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Kuwait's disabled athletes symbols of strength: Amir



Left: His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister, visits the Kuwait Disabled Sport Club (KDSC). Right: His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and the Acting Prime Minister, visits the Kuwait Blind Association (KBA).

Sheikh Meshal pledges more support for visually impaired

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (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 Disabled Sport Club (KDSC) on Tuesday evening. 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 KDSC Board Chairman Shafi Al-Hajeri. Expressing holy Ramadan wishes for the audience in a speech, His Highness the Amir said, "Together with my

brother His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and my brother companions, we are pleased to congratulate you on the holy month of Ramadan." "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. Renewing the state's support to the disabled "people with strong will and endurance," he said, "We reassure them that they are heroes in our eyes and badges on our chests. With their resolve and determination, they are able to make achievements whatever difficulties or challenges might be.

They are a source of inspiration for every sincere citizen in our dear homeland." His Highness the Amir noted that the State of Kuwait was one of the first countries that attached great importance to care for the people with disability in terms of health, education, sports and training, citing the legislations ensuring decent living "in the country of humanitarianism." Recalling the first public awareness forum "caring for you is our goal," he appreciated the efforts of the state bodies to build the capacity of the disabled in sport through cooperation with the competent regional and international organizations.

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

He traveled across the Arab countries and found no one who preserved loyalty

Al-Baghdadi ate half the loaf of bread and left the rest for a noble man.

Al-Baghdadi was infatuated with the cousin of the Shami man. The latter approved of his cousin marrying Al-Baghdadi, even though he loved her deeply.

Due to his dignified soul, the Shami man refused to accept money from his friend as charity.

He could not bear to see his friend in a difficult situation, so he devised a plan to save him.

My father taught you business, my mother is your palace maid, and my sister will marry you.

He reproached him: "I came to visit you, and you sent your maid with money as if I were a beggar."

3

Kuwait blasts Israeli raids in Syria

UN urged to act as over 400 Palestinians martyred in Gaza

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (KUNA): Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the recent Israeli occupation raids on the Syrian lands, in a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the ministry reiterated Kuwait's position calling for respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The statement stressed the importance of the Security Council assuming its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security, and putting an end to the blatant Israeli occupation violations, which threatens the security and stability of Syria and the entire region. Elsewhere, Kuwait's deputy permanent delegate to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva Abdullah Al-Khubaizi reiterated rejection of all violations being perpetrated by lawless groups against the security forces in Syria. The State of Kuwait maintains its principled stance against all acts that could destabilize Syria, Counselor Al-Khubaizi said in a statement an interactive dialogue by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

The event is part of the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council being held between February 24 and April 4, 2025. The Kuwaiti diplomat reaffirmed his country's support to the efforts aiming to protect human rights in Syria, appreciating the positive steps recently taken by the Syrian authorities towards national reconciliation and dialogue. Counsellor Al-Khubaizi welcomed the recent agreement to integrate the civilian and military entities in northeast Syria into the state institutions with a view to maintaining the country's sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity. He denounced the repeated attacks by the Israeli occupation forces on the Syrian people, saying these attacks run counter to the international law and the UN Charter and pose serious threat to the regional security. He renewed Kuwait's call for lifting the sanctions on Syria which have negative impacts on the basic rights of the Syrian people and hamper the post-conflict recovery.

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Ramadan Timings

Iftar Thursday 18:00
Imsak Friday 04:31

Kuwait faces unstable weather as rain, dust storm on horizon

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (KUNA): Kuwait is set to experience unstable weather due to the influence of a deepening surface depression combined with an upper-atmosphere system, the Kuwait Meteorological Department announced. According to the department's director, Dirar Al-Ali, cloud cover will increase from Wednesday evening, bringing chances of scattered light rain. Rainfall is expected to persist intermittently until Saturday evening, varying from light to heavy.

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Kuwait, UNICEF collab to provide education for Sudanese refugees

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (KUNA): The Public Authority for Minors Affairs signed an agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support the education of Sudanese refugees in Libya. In a statement on Wednesday, the authority's Acting Director General Dalal Al-Nouri said that the agreement aims to support and aid the Sudanese people, affected by the civil conflict that broke out in 2023. The agreement includes providing fully-equipped study classes, said Al-Nouri, adding that 2,500 children will benefit from the agreement. The project will be executed by UNICEF, under supervision of the the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she noted.



A stunning view of Kuwait City, showcasing its modern skyline and vibrant urban landscape.

Photo by Samer Shiqer

Faqaa ... nature's hidden gems

Kuwait's truffle season brings flavorful desert delight



Faqaa (desert truffle) seen on display at a market stand.

KUNA photo

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (KUNA): As winter sets in and extends into early spring, Kuwaitis eagerly seek out faqaa (desert truffle), a prized seasonal fungus known for its unique taste and rich flavor. The Kuwaiti variety, in particular, is highly valued, with different types varying in shape, color, and size, among them, Zubaidi is the most sought-after due to its large size, white color, and irregularly rounded shape, followed by Khalasi, Jabi, and Hober, the smallest of the varieties. For many, the truffle season is an opportunity to venture into the desert after thunderstorms and rainfall, which create ideal conditions for truffle growth. Typically lasting about two months, truffle season sees enthusiasts scanning the sandy or clay-rich terrain for telltale cracks and soil lumps-signs of truffles maturing underground, and once harvested, the truffles are either consumed or sold in the market, where they fetch high prices due to their rarity and culinary appeal.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Foreign Ministry on Wednesday condemned in strong terms the assassination bid on the Somali President **Sheikh Mahmud**. The ministry in a statement renewed the unwavering rejection of all forms of terrorism and violence, affirmed full support for the republic of Somalia with respect of the measures it may take to safeguard its security and stability. It offered condolences to the Somali Government and people and wished the injured quick recovery. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: The Turkish Lira made a record fall on Wednesday in the aftermath of arresting Istanbul's mayor, **Ekmrem Imamoglu**. The Lira dropped to 41 vis a vis the US dollar in today's early trades before rising to 47.38. Upon yesterday's market closing, it reached 67.36. Meanwhile, the Istanbul bourse declared temporary trades' cessation after the benchmark dropped by 87.6 percent. Sovereign bonds' proceeds rose by 175 points reaching 94.29 points. The mayor, the president's political foe, was detained on corruption charges and funding a terrorist group. (KUNA)

2 Kuwait, China discuss ways to boost strategic relations in all fields

3 Appeal fees hike stirs confusion; KBA team plans to file complaint



8 Gulf Bank appoints Bader Al-Ali and Faisal Al-Gharabally as General Managers

8 Zain Group introduces Global M2M offering to accelerate the proliferation of connected devices across the region

9 KIB Invest proudly sponsors UIC 20th Anniversary Ceremony

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:34	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:53	Maghrib ..	17:59
Zohr	11:56	Isha	19:15

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southerly wind to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-55 km/h causing rising dust and a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.
By Night: Rather cold and

Weather

cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southwesterly wind to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	30	20

Kuwait Airport	31	15
Abdaly	33	16
Bubyan	25	17
Jahra	33	19
Faiilaka Island	30	21
Salamiyah	25	19
Ahmadi	25	16
Jal Aliyah	32	17
Nuwaisib	32	16

Call for technology transfer, localizing industry

Kuwait, China discuss ways to boost strategic relations in all fields



KUWAIT'S Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Sameh Hayat, Kuwait's Ambassador to China, Jassim Al-Najim with Kuwaiti and Chinese officials.

BEIJING, March 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Sameh Hayat met with Assistant Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Jin Xin in Beijing on Tuesday.

They discussed ways to enhance the distinguished strategic relations between Kuwait and China in all fields.

Ambassador Hayat emphasized, in a statement to KUNA, the uniqueness of the bilateral relations with China on all levels and the importance of building on the continuous momentum from the meetings of senior officials.

He stressed the need for regular follow-up meetings in addition to other high-level visits that reflect the depth of the relationship between the two friendly countries.

Ambassador Hayat appreci-

ated the participation of Chinese state-owned companies in building major developmental projects in various fields in Kuwait, highlighting Kuwait's commitment to technology transfer, localizing industry, and enhancing investments in promising sectors, particularly in new and renewable energy and green hydrogen.

He clarified the alignment of views on key regional developments, reviewing with his Chinese counterpart in the ruling party the latest situations in the Middle East and their implications for regional security and stability.

For his part, the Chinese official praised Kuwait's balanced foreign policy and its wisdom regarding all regional and international issues, especially the uniqueness of its relations with various countries.

He stated that Kuwait's efforts

contribute to strengthening the foundations of international peace and security in the region, reaffirming the strategic bilateral relations and the necessity of enhancing them in all fields.

He also commended the distinguished bilateral relations, which have flourished for 54 years, noting the continuous progress and cooperation in various areas.

The meeting was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to China, Jassim Al-Najim, and

the diplomatic attaches Ajeel Al-Ahmed and Mubarak Al-Qamis from the Asia Department of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Al-Najim

Comply with Gulf Building Code: Al-Farsi

'Provide high-quality restrooms in Mubarakiya'

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi has affirmed that public restrooms are a necessity and basic requirement, not an option; hence, the need to comply with the Gulf Building Code, which ensures public health and safety through the establishment of unified building standards.

She pointed out that all build-

ings and facilities -- including commercial, investment, craft and public facilities -- should be required to provide restrooms that serve all visitors like the elderly, children and people with medical conditions.



Al-Farsi

She said the sustainable, high-quality restrooms

for men, women and people with special needs should be provided in all public facilities like the Mubarakiya Market, public and tourist facilities, public beaches and on-land travel routes.

She called for the display of clear guidance and identification signs for restrooms; which should be maintained and operated according to the systems, regulations and contracts determined by Kuwait Municipality in coordination with all concerned parties.

Revoked nationality women benefits at par with Kuwaitis

'All privileges for Article 8 females continue'

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) confirmed in a letter to all ministers that female employees whose citizenship has been revoked will continue to enjoy the job privileges enjoyed by female Kuwaiti employees, including allowances, bonuses, vacations, scholarships, reduced working hours, and more.

In the letter, CSC Chair Dr. Essam Al-Rubaian explained that the Civil Service Commission had decided to approve the continued enjoyment of various job benefits by female employees whose citizenship has been revoked, in accordance with Article 8. These benefits include the types of leave granted to female Kuwaiti employees in the government sector, as well as allowances and bonuses related to their jobs, such as the basic salary, social allowance, children allowance, cost of living allowance, financial incentives, financial support, special allowances, incentive bonuses, job level bonuses, and nature of work allow-

ance. Al-Rubaian explained that the CSC

also agreed that women in this category, whose citizenship was withdrawn, would continue to enjoy scholarships and study leave if the decree withdrawing citizenship was issued after the scholarship or study leave decision. They will also retain all benefits stipulated under the leave and study missions regulations during their study period. They would be entitled to all types of internal and external training courses specified in the government agency's plan, as well as reduced working hours in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations. They would also continue to receive any personal bonuses granted to them, as per the applicable regulations, along with annual bonuses for excellent service, bonuses for work teams and committees, and compensation for additional work assignments, all in accordance with the rules and conditions stipulated in the governing decisions.

Those whose citizenships were revoked, in accordance with Article 8, will continue to receive the financial benefits resulting from periodic bonuses, job promotions, or financial grade adjustments after reaching the maximum periodic bonus limit. These

benefits will be provided in accordance with the provisions, rules, and conditions established for Kuwaiti employees, in line with the regulating decisions. Based on the employer's request, CSC will determine the financial categories for these benefits, which will be granted as an increase to the comprehensive bonus in the concluded contract.

Meanwhile, Al-Rubaian said, "Supervisory positions and the supervisory allowance associated with these positions, as well as official missions outside the country, are exclusive to Kuwaiti employees. Transfer, secondment, and delegation will be governed by the regulating decisions. Regarding other allowances, bonuses, and rewards, including allowances for "shift, food, staying up late, danger, infection, pollution, and noise", as well as the incentive bonus for workers in remote areas and allowances for "distance, road, screen, training, night shift, and housing", the Council has decided that those whose citizenships were revoked, in accordance with Article 8, will continue to enjoy these benefits, provided they meet the conditions and controls stipulated in the regulating decisions."

Other Voices

'Remember me well in the tougher times'

By Ahmad alsarraf

ONE year ago, during the last Ramadan, five physicians and a senior administrator from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), armed with their expertise, equipment, and aid, took a bold step, and risked their lives to enter the war-torn Gaza Strip and offer support to its people. The team members were uncertain whether they would return to their families safely.

In March 2024, Dr. Musaed Rashid Al-Enezi, Dr. Hussein Al-Quwain, Dr. Faisal Al-Hajri, Dr. Muhammad Jamal, Dr. Muhammad Shamsah, and senior KRCS administrator Abdulrahman Al-Saleh made the decision to enter Gaza under any circumstances, becoming the first Arab or Islamic team to do so. Their mission was driven by their humanitarian duty, the oath they had taken, and their commitment to providing as much medical and food aid as possible to the people of Gaza. They aimed to perform the highest number of surgical operations possible, even under what could be described as the most horrific conditions in the history of warfare.

The team was fully aware of the magnitude of risks involved, particularly when confronting a ruthless and immoral enemy, all while war, destruction, serious injuries, death, and hunger were growing increasingly prevalent.

The team members spent four dangerous days among the wounded, injured, and those in need, providing whatever medical assistance they could. They accomplished far more than expected, performing numerous surgeries on the cases they were able to reach. They showed the Palestinian resistance fighters, the wounded, and defenseless civilians that their brothers from Kuwait had overcome their own wounds and psychological pain, risked their lives, and entered Palestine to offer much-needed aid.

Entering Gaza under those circumstances was a terrify-

ing adventure, and completing the tasks assigned to the team was even riskier. The team was fully aware of what they were about to undertake, as it was akin to a suicide mission, especially with the looming threat of an enemy that had abandoned even the most basic moral principles and mercy. As a result, the team members signed pledges to hold no party accountable for their safety before obtaining entry permits to Gaza from the relevant authorities.

The team not only faced the risk of conducting operations under continuous bombardment, but they also succeeded in distributing numerous food baskets and First Aid kits to the residents. They carried out their mission while the sounds of bomb explosions, artillery shells, and buzzing drones deafened their ears.

Despite the relentless bombardment day and night, some team members could scarcely believe they had returned from that trip unharmed. In the end, they were all deeply satisfied with what they had accomplished.

Meanwhile, some individuals from our nation mocked the Palestinian resistance, and were indifferent to the catastrophe the people of Gaza had suffered. They continued to remind us of their stance from 35 years ago in persistently supporting Israeli positions simply because they had an issue with the Palestinian resistance.

I reflected on the events of that great risk, its profound humanitarian significance, and the material, medical, and moral aid it provided to the people of Gaza. I thought of the long and remarkable history of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the role of the chairman and members of its last elected Board of Directors. I also recalled the verse composed by the distinguished poet Abu Firas Al-Hamdani: "My people will remember me well in hard times. The darker the night, the more the full moon is missed".

Meanwhile, I wish the best of luck to the chairman and members of KRCS's new Board of Directors.



e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

Good opportunity to meet colleagues: Dr Shamsah

Kuwait pediatricians gather at Ramadan ghabqa

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Kuwait Pediatric Society organized its first Ghabqa recently in a special Ramadan atmosphere that brought together all pediatricians from various hospitals in a bid to develop communication and strengthen relationships among professionals in the same field.

President of the society and Pediatric Consultant Dr. Abdullah Shamsah pointed out that the event is a good opportunity to meet with colleagues, while mentioning the achievements of the organization over the past three years -- both locally and internationally.

