heart disease burden

CANBERRA, March 18, (Xinhua): Extreme heat is a major contributor to heart disease in Australia, responsible for 7.3 percent of the total cardiovascular disease burden, a new study said on Monday.

Between 2003 and 2018, hot weather accounted for nearly 50,000 years of healthy life lost annually, with South Australia experiencing the highest impact and the Northern Territory the lowest, according to the study funded by the Adelaide University China Fee Scholarships and the Australian Research Council Discovery Program.

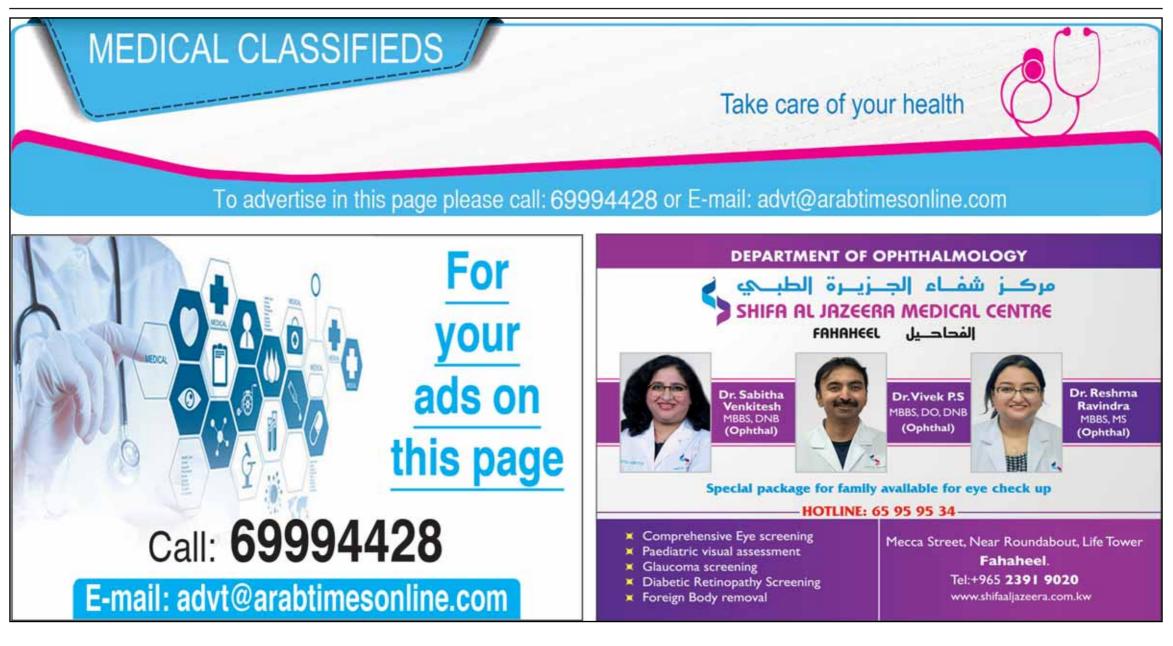
Under future climate scenarios, the burden of cardiovascular disease is expected to rise steadily. By the 2050s, under a high-emissions scenario, it is projected to more than double compared to the baseline, with the Northern Territory experiencing the most significant increase, said the study published in the European Heart Journal.

"When the weather is hot, our hearts have to work harder to help us cool down. This added pressure can be dangerous, especially for people with cardiovascular disease," said Bi Peng, the research lead from the University of Adelaide Public Health and Environmental Medicine.

"Many of us have experienced how

a warming climate can make us feel unwell, particularly during longer periods of extreme heat," Bi said, adding the exact number of people living with severe heart disease or dying prematurely due to rising temperatures remains uncertain. It is crucial to understand how this burden will grow in the future.

Using disability-adjusted life years to measure lost healthy years due to illness or death, the study underscores the urgent need for adaptation and mitigation strategies, including urban cooling initiatives, public health campaigns, and emergency response measures in hot days.



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Five takeaways from F1's season-opener

McLaren has ominous pace, Lewis Hamilton has work to do

MELBOURNE, March 18, (AP): Lando Norris heads to the second round of the Formula 1 season in China with a lead over champion Max Verstappen after winning a thrilling race in Australia.

Ahead of Sunday's race in Shanghai, here are five takeaways from the season-opening Australian Grand Prix:

Without the rain and the safety car, the Australian Grand Prix might not have been much of a contest.

The two McLarens of Norris and Oscar Piastri quickly built a lead of more than 15 seconds to Verstappen in third early in the race. The McLarens were also three-tenths of a second faster than anyone else in qualifying. So much for preseason predictions that this year could be exceptionally close between multiple teams.

Norris acknowledged McLaren are favorites but warned the team shouldn't get complacent. "If you start thinking things are good and groovy, that's when you get caught," he said. "We will have races where we struggle."