He cited local achievements like organizing medical conferences in 2023 and 2024, a number of work-

shops on certain pediatric specializations, while the international accomplishments include leadership of international conferences as speakers or key contributors, which in turn reflects the international standing of the society.



Dr Shamsah

He stressed the importance of State support for the activities and events of medical associations, indicating that the activities undertaken by the organization depend on the individual efforts

of its members. He underscored the need to establish a specialized children's hospital that houses pediatricians from

all hospitals in one location, as this will help save time and effort while ascertaining quick access to doctors any time.

On the most prevalent pediatric diseases in Kuwait, Shamsah said most pediatric diseases are seasonal like the respiratory diseases, particularly influenza, which are more prevalent in winter; while gastroenteritis is more prevalent during the Gargee'an holiday. Child accidents -- including those involving buggies, jet skis and drowning -- are more prevalent during summer, he added.

Indicating that there are about 1,200 pediatricians in Kuwait, excluding surgeons; Shamsah reiterated that all those wishing to join the society are welcome. He also appreciated the efforts exerted to arrange the Ghabqa and ensure its distinguished presentation.

Indiscipline in families blamed

Student numbers dwindle in Ramadan month

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Several schools under the Ministry of Education have witnessed a remarkable increase in student absenteeism during Ramadan, particularly on the Thursday before a holiday, reports Al-Anba daily.

This recurring trend, which the ministry faces during religious and national occasions and other holidays, has become more pronounced during Ramadan. Initially, absenteeism fluctuated during the early days of the holy month, but it gradually worsened; leading to many classrooms being nearly empty.

While some school administrations appear to be lenient in addressing this issue or fail to strictly enforce the absence regulations, former psychological consultant at the ministry Huda Al-Haddad labeled absenteeism as a "negative phenomenon." She identified the primary cause as lack of discipline within families,

with heads of households being primarily responsible for the situation. She emphasized that parents have no excuse for allowing this trend to continue, especially after receiving absence notifications through Sahel app.

She praised the ministry's measures to tackle absenteeism, including the deduction of half a grade from each subject for students who miss more than three days without an excuse and expulsion after 15 days of unexcused absences. However, she pointed out that some schools may not fully enforce these rules and stressed that non-compliant schools should be held accountable. She also underscored the deterrent effect of these measures, particularly the grade deductions, which can have a significant impact on a student's grade point average (GPA); especially in high school, where cumulative grades

determine future prospects. She stressed the importance of student responsibility, reminding them that education is the key to their future. "Adhering to school attendance will help them avoid the adverse effects of absenteeism, such as poor academic performance and gaps in the curriculum," she explained.

Moreover, the ministry has introduced an electronic absence tracking application on its official website. This platform allows parents to monitor their children's attendance, behavior and academic progress using the student or guardian's civil identification number and password. The application provides comprehensive student data like absences, behavior reports, pledge letters, summons, expulsions, evaluations, class schedule and sick leave. This ensures that parents remain informed and can communicate directly with the school.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



He traveled across the Arab countries and found no one who preserved loyalty

LOYALTY is the trait of a person who is mindful not to wrong anyone. As the old saying goes, "If the world is free of good people, it will fall into ruin." Selflessness and altruism dissolve the greatest grudges and reflect noble morals. The following story illustrates the power of loyalty among people:

Once upon a time, a stranger entered a restaurant in Damascus and ordered a loaf of bread. He ate half of it, left the other half on the table, and then left.

The stranger came every day and did the same thing. One day, a man from Damascus noticed his unusual behavior. He approached him, greeted him, and politely asked, "Brother, why do you eat half a loaf every day and leave the other half? Where are you from?"

The stranger replied, "I'm from Baghdad. I have traveled through many Arab countries, but unfortunately, I have never met anyone who would remain loyal and honor the bonds of friendship after sharing meals (bread and salt) together. I eat only half of the loaf because I haven't found anyone worthy of sharing the other half."

The Shami man responded, "Then today, you are my guest. Come to my house."

The Shami man was living in his house with his mother and his cousin, who is the daughter of his late uncle. He was in love with his cousin, and they were soon to marry.

When the Baghdadi man knocked on the door, the Shami man's cousin opened it. As soon as he saw her, he was captivated by her beauty. After lunch, the Baghdadi man turned to his host and said, "I beg you, by the bread and salt we shared, not to refuse my proposal to marry the girl who opened the door for me."

The Shami man replied, "She is my cousin, and her father has passed away."

The guest said, "I want to marry her."

The Shami man could not refuse or even explain his feelings. With a heavy heart, he said to his guest, despite his own love for her, "She is yours."

The man traveled with his new bride to Baghdad. Time passed, and soon the Shami man's mother passed away. The man, once prosperous, soon faced hardship. His wealth dwindled, and he was eventually forced to sell his house to survive. Left with little money, the Shami man decided to travel to his friend, now his brother-in-law.

When he arrived in Baghdad, he discovered that his friend had become one of the wealthiest men in the city, and owned a grand palace. He approached the palace and asked the maid to inform the owner of his arrival. To his surprise, the maid returned, carrying a bag of gold coins,

Al-Baghdadi ate half the loaf of bread and left the rest for a noble man.

Al-Baghdadi was infatuated with the cousin of the Shami man. The latter approved of his cousin marrying Al-Baghdadi, even though he loved her deeply.

Due to his dignified soul, the Shami man refused to accept money from his friend as charity.

He could not bear to see his friend in a difficult situation, so he devised a plan to save him.

My father taught you business, my mother is your palace maid, and my sister will marry you.

He reproached him: "I came to visit you, and you sent your maid with money as if I were a beggar."

and handed it to him.

The Shami man said, "I came to meet my friend, not for the money". In a moment of frustration, he threw the bag of gold coins, and the coins scattered across the floor. With tears in his eyes, the Shami man turned and left the palace.

As he walked away, he realized he had no money left, and he found himself stranded in Baghdad with no means to return to Damascus. With nothing but his prayers and supplications to God Almighty, he slept on the streets, hoping for relief and guidance to show him the right path.

A few days later, an elderly man approached the Shami man and asked about his circumstances. The Shami man, broken and desperate, shared his story. The old man, moved by his plight, offered him a job in trade.

The Shami worked diligently, and learned the secrets

of business, the fundamentals of the markets, and everything necessary to thrive. Within three years, his hard work paid off, and he became one of the wealthiest men in Baghdad. He built a grand palace that rivaled that of his friend.

One day, an elderly woman came to him, and asked if she could work as a servant in the palace to earn her living. He agreed, and she eventually became like a mother to him.

She told him about a poor girl who was looking for work in the palace. Because of his kind heart, the Shami man agreed to take her in.

The woman began to dress the girl in beautiful clothes, and soon the Shami man caught sight of her. He was immediately captivated by her beauty and asked to marry her. The old woman, seeing his sincerity, made the arrangements, and a wedding date was set at the palace.

The wealthiest and most prominent merchants were invited to the celebration. However, just as the festivities were in full swing, the Baghdadi man unexpectedly entered his friend's palace on the wedding night, despite not being invited.

The Shami man reproached him, saying, "I came to visit you, and you sent your maid with a bag of gold coins, as if I were a beggar. What do you want now?" He tried to dismiss him from the wedding.

Al-Baghdadi replied, "When the maid informed me, I looked out the palace window and saw your dire circumstances. I sent you the money to help improve your situation, so you could appear respectable in your cousin's eyes, the one you allowed me to marry, even though you loved her. When I realized you refused the money, I was confused about how else to help you."

He then said, "Do you know that the great man who taught you the basics and secrets of trade is my father, and the woman who still serves you in your house is my mother? Today, I have come to your palace to attend the wedding of my sister, whom you are about to marry."

At that moment, Al-Baghdadi gestured, and Al-Shami's cousin entered, carrying a boy and a girl in her arms. She approached her Shami cousin and sat at his feet. The bride came and sat beside her, and both Al-Baghdadi and Al-Shami joined them. Al-Baghdadi then took half a loaf of bread from his pocket and divided it among everyone. Together, they shared in eating it.

It is the right of sharing bread and salt to remain loyal to one another. Good people do not pollute the well they once drank from. We are in urgent need of individuals who preserve the sanctity of a meal shared, and remember the bonds that come with it.

■ Days pass quickly, and we rejoice in their quick passing. Ramadan is almost over, but how soon will it return. Hopefully, we will still be alive when the next Ramadan comes next year.



■ The older we get, the weaker our eyesight becomes, but our vision grows clearer.



■ Wise people say, "Don't focus on those who wrong you, for you will never be able to repay their wrongdoing. What matters most is those who have done good to you, and how you can repay them."



■ This is the essence of books and experiences. Once the rain stops, the umbrella becomes a burden for everyone. This is how loyalty fades once the benefits are no longer there.



■ I wish the blessed month of Ramadan could last for two months instead of just one. It is a month of friendship, harmony, the exchange of visits, and a time to forget disputes, hatred, and resentment.



■ Ramadan, among the eleven months, is like Prophet Joseph (PBUH) among his eleven brothers/planets. Do not kill him, do not throw him into the well, and do not sell him for a cheap price. Rather, receive him in the best way, so that he may be our intercessor on the Day of Judgment.



■ We are facing an era of legal reform. Nine hundred laws governing the state, most, if not all, of which have become outdated, decrepit, and need to be sifted through.



■ The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) is referring several corrupt individuals and thieves to the judiciary. Perhaps God wants good for us.



■ Ministers and senior officials steal and take bribes, and they also decide what is illegal ... May God help us.



KFF photo
Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi awards the second winner.

Ramadan esports tourney concludes

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Under the patronage and in the presence of the Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, the Ramadan esports tournament concluded on Tuesday evening.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the event, which was organized by the KFF Sports Union, was held at the Prevention Sector Theater in West Mishref.

The tournament, which began on March 15, lasted for four days, and witnessed the participation of 91 players from various KFF sectors and departments.

Major General Al-Roumi expressed his sincere gratitude to the sponsors,

including Foo Company and Al-Mulla Auto Company, for their support of the tournament.

He commended the strong competition between the players and praised the efforts of the Chair and members of the Fire Sports Union.

At the end of the event, Major General Al-Roumi awarded medals and cash prizes to the top three winners after the final match.

The closing ceremony was also attended by Director of the Health Affairs Department and Chair of the Fire Sports Union Colonel Dr. Fayez Abdul Aziz Ahmed, along with a number of KFF officials.

Drive against peddlers continues

Kuwaiti duo, Saudi, Indian held with 900 'foreign liquor' bottles

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Ministry of Interior has announced the arrest of four individuals by the General Department for Combating Narcotics, who were found in possession of 919 bottles of alcoholic beverages and psychotropic substances, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement, the ministry explained that as part of their ongoing efforts to combat drug and alcohol dealers and smugglers, the Criminal Security Sector, through the General Department of Narcotics Control, apprehended a four-member gang involved in distributing imported alcoholic beverages and psychotropic substances across the country.

Following a thorough investigation and with legal authorization from the Public Prosecution, the suspects – a

group comprising two citizens, a Saudi national, and an Indian national – were detained while in possession of 919 bottles of imported alcoholic beverages and approximately 200 psychotropic tablets.

The ministry confirmed that the suspects and the seized items have been handed over to the Drugs and Alcohol Prosecution for legal proceedings.

Furthermore, the ministry emphasized that the General Department of Narcotics Control will continue its security efforts to apprehend drug and alcohol dealers and distributors, underscoring their commitment to taking strong action against anyone attempting to jeopardize public safety by trafficking in these illegal substances.

Appeal fees hike stirs confusion; KBA team plans to file complaint

Ruling in ex-minister funds scam case delayed

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Kuwait Bar Association (KBA) Chairman Adnan Mahmoud Abel stated that increasing appeal fees without legal basis is a clear violation of the recent amendments, adding that this has caused confusion at work.

In a press statement, Abel disclosed "we have contacted the Ministry of Justice regarding this matter to address it immediately."

Abel said a team of experienced colleagues has been formed to prepare an appeal against the constitutionality of the recently approved fee increase; as it violates Article 166 of the Constitution, which prohibits restricting the right to litigation or creating a gap between litigants based on their financial capacity.

He stressed the need to address the administrative procedures and backlog of appeals in accordance with the technical and legal frameworks established through the recommendations of the concerned committees and the association's previous proposals.

Ruling delayed to April 14: The Court of Cassation postponed the announcement of its verdict on the case of the former minister accused of corruption until April 14, reports Al-Anba daily.

The defendant appealed the ruling made by the Ministers Court in October, which sentenced him to four years in prison with hard labor, fined him KD100,000 and dismissed him from public office. The charges against him include embezzlement of public funds and abuse of influence.

Case files indicate that the Permanent Investigation Committee for the trial of ministers previously referred the former minister to the Ministers Court, recommending that he face punishment on charges of embezzling public funds and abusing his influence.

The former minister stands accused of transferring ownership of two industrial plots – one while he was a member of the National Assembly and the other after he took on the ministerial role – and registering them under the name of a retired military officer.

The case came to light after the military officer, who is also being prosecuted in connection with the same case, sold one of the plots and transferred KD700,000 to the former minister's account.

Wanted expat arrested: Hawally Police arrested an expatriate in Salmiya, who was wanted by law for committing financial crimes with an absconding case filed against him by his employer, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, while conducting routine patrols in Salmiya recently, two officers got suspicious of a vehicle parked on the side of the road.

Upon approaching the car, the officers discovered that the driver is an Arab. Further investigation revealed that the individual was wanted by law for involvement in financial crimes and an absconding case was registered against him by the company he worked for. He was referred to the concerned authorities.



KU photo
Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Mailem welcomes a delegation from the Kuwait Investment Company at her office in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

KU officials meet KIC delegation

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Mailem received a delegation from the Kuwait Investment Company (KIC) at her office in Sabah Al-Salem University City, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting was held in the presence of the acting Secretary-General of Kuwait University Dr. Bader Al-Rajhi, Acting Vice President for Academic

Affairs Dr. Mohammed Al-Mulla, Assistant Secretary-General for Facilities Management Affairs Mohammed Al-Sulaiman, and Director of Public Relations and Media Anoud Al-Rashidi.

In a press statement, Kuwait University explained that the friendly meeting focused on exploring ways to develop strategic and community cooperation in areas such as sustainability, commu-

nity development, and the provision of vocational training opportunities that align with labor market needs and contribute to skill development.

The discussion also aimed to support student activities and events, thereby strengthening relations between the parties and achieving mutual benefits that contribute to the development of both the academic and public sectors.

Audit findings lead to ministerial intervention

Minister Al-Huwailah dismisses six Rehab Coop Board over violations

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah issued a decision to dismiss six members of the Rehab Cooperative Society Board of Directors for committing serious financial and administrative violations.



Dr. Al-Huwailah

reported by the Audit Committee

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision, which states the dismissal was based on the serious financial and administrative violations reported by the Audit Committee

of the cooperative.

Al-Huwailah then appointed six members to the cooperative's board for a period of one year or until their replacements are elected (whichever is sooner).

The dismissed members are required to hand over any funds and documents in their possession to the board within a period not exceeding one week from the date of the issuance of the decision.

Key appointments announced

KOC reshapes admin and financial affairs

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmad Al-Eidan issued a decision regarding organizational changes in the Administrative and Financial Affairs Directorate with Ghazi Al-Qabandi as head of the Compensation Taskforce.