Lewis Hamilton briefly led on his Ferrari debut. Unfortunately for the seven-time champion, a strategy blunder meant Ferrari left Hamilton and his new teammate Charles Leclerc on dry tires in increasingly heavy rain. "Missed a big opportunity," Hamilton told Ferrari over the radio. Hamilton finished 10th, two places behind Leclerc

Hamilton and Ferrari may need to work on their communication. After more than a decade working with Peter "Bono" Bonnington at Mercedes, Hamilton was frustrated at regular radio updates from his new engineer Riccardo Adami. "Leave me to it, please," he said repeatedly.

No one expected Liam Lawson, in his 12th career F1 race, to beat his four-time champion teammate Verstappen.

However, Lawson also underperformed compared to Yuki Tsunoda, his old teammate, after being picked over Tsunoda for the Red Bull seat. Lawson qualified 18th and made little progress before crashing out. Tsunoda qualified fifth and was competitive, though a team strategy error meant he finished 12th. If Lawson doesn't improve, Red Bull could face even more scrutiny of its decision to pick him.

Formula 1's biggest rookie class in years struggled - with one big exception. The 18-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli became the secondyoungest driver ever to score F1 points, behind only Verstappen, as he finished fourth with a strong drive from 16th.

Of the other drivers starting their first full F1 seasons, Lawson, Sauber's Gabriel Bortoleto and Alpine's Jack Doohan crashed out, Racing Bulls Isack Hadjar crashed before the start and Haas Oliver Bearman was the last finisher in 14th.

Alex Albon benefited from his new teammate as he finished fifth for Williams' best result since 2021. Carlos Sainz, Jr. crashed out early but joined the team staff on the pit wall to offer Albon advice over the radio on how best to handle the rapidly changing weather. "We're a very bonded team," Albon said.



McLaren driver Lando Norris of Britain leads Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands during the Australian Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park, in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Coach full of confidence

Shining at short track worlds, Canada eyes more success at Winter Olympics

BEIJING, March 18, (Xinhua): Fresh off a historic six-gold, four-silver medal haul at the 2025 ISU World Short Track Championships in Beijing, Canada's head coach Marc Gagnon is eyeing more success at next year's Winter Olympics.

Despite the potential for winning multiple medals, Canada dominating the Beijing worlds still goes "a little over" Gagnon's expectations, as it swept all team and men's individual titles, after amassing 8,731 points across six World Tour events this season, nearly 2,000 points clear of rivals like the Netherlands.

"I'm very happy because we've had a really good year during the World Tour," said Gagnon, Canada's most decorated male Olympian with three gold medals. "But the last two World Tour events, we were struggling a little more than usual." "This weekend, we needed to get back on track as preparation for the Olympic Games. Winning at the World Championships is different - it's about becoming a world cham-pion, just like at the Olympics." Canada's relay dominance came as a surprise even for Gagnon. "We didn't expect to lead China and South Korea by that margin. Their collision helped us create the gap. Otherwise, it would've been a three-country race." "Our selection process in Canada is really hard on the skaters because we do a lot of races to select them," Gagnon acknowledged the challenges of maintaining momentum across a grueling season.

"Between the World Tour and keeping them ready, we needed to do mental work to bring them back this weekend," he said. "The big work was keeping them mentally prepared, happy and fit. Physically, we had no doubt. They were ready." Asked about training strategies, Gagnon downplayed any secrets. "It's just training, but not forgetting that there's a body and a mind. Every skater is human, and we need to take accurate the approximation of the about the to take care of that." As the 202425 season comes to an end, Gagnon plans a break of two to three weeks for his team before getting back to training in mid-April. "We don't have much time to lose." Looking to Milan-Cortina 2026, Gagnon tempered expectations. "Stress at the Games is always higher. If we can do two-thirds of what we did this weekend, I'd be happy," he admitted.

Canada clinched six medals including two golds in short track at Salt Lake City 2002 where Gagnon competed. Now, the 49-year-old is setting his sights higher.

"We're aiming for at least seven, hopefully eight," he said.



Irishman delivers an early knockout vs J.J. Spaun

PONTE VEDRA BEACH. Fla., March 18, (AP): The playoff was only three holes. Rory McIlroy needed only three swings. And yet his victory Monday over J.J. Spaun in The Players Championship revealed so much about the state of his game and the cruel nature of the notorious TPC Sawgrass.

McIlroy delivered an early knockout against J.J. Spaun with his best drive of the week that set up a simple birdie, followed by a three-quarter 9-iron into a cold, cackling wind that found land on

the island green at the par-3 17th. "By no means did I have my best stuff this week," McIlroy said after becoming the eighth multiple winner of The Players. "But I was still able to win one of the biggest tournaments in the world. That's a huge thing.'

It's the first time in his career he has won twice going into the Masters, the major that for more than a decade has kept him from joining golf's most elite group with the career Grand Slam.

Spaun thought he had the perfect answer until he saw his 8-iron sail over the island on the second playoff hole, ending his hopes of the biggest win of his career.

"Can I watch this?" Spaun said as he sat at a table, his eyes trained on a television in the back of the media center showing a replay of his tee shot on the 17th. It was his first time seeing where the ball landed - just beyond the wooden frame and into the water. He had heard only groans from the gallery.



Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, reacts during a trophy ceremony after winning a playoff round of The Players Championship golf tournament Monday, March 17, 2025, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. (AP)

and couldn't get back to sleep. Whether this was about trying to win or trying not to lose - he had a three-shot lead with five holes to play in the final round Sunday - didn't matter.

He worked on his tee shot with the same helping wind off the right. To practice in the right wind for the 17th, McIlroy turned and hit balls from the range toward the third green. McIlroy had been spotty off the tee all week, missing nearly half of his fairways. He set the tone with his best of the week, a 336-yard blast right down the middle that set up a pitching wedge from 176 yards into the par-5 16th for a two-putt birdie from 35 feet.

"Get up."

"It just looked like it was going to be short," Spaun said. "I was stunned. I couldn't believe it was long. I'm happy with the swing I put on it - I am. The wind must have just laid down just a little too much, and it just went through

Goydos came up short and into the water, and there is no lonelier walk than to the drop zone knowing it's over.

Spaun wound up three-putting from 45 feet for triple bogey. McIlroy ran his 30-footer well past the hole for a bogey, giving him a three-shot lead. Both hit drives well right on the 18th.



And he still couldn't believe it. "I never thought it was long," he said quietly. "I never thought it was long.

So ended a memorable week at golf's richest tournament, where thousands of spectators showed up in the cold and wind for 47 minutes of golf between McIlroy - among the most celebrated players who now has 39 worldwide wins - and Spaun, a 34-year-old with one PGA Tour title who until this week had never broken 70 on the TPC Sawgrass.

McIlroy said he woke up at 3 a.m.

"I thought if I could get the ball in the fairway there, it sort of puts a little bit of pressure on J.J.," he said. "To step up and make that swing was awesome.

And then it effectively ended on the 17th.

"When my ball was in the air, I was telling it to get down," McIlroy said. Spaun hit his 8-iron with a higher

trajectory into a hurting wind off the right, and his first instinct was to yell,

The first three-hole playoff in 10 years at The Players was caused by a four-hour rain delay on Sunday. McIlroy had to make a 4-foot par putt on the 72nd hole. Spaun had a 30-foot birdie putt for the win that stopped inches short

the wind. Wasn't my time.

McIlroy, disappointed and having lost a three-shot lead on the back nine, looked ahead to the playoff by saying, "Make five good swings tomorrow morning and get this thing done."

Turns out he only needed three - the driver and wedge on No. 16, the 9-iron on No. 17 - to beat Spaun and claim the \$4.5 million prize from the \$25 million purse.

It was reminiscent of a 2008 playoff between Sergio Garcia and Paul Goydos, back when the 17th was used in sudden death. Garcia hit the green. McIlroy took a safe bogey and Spaun didn't bother putting the 10-footer he had left for bogey.

Any mention of The Players being the fifth major or even resembling one is not where McIlroy wants to go right now because he knows the real one - the big one - is a month away at Augusta National. The trick now is to keep his game in good stead. He also won the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am last month. He plans to add one more start in Houston or San Antonio before the Masters.

"Everything feels like it's in good working order at the minute," he said. "Just keep practicing and doing the right things and practicing the right habits, and day after day, week after week, they all add up to days like today.'

Gauff heads home to Miami Open after her 21st birthday & a bit of a rough patch

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., March 18, (AP): Coco Gauff shrugged her right shoulder and chuckled a bit Monday at the notion that she seems to illicit concern from others when she goes through a two- or threematch losing streak - a rough patch in the course of a long season.

"Sometimes when I don't do well, people think there's something personally wrong with me," Gauff said at the Miami Open..

Bow out early at one event or two - or drop a trio of outings consecutively, as she did at the Australian Open, Qatar and Dubai in January and February - and fans or former players will ask the 2023 U.S. Open champion, who just turned 21 last week, whether she's OK.

"I'm like, 'I just lost a couple of matches! I'm chillin'," said Gauff, who has a first-round bye because she is seeded No. 3 at the hard-court Masters 1000 event and will get started by taking on another past Grand Slam champion - Petra Kvitova or Sofia Kenin - in the second round later in the week.

"I'm obviously not happy with those past results, but it's one of those things that, in the history of my



In this file photo, Coco Gauff of the United States returns a shot to Yuliia Starodubtseva of Ukraine during the women's singles quarterfinals match of the China Open tennis tournament, at the National Tennis Center in Beijing. (AP)

career, I've had ups and downs. I still feel like I have a couple more years ... (to reach) that point where every week is a great week, I guess," said Gauff, who is based not far from where the Miami Open is played. "I'm also in the middle of changes in my game; it's been difficult."

She's spoken frequently about those switches, which began with adjusting her coaching staff after last year's U.S. Open and also included adapting her serve - with a particular eye on shoring up second serves so as to avoid double-fault issues - and her forehand.

It's been clear ever since she burst onto the scene as a 15-year-old qualifier at Wimbledon in 2019, beating seven-time major champion Venus Williams along the way to reaching the fourth round, that Gauff's backhand is nothing if not elite, while her forehand is the shot that opponents tend to go after.

The American's most recent match was a three-set loss to Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Belinda Bencic at Indian Wells, California, in the fourth round last week. Afterward, Bencic spoke about what her thinking was at 4-all in the final set.

"I felt like she was more tense," Bencic said about Gauff, "so I felt like that was the right time to go for her forehand.'

Gold medalist Steven Dubois (center) of Canada, silver medalist William Dandjinou (right) of Canada and bronze medalist Pietro Sighel of Italy react after the awarding ceremony for the men's 1000m final A at the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2025 in Beijing, China. (Xinhua)

Best of the Rest

China starts coach selection: China's sports authority has started the selection process for the new head coach of the Chinese women's national volleyball team.

According to an announcement released on Tuesday, the new head coach should possess a clear coaching style, outstanding management ability, and profound coaching experience to lead the team in major tournaments such as the World Championship, Asian Games, Olympic Games, and others during the 2025-2028 cvcle.

Candidates are required to submit their applications before next Tuesday.

At the Paris Olympic Games, China's women's volleyball team reached the quarterfinals under coach Cai Bin. Cai began his tenure in February 2022, guiding the team to the final of the 2023 FIVB Women's Volleyball Nations League and securing gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games. (Xinhua)

qqq Thuram ruled out of quarters: France striker Marcus Thuram has been ruled out of the Nations League quarterfinal against Croatia because of a left ankle injury

Thuram showed up at France's training camp on Monday and underwent medical tests that ruled out the Inter Milan forward. Coach Didier Deschamps decided against calling up a replacement for Thuram, the French Football Federation said on Tuesday. (AP)

Chelsea 'appalled at abuse': Chelsea expressed its disgust after Wesley Fofana was targeted by racially abusive messages on social media after the 1-0 loss to Arsenal in the Premier League.

The French defender used his Instagram stories to highlight the discriminatory messages he was sent on the platform on Sunday. They included racist words and monkey emojis. "The abuse Wes Fofana has been subjected to following yesterday's fixture

is abhorrent and will not be tolerated," Chelsea said.

The club said it was "appalled and disgusted" by the rise in online abuse toward its players and said they have its "full support." (AP)

Change Name

I, HUJEFA ALI, holder of Indian Passport Number: Z4825192 Permanent Address House 38, Marothiya Bazar, Indore District: Indore, State: Madhya Pradesh, PIN Code: 452001 Do hereby Correct my Name HUZEFA AKODIAWALA

Alabama's bench could be key to the Tide making another deep run in the NCAA tourney

TUSCALOOSA, Ala., March 18, (AP): With versatile point guard Mark Sears and mustachioed forward Grant Nelson, Alabama has two of the more recognizable players in the NCAA Tournament.

The duo led the Crimson Tide to the Final Four last year and returned to school in hopes of delivering the program's first national title. But Bama's supporting cast - specifically its bench - might be the key to making another deep run, especially with Nelson dealing with a left knee injury.

The second-seeded Tide (25-8) open NCAA play against No. 15 seed Robert Morris in Cleveland on Friday, giving Nelson an extra day to recover from an injury sustained in the first half of a loss to Florida in the semifinals of the Southeastern Conference Tournament on Saturday. The good news? Alabama ranks seventh in the country in bench points, averaging 34.19 a game from its reserves. It's the kind of diversified scoring that makes coach Nate Oats' squad a daunting matchup for anyone in the field, especially on short notice.

"We have guys that have been battle-tested, and we have some guys that have some savvy about them to stay in those games and make plays, and we're going to need that to make runs here in March," Oats said.

Because of injuries, Alabama's bench might not be quite as stout as Purdue coach Matt Painter insisted in November when he said the Tide's backups could form their own team - and would be ranked.

But the group was more than solid down the stretch and in the SEC Tournament. Jarin Stevenson scored 16 points in 19 minutes in a win against Kentucky, and fellow sophomore forward Mouhamed Dioubate finished with 12 points and 12 rebounds in a loss to Florida in the semifinals.

The Tide also got highly touted freshman Derrion

Reid back after he missed nearly a month while recovering from a hamstring injury. "We knew he was going to be rusty," Oats said. "It's hard when you don't practice for a few weeks in a row. Only had a few practices. ... I thought he was able to get a little flow, knock some

of the rust off. We were able to get him almost 10 minutes. ... He wasn't bad in his minutes.' With Sears and Nelson leading the team in min-

utes (and points), the Tide have the No. 1 scoring offense in the country at 91.4 points a game. Alabama has topped 100 points a whopping eight times, including five in SEC play.

SPORTS

Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader welcomes CAS rulings in favor of Asian Aquatics Federation

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: The President of the Kuwait and Asian Aquatics Federations Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader Al-Sabah welcomed the two decisions issued by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which dismissed the cases filed by the Swimming Federation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The court ruled that all decisions taken during the Asian Aquatics Federation General Assembly in Doha on February 12, 2024, were legal and valid, in line with the principles of good governance.