The decision also stipulates the appointment of Iman Abdul-Rasoul as head of the Employment and Workforce Evaluation Team, Fahad Al-Dhubaib as head of the Recruitment and Transfer Team, Khaled Al-Aslawi

as head of the Training Team, Abbas Hajieh as head of the Career Development Team reporting to the director of Training and Career Development, Hanan Ashkanani as a senior specialist, Eid Habib as head of the Strategy and Monitoring Team (Kuwaitization of Contracts), Sabeka Al-Sabag as head of the Outputs and Employment Team, Hassan Al-Arbash as head of the Employee Services Team, Faleh Al-Azmi and Khaled Al-Juaib as senior specialists in the Human Resources Group, Saleh Sharif as head of the Administrative Services Team, Bader Al-Hadiyya as head of the Employee Services Team, and Mohammad Mubarak Al-Mansouri as head of the Administrative and Support Affairs Team.

Education center revamps project plans to ensure timely completion

New management and cost-saving strategies in place

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The National Center for Education Development confirmed a re-evaluation of the implementation procedures for educational projects to accelerate the pace of work and ensure their completion within the planned timeframe.

This comes after some projects were delayed and others were not initiated.

In its response to the report of the State Audit Bureau (SAB); the center revealed several steps, including informing the Secretariat General of

the Supreme Council for Planning and Development of its desire to complete the home-based education project by the end of the 2024/2025 fiscal year despite the deadline set in the automated system as Dec 31, 2025.

It also requested an extension of the deadline for the School Excellence Project to implement comprehensive quality standards until March 31, 2025 in order to complete the pilot implementation procedures after its approval by the education minister.

The center requested an extension of the Certified Learning Practitioner project due to the delay in completing the preparatory phase.

It affirmed that the necessary official approvals were obtained from the concerned authorities like financial, legal and contractual approvals,

to ensure the project proceeds in accordance with the approved regulations.

It announced the appointment of new project managers to oversee development plan projects, such as the Local and International Studies Project and the Home Education Project, to make sure their implementation is in accordance with the specified objectives.

It is also re-evaluating the mechanism for forming working teams to achieve the desired returns from their work and avoid any delay.

On the Teacher Licensing Project, the center confirmed that it has taken serious steps to further activate the project in the coming period. The system for licensing educational platforms, particularly the Teacher Licensing Project and the National University Admission Tests Project, was evaluated. The

evaluation revealed risks related to the sustainability of the system's operation due to high operational costs.

This has prompted the center to take several measures to address these risks; such as activating the system in accordance with the procedures approved by the relevant working teams and reducing operational costs in coordination with the supplier company to review licensing and subscription costs and explore alternatives if the desired reduction is not achieved, while ensuring that there is no interruption in system operation.

The center confirmed its commitment to improve the efficiency of educational project implementation and guarantee the optimal use of financial resources; thus, enhancing the quality of the education system.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Namaa Charity launches a project to distribute milk to children in the Gaza Strip.

'We are facing real humanitarian crisis'

Namaa Charity distributes vital baby milk to 250 Gaza children

RAMALLAH, March 19, (KUNA): Namaa Charity, in partnership with Wafa Association for Development and Capacity Building, implemented a project to distribute milk and baby bottles to needy children in the Gaza Strip, benefiting 250 children. This initiative aims to alleviate their suffering and secure basic food supplies amid a severe shortage of food.

The CEO of Namaa Charity, Saad Al-Otaibi, affirmed that the project embodies Kuwait's humanitarian message in supporting afflicted peoples and is an extension of the ongoing relief efforts in Gaza, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, such as infants and children.

He added, "We are facing a real humanitarian crisis as thousands of children in Gaza face the risk of hunger due to the shortage of baby milk. Therefore, it was imperative for us to move quickly, in partnership with Wafa Association, to deliver this ur-

gent aid and save the lives of defenseless children."

Al-Otaibi extended his sincere thanks and gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for their great support for humanitarian work.

He stressed that the State of Kuwait "will always remain at the forefront of countries seeking to alleviate the suffering of needy peoples, especially our brothers in Palestine."

In turn, the Director of the Wafa Foundation for Development and Capacity Building, Marwan Muhaisen, praised the fruitful cooperation with Namaa Charity, stressing that this aid arrived at a critical time when infants were suffering from a severe shortage of milk, which directly threatened their lives.

Interior Ministry hosts Gerge'an event for inmates

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: As part of the Ministry of Interior's efforts to strengthen family ties and bring joy to inmates and their families, the General Department of Correctional Institutions organized a Gerge'an celebration for inmates of the Central Prison and their families, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event was held in the presence of the Director General of Correctional Institutions Brigadier

General Fahad Al-Obaid, Director of the Central Jail Administration Colonel Nasser Al-Musallam, and several officers.

The celebration included an iftar banquet for inmates and their families, the distribution of Gerge'an sweets, as well as competitions, quizzes, and recreational games for children.

The event also featured a mural of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al

Sabah, painted by a group of inmates prior to the celebration to express loyalty and patriotism.

At the conclusion of the event, the General Department of Correctional Institutions honored inmates who demonstrated good conduct, as part of its support and encouragement of positive behavior. This initiative highlighted the role of correctional institutions in rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Kuwait achieves 2,080 megawatts export to Gulf grid in February '25

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The February 2025 statistics issued recently by the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy revealed that 2,080 megawatts were exported from the electricity grid to the Gulf Interconnection Network.

This is the difference between the total exported quantity of 13,513 megawatts and the total imported quantity of 11,433 megawatts in February.

The report indicated that the maximum electrical load

reached 7,760 megawatts on Feb 5; while the lowest reached 6,010 megawatts on Feb 8 and Feb 21.

In a related development, the report confirmed that the ministry supplied electricity to 544 customers in various residential sectors, with a total load of 68,422,630 kilowatts for the electricity needs of the plots in the same month.

It also indicated that the private housing sector topped the list with 503 plots, followed by the government and investment sectors with 12, industrial sector with seven, agricultural sector with six, and commercial sector with four.

Awqaf urges Husayniyas to register online by April 15

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has called on all individuals responsible for Husayniyas and Husayniya councils to register on the electronic platform of the ministry from March 18, 2025 to April 15, 2025, reports Al-Anba daily.

This initiative is part of the ongoing efforts of the ministry to enhance its role as stipulated in its establishment decree and to regulate buildings used for religious activities.

In a press statement, the ministry announced that it will be in contact with those who are responsible for Husayniyas to facilitate the organization and regulation of their operations within its legal and administrative frameworks.

It urged all responsible parties to complete the registration within the specified timeframe to support its efforts and ensure the effective operation of Husayniyas in compliance with the legal framework.

Graduate admissions and key reports approved

Public Universities Council sets new hiring criteria

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The acting Secretary-General of the Council of Public Sector Universities Dr. Jassim Al-Ali announced that the council has approved the

draft ministerial resolution regulating the conditions, criteria, and procedures for filling academic positions, including college deans, specialized deanships, heads of

academic departments, and similar roles, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This follows the issuance of Decree-Law No. 156/2024, which amended certain provisions of Law

No. 76/2019 regarding public universities.

The announcement was made during the council's first meeting of 2025, chaired by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, in the presence of the council members.

During the meeting, they discussed several important agenda items.

Al-Ali explained that the council approved the minutes of its previous meeting No. 2/2024 held on November 7, 2024, and reviewed a report on the follow-up to the implementation of its previous decisions.

Regarding the College of Graduate Studies at Kuwait University, the council approved the announcement and admission requirements, the expected number of students for the 2025/2026 academic year, and the available scholarships, with one seat allocated for students with special needs in each graduate program.

The meeting concluded with a review of Kuwait University's annual report for the 2022/2023 academic year, as well as the 2023 annual report of the General Secretariat of the Council of Public Sector Universities.



KUNA photo
During the council's first meeting of 2025, chaired by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal.

MoH urges timely updates for allowance accuracy

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Ministry of Health has stressed the importance for employees receiving spousal and children allowances to update their personal information to ensure the continued and accurate disbursement of benefits, in accordance with the regulations, reports Al-Anba daily.

This step aims to maintain transparency and accuracy in allowance allocations, preventing errors that could affect employees' entitlements.

According to sources, the ministry has instructed its employees to promptly update their data whenever there are changes that impact their en-

titlements, such as a male child reaching the age of 24 or the death of a spouse or child.

Sources added the ministry has notified the directors of health districts and central departments to closely monitor and ensure the accuracy of data and the proper disbursement of financial benefits to the affected employees.

Event aims to equip researchers with essential skills in descriptive and inferential statistics

KU to host workshop on statistical analysis using R Programming

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Research Sector of Kuwait University (KU) will organize a specialized workshop titled "Statistical Analysis of Scientific Research Using the R Programming Language: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics," with support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

The workshop aims to enhance researchers' skills in statistical analysis and the use of quantitative tools in scientific research.

The workshop will take place from April 13 to 17 in Classroom 1012 - B2, North Building, College of Business Administration.

The workshop will be led by Professor Stefan T. Gries, Professor of Statistical Corpus at the University of Cali-

fornia, Santa Barbara, and the University of Giessen in Germany, along with Dr. Mohammed Al-Enzi, Assistant Professor at KU specialized in statistical corpus and linguistic data analysis.

The workshop targets members of the academic and supporting academic staff, as well as graduate students from various disciplines. Its aims to equip them with the skills needed to analyze research data using the R pro-

gramming language, which is a vital tool in statistical analysis.

The workshop is part of the collaborative efforts between KU and KFAS, as specified in the memorandum of understanding signed between the two institutions. The agreement seeks to enhance researchers' skills and capabilities for contributing to the improvement of the quality of scientific research.

Philanthropist donates KD 1 mln to Nat'l Campaign for Debtors Support

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: A philanthropist donated KD 1 million to the National Campaign for Debtors Support with the aim of alleviating the suffering of

the needy and promoting a spirit of solidarity.

Total donations to the campaign, which was launched last Friday, have reached KD 1,693,677, with the number of donors totaling 9,004. Sources expect cooperative societies to begin contributing to the campaign by allocating their zakat funds during the last ten days of Ramadan.

20 faculty members promoted

KU Council grants key academic initiatives under new leadership

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Maillem chaired her first University Council meeting on Wednesday at the council's meeting hall in Sabah Al-Salem University City with the members in attendance.

Al-Maillem warmly welcomed all those present at her first meeting after gaining the confidence of the political leadership in assuming the post.

After the meeting, acting Secretary General of the university Dr. Bader Al-Rajhi disclosed in a press statement that the council approved the following:

- Minutes of Meeting No. 06/2024 held on Dec 22, 2024;
- Amendment of Clause 10 of Article 44 of the Kuwait University Financial Regulations;
- Memorandums of Understanding



KU photo
Dr. Dina Al-Maillem, Kuwait University President.

between Qassim University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait University, and the University of Mal-

ta in the Republic of Malta and Kuwait University;

- Annual scholarship plan for the 2024/2025 academic year;
 - General budget for the Scientific Publications Council, Scientific Journals and the Authorship, Arabization and Publication Committee for fiscal 2023/2024;
 - General budget and final accounts of the Journal of Medical Foundations and Applications for fiscal 2023/2024;
 - Proposal of the College of Graduate Studies to amend Article 41bis of its bylaws;
 - Promotion of 20 faculty members to professor and associate professor.
- Al-Maillem congratulated the promoted faculty members, wishing them continued success in their academic and research endeavors. She also affirmed the university's commitment to fully support its academic staff, and improve the environment for scientific research and academic excellence.

7,500 daily meals served locally and abroad

Zakat House expands iftar reach



KUNA photo

Zakat House assistance in Jordan.

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's Zakat House (Zakah House) has confirmed that it will continue offering iftar banquets for the needy both inside and outside Kuwait during the holy month of Ramadan, with donations from Kuwaitis since 1983.

Director of Projects and Local Bodies at Zakat House, Rad'an Al-Hajri, said in a press statement on Tuesday that the project, which is being implemented in the country, includes 17 locations across all Kuwaiti governorates.

Al-Hajri added that the project aims to provide approximately 7,500 meals daily, each containing a variety of food items according to the latest safe food requirements set by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition.

He explained that the implementation of the local iftar banquets project is an expression of Kuwaitis' love for charity and their keenness to extend a helping hand to the needy inside Kuwait, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

He appealed to the benefactors of the country of good-

ness and giving to donate to the project, indicating that Zakat House receives donations through the donors' reception halls at its headquarters in South Surra, or through one of its branches in Salwa, Jahra, and Ishbiyya, or through its revenue centers located in various areas of Kuwait near the central markets of cooperative societies.

For his part, the supervisor of external projects and bodies at Zakat House, Ayed Al-Mutairi, said in a similar statement that Zakat House allocates part of its charitable projects to serve Muslims outside the State of Kuwait, in line with the desires of donors to achieve the goal of the House's strategy in strengthening the humanitarian aspect through partnership and communication with sectors concerned with zakat locally and internationally.

Al-Mutairi added that the iftar banquets project abroad this year is being implemented in 14 countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, Mauritania, Bosnia, and Montenegro, at a cost of about 66,000 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately 214,000 US dollars).

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait blasts

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) reaffirmed Tuesday unwavering support for Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity while rejecting foreign interference in its internal affairs and any actions that fuel divisions among the Syrian people.

This came in a statement delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen as Chairman of the GCC Ambassadors Council during the interactive dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria during the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Ambassador Al-Hayen emphasized that Syria's security and stability are fundamental pillars of regional stability and that combating extremism, radicalization and incitement, stressing the need to respect diversity and religious beliefs as a priority for the GCC.

He reiterated the GCC's support for all efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive political transition that ensures security stability and prosperity under the rule of law and justice.

Ambassador Al-Hayen also welcomed the convening of the Syrian National Dialogue Conference, expressing hope that it would contribute to fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people across all factions while preserving Syrian unity and sovereignty.

He called on all parties in Syria to prioritize national interests, achieve reconciliation, safeguard civilians and protect state institutions.

He further stressed the GCC's position on integrating armed factions under the Ministry of Defense to ensure that weapons remain under state control thereby restoring Syria's regional and international role, welcoming the agreement on merging all civil and military institutions in northeastern Syria into national institutions.

The GCC also called for lifting sanctions on Syria and providing all necessary support to the Syrian people, reaffirming the bloc's commitment to delivering humanitarian assistance.

In other news, Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the deadly attacks by the Israeli occupation forces on Gaza Strip last night, which left hundreds of casualties, the majority of whom were children, women and elderly.

Such military escalation constitutes a grave violation of the ceasefire agreement and reflects the occupation forces' policy of genocide targeting civilians and destroying infrastructure in the Strip, the Ministry stressed in a statement on Tuesday.

Kuwait reaffirmed its calls on the international community, particularly the UN Security Council (SC) and the parties to the ceasefire agreement, to take immediate action to halt the Israeli attacks, protect the Palestinian people, and prevent all violations that threaten peace and stability in the region.

Meanwhile, the Saudi Cabinet condemned the new wave of deadly strikes by Israeli occupation forces in the Gaza Strip last night.

During its session, chaired in Jeddah on Tuesday by Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman, the Cabinet urged the international community to shoulder their responsibility and intervene immediately to halt these crimes and alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people.

The Cabinet reviewed the latest developments in Arab, regional, and international affairs, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted Minister of Information Salman Al-Dosari as saying following the session.

The Cabinet reiterated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's firm stance against the destabilizing acts, renewed commitment to the efforts aiming to achieve security and stability in the region and beyond.

The health authorities in Gaza reported that at least 413 Palestinians fell martyrs due to the renewed Israeli occupation attacks, which violated the ceasefire agreement.

The Muslim World League (MWL) strongly condemned, on Tuesday, the renewed attacks by the Israeli occupying forces on Gaza Strip, which led to significant casualties among innocent civilians.

MWL's Secretary-General, Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa, denounced the aggressive attacks in a statement, describing them as violations of international and humanitarian laws and norms.

Al-Issa urged the international community to take immediate and decisive action against these grave violations committed by the Israeli occupation government, which targets innocent civilians in Gaza.