The CAS also ruled that the decisions made during the Asian Aquatics Federation's elective General Assembly

meeting on April 26, 2024 in Bangkok were legal and valid, in line with good governance standards.

The court confirmed that the results of the federation's Board of Directors elections were legal and in accordance with the federation's constitution.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader expressed his satisfaction with the legal rulings issued by the CAS, emphasizing that they were in favor of the Asian Aquatics Federation.

He stressed that it is time to move past these events and focus on the future, without any interference from external parties in the affairs of the aquatics community.



Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader

Atletico's season falling apart after consecutive losses to Madrid, Barca



Atletico Madrid's Rodrigo Riquelme, right, goes for the ball past Barcelona's Inigo Martinez during a La Liga soccer match between Atletico Madrid and FC Barcelona at the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid. (AP)

Simeone left searching for answers for team's sudden struggles

MADRID, March 18, (AP): In just a Simeone wasn't giving up yet on the title race to bad luck, though he acknowledged that it played

Bach stresses unity and neutrality ahead of election

COSTA NAVARINO, Greece, March 18, (Xinhua): Outgoing International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach underscored the principles of unity and political neutrality as critical to safeguarding the Olympic Movement's future.

The remarks came on the eve of the IOC 144th Session's opening ceremony at the ancient site of Olympia, after which members will elect a new IOC president on Thursday.

Invoking the words of Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Movement, Bach framed the historic gathering as both a symbolic and pragmatic milestone.

"Coubertin once said the Olympic Games are always a pilgrimage to the past and an act of faith in the future. This is what we are about to do," he stated.

"Tomorrow, we will begin our pilgrimage to the past.

"Then, we will perform acts of faith in the brilliant future of the Olympic Movement."

When asked about advice for his successor, Bach emphasized two nonnegotiable priorities.

"First, keep putting athletes at the heart of the Olympic Movement. Second, preserve the unity of the Olympic family," said Bach, who is set to step down in June.

"Unity does not mean everyone must have the same opinion. It means all are committed to the same values."

To achieve this unity, Bach outlined two foundational principles. First is solidarity.

"Every member-particularly every Olympic Committee-must be treated equally, must have access to the benefits of the Olympic Movement, and must have the chance to develop, to grow," he asserted.

"We must close the gap between privileged and less-privileged Olympic Committees.

"Each must not only have a voice but a vote."

The second principle is political neutrality. Addressing rising tensions in a multipolar world, Bach warned of attempts by "emerging geopolitical blocs to pull the Olympic Movement to their side."

"If the IOC takes the position in favor of one or the other, the Olympic Movement would be torn apart.

"It would not be a global movement anymore. It will just be an instrument, another tool for politics to divide this world even more," he said.



International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, center, speaks during a press conference, ahead of the 144th session which will elect the new IOC President, in Costa Navarino, southwestern Greece. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Central Cordoba sinks Tigre: Leonardo Heredia scored in the 91st minute as Central Cordoba recovered from a goal down to clinch a 2-1 away victory over Tigre in Argentina's Primera Division Apertura tournament on Monday. Alfio Oviedo gave the host the lead by taking advantage of a deflection to prod home from close range in the 72nd minute. Central Cordoba equalized eight minutes later when Gaston Veron converted from the penalty spot after Lorenzo Scipioni handled in the area. Heredia completed a remarkable turnaround as he side-footed home from the edge of the six-yard box following Matias Perello's cross from the left wing. The result ended a three-game winless run for Central Cordoba and lifted the side to sixth in the 15-team Group A standings with 17 points, four points behind third-placed Tigre. Elsewhere, Union Santa Fe registered a 3-1 home victory over Banfield, Velez Sarsfield won 2-1 at Atletico Tucuman, and Platense prevailed 2-0 at San Martin. (Xinhua)

matter of days, one of Atletico Madrid's most promising seasons turned into great disappointment.

Playing well and with confidence, Atletico looked poised for a deep run in the Champions League, and was holding steady at the top of the Spanish league, in position to fight for both titles.

Then came a pair of setbacks, both at home and in heart-breaking fashion. First it was a penalty shootout loss to Real Madrid in the round of 16 in the Champions League last Wednesday, and four days later a 4-2 defeat against Barcelona in the Spanish league after Diego Simeone's team had led 2-0 midway through the second half.

Simeone was left searching for answers for the team's sudden struggles, and looking for ways to put it back on track for what is left of the season.

"What can we do?" the head coach said. "On Wednesday we get back to training, with the same motivation as always, with the same spirit, and accepting that it is what it is." in the Spanish league, but Sunday's loss meant that Atletico fell four points behind both Madrid - which won 2-1 at Villarreal on Saturday - and league leader Barcelona, which has a game in hand and can potentially increase its gap to Atletico to seven points.

"Barcelona has an important advantage," Simeone said. "We have to be realistic, but we will keep going match by match until the end."