Health authorities in Gaza have announced the martyrdom of 413 Palestinians due to attacks by the Israeli occupying forces on the Strip, constituting a violation of the ceasefire agreement.

Kuwait faces

with possible thunderstorms in some areas.

The heaviest rainfall is forecast between Friday afternoon and Saturday, accompanied by strong southern winds on Thursday and Friday. These winds may raise dust, reduce visibility – especially in open areas – and cause rough sea conditions.

Weather conditions are expected to gradually improve from midnight on Saturday, with decreasing clouds and diminishing rain chances. However, fog may form on Sunday morning, particularly in coastal areas.

Kuwait's disabled

His Highness the Amir took pride in the achievements recently made by Kuwait athletes with disabilities in international sports events.

He urged them to continue training and the competent state bodies to continue motivating them and improving their skills.

On his part, KDSC Chairman Shafi Al-Hajeri expressed, on behalf of the Club's members and management, the holy Ramadan wishes for His High-

ness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousuf Saud Al-Sabah.

He recalled the achievements made by KDSC members since 1977, noting that the number of athletes with disabilities representing Kuwait at international Paralympics grew from 30 to 350, males and females, in the past four and a half decades.

He noted that the Kuwaiti athletes were able to make outstanding achievements in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, citing the shotput gold medalist Faisal Sorour and the bronze medalist Faisal Al-Rajehi of the 5000m wheelchair race.

Al-Hajeri expressed gratitude for His Highness the Amir's visit to the Club, promising that the Club will continue doubling its efforts to foster the skills of its members.

Also on Tuesday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited the Kuwait Blind Association (KBA), accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousuf Saud Al-Sabah.

His Highness was received by Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, Kuwait Blind Association Director, Fayiz Al-Azmi, and the Association's Secretary General Mansour Al-Anezi.

In his speech, His Highness the Amir congratulated the association on the holy month of Ramadan, expressing his pride in all the efforts of the association in helping and supporting those with vision impairment issues.

He appreciated the association member's efforts to their country through sports, events, seminars, and many others, especially the first Al-Baghli Holy Quran Competition for the Blind at the GCC countries level.

His Highness reaffirmed the rights of those with vision impairment, reminding both the public and private sectors to provide them with adequate support, especially through modern technology to ensure they benefit from it.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Blind Association Fayiz Al-Azmi also delivered a speech on this occasion, in which he said, "On behalf of the members of the Kuwait Blind Association, I extend my warmest congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan."

"I also extend my warmest congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, the Prime Minister, and all residents of this blessed land. I ask Allah Almighty to have many returns of this blessed occasion to Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir."

"Since its founding in 1972, the Kuwait Blind Association has been honored to visit the former Amir's of Kuwait," Al-Azmi said.

"Such visits, Your Highness, have never been made in any country in the world except in our beloved country, Kuwait, and this reflects your unlimited humanitarian role in empathizing with the suffering of those visually impaired members.

KOC CEO affirms geology's vital role in oil production

'Geoscience drives Kuwait's oil future'

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmad Al-Eidan praised the role of the national staff in the oil exploration efforts of the company, stressing that their contributions over the past 90 years have not been underestimated.

In a statement to reporters on the sidelines of the Ramadan Ghabqa hosted by the Kuwait Society for Geosciences recently, Al-Eidan affirmed that Geology is the foundation of petroleum discoveries.

He explained that Geoscience is the primary source of Kuwaiti oil exploration, as it determines the presence or absence of oil before extraction. He also pointed out that KOC relies on Geology, along with Petroleum Engineering and Field Engineering, to develop new production and exploration operations.

He confirmed that KOC is constantly developing the work of Geology and the Society, clarifying the Society is not just an association; as it is rather a gathering of geologists, conveying a message about the importance of Geology and its

contributions to building the nation.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Society Dr. Mubarak Al-Hajri stated that it has gained the respect and trust of local, Gulf, Arab and international geological communities.

He said it has forged strategic partnerships with established geological organizations and institutions at the local, Gulf, Arab and international levels.

He revealed the Society has been presenting strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening joint cooperation, scientific research and cognitive development; thereby, contributing to the development of the geological community in Kuwait.



Al-Eidan

He thinks Kuwait is experiencing a distinguished geological scientific movement; hence, the need to maximize such movement. "Therefore, the theme of the Ghabqa is 'Geology Unites Us'. We consider this the responsibility of the Society," he added.

He stressed the need to consolidate the concept of loyalty and strengthen the spirit of cohesion among members of the geological community in the

country, in addition to encouraging and supporting the Society's activities and events.

He said the Society is leading a geological movement at the local and Gulf levels, indicating that the Kuwaiti geological community can be an important driver in boosting the national economy; while contributing to sustainable development, and to support Kuwait's vision for progress, advancement and prosperity.

Director for Public Relations and Media at KOC Mohammed Al-Basry praised the Society's distinguished efforts in promoting Science and knowledge.

Al-Basry added that such gatherings strengthen cooperation between national institutions and open new horizons for joint work in the service of the country.

He believes these gatherings are an opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas that contribute to the development of the oil sector and geological sciences – one of the cornerstones of the national economy.

He added KOC believes in the importance of partnerships with scientific and research institutions, and is keen on supporting all efforts that contribute to the development of national professionals and the promotion of scientific research.

He concluded "we are confident that the Society will remain a strategic partner in this endeavor."

AU's Event Management students shed light on Kuwait's tourism industry

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Australian University (AU) is continuing the success of its recently introduced Event Management major, a program designed to equip students with the skills needed to shape the future of Kuwait's entertainment and tourism industries. Under the College of Business, the Marketing and Event Management Department has emerged as a hub for innovation, aligning student projects with Kuwait Vision 2035's goal of economic diversification and national development.

A recent student-led study on Kuwait's tourism industry, conducted under the guidance of AU faculty, highlighted the department's impact. The research surveyed key industry players and revealed significant opportunities for growth, particularly in cultural tourism, entertainment events, and digital marketing. Findings showed that 72% of respondents would be more likely to visit Kuwait if more music festivals and cultural celebrations were introduced, underscoring the importance of event management in driving tourism.

The study was carried out by College of Business students Khalid Al Otaibi, Mobarak Al Mahdi, Zainab Hussain, Fatemah Hussain, and Shahad Al Jarwan, under the supervision of Dr. Faidon Theofanis, Associate Professor of Marketing. The research was fully supported by Dr. Farid Abdullah, Dean of the College of Business, and Ms. Marcelle De La Roche, Head of the Marketing and Events Management Department.

Students in the Marketing and Event Management Department have been actively engaging in projects that address real-world industry challenges. Their research emphasized the need



Australian University

for developed infrastructure, expanded social media marketing strategies, and the progress of family-friendly attractions to enhance Kuwait's appeal as a touristic destination.

With the Marketing and Event Management Department leading the way, AU continues to solidify its reputation as a center for academic excellence and industry-relevant education, producing graduates with hands-on practical experience who can shape the future of Kuwait's tourism and event management industry.

Putin's vow not to hit energy infrastructure 'at odds with reality': Zelenskyy

US, Russia agree to immediate ceasefire for energy infrastructure in Ukraine war

WASHINGTON, March 19, (AP) — US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed during a lengthy call Tuesday to an immediate pause in strikes against energy infrastructure in the Ukraine war, but the Russian leader stopped short of backing a broader 30-day pause in fighting that the US administration is pressing for.

The White House described it as the first step in a "movement to peace" that it hopes will include a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea and eventually a full and lasting end to the fighting. But there was no indication that Putin has backed away from his conditions for a prospective peace deal, which are fiercely opposed by Kyiv. And shortly after the call ended, air raid alerts sounded in Kyiv, followed by explosions in the city. Local officials urged people to seek shelter.

Putin during the call reiterated his demand for an end to foreign military and intelligence assistance to Ukraine, according to the Kremlin. Trump, though, denied that the subject came up during an interview with Fox News on Tuesday.

"We didn't talk about aid," Trump said. "We didn't talk about aid at all."

Russia also wants Ukraine to pull back its troops from the four regions that Moscow has annexed but never fully captured, renounce any prospect of joining the NATO military alliance and sharply cut its army.

"We agreed to an immediate Ceasefire on all Energy and Infrastructure, with an understanding that we will be working quickly to have a Complete Ceasefire and, ultimately, an END to this very horrible War between Russia and Ukraine," Trump said on social media.

Putin also told Trump that Russia and Ukraine are set to exchange 175 prisoners of war each on Wednesday, and Russia will also hand over to Ukraine 23 badly wounded soldiers, the Kremlin said.

The limited pause comes as Trump still hopes to get Russia to sign off on his 30-day ceasefire proposal aimed at ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian officials last week agreed to the 30-day ceasefire proposal during talks in Saudi Arabia led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio. White House



In this combination of file photos, President Donald Trump, (left), and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (center), are seen at the Elysee Palace on Dec 7, 2024 in Paris, and President Vladimir Putin, (right), addresses a Technology Forum in Moscow, Russia on Feb 21, 2025. (AP)

special envoy Steve Witkoff then met with Putin in Moscow to discuss the proposal.

The Trump-Putin engagement is just the latest turn in dramatically shifting U.S.-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.

Trump has at moments boasted of his relationship with Putin and blamed Ukraine for Russia's unprovoked invasion, all while accusing Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of unnecessarily prolonging the biggest land war in Europe since World War II.

Trump has said Washington and Moscow have already begun discussing "dividing up certain assets" between Ukraine and Russia as part of a deal to end the conflict.

Zelenskyy said Wednesday that a vow by Putin not to attack energy infrastructure was "very much at odds with reality" following an overnight barrage of drone strikes across the country.

Zelenskyy said that he would speak with Trump later in the day and expected to hear more about the American leader's phone call with Putin about a ceasefire and to discuss the next steps to be taken.

"Even last night, after Putin's conversation with ... Trump, when Putin said that he was allegedly giving orders to stop strikes on Ukrainian energy, there were 150 drones launched overnight, including on energy facilities," Zelenskyy said at a news conference in Helsinki with Finnish President Alexander Stubb.

Russia said it had halted its targeting of Ukraine's energy facilities and accused Kyiv of attacking equipment near one of its pipelines.

"Unfortunately, we see that for now there is no reciprocity on the part of the Kyiv regime," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Russian strikes, which hit civilian areas and damaged a hospital, followed Putin's refusal to back a full 30-day ceasefire during discussions with Trump.

Stubb called the discussions between Putin and Trump a step in the right direction, but Finland's president said that Russia needs to end its aggression.

"There are only two ways to respond to the proposal of the president of the United States: it's a yes or a no - no buts, no conditions," Stubb said. "Ukraine accepted a ceasefire without any forms of conditions. If Russia refuses to agree, we need to increase our efforts to strengthen Ukraine and ratchet up pressure on Russia to convince them to come to the negotiating table."



Travel is highly discouraged in the #ABQ metro through Tuesday afternoon on March 18, due to visibility below a quarter mile from blowing dust and dangerous crosswinds of up to 70 mph on north to south roads and highways, in downtown Albuquerque, NM, looking west from Route 66. (AP)

Dust storms, strong winds rage across New Mexico

Dust storms, strong gusts and at least two brush fires descended on New Mexico on Tuesday, snarling highway traffic, knocking out power and setting buildings ablaze.

The National Weather Service pushed an emergency alert to cellphones that warned of zero-visibility conditions and adverse health consequences for infants and the elderly. And in some parts of the state, gusts have reached as high as 70 mph (113 kph).

The state is being hit by strong winds off an area of low pressure directly over Kansas on Tuesday evening, while extremely dry conditions over the last few months have created prime conditions for fire threat and dust storms, said Marc Chenard, meteorologist for the weather service. Dry, dusty weather reduced visibility to almost zero in some instances amid gusts of up to

50 mph (80 kph) along the Albuquerque-Santa Fe corridor and high plains communities in Torrance County, including towns along Interstate 40. Interstate 25 was opened after a brief closure near Cochiti Pueblo due to dust, wind and poor visibility.

Blinding dust prompted New Mexico's transportation department to close a 130-mile stretch of Interstate 10, from the Arizona state line to the outskirts of Las Cruces, along with state highways near Deming.

High winds also led to road closures in the state's oil-producing region near Roswell and Carlsbad. "Motorists should not drive into a dust storm. Pull aside and stay alive," the National Weather Service said in a dust-storm warning.

More than 39,000 customers were without power by Tuesday evening, according to PowerOutage.us. (AP)

Trump administration makes public thousands of files related to 1963 assassination of JFK

DALLAS, March 19, (AP) — Unredacted files related to the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy were released Tuesday evening.

About 2,200 files consisting of over 63,000 pages were posted on the website of the US National Archives and Records Administration. The vast majority of the National Archives' collection of over 6 million pages of records, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings and artifacts related to the assassination had previously been released.

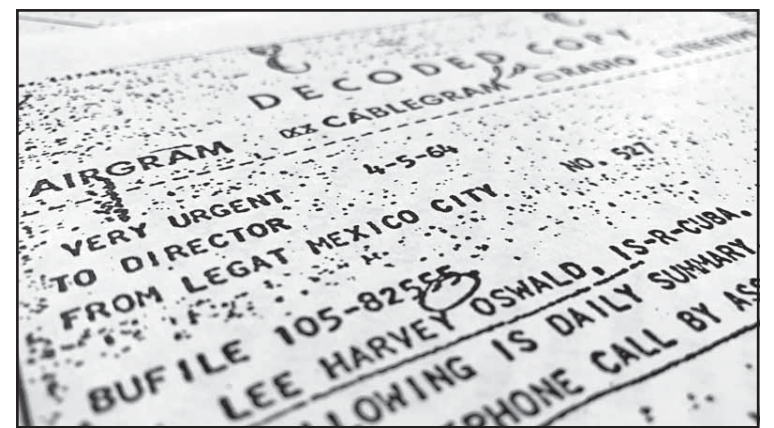
President Donald Trump told reporters on Monday that the release was coming, though he estimated it at about 80,000 pages. "We have a tremendous amount of paper. You've got a lot of reading," Trump said while visiting the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington.

There is an intense interest in details related to the assassination, which has spawned countless conspiracy theories. Here are some things to know:

Shortly after he was sworn into office, Trump ordered the release of the remaining classified files related to the assassination.

He directed the national intelligence director and attorney general to develop a plan to release the records. The order also aimed to declassify the remaining federal records related to the 1968 assassinations of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

After signing the order, Trump handed the pen to an aide and directed



Part of a file, dated April 5, 1964, details efforts to trace Lee Harvey Oswald's travel from Mexico City back to the United States, is photographed in Washington on Oct 26, 2017. (AP)

that it be given to Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Trump administration's top health official. He's the nephew of John F. Kennedy and son of Robert F. Kennedy. The younger Kennedy, whose anti-vaccine activism has alienated him from much of his family, has said he isn't convinced that a lone gunman was solely responsible for his uncle's assassination.

When Air Force One carrying JFK and first lady Jacqueline Kennedy touched down in Dallas, they were greeted by a clear sky and enthusiastic crowds. With a reelection campaign on the horizon the next year, they went to Texas for a political fence-mending trip.

But as the motorcade was finishing its parade route downtown, shots rang out from the Texas School Book Depository building. Police arrested 24-year-old Lee Harvey Oswald, who had positioned himself from a sniper's perch on the sixth floor. Two days later, nightclub owner Jack Ruby fatally shot Oswald during a jail transfer.

A year after the assassination, the Warren Commission, which President Lyndon B. Johnson established to investigate, concluded that Oswald acted alone and that there was no evidence of a conspiracy. But that didn't quell a web of alternative theories over the decades.

Europe and Canada eyeing alternatives to American-made F-35 Joint Strike Fighter

BERLIN, March 19, (AP) — Questions are mounting in Canada and in Europe over whether big-ticket purchases of high-end US weaponry, such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, are still a wise strategic choice for Western countries worried about their investment in US defense technology.

In less than two months, US President Donald Trump has upended dec-

ades of foreign policy. He has left NATO members questioning whether Washington will honor the trans-Atlantic alliance's commitment to defend each other, if other European countries are attacked by Russia. He's also made repeat overtures to Moscow and suspended most US foreign aid.

That could impact foreign sales of the Lockheed Martin-produced

F-35 and other advanced US jets like the F-16. As Russia's war in Ukraine grinds on, it's become clear that Eastern European NATO members still have vast stores of Soviet-era weapons in their stockpiles that weren't interoperable with Western weaponry.

A long-term plan to get all of NATO on similar platforms - by replacing old Soviet-era jets with Western ones, particularly the F-16 and in some cases, the F-35 - has gained momentum.

Some of the NATO countries are now rethinking tying their defense to U.S.-made systems and potentially considering European jets.

In Canada, where Trump has launched a trade war and has threatened economic coercion to make it the 51st American state, new Prime Minister Mark Carney has asked Defense Minister Bill Blair to review its purchase of F-35s. Canada has been a partner with the U.S. in developing the fighter.

Blair will see if there are other options "given the changing environment," a defense spokesman said.

Carney on Tuesday announced an early warning radar system purchase from Australia worth Canadian \$6 billion (\$4.2 billion). Officials say it will have a smaller footprint than a similar American system.



A US Air Force officer, (left), briefs an Indian naval officer about the F-35 fighter aircraft at the static display area on the last day of the Aero India 2025, a biennial event, at Yelahanka air base in Bengaluru, India on Feb 14. (AP)

United Nations chief praises new talks on reviving peace process for divided Cyprus

GENEVA, March 19, (AP) — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Tuesday he will appoint an envoy to help shepherd a divided Cyprus toward long-lasting peace, as he hailed a "constructive atmosphere" in talks with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders.

The UN chief spoke after an informal meeting in Geneva with Greek Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar that aimed to breathe new life into a peace process on hiatus for nearly eight years.

The Mediterranean island was divided when Turkey invaded the northern part in 1974 following a failed coup by supporters of a union with Greece. Only Turkey recognizes a Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence, and has more than 35,000 troops in the island's northern third. Although Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, only the Greek Cypriot south, where the internationally recognized government is seated, enjoys full membership benefits.

"These discussions were held in a constructive atmosphere, with both sides showing clear commitment to making progress and continuing dialogue," Guterres told reporters. He said Christodoulides and Tatar agreed to trust-building initiatives on issues like energy, environment, opening four new crossing points along



From left: Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar pose for a photo, ahead of a meeting to discuss the future of stalled peace talks over the divided island of Cyprus at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on March 18. (AP)

a U.N. controlled buffer zone, youth affairs and de-mining, and that he will appoint an envoy to "prepare the next steps" for a new meeting at the end of July to take stock of progress.

Italy recovers six bodies of migrants

MILAN, March 19, (AP) — The Italian Coast Guard has recovered six bodies and was searching for up to 40 migrants missing after a rubber dinghy that departed from Tunisia sank in the central Mediterranean, the UN refugee agency in Italy said Wednesday.

Another 10 people, including four women, were rescued Tuesday and brought to Italy's southernmost island of Lampedusa. The Red Cross said they were in good physical condition, and were receiving psychological care.

Survivors said that some 56 people were in the dinghy when it departed from the Tunisian port of Sfax on Monday evening, the UNHCR reported. The boat started to deflate a few hours after departure. The people on board were from Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Mali, the UNHCR said. The UN Missing Migrant Project puts the number of the dead and missing in the perilous central Mediterranean at over 24,506 from 2014 to 2024, many of whom were lost at sea.



Migrants are helped evacuate a partially deflated rubber dinghy by the rescue personnel of the SOS Mediteranee's humanitarian ship Ocean Viking in the Central Mediterranean Sea on March 12, 2024. (AP)

Tensions flare between 2 countries

France, Algeria feud over expulsion policy

ALGIERS, Algeria, March 19, (AP) — A dispute over the fate of 60 Algerians that France hopes to deport has deepened a rupture between the countries that has approached a historic low over the past year.

Algeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday rejected a French list of Algerians "with a dangerous profile" set for deportation. It said the list from France's Interior Ministry bypassed traditional diplomatic channels for such expulsions and denied the Algerians their rightful trials.

The ministry statement rejected "threats and intimidation attempts, as well as injunctions, ultimatums, and any coercive language."

France's right-wing Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who had previously threatened that France could terminate decades-old immigration and visa accords, on Tuesday pledged to retaliate in a post on X.

The list in question is the first time that France has publicly discussed compiling and transmitting names of those slated for expulsion. The names are a fraction of the Algerians that French authorities have previously said they've designated for deportation.

As conservative forces have risen in France in recent months, officials including Retailleau have pushed for stricter immigration controls, and the government has intensified its efforts to expel Algerians.

Data submitted to France's parliament last year showed less than 10% of French expulsion orders led to actual deportations.

The Algerians set to be deported include a 37-year-old suspect sentenced to life for his role in an eastern France stabbing attack last month, and a trio of TikTok influenc-



French President Emmanuel Macron speaks to soldiers at the Luxeuil-Saint-Sauveur airbase, in Saint-Sauveur, north-eastern France on March 18. (AP)

ers found guilty of inciting violence against Jews, Morocco or opponents of Algeria's government.

With economic difficulties and political dissatisfaction mounting in Algeria, the country's officials have leaned into disagreements with former colonizer France.

Algerian officials have maintained that their country's refusal to accept the deportees from France is related to concerns about due process.

Despite lingering tensions since Algeria wrested independence from France in a bloody war more than 60 years ago, the countries have cooperated on issues such as security, migration and trade. But relations have deteriorated under French President Emmanuel Macron and Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

INTERNATIONAL

Chinese enterprises donate relief supplies to support victims of floods in Zambia

LUSAKA, March 19, (Xinhua): Chinese enterprises operating in Zambia donated supplies to support victims of the floods that have affected the country during the 2024-2025 rainy season.

Among the donated items were food supplies such as maize meal, rice, sugar and cooking oil, while non-food items included disinfectants, blankets, mattresses, protective gear and other essentials, valued at about 1.2 million zambian kwacha (about 42,000 U.S. dollars).

The companies also handed over a cash donation of about 200,000 kwacha (about 7,000 dollars).

Zambian Vice President Mutale Nalumango, Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Zambia Wang Sheng, and officials from the Zambia Chinese Association attended the hand-over ceremony held at the offices of the Disaster Management and Mitigation

Unit in Lusaka, the country's capital.

In his remarks, Wang said China shares the pain of the flood victims, which prompted the decision to provide relief support, and China stands ready to offer further humanitarian assistance within its capacity.

"With similar flood challenges at home, we in China deeply empathize with the pain and loss suffered by the zambian people. We are taking action and stand ready to provide more humanitarian assistance within our capacity in a timely manner," he said.

He noted that since the establishment of diplomatic relations 60 years ago, the two countries have stood by each other and offered support in times of need.

During the COVID-19 and cholera outbreaks, China was among the first countries to assist Zambia in combating the diseases, Wang said, adding that this support reflected the compre-

hensive strategic cooperative partnership announced by the two heads of state and China's commitment to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

He said the donation exemplified the commitment of the Chinese community and businesses in Zambia to fulfilling their social responsibilities, which have always been among their core values.

For her part, Nalumango commended China for its support, saying it would significantly ease the suffering of the victims.

The support is a testament to the cordial relations that have existed between the two countries for the past 60 years, she said.

According to the vice president, the floods have claimed four lives, displaced many people, particularly in Lusaka, and impacted other parts of the country.



Zambian Vice President Mutale Nalumango (right) attends the handover ceremony of China-donated relief supplies to Zambian flood victims in Lusaka, capital of Zambia, on March 17. (Xinhua)

Police in Bangladesh arrest Rohingya armed group leader

DHAKA, Bangladesh, March 19, (AP): Security officials in Bangladesh arrested the leader of a Rohingya insurgent group on charges of illegal entry, sabotage and terrorist activities in the South Asian nation, where there are more than 1 million Rohingya refugees from neighboring Myanmar.

Police said that a team of the Rapid Action Battalion arrested **Ataullah Abu Ammar Jununi**, known as the commander-in-chief of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in a raid Tuesday in Narayanganj district near the capital, Dhaka.



Jununi

Jununi, a Pakistani-born Rohingya, leads a group that has conducted attacks on officials in Myanmar as part of what it describes as "a defensive war with the brutal Burmese military regime" on behalf of the Rohingya, who face discrimination and violence in Myanmar.

Bangladeshi intelligence says ARSA members have been involved in targeted killings, kidnappings, illicit drugs, smuggling and other serious crimes in the Rohingya refugee camps. Infighting and retaliatory attacks over control

of the camps led to deaths of hundreds of Rohingya.

Bangladesh's Daily Star reported that 10 other group members, including four children and women, were also arrested in separate raids in Narayanganj and Mymensingh districts.

Shahinur Alam, a senior police official at Siddhirganj in Narayanganj, told reporters that the officials also seized cash, a knife, a sharp steel chain and four wristwatches during the raid.

A magistrate later on Tuesday authorized police to hold Jununi and six others for interrogation. Four others were sent to prison.

Further details on how Jununi came to Bangladesh and how he stayed in the country remained unclear.

ARSA was formed in 2016 by Rohingya exiles living in Saudi Arabia, according to the International Crisis Group, and is led by Jununi and a committee of about 20 Rohingya emigrants. ICG says there are indications Jununi and others received militant training in Pakistan and possibly Afghanistan.

Successive governments in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar have denied the Rohingya basic rights and citizenship, deeming most of them to be foreign invaders from Bangladesh, even though Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations.

US vows to keep strong, forward-deployed force in Seoul

S.Korea to mobilize police when court decides on Yoon impeachment

SEOUL, March 19, (Agencies): The South Korean police planned to mobilize all available riot police across the country on the day when the constitutional court decides whether to impeach President Yoon Suk-yeol over his botched martial law imposition, Yonhap news agency said Wednesday.

The police will issue the highest level of emergency order to deploy about 20,000 riot policemen of 338 units across the country for expected protests and crowd control when the court reaches a conclusion on Yoon's impeachment.

Of the total, about 14,000 riot policemen will be deployed in Seoul, where the constitutional court is located.

On the day of sentencing, detectives will be placed inside the court, and if protesters break into the court, they will be caught red-handed.

Police commandos, as well as paramedics and ambulances, will also be on standby around the court to prepare for emergencies.

Yoon was released on March 8 as the prosecution decided not to appeal against a court's release approval.

The Seoul Central District Court approved the release of the arrested president, accepting Yoon's request to cancel his detention made by his legal team on Feb. 4.

Yoon was apprehended in the presidential office on Jan. 15 and was indicted under detention on Jan. 26 as a



South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung, (center), and his party members shout slogans during a rally calling for impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's dismissal near the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea on March 19. The letters read 'Dismiss Yoon Suk Yeol.' (AP)

suspected ringleader of insurrection, becoming the country's first sitting president to be arrested and prosecuted.

Yoon declared an emergency martial law on the night of Dec. 3 last year, but it was revoked by the opposition-led National Assembly hours later.

A motion to impeach Yoon was passed in the National Assembly on Dec. 14, and since then the constitution-

al court held 11 hearings on Yoon's impeachment with its final verdict widely expected to be delivered this week.

Meanwhile, South Korea's Acting President Choi Sang-mok on Monday instructed the government to engage with the US to prevent any adverse impact on energy cooperation following Washington's designation of South Korea as a "sensitive" country, Yonhap

News Agency reported.

The US Department of Energy (DOE) under the previous Joe Biden administration made the designation in January after Yoon briefly imposed martial law in December amid discussions about the possibility of Seoul developing nuclear weapons.

During a meeting with ministers on economic affairs, Choi directed relevant government agencies to "actively explain" the situation to Washington to ensure that South Korea-US cooperation in science, technology and energy remains unaffected. In particular, Choi ordered the industry minister to meet with his US counterpart this week for active consultations.

Also:

TOKYO: The US Forces Korea (USFK) has pledged to maintain a "strong, forward-deployed force" in South Korea in a bid to ensure its security commitment in the face of North Korea's military threats, the Seoul-based Yonhap News Agency reported Tuesday.

"Our focus remains on maintaining a strong, forward-deployed force that ensures deterrence and regional stability," Maj. Gen. **William D. "Hank" Taylor**, director of operations for UN Command, Combined Forces Command and USFK, said in remarks to Yonhap, as the allies are conducting their annual springtime Freedom Shield exercise.

Colombia president at rally calls for special election on labor and health reforms

BOGOTA, Colombia, March 19, (AP): Colombia's President Gustavo Petro urged supporters to "rebel" against centrist and right-wing politicians who have blocked efforts to reform Colombia's health system and labor laws, as the nation prepares for congressional and presidential elections next year.

During a protest organized by labor unions on Tuesday, Petro gave a half-hour speech in which he said his government will press ahead with plans to organize a special election. The plebiscite will enable

voters to approve or reject health and labor legislation that has languished in Congress due to a lack of consensus from political parties.

"The people have made lots of sacrifices to be governed now by monarchs and tyrants," Petro said of the members of congress who have opposed his reforms. "They want to exploit humans because they have sold their heart to greed."

Petro, the South American nation's first leftist president, has struggled to get legislation passed in the Senate, where his Historical

Pact movement only has a fifth of all seats.

Petro gave national government workers the day off Tuesday so they could join protests in favor of the special election, while government agencies promoted the protests on their social media feeds and through television ads.

On Tuesday, thousands of people joined a protest in Bogota's historic Bolivar Square, where Petro was the main speaker. In a fiery tone, the president urged voters to "punish" members of Congress who he accused of legislating in favor of corporations, and of succumbing to "corruption and greed."

The special election the government plans to hold is known as a popular consultation in Colombian law, and requires Senate approval. For its results to be implemented, one third of all registered voters must participate, or around 13 million people.

Political analysts in Colombia say that it will be hard for Petro's government to convince enough voters to turn out for the election. The president was elected in 2022, with 11.2 million votes.

But some analysts have said that the special election can help the government energize its supporters before congressional elections in March. The special election also enables the national government to campaign for its causes, using public funds.



Colombia's President Gustavo Petro addresses supporters during a rally he called to back his labor and health reform proposals, which have struggled to gain legislative approval, outside Congress in Bogotá, Colombia on March 18. (AP)

Presidents of Congo and Rwanda meet in Qatar to discuss eastern Congo insurgency

DAKAR, Senegal, March 19, (AP): The presidents of Congo and neighboring Rwanda met Tuesday in Qatar for their first direct talks since Rwanda-backed M23 rebels seized two major cities in mineral-rich eastern Congo earlier this year.

The meeting between Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwanda's President Paul Kagame to discuss the insurgency was mediated by Qatar, the three governments said in a statement. The state-run Qatar News Agency published an image of the two African leaders meeting with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the energy-rich nation's ruling emir.

Congo and Rwanda reaffirmed their commitment to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, but the joint statement offered no specifics on how that ceasefire would be implemented or monitored.

The summit came as a previous attempt to bring Congo's government and M23 leaders together for ceasefire negotiations failed. The rebels pulled out Monday after the European Union announced sanctions on rebel leaders.