Atletico looked in control against Barcelona at the Metropolitano Stadium. But Barcelona was able to equalize with goals six minutes apart in the 72nd and 78th minutes, and got the victory with a pair of goals in stoppage time. Against Madrid in the Champions League, At-

Against Madrid in the Champions League, Atletico looked in position to finally end its long slump against its city rival in the competition, but it couldn't come through a penalty shootout despite playing better during most parts of the tie.

In the shootout, a rare double touch by Atletico forward Julián Álvarez while taking his penalty led to yet another elimination.

Simeone didn't want to blame his team's defeats

a part. He also noted his side needed to be more assertive at key points in matches, especially when it was playing better and could have sealed victory.

Against Barcelona, Simeone took some blame by saying that he should have made a change quicker than he did, adding defender José María Giménez sooner into the game. "When we went up 2-0, I should have added Giménez earlier, before they restarted the match," Simeone said. "But they restarted and scored the first goal, and then came the second."

Simeone defended his players, saying they "have given it all, they have always competed and the fans have recognized that." Atletico visits Espanyol after the international break before hosting Barcelona again in the second leg of the semifinals of the Copa del Rey, a competition Atletico hasn't won since 2013, not long after Simeone took over.

The teams drew 4-4 in Barcelona in the first match last month, when Atletico was losing 4-2 until the 84th. Madrid and Real Sociedad are in the other semifinal, with Madrid having won 1-0 away in the first leg.

China announces roster: China's table tennis team announced its roster for next month's ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup on Tuesday, with the 10-player list featuring prominent names like Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha.

The ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup will be held in Macao, China, from April 14 to 20. The Chinese men's representatives include Lin Shidong, Wang Chuqin, Liang Jingkun, Lin Gaoyuan, and Huang Youzheng, while the women's team will feature Sun Yingsha, Wang Manyu, Wang Yidi, Chen Xingtong, and Kuai Man.

The qualification pathway for the World Cup, released by the ITTF in February, includes automatic qualification for current world champions, U19 world champions, and players qualifying through Continental Cups and world rankings. (Xinhua)

Uncapped forward Carbonero earns Colombia call-up

Messi out of World Cup qualifiers against Uruguay and Brazil due to adductor injury

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 18, (AP): Lionel Messi will miss Argentina's World Cup qualifiers against Uruguay and Brazil over the next eight days because of an injury to his adductor.

The 37-year-old Messi was not included in the 25-man squad announced on Monday by coach Lionel Scaloni. Later Monday, Inter Miami said Messi - the reigning Major League Soccer MVP - underwent an MRI "to assess the extent of the discomfort in his adductor region," an injury that the team said occurred in Sunday's win over Atlanta United.

"The examination's findings confirmed the presence of a low-grade injury in the adductor muscle," Inter Miami said. "His clinical progress and response to treatment will determine his availability for competition."

Argentine media initially reported Messi suffered a sore left thigh on Sunday during Inter Miami's 2-1 victory.

Argentina, which leads South America, will visit second-placed Uruguay on Friday and host fifthplaced Brazil four days later at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires.

Messi was not the only absen-

tee for the two matches that could seal Argentina's qualification. Also ruled out were Paulo Dybala, Gonzalo Montiel and Giovani Lo Celso.

Scaloni also dropped Alejandro Garnacho and Claudio Echeverri from the larger squad announced on March 2.

Messi, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner who captained and

led Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title, has been sidelined several times by Inter Miami this season because of injury concerns.

This month, Messi missed three games but returned on Thursday for the second leg of the round-of-16 CONCACAF Champions Cup tie against Cavalier SC.

Inter Miami coach Javier

 Mascherano said Messi was fit to start against Atlanta on Sunday.
Messi scored in the 20th minute, just before he was reported to have been injured.

Uncapped forward Johan Carbonero has been called up to Colombia's squad for the FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Brazil and Paraguay, the Colombian Football Federation said.

The 25-year-old replaces Bournemouth attacker Luis Sinisterra, who was omitted from the 26-man squad after suffering an undisclosed injury in his team's 2-1 home defeat to Brentford in the Premier League on Saturday.

Carbonero has impressed since joining Brazil's Internacional on loan from Argentine side Racing in January.

Colombia will meet Brazil in Brasilia on Thursday and Paraguay in Barranquilla five days later.

Nestor Lorenzo's men are currently fourth in the 10-team South American zone standings with 19 points from 12 outings.

The top six sides will automatically qualify for the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada while the seventhranked side will advance to an intercontinental playoff.





Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi (10) attempts a shot against Atlanta United midfielder Tristan Muyumba, left, during the first half of an MLS soccer match in Atlanta. (AP)



Minnesota Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert (27) blocks a shot by Indiana Pacers forward Bennedict Mathurin (00) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Minneapolis. (AP)



Blues conclude training

Kuwait set for Iraq test as World Cup qualifiers enter crucial phase

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BASRA, Iraq, March 18: Kuwait will wrap up its training session Wednesday, at the Basra Sports City Stadium in preparation for its crucial encounter against Iraq on Thursday, in the seventh round of Group B matches for the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

The Blues arrived yesterday afternoon from Dubai, where they had been in a training camp since March 9.

During the camp, they played a single friendly match against China, which ended in a 3-1 defeat.

Kuwait currently sits in fifth place in Group B with four points. South Korea leads the group with 14 points, followed by Iraq with 11, Jordan with 9, Oman with 6, and Palestine with 3.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Football Association has announced the arrival of Mirjas Doski, a Viktoria Plzen player from the Czech Republic, and Zidane Iqbal, a forward for Dutch club Utrecht, to the national team camp in Basra this evening, Monday.

In an official statement, the Iraqi FA confirmed that the duo will join the national team's group training session tomorrow, Tuesday, before the squad is fully completed with the arrivals of Adam Rashid and Charbel Shlimon.

Iraq continued its preparations this evening at Basra Sports City, with 25 players participating.

The training session was attended by Adnan Darjal, Chairman of the Iraqi FA Board of Directors, Ahmed Al-Moussawi, a member of the Executive Office, and Badr Nasser, Chairman of the Basra Sub-Federation.

Iraq will host Kuwait on March 20 before traveling to face Palestine on March 25 in rounds 7 and 8 of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.



Kuwait players' last training session in Dubai.

Undermanned Nuggets snap Warriors streak

SAN FRANCISCO, March 18, (AP): Aaron Gordon scored a season-best 38 points, Russell Westbrook hit a crucial late 3-pointer and delivered a triple-double, and undermanned Denver missing their two main stars beat Golden State 114-105.

Westbrook contributed 12 points, a season-high 16 assists and 11 rebounds.

Jimmy Butler had 23 points, eight rebounds and six assists as the Warriors had their seven-game winning streak snapped. Golden State dropped to 14-3 since Butler made his debut Feb. 8 and 14-2 in games he played.

Stephen Curry had 20 points and seven assists and Draymond Green became the sixth player in Warriors franchise history to reach 6,000 career rebounds.

Knicks 116, Heat 95

In New York, Mikal Bridges scored 28 points, Josh Hart tied a franchise record with his eighth triple-double this season and the New York Knicks beat Miami, sending the Heat to their first eight-game losing streak of coach Erik Spoelstra's career.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points for the Knicks, who fell behind 12-0, then completely turned around the game after Towns scored 15 straight in the second quarter. New York won the season series 3-0 for its first sweep of Miami since 1992-93.

New York led by six midway though the third quarter when the game was delayed for the court to be cleaned up after a fan vomited. The Knicks outscored the Heat 24-6 after the delay to lead 88-64 heading into the fourth.

Rockets 144, 76ers 137

In Houston, Jalen Green and Jabari Smith Jr. had 30 points apiece and Houston rallied for an overtime victory over Philadelphia, extending their season-best winning streak to seven games.

The Rockets trailed by as many as 25 points and never led in regulation before their late rally.

Houston was up by six points after opening overtime with a 9-3 run. Quentin Grimes made a 3-pointer to cut the lead to 140-137 with less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes left in OT.

But Alperen Sengun made two free throws with just over a minute left before Aaron Holiday added two more with 12.1 seconds remaining, making it 144-137 and securing the win.

Lakers 125, Spurs 109

In Los Angeles, Austin Reaves scored 30 points and Luka Doncic had 21 points, 14 assists and nine rebounds in Los Angeles' victory over San Antonio.

Knicks sweep struggling Heat



Dorian Finney-Smith added 15 points while hitting four 3-pointers for the Lakers, who extended their home winning streak to eight games with back-to-back victories over Phoenix and San Antonio following four consecutive losses on the road.

Stephon Castle had 23 points and Devin Vassell scored 15 of his 17 in the first half for the Spurs, who have lost five of seven.

Kings 132, Grizzlies 122

In Sacramento, Malik Monk had 28 points and seven assists, and the Kings beat Memphis to end a four-game losing streak despite losing center Domantas Sabonis to a pair of injuries Monday night.

Sabonis suffered a cut over his left eye and blood trickled down his face after the Kings' big man was hit in the face by the back of Luke Kennard's head. Sabonis returned but left for good in the third quarter after rolling his right ankle.

Pacers 132, Timberwolves 130

In Minneapolis, Obi Toppin's fourth 3-pointer of overtime came with 3.5 sec-

Golden State Warriors' Jonathan Kuminga and Denver Nuggets' Spencer Jones vies for a loose ball in 4th quarter during Dubs' 114-105 loss in NBA game at Chase Center in San Francisco. (AP)

onds left to lift short-handed Indiana over Minnesota, ending the Timberwolves' eight-game winning streak.

Toppin had a season-high 34 points on 7-for-10 shooting from deep to help the Pacers win without their top six scorers down the stretch. Four starters were out. Andrew Nembhard was ejected in the third quarter, and Bennedict Mathurin fouled out in the fourth.

Pistons 127, Pelicans 81

In New Orleans, Cade Cunningham had 24 points and eight assists, and Detroit routed New Orleans.