Qatar has hosted peace talks between Afghanistan's Taliban and the United States, Chad and rebel forces and over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

A diplomat briefed on the meeting



People hold a demonstration to denounce Rwanda's aggression in eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Place des Nations in front of the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on March 14. (AP)

said both Tshisekedi and Kagame had formally requested Qatar's mediation for the talks, which the diplomat said were informal and aimed at building trust rather than resolving all outstanding issues. The diplomat spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

Peace talks between Congo and Rwanda were unexpectedly canceled in December after Rwanda made the signing of a peace agreement conditional on a direct dialogue between Congo and the M23 rebels, which Congo refused at the time.

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Roadside bomb in Mogadishu targeted Somalia prez convoy

MOGADISHU, Somalia, March 19, (AP): A roadside bomb exploded Tuesday near Somalia's presidential palace and the government said the attack by a militant group targeted the president's convoy.

The Information Ministry in a statement called the attack in the capital Mogadishu a "cowardly act of desperation" by the militant group a l - S h a b a b, which claimed responsibility. The statement did not provide an official death toll but a witness said he counted three bodies at the scene.



Mohamud

The president was unharmed. Al-Shabab, which opposes Somalia's federal government, frequently carries out bombings and assaults targeting government officials and military personnel in the Horn of Africa nation. The group controls parts of rural Somalia and poses a significant threat despite sustained military operations by government troops and African Un-

ion peacekeepers.

Tuesday's explosion happened near the presidential palace right after President **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud** was driven out of the palace grounds in a convoy heading to the main airport.

The president was headed to Middle Shabelle in southern Somalia to oversee military operations against al-Shabab.

Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack through a website allied to the militant group.

A witness, Ayub Osman, said he saw "three people lying on the ground, motionless, covered in dust and debris." Another witness, Hassan Nur, who lives nearby said he saw two bodies.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the attack targeting the president's convoy that killed and injured other people and reaffirmed the U.N.'s support to Somalia's people and government "in their fight against terrorism and in furthering efforts towards peace and stability," U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said.

The British Embassy in Mogadishu condemned the attack and reaffirmed support for Somalia's counterterrorism efforts.

Honduras plane crash kills twelve

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, March 19, (AP): A small commercial plane crash off the coast of Honduras left 12 people dead, including a well-known Garifuna musician, authorities said.

The Lanhsa Airlines flight crashed into the sea shortly after takeoff Monday night from the island of Roatan en route to the mainland city of La Ceiba.

It carried 17 passengers and crew, five of whom were rescued and hospitalized.

Police reported that the plane failed to reach full altitude and sank quickly after impact. Local fishermen rescued the survivors.

The Honduran Civil Aeronautics Agency said the crash is under investigation. Among the victims was **Aurelio Martínez Suazo**, a former member of Congress and member of the Garifuna ethnic group, which is of mixed African and Indigenous heritage.



Suazo

ISLAMABAD, March 19, (AP): A leading rights group said on Wednesday that Pakistan's authorities have intensified pressure on Afghan refugees to go back to neighboring Afghanistan, where they risk persecution by the Taliban and face dire economic conditions.

"Pakistani officials should immediately stop coercing Afghans to return home and give those facing expulsion

the opportunity to seek protection," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at New York-based Human Rights Watch.

"The Taliban authorities in Afghanistan should prevent any reprisals against returning Afghans and reverse their abusive policies against women and girls," she said.

Pakistan set a March 31 deadline for the deportation of all foreigners living

illegally in the country. Most of them are Afghans.

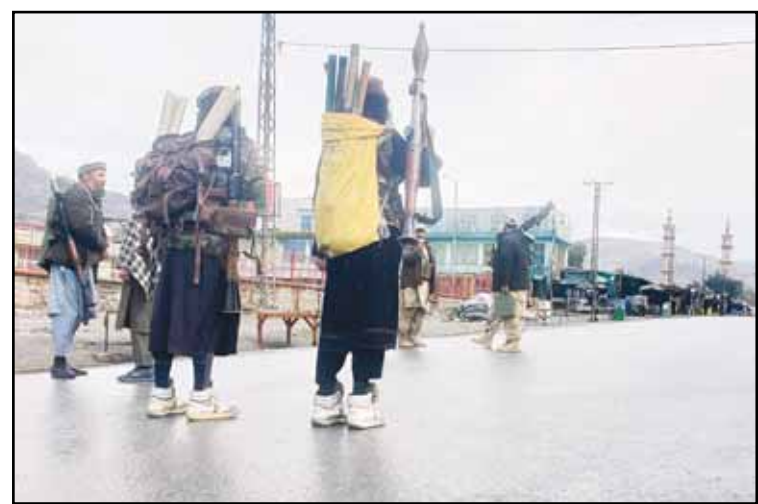
The HRW appeal came a month after the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad said that Pakistan has stepped up arrests of Afghan citizens in Islamabad and near-by Rawalpindi for forced expulsion.

However, Pakistan has dismissed the allegation by Kabul, saying that the authorities were only trying to facilitate conditions for the swift return of Afghans to their home country.

More than 500,000 Afghans who fled the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 have been living without papers in Pakistan, thousands of them waiting for resettlement in the United States and elsewhere.

There are also around 1.45 million Afghan refugees, registered with the U.N. refugee agency, most of whom fled during the 1979-1989 Soviet occupation of their country. Last July, Pakistan extended the stay of refugees registered with UNHCR until June, saying they won't be arrested or deported at least until the extension expires.

In January, US President Donald Trump paused American refugee programs for at least three months and since then, around 20,000 Afghans who were awaiting resettlement in Pakistan are now in limbo. Afghans waiting for relocation to the United States have also urged Trump to restore the refugee program to end their ordeal.



Taliban fighters stand near the closed Torkham border with Pakistan, where Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire overnight, in Torkham, Afghanistan on March 3. (AP)

US dollar plunges to KD 0.307

KUWAIT CITY, March 19, (KUNA): The US dollar exchange rate against the Kuwaiti dinar dropped 0.03 percent to reach KD 0.307 on Wednesday, while the Euro rose by 0.15 percent to reach KD 0.336, said Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

CBK added in its online daily bulletin that

the exchange rate of the pound sterling settled at KD 0.399, while the Swiss franc went up by 0.47 percent to reach KD 0.351, and the Japanese settled at KD 0.002.

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

Business

Gulf Bank appoints Bader Al-Ali and Faisal Al-Gharabally as General Managers

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Following the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank has announced the appointment of Mr. Bader Al-Ali as General Manager of Consumer Banking and Mr. Faisal Al-Gharabally as General Manager of International Banking. This step aligns with the Bank's ongoing efforts to empower national talent and promote them to leadership positions.

Mr. Bader Al-Ali brings over 18 years of banking experience, covering Consumer Banking, Digital Banking, Audit, Branch Sales and Operations, as well as Internal Control and Compliance Management. Mr. Al-Ali holds a Mini MBA in Banking Management from the Management Center Europe (MCE) in the United Kingdom and an Advanced Diploma in Islamic Finance from the General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions.

He has also obtained certifications in "The Digital World" from London Business School, "Strategic Management in Banking" from INSEAD Business School, and "Leading Strategy Execution in Financial Services" from Harvard Business School. Additionally, he is a graduate of the University of Bahrain with a specialization in Information Technology and Management Information Systems, focusing on Computer Science and Computer Engineering.

Mr. Faisal Al-Gharabally has over 24 years of banking experience, primarily at Gulf Bank, where he has spent nearly 18 years in corporate banking. He



Bader Al-Ali



Faisal Al-Gharabally

joined Gulf Bank in January 2001, starting in the Internal Audit department. In 2007, he transitioned to Corporate Banking, where he steadily advanced through various roles, ultimately serving as Deputy General Manager of Cor-

porate Banking before his latest appointment.

Mr. Al-Gharabally holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Finance from Kuwait University and an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) from INSEAD Business School. He has also completed specialized training programs in credit and leadership from renowned institutions, including Harvard Business School and the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Gulf Bank remains committed to fostering leadership and expertise within its workforce, reinforcing its position as a leading financial institution in Kuwait. 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.

Kuwait trade sector financing drops by KD 108.8 mln in Jan

Trade financing sees 20% year-on-year growth

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The value of financing provided by local banks to the trade sector in Kuwait for citizens and residents decreased by KD 108.8 million in January, marking a 32.4 percent decline, and reaching KD 354.3 million compared to KD 463.1 million in December 2024 on a monthly basis.

However, financing increased by 20 percent year-on-year, rising by KD 59.9 million, compared to KD 294.4 million in January 2024.

The accumulated balance of trade sector financing grew by approximately KD 14 million, or 0.3 percent, in January 2025, reaching KD 3.725 billion, compared to KD 3.711 billion in December 2024.

The balance decreased by approximately KD 149 million, or 4.1 percent, on an annual basis, from KD 3.576 billion in January 2024.

Bank financing for the trade sector reached its highest level in 2024 in December, totaling KD 463.1 million. October ranked second with KD 416 million, while September came in third with KD 369.8 million.

Monthly statistics issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait revealed that new consolidated financing provided by local banks to the trade sector in Kuwait grew by 33.5 percent in 2023, an increase of approximately KD 766 million, rising from KD 2.282 billion in 2022 to KD 3.048 billion in 2023.

Financing surged by KD 390 million, or 12.7 percent, reaching KD 3.4 billion in 2024.

Trade financing is a service provided by local banks to support domestic and foreign trade through commercial transactions, letters of guarantee, and letters of credit. It serves as a payment mechanism where the bank commits to paying the seller after reviewing all required documents that comply with the terms and conditions.

Data from the Central Bank of Kuwait showed that the volume of financing for Kuwaiti imports from local banks in January 2025 amounted to KD 641.3 million. On a monthly basis, import financing declined by 29.5 percent, or KD 269.5 million, from KD 910.8 million in December 2024 to KD 641.3 million by the end of January.

However, the value of import financing increased year-on-year in January by 15.4 percent, or KD 85.7 million, compared to KD 555.6 million at the end of January 2024.

Data showed that financing from local banks in dollars accounted for the largest share during the first months of the current year, making up 78.3 percent, or KD 502.5 million, of the total financing amounting to KD 641.3 million. Other currencies followed, with 8 percent, or KD 51.2 million. Financing in the European currency (euro) ranked third, accounting for 5.4 percent, or KD 34.6 million.

Financing in Saudi riyals came fourth, comprising 4.4 percent, or KD 28.4 million, followed by financing in UAE dirhams at 2.5 percent, or KD 16.5 million. Financing in British pounds accounted for 0.64 percent, or KD 4.1 million, while financing in Japanese yen made up 0.4 percent, or KD 2.6 million. Finally, financing in Swiss francs accounted for 0.22 percent, or KD 1.4 million.

The data indicated that private sector deposits in foreign currencies decreased by 2 percent, reaching KD 1.8 billion (approximately \$5.9 billion).

The total balance of local banks' claims on the Central Bank of Kuwait in dinars, represented by Central Bank bonds, decreased by approximately 2.8 percent, to KD 1.3 billion (approximately \$4.3 billion).

The data also showed that the total assets of local banks decreased by 0.1 percent in January, reaching KD 91.5 billion (approximately \$301.9 billion), while net foreign assets of local banks increased by 1.8 percent, rising to KD 15.4 billion (approximately \$50.8 billion).

In addition, time deposits at the Central Bank of Kuwait decreased by 5.4 percent in January, totaling KD 700 million (approximately \$2.3 billion). Cash credit facilities (loans) increased by 0.2 percent, reaching KD 57.2 billion (approximately \$188.7 billion).

In collaboration with City Hypermarket

Gulf Bank distributes Ramadan food packages to underprivileged families

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: As part of its Ramadan program "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together," Gulf Bank distributed food packages to underprivileged families in Al-Ahmadi. This initiative was made possible through a collaboration with City Hypermarket.

Every year, Gulf Bank remains dedicated to organizing meaningful initiatives and activities throughout the holy month of Ramadan, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and community support.

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

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

Gulf Bank continues to uphold its strong commitment to sustainability across social, economic, and environmental levels through carefully curated initiatives that positively impact both the Bank and the community. These efforts support the Bank's 2025 strategy, align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and contribute to Kuwait Vision 2035. Notably, in the days leading up to



A group photo of the Gulf Bank and City Hypermarket teams.



Part of the food package distribution in Al-Ahmadi.

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

Additionally, the Bank participated in the "Joy Land" initiative, which

provided household essentials and Eid clothing to low-income families. This initiative aimed to enhance the quality of life for underprivileged families during Ramadan by addressing their basic needs and spreading joy.

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan narrows 47%

TOKYO, March 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan narrowed 47.0 percent from a year earlier to JPY 44.1 billion (USD 275 million) in February, down for the first time in two months, due to weak exports, government data showed on Wednesday.

However, Kuwait remained in black ink with Japan for 17 years and one month, as exports still outpaced imports in value, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Overall Kuwaiti exports to Japan fell 31.0 percent year-on-year to JPY 70.1 billion (USD 447 million) for the first decline in two months. Imports from Ja-

pan surged 41.5 percent to JPY 26.0 billion (USD 162 million), up for the third month in a row.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan shrank 19.9 percent to JPY 644.9 billion (USD 4.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region falling 9.2 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 93.2 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, slid 12.1 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan jumped 21.4 percent on demand for automobiles and steel.

The world's third-biggest economy logged a global trade surplus of JPY 584.5 billion (USD 3.9 billion) in February, returning to the black for the first time in two months.

Exports gained 11.4 percent from the year before, buoyed by sales of vehicles, chip-making equipment and electronic semiconductor parts.

Imports edged down 0.7 percent chiefly due to lower bills for crude oil, coal and non-ferrous metal. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

Goldman Sachs predicts \$71 oil price in 2025

Oil prices under pressure despite geopolitical tensions

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Oil market expert Mohammed Al-Shatti stated that oil prices are under continued pressure, despite the geopolitical tensions currently supporting prices, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an interview, Al-Shatti explained that global economic factors, particularly uncertainty regarding global growth, could have a greater impact on the market in the near future. The recent rise in oil prices was a market reaction to the geopolitical

escalation. However, this impact is temporary and unlikely to disrupt oil supplies. The greatest risk to the oil market comes from U.S. tariffs and global trade tensions, which are clearly exerting pressure on prices.

There is a glimmer of hope in the markets due to measures taken by the Chinese government to stimulate economic growth. Also, Goldman Sachs' recent reduction in its forecast for U.S. economic growth, along with its projection that oil prices will reach \$71

per barrel in 2025, highlights the ongoing uncertainty in the market.

Al-Shatti noted that the start of the maintenance season for U.S. refineries will lead to a decline in oil demand, potentially resulting in an increase in U.S. inventories, which is a negative factor for prices.

He also indicated that markets have seen a drop of approximately \$5 per barrel since U.S. President Donald Trump took office, and this trend is expected to persist in the coming weeks.

Revolutionizing the M2M connectivity landscape in the Middle East

Zain Group introduces Global M2M offering to accelerate the proliferation of connected devices across the region

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle services operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced the introduction of its groundbreaking Global M2M Offering. This innovative solution is set to empower OEMs from across the globe to seamlessly integrate their devices into multiple regional markets through a single point of integration and contractual relationship.

For the first time in the Middle East, this development enables partner OEMs to access all the required connectivity for their devices, eliminating the necessity to establish local presence while ensuring full compliance with local regulations.

In partnership with MAVOCO AG, a leading provider of connectivity management platforms, Zain is able to offer its customers state-of-the-art connectivity management and control technologies, with full self-service and open integration capabilities.

Machine-to-Machine (M2M) connectivity links machines, devices, and appliances wirelessly to the internet, transforming them into intelligent devices that exchange real time information and open up a range of possibilities for how businesses are run, how they grow, and how they keep customers happy.