Simone Fontecchio scored 23 points for Detroit, which had dropped four of six.

Zion Williamson had 30 points for New Orleans, and Yves Missi finished with 12 points, 10 rebounds and two blocks.

Bulls 111, Jazz 97

In Salt Lake City, Coby White scored 26 points and Chicago beat Utah, sending the Jazz to their 10th straight loss.

White, who shot 9 of 19 from the field and 2 for 10 from long distance, was helped by 6-for-7 shooting from the line. Tre Jones added 18 points, 12 assists and three steals as the Bulls won for the fifth time in six games. Kevin Huerter and Matas Buzelis each scored 17. Dalen Terry chipped in with 11 points as six Bulls scored in double figures.

Kuwait appoints Iceland's

Kuwait Club secures victory over Kazma to claim league lead



Players in action during the volleyball league match.

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 18: Kuwait Club's first volleyball team achieved a major milestone, securing a crucial 3-1 victory (25-20, 25-18, 19-25, 25-21) over league leaders Kazma in the 24th round of the Volleyball League. The match took place at the Volleyball Association Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.

With this win, Kuwait Club not only toppled Kazma but also

climbed to the top of the standings, overtaking the "Orange Team" in the title race.

Updated League Standings: Kuwait Club – 23 points, Kazma & Al-Shabab – 21 points (Kazma leads on set difference), Qadsia – 18 points, Burgan – 13 points, Al-Arabi – 12 points, Al-Nasr – 11 points, Sulaibikhat – 9 points, Yarmouk – 5 points, Al-Tadamon – 3 points, Al-Sahel SC – 2 points

As the league intensifies, Burgan will face Yarmouk in a 25thround clash at the Union Hall tonight at 9:00 pm.

KUWAIT CITY, March 18, (KUNA): The Kuwait Handball Federation announced on Mon-

(KUNA): The Kuwait Handball Federation announced on Monday the appointment of Icelandic coach Aron Kristjansson as the new head coach of the national handball team on a one-year contract.

Khaled Talib, Treasurer of the Kuwait Handball Federation, told KUNA that after thorough negotiations, he successfully convinced Kristjansson to take on the role.

The experienced coach brings extensive knowledge of Gulf handball, having previously led Bahrain's national team.

Talib emphasized that the appointment comes at a crucial time, with major tournaments on the horizon, including the Arab Cup in May and the 2026 Asian Cup. Kristjansson will need to quickly familiarize himself with the Kuwaiti squad to ensure the team is well-prepared for the upcoming challenges.

Kristjansson, 52, has over two decades of coaching experience in Iceland, Germany, and Denmark, in addition to managing



Aron Kristjansson the new head coach of Kuwait handball team.

the Icelandic national team from 2012 to 2016.

He later took charge of Bahrain in 2018.

As a former professional player, he competed from 1990 to 2004, further adding to his rich handball pedigree.

China arrives in Saudi Arabia for World Cup qualifiers

RIYADH, March 18, (Xinhua): Chinese men's national football team arrived in Riyadh on Monday night to begin its final preparations for the upcoming match against Saudi Arabia in the 2026 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers scheduled for Thursday.

Arriving from Dubai, the Chinese team landed at the King Khalid International Airport, where they were welcomed by dozens of waiting fans.

A representative of the Chinese Football Association told Xinhua that after two weeks of training in Dubai, the team is in good condition. The team began its training in Riyadh on Tuesday, aiming to be in top form for the Saudi Arabia match.

Japan currently leads Group C with 16 points, followed by Australia with seven points. Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and China are level on six points.

Indonesia has completed the renovation of 17 stadiums to meet FIFA standards and aims to double this number within two to three years, according to President **Prabowo Subianto**.

Prabowo inaugurated all 17 stadiums at the Gelora Delta Sidoarjo Stadium in East Java province on Monday afternoon. During the inauguration, he said that

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AHMED AL JARALLAH

these international-standard sports facilities would help improve the quality of football in the country.

Prabowo noted that the stadiums meet international standards and have been inspected by FIFA. "I would like to thank all parties who have worked hard so that today we can

"I would like to thank all parties who have worked hard so that today we can inaugurate all 17 international-standard stadiums, which have been inspected by FIFA and declared compliant with the requirements," Prabowo said.

The president stated that the government plans to increase the number of FIFAstandard stadiums in various regencies as part of efforts to enhance football quality nationwide.

"In the next two or three years, we will build maybe 17 or even 20 more stadiums. Every regency must have good stadiums. That is our target, we will achieve it," he said.

During the inauguration, **Erick Thohir**, chairman of the Indonesian Football Association, said that the stadium renovations reflect the government's commitment to advancing the country's football standards, adding that the goal is to establish a strong football ecosystem that aligns with the FIFA regulations.

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IN FREE KUWAIT Published by: Arab Times Publishing House

Editorial Office:

Tel: **24826912 -** Airport Road, Shuwaikh P.O. Box: 2270, 13023 Safat, Kuwait E-mail: **arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com**

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