Zain already empowers several million devices across its footprint and the launch of the Global M2M offering will further facilitate and enable the proliferation of connected devices across the region.

Kamil Hilali, Zain Group Chief Strategy Officer commented, "The introduction of our Global M2M offering is a strategic move that accompanies the recent launch of Zain's new 4WARD strategy, capitalizing on our strategic footprint and superior connectivity to position Zain as the regional partner of choice. This service addresses the significant challenges faced by OEMs operating in or looking to operate in the re-



Zain's Machine-to-Machine (M2M)

gion, including compliance with local regulations and high integration costs."

He added, "By providing a unified solution that ensures compliance and simplifies connectivity across our extensive network, Zain is empowering the connection of global manufacturers to the Middle East. This will boost the pace of digital transformation of enterprises and governments, driving socio-economic growth across the region."

Hilali concluded, "We are confident of the opportunity to capture a first-mover advantage in the provision of comprehensive, universal connectivity services to OEMs and further solidify Zain's position as a leader and partner of choice for digital transformation."

Zain's Global M2M Offering also addresses several key challenges faced by OEMs in the region. It ensures full regula-



Zain HQ building

tory compliance by adhering to local requirements in markets such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, where permanent roaming restrictions pose significant hurdles. The solution simplifies integration through a single connectivity point, eliminating the complexity and cost of engaging multiple mobile network operators (MNOs) across different countries.

Additionally, the global IMSI-based solution provides competitive roaming rates and worldwide coverage, allowing OEMs to avoid establishing local entities and thereby reducing operational costs and legal complexities. The offering further streamlines processes by presenting a unified contractual relationship, enabling OEMs to leverage their scale without fragmentation by country or operator.

Through this launch, Zain is targeting a diverse range of market segments seeking more intelligent coverage, including

■ Empowering the connection of global manufacturers to the Middle East will boost the pace of digital transformation of enterprises and governments, driving socio-economic growth

■ The new offering represents a comprehensive solution designed to simplify IoT connectivity for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) across industries

■ Zain becomes the first regional operator to offer global connectivity using global International Mobile Subscriber Identifier (IMSI)

international car manufacturers, industrial equipment manufacturers, smart meter providers, connected device companies, and enterprises involved in international freight, shipping containers, and cold supply chain management.

The dynamic nature of M2M services is set to reshape global business operations. IOT-Analytics, a leading global provider of market insights and strategic business intelligence for IoT, AI, Cloud, Edge, and Industry 4.0, estimates that there are currently around 19 billion internet-connected physical devices, a figure expected to double to 40 billion by 2030.

With this innovative offering, Zain is poised to revolutionize the M2M connectivity landscape in the Middle East by providing OEMs with a seamless, cost-effective, and compliant solution for a plethora of connected devices. For more on Zain's Global M2M offering, please visit zain.com/m2m

Reaffirming its commitment to the growth of Kuwait's investment sector and broader economy

KIB Invest proudly sponsors UIC 20th Anniversary Ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: KIB Invest, the investment arm of Kuwait International Bank (KIB), is honored to have sponsored the 20th Anniversary Ceremony of the Union of Investment Companies (UIC). This milestone event, held on March 18 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, celebrated two decades of UIC's contributions to the investment sector. It highlighted UIC's role in empowering investment companies and fostering economic growth in Kuwait. As a dedicated member of UIC, KIB Invest remains deeply engaged in the organization's initiatives, with representatives actively contributing to key UIC committees.



Jamal Al Barrak, CEO of KIB Invest.

The UIC 20th Anniversary Ceremony brought together prominent executives, industry leaders, and key decision-makers from the investment, banking, and financial sectors. The event served as a platform to reflect on the organization's history and its pivotal role in shaping Kuwait's investment sector. Attendees explored the evolution of both local and global economies, discussing major financial and business milestones that have shaped the investment landscape.

Jamal Al Barrak, CEO of KIB Invest, said: "At KIB Invest, we are proud to be part of UIC's journey in empowering investment companies

and driving growth within the industry. Our active involvement in UIC's initiatives and committees allows us to collaborate on new ideas and solutions that address the evolving challenges of the investment sector. Supporting important community events like the UIC 20th Anniversary is not just about celebrating milestones but about forging stronger partnerships and contributing to the broader development of the industry. We look forward to continuing our work with UIC to foster innovation, collaboration, and success for all investment firms in the region."

For his part, Rakan Al Ahmad,



KIB Invest - Sponsorship of UIC 20th Anniversary Ceremony.

KIB Invest's Head of Investor Relations and Marketing, emphasized that "KIB Invest's sponsorship of UIC's 20th Anniversary demonstrates our commitment to fostering long-term relationships and collaborating to shape the future of the investment sector. The event showcased the collective efforts of all contributors to UIC's success, and we are proud to celebrate this milestone. Through such strategic partnerships, we continue to strengthen our presence in the industry while

supporting each other's growth and development as part of the broader investment community."

The UIC 20th Anniversary celebration featured a discussion panel with distinguished economists and industry experts to discuss the future of investments in Kuwait and the broader region. UIC also outlined its vision for the sector, emphasizing sustainability and its alignment with Kuwait's Vision 2035. The event concluded with a recognition ceremony honoring former UIC

chairmen, longstanding member companies, and firms recognized for their significant contributions to the Center for Investment Studies.

KIB Invest's sponsorship of the UIC 20th Anniversary Ceremony underscores its commitment to fostering growth and collaboration within the investment sector. As a key player in Kuwait's financial sector, KIB remains dedicated to driving initiatives that drive industry growth, developing and implementing forward-thinking solutions, and fostering strategic partnerships to strengthen the broader investment ecosystem.

About KIB Invest

Al Dawli Invest Investment Company (KIB Invest) is a Shariah compliant investment company that delivers a broad range of investment products and services with a specialization in Asset Management, Fund and Portfolio Management, Wealth Management, Custody Services, and Investment Advisory Services.

Established in 2023 and headquartered in Kuwait, KIB Invest is a Kuwaiti Shareholding Closed Company (K.S.C.C) with a paid-up capital of KD 45,000,000. It is a subsidiary of Kuwait International Bank [KIB].

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.

UAE leads in AI workforce training

GCC firms to invest big in 'AI' with over \$25 mln allocations

DUBAI, March 19: Artificial Intelligence (AI) remains a top priority for business leaders worldwide in 2025, with a strong focus on achieving tangible results from AI initiatives. According to the latest findings from Boston Consulting Group (BCG)'s AI Radar global survey, one in three companies globally plans to allocate over \$25 million to AI this year, while in the GCC, one in four companies is set to make a similar level of investment. The survey, including input from 1,803 C-level executives across 19 markets and 12 industries, highlights a widespread optimism about AI's potential, tempered by significant challenges in realizing its full value.

AI as a Tool for Productivity and Innovation

Leading companies in the GCC are focusing their AI investments on two strategic priorities: reshaping core business functions and creating entirely new AI-powered business models. Reshaping involves fundamentally transforming existing operations for greater efficiency while creating new business models that enable offerings that weren't possible before AI.

This strategic approach is reflected in the fact that 81% of GCC companies plan to increase tech investments in 2025, and 72% of GCC companies rank AI/GenAI as a top three strategic priority. At the country level, 88% of executives in Qatar, 72% in the UAE, and 69% in KSA rank AI/GenAI among their top three strategic priorities, compared to a 73% global average.

In the GCC, 66% of executives expect AI to boost productivity; however, they agreed that more is needed to ensure that current workforce talent is ready to meet AI demands. Overall, this positive outlook on workforce retention in the GCC and the broader Middle East stands out as a key finding from the survey, with only 7% of executives in the Middle East anticipating headcount reductions due to AI automation – an even lower percentage than the global average of 8%.

The GCC's efforts also emphasize practical AI applications rather than limited experimentation. For successful AI implementation, the region's organizations are increasingly adopting the "10-20-70 principle" – a proven framework for AI value creation. They dedicate 10% of their efforts to algorithms, 20% to data and technology, and 70% to people, processes, and cultural transformation. This strategic balance recognizes that technology alone isn't enough – organizational and cultural changes are essential for AI success. This commitment is evident in the UAE, where 27% of organizations have already trained more than a quarter of their workforce on AI tools. While the UAE is currently leading in AI workforce development within the region, this comprehensive training approach represents a model that other GCC countries are working to adopt, recognizing that employee upskilling is critical for maximizing AI's potential.

A Balanced Approach to AI Risks

While the GCC leads in AI adoption, regional executives are also keenly aware of the risks of scaling AI. Data privacy and security, lack of control over AI decision-making processes, and regulatory challenges are top concerns for regional executives, aligning closely with global risk perceptions. Addressing these concerns is crucial to ensuring AI's practical and ethical adoption.

"We're seeing a fundamental shift in how GCC organizations approach AI. It's no longer about selective implementation – there's a clear understanding that AI should be integrated into all roles and processes. The region's focus on training goes beyond adopting technology – it's about preparing a workforce that can stay competitive in a changing job market," said Robert Xu, Managing Director and Partner, BCG X.

AI and GenAI Investments in the GCC

To maximize the return on their significant AI investments, forward-thinking GCC organizations are moving beyond technology acquisition to focus on strategic value creation. This evolution reflects a maturing approach to digital transformation across the region.

The most successful GCC companies distinguish themselves through a three-tiered strategy: first, deploying AI for immediate productivity gains in everyday operations, then reshaping critical business functions to achieve substantial efficiency improvements, and ultimately, developing entirely new AI-powered business models that create lasting competitive advantages.

This approach requires executive leadership that breaks through traditional thinking. GCC leaders who see the most significant impact are those who reimagine entire operating models rather than digitize existing processes. They concentrate resources on a few transformative opportunities rather than spreading investments thinly across numerous projects, and they manage AI implementation as a comprehensive business transformation rather than a technology initiative.

The region's most innovative organizations recognize that AI success depends on blending technological capability with organizational readiness. By focusing equally on system architecture, data strategy, and human factors like upskilling and cultural adaptation, these companies create a foundation for sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly AI-driven global economy.

"While many regions are caught in short-term AI experimentation, the GCC takes the long-term view. The remarkable investment levels we're seeing aren't just about immediate gains – they reflect a deeper understanding that AI's true socioeconomic impact will unfold over years, not quarters. This patient, strategic approach to technology and talent development is setting the region apart," said Dr. Lars Littig, Managing Director and Partner at BCG.

In addition to distributing gifts and spreading joy to those in need

stc distributes iftar meals in partnership with Tarahom Volunteer Team throughout Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, distributed iftar meals throughout Kuwait in collaboration with the Tarahom Volunteer Team. Several additional initiatives were also organized by stc simultaneously under its "With good, we go further" 2025 Ramadan campaign to extend support to underprivileged families and individuals. These initiatives align with the core values behind stc's extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework, focusing primarily on supporting the community and those in need.

stc annually distributes iftar meals to those in need as part of the various initiatives organized under its Ramadan campaign. This year, the Company, in partnership with Deboned and Wako, distributed iftar meals throughout different locations in Kuwait in collaboration with the Tarahom Volunteer Team. The distribution of meals during the Holy Month comes as an essential pillar of the stc's CSR program, in which the Company gives back to the community while strengthening its social connections. Through such initiatives that extend a supporting hand to those in need, stc aims to reflect the spiritual and ethical values of Ramadan while encouraging individuals to contribute to a more united and compassionate society.

To further enrich the Ramadan ex-



Tarahom and stc teams distributing iftar meals to fasting people.

perience, stc distributed special gifts to children throughout various locations, creating moments of happiness and celebration in the spirit of Ramadan.

stc emphasized in a statement that distributing iftar meals remains a key pillar of its Ramadan campaigns, directly reflecting the values of the Holy Month. The Company also expressed that by working alongside

its partners and volunteers, stc aims to extend its reach and enhance the positive impact created from its initiatives. In this regard, the Company extended its sincere gratitude to the Tarahom Volunteer Team, Flare Fitness, Deboned, and Wako for their collaboration and support in bringing these initiatives to life.

As part of its 'With good, we go

further' campaign, stc will continue to introduce various initiatives throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan that embody the values of generosity, learning, and social responsibility. These efforts aim to strengthen bonds with the community while creating opportunities for positive engagement that align with the essence of the Holy Month.

Egypt, UK discuss economic growth and trade expansion

CAIRO, March 19, (KUNA): Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration Badr Abdelatty stressed strengthening trade and investment relations between Egypt and the UK, estimating trade exchange at about five billion sterling pounds (USD 6.4 billion) during the past year.

This came during the Foreign Minister's reception, on Tuesday, of Yasmin Qureshi, Member of the British House of Commons and the UK's Special Trade Envoy to Egypt.

The ministry's spokesperson Ambassador Tamim Khalaf said in a statement that Abdelatty expressed his aspiration for further joint work to maximize the potential available in economic relations between the two countries, as well as to attract more British investments to Egypt.

Abdelatty reviewed the steps taken by the Egyptian government to create a business environment, improve the investment climate, and overcome obstacles facing foreign investors, emphasizing the importance Egypt places on the role of the private sector in economic activity.

He also stressed the importance of building on the Egyptian-British Partnership Agreement signed in December 2020, as well as the outcomes of the Egyptian-British Partnership Council held in January, during which it was agreed to resolve any outstanding issues, thus contributing to the access of exports to the Egyptian and British markets.

Minister Abdelatty noted the importance Egypt places on strengthening cooperation with the British side in other fields, most notably university education.

Powell signals Fed will stay cautious

Fed expected to signal two interest rate cuts in 2025 amid economic uncertainty

WASHINGTON, March 19, (AP): Even as the economy undergoes what may be wrenching changes, the Federal Reserve on Wednesday is expected to signal it could cut its key interest rate twice this year – the same forecast it issued in December.

Yet the reasons for those cuts may change dramatically, depending on how the economy fares.

What were once seen as "good news" rate reductions in response to a steady decline in inflation back to the Fed's target of 2%, now could become "bad news" cuts that would be implemented to offset an economy struggling in the wake of widespread tariffs, rapid cuts in government spending, and a spike in economic uncertainty.

At the end of last year, the Fed reduced its key interest rate three times to about 4.3% from 5.3%. The Fed had rapidly raised its rate to combat inflation, and as price growth headed lower, that allowed the central bank to reverse some of those rate hikes. In September, inflation dropped to a 3 1/2 year low of 2.4%.

Yet inflation then marched higher for four straight months, before it finally fell back in February, to an annual rate of 2.8%. Partly because of that reversal, Chair Jerome Powell has underscored that the Fed is in wait-and-see mode as it evaluates the impact of President Donald Trump's policies on the economy.

So far, consumer sentiment has fallen sharply as Americans worry that inflation will rise in the coming

months. Small business owners report a much more uncertain economic outlook, which can cause them to cut back on hiring and investment.

Retailers of both high-end and lower-cost goods have warned that consumers are turning more cautious as they expect prices to rise because of tariffs. Retail sales rose modestly last month after a sharp fall in January. Homebuilders and contractors expect that home construction and renovations will get more expensive.

On Tuesday, the Fed reported that manufacturing output jumped last month, driven higher by a spike in car production. Some of that could have reflected higher auto purchases by consumers looking to get ahead of tariffs. New home construction also grew faster than expected.

Many economists have sharply reduced their forecasts for growth this year, with Barclays, a bank, now forecasting growth of just 0.7%, down from 2.5% in 2024. And economists at Goldman Sachs now expect inflation – excluding the volatile food and energy categories – will tick higher to 3% by the end of this year, up from its current level of 2.6%.

Slower growth, if it also pushes up unemployment, and higher inflation would put the Fed in a very difficult spot. Typically, when companies start cutting workers, the Fed would reduce rates to spur more borrowing and spending and boost the economy.

Yet if inflation crept higher, it would want to keep rates elevated to slow growth and restrain inflation. When the Fed lifts its key interest rate, it tends to push other borrowing costs higher, including for mortgages, auto loans, business loans, and credit cards.

Economists will closely watch Powell's press conference Wednesday to see if he will signal how the Fed would handle such a situation.

But Powell will probably double-down on his recent efforts to underscore that the Fed can, for now, watch from the sidelines.

"The costs of being cautious are very, very low," Powell said earlier this month. "The economy's fine, it doesn't need us to do anything, really."

Separately, Christopher Waller, a member of the Fed's governing board, has previously said the Fed could still cut rates this year, even if tariffs were imposed, as long as inflation was still falling once the impact of was excluded.

Yet earlier this month, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal, he acknowledged teasing out tariffs' impact on prices would be difficult.

"You're trying to find the signal of what's fundamental, and what is maybe tariff noise," he said. "And that's tough."

Critics say move will hurt the vulnerable

UK cutting welfare spending to urge people to work

LONDON, March 19, (AP): Britain's Labour Party government on Tuesday announced an overhaul of the welfare system that it says will save the cash-strapped administration 5 billion pounds (\$6.5 billion). Critics claim it will harm some of the U.K.'s most vulnerable people.

The government says the shakeup will help people who are currently "written off" find jobs. It's a risky strategy for a party founded more than a century ago to fight for the rights of working people, and it has made trade unions and party supporters uneasy.

Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall told lawmakers in the House of Commons that the government had inherited a broken social security system that is "failing the very people it is supposed to help and holding our country back."

She said Britain's statistics are stark, with one in 10 working-age people claiming a sickness or disability ben-

efit, and "millions of people who could work trapped on benefits."

Blaming the Conservatives, who lost power in July after 14 years, for damaging the economy and health system, Kendall said "the social security system will always be there for people in genuine need."

But she announced changes to the way disabilities are assessed. Campaigners say that will make it harder for people to get and keep benefits.

The changes, which will have to be approved by Parliament, are expected to save more than 5 billion pounds by 2030.

Not everything is being cut. The overhaul also includes an above-inflation increase to universal credit, one of the most common welfare benefits. Kendall said 1 billion pounds will be spent to "tear down barriers to work," including new rules allowing welfare recipients to try out

paid jobs without losing their benefits.

The government claims a lack of support towards employment is trapping sick and disabled people in economic inactivity. Kendall said that "in most comparable countries" spending on sickness and disability benefits "is either stable or falling - whilst ours continues to inexorably rise."

The Disability Benefits Consortium, which represents more than 100 charities and organizations, said the "cruel" changes "will largely hit those who are unable to work and rely on these benefits to survive."

Sarah Hughes, chief executive of mental health charity Mind, said the cuts would make it harder for people to get support and "will only serve to deepen the nation's mental health crisis."

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's center-left government has seen its popularity plummet as it grapples with a slug-

gish economy and creaking public services.

Treasury chief Rachel Reeves is due to make a spring budget statement on March 26, and is expected to trim public spending to make up for lower-than-expected tax takings and high borrowing costs.

Tuesday's welfare announcement followed weeks of speculation about how deep the cuts would be.

Labour lawmaker Imran Hussain said that "thousands of the most severely disabled people in my constituency, and millions across the U.K., have watched in disbelief as politicians debate cuts to the support that enables their very survival, leaving many at breaking point."

Kendall said she understood "the worry and anxiety." "And I hope I've made it clear to the House today, I don't start from a position of being tough," she said. "I start by precisely from a position of compassion."

Asian shares mixed after Wall Street falls back ahead of Fed rate decision

Japanese economy recovering moderately

TOKYO, March 19, (AP): Asian shares were mixed Wednesday ahead of a decision on interest rates by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

U.S. futures edged higher while oil prices declined.

Japan reported that it logged a trade surplus in February, with exports rising more than 11% as manufacturers rushed to beat rising tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The Japanese central bank opted to keep its benchmark rate unchanged, as expected. The Fed also is expected to hold rates steady.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 edged down 0.3% to finish at 37,751.88 after the central bank decided to keep the benchmark interest rate unchanged at 0.5%. The U.S. Federal Reserve is also expected to keep rates steady.

Bank of Japan Gov. Kazuo Ueda reiterated that the Japanese economy is recovering moderately, though risks remain. He declined comment on Trump's policies. Ueda said fluctuations in exchange rates and consumer prices required monitoring.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar jumped to 149.61 Japanese yen from 149.28 yen. The euro cost \$1.0926, down slightly from \$1.0944. A cheap yen erodes Japan's buying power but is a plus for exporters since it boosts their overseas profits when they are converted into yen.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.1% to 24,770.21, while the Shanghai Composite declined 0.1% to 3,426.43.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 declined 0.4% to 7,828.30. South Korea's Kospi gained 0.6% to 2,628.62.

Much attention will focus Wednesday on forecasts the Fed will publish after its meeting, showing the outlook for interest rates, inflation and the economy. For now, traders on Wall Street are largely expecting the Fed to deliver two or three cuts to rates by the end of



People stand in front of an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei index at a securities firm Thursday, March 6, 2025, in Tokyo. (AP)

2025.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 dropped 1.1% to 5,614.66 for its latest swerve in a scary ride, where it tumbled by 10% from its record and then rallied for two straight days. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.6% to 41,581.31, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.7% to 17,504.12.

Tesla was one of the heaviest weights on the market, falling 5.3%. The electric-vehicle maker's stock has been struggling due to declining sales and worries over anger toward its CEO, Elon Musk, who has been leading efforts to cut spending by the U.S. government. EV rivals, meanwhile, continue to chip away at its business. China's BYD on Monday announced an ultra-fast charging system that it says is nearly as quick as a gasoline fill-up.

Alphabet sank 2.2% after the owner of Google said it would buy cybersecurity firm Wiz for \$32 bil-

lion. It would be the company's most expensive purchase in its 26-year history, and it could boost the tech giant's in-house cloud computing amid burgeoning artificial-intelligence growth.

The drop for Big Tech continues a trend that's taken hold in the market's recent sell-off: Stocks whose momentum had earlier seemed unstoppable have since dropped sharply following criticism they had simply grown too expensive.

Chief among them have been stocks that zoomed higher in the frenzy around AI technology. Nvidia fell 3.3% as it hosted an event known as "AI Woodstock." Super Micro Computer, which makes servers, lost 9.6%. Palantir Technologies, which offers an AI platform for customers, sank 4%.

They've been among the biggest losers as Wall Street retrenches amid uncertainty about what President Donald Trump's trade war will do to the economy. Trump's

rat-a-tat announcements on tariffs and other policies have created worries that U.S. households and businesses could hold pull on their spending, which would hurt the economy.

That complicates matters for the Federal Reserve, which is beginning its latest meeting on interest-rate policy and will make its announcement on Wednesday.

Virtually everyone expects the Fed to stand pat. Cutting its main interest rate would make it easier for U.S. businesses and households to borrow, helping to boost the economy. But lower interest rates can also push inflation upward, and U.S. consumers shell-shocked by high prices have already begun bracing for even higher inflation because of tariffs.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude fell 29 cents to \$66.46 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 30 cents to \$70.26 a barrel.

Officials outline plans to boost consumer spending

China's economy shows signs of improvement

BEIJING, March 19, (AP): Chinese government officials on Monday outlined steps they are taking to try to boost domestic demand by getting consumers to spend more as a tariff war launched by U.S. President Donald Trump threatens to curb the country's exports.

The central bank will study creating new tools to increase low-cost funding for important consumption areas, said Che Shiyi from the People's Bank of China, the central bank.

On the spending side, the government has already provided a first tranche of 81 billion yuan (\$11.2 billion) to local governments in January for a rebate program to boost auto and appliance sales, announced Li Chunlin, the vice chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission.

The officials spoke at a news conference one day after the government, together with the ruling Communist Party, released a multi-faceted plan to try to boost consumer spending. The moves seemed designed to demonstrate that the gov-

ernment is committed to reviving a sluggish economy.

"While there are few new details on how the government will increase spending, the details of the plan show a greater determination to tackle China's consumption problem this year," Lynn Song, the chief Greater China economist at ING bank, wrote in a report on the plan.

New government data released Monday showed signs of improvement in the first two months of the year, though housing market weakness remained a drag on growth.

Retail sales were up 4% in January and February compared to last year, more than forecast. Industrial production rose 5.9%, the National Bureau of Statistics reported. The stronger than expected data helped buoy stock markets in Asia.

A bureau spokesperson said the economy is moving in the right direction but cautioned that challenges remain at home and abroad. Trump has imposed a 20% tariff on Chinese products, which could set back an economy with a high dependence on exports and late on Sunday, he

reiterated his intention to push ahead with more tariffs in early April.

"The external environment has become more complex and grim, domestic effective demand is insufficient, some companies are facing difficulties in production and operation, and the foundation for the continuous recovery of the economy is still unstable," Fu Linghui said at a news conference.

He added, though, that China's foreign trade has proven resilient.

"China's industrial system is complete, and its innovation capabilities are gradually improving," he said. "There is a foundation and conditions for the steady development of foreign trade."

The long-running real estate crisis has depressed consumer confidence and spending. Real estate investment fell 9.8% in the first two months of the year, the statistics bureau said.

The good news is that real estate price declines have slowed, though they have yet to bottom out. Prices for both new and existing homes fell in January and February, but at a much slower pace than most of last year.

ING bank said it expects real estate prices to stop falling this year but they likely will not rebound quickly.

"February's data showed that it would be wise for officials not to take their foot off the pedal in terms of policy support," Song wrote in a report.

The plan released Sunday includes various initiatives, from accelerating the development of artificial-intelligence related products such as autonomous driving and smart wearables to developing winter tourism in parts of the country that get a lot of snow and ice, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

It also included measures to boost spending power by expanding the minimum age, benefits for older people and health insurance for rural residents, Xinhua said.

Earlier this month, the government announced the rebate program, now in its second year, would double to 300 billion yuan in 2025. It offers rebates to people who trade in old appliances or automobiles for new ones.

will come in auto tariffs that are due to take effect next month. Japanese officials have been seeking an exemption from the Trump administration for Japan, an important trading partner and ally of the U.S.

Japan's exports to the U.S. grew 10.5% in February while imports from the U.S. fell 2.7%, compared to a year earlier, leaving a surplus of 918.8 billion yen (\$6.2 billion).

Exports to Asia jumped about 16% from a year earlier while those to Europe fell 4.5%.

A large share of the jump in exports included food, machinery and vehicles.

Imports from the Middle East fell as oil prices declined.

Also Wednesday, Japan's central bank chose, as expected, to keep its benchmark interest rate unchanged at 0.5%. The central bank has been gradually raising the key rate from below zero to counter rising inflation, but Trump's policies have raised uncertainty over the global economic outlook as well as trade.

Other Voices

Trump's new tariff proposals: economic protectionism or trade war?

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

On February 1, 2025, President Trump signed executive orders imposing a 25% tariff on all goods imported from Canada and Mexico. The administration cited concerns over illegal immigration and drug trafficking as primary motivations for these measures. Trump's trade advisor, Peter Navarro, stated that the tariffs aim to pressure these nations into strengthening their border controls and curbing the flow of illicit substances into the United States.

The response from Canada and Mexico was swift and assertive. The former Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who recently resigned, had previously warned that such tariffs could harm both economies. His successor has vowed to take a firm stance against the U.S. measures, considering potential reciprocal tariffs on American goods. Similarly, Mexican officials expressed their discontent, arguing that tariffs are not an effective solution to complex issues like immigration and drug trafficking.

In addition to actions against North American neighbors, the Trump administration imposed a 10% tariff on imported Chinese goods. This move aligns with the President's longstanding criticism of China's trade practices and his commitment to reducing the U.S. trade deficit. The administration argues that these tariffs are necessary to protect American industries from unfair competition and intellectual property theft.

Economists warn that these tariffs could lead to increased prices for American consumers, particularly for electronics and other consumer goods predominantly manufactured in China. There is also concern about potential retaliation from China, which could further escalate trade tensions and impact global markets.

On February 26, 2025, President Trump announced plans to impose a 25% tariff on goods imported from the European Union. He accused the EU of engaging in unfair trade practices and stated that the bloc was "formed to screw the United States." European leaders have expressed deep concern over these developments. Italian Prime Minister



Al-Hajeri

Giorgia Meloni criticized the EU's retaliatory tariffs, warning that such actions could lead to a "vicious circle" of escalating

trade barriers, ultimately harming consumers and exacerbating inflation within the EU.

The implementation of these tariffs has raised alarms about their potential impact on both the U.S. and global economies. Critics argue that increased tariffs function as a tax on consumers, leading to higher prices for everyday goods. These recent tariff proposals also represent a significant shift toward protectionist trade policies, aiming to address concerns over national security, unfair trade practices, and economic imbalances.

While intended to bolster domestic industries and safeguard American jobs, these measures carry the risk of unintended consequences, including higher consumer prices, strained international relations, and potential retaliation from affected trading partners. As these policies unfold, their long-term impact on the U.S. and global economies remains a subject of intense debate among policymakers, economists, and business leaders.

PM supports Trump's ceasefire efforts

Meloni calls for 'pragmatism' on tariffs

MILAN, March 19, (AP): Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni on Tuesday called for "pragmatism" to prevent an EU-US dispute over tariffs from escalating into a full-scale trade war, and expressed support for U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts for a ceasefire in Ukraine.

Speaking to the Italian Senate ahead of a meeting of EU leaders this week, Meloni made her first wide-ranging comments touching on Trump policies that have shaken Europe in the two months since he took office.

Meloni struck a diplomatic tone on tariffs and expressed favor for Trump's moves to establish a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine as a possible pathway to end the war in Ukraine. She also ruled out sending Italian troops to Ukraine, and spoke against the proposal for a security force by Britain and France. And she pledged to forge ahead with a controversial and stalled plan to vet migrants outside of the EU borders in Albania.

"We support the efforts of U.S. President Donald Trump in this sense," she said, adding that the proposed ceasefire deal "is a first significant step in a path that must lead to a justice and lasting peace for Ukraine."

Meloni also ruled out sending Italian troops to Ukraine, saying "it is not on the agenda."

"We believe that the dispatch of European troops proposed in a draft

by Britain and France is a very complex, risky and ineffective option," she said.

Meloni said she hoped that a trade war with the United States can be avoided, after the EU responded to U.S. tariffs on steel with tariffs on American whiskey and spirits. Italian winemakers, whose exports to the U.S. last year grew to 2 billion euros, are among those bracing for threatened tariffs of up to 200% should the EU tariffs take effect on April 1.

"I am convinced that we need to work concretely and with pragmatism to find common ground and avoid a trade war that would not benefit anyone, not the United States, and not Europe," Meloni said. She warned against retaliatory tariffs "that become a vicious circle where everyone loses."

Meloni said Italy is determined to operate centers in Albania that it built last year to screen asylum-seekers, saying she has received support for the project from other EU governments. The project has been stalled after Italian courts refused to approve deportation proceedings, which has been referred to the EU Court of Justice.

"I hope that the court will avoid the risk of compromising the repatriation policies not only of Italy, but all EU member states," she said, adding that it would "undermine the very stability of Europe."

Japan's exports surge in February, leaving a trade surplus as worries persist over Trump's tariffs

TOKYO, March 19, (AP): Japan's exports grew at an 11.4% annual pace in February while imports declined slightly, leaving a surplus after two straight months of deficits as worries grow about President Donald Trump's tariff hikes.

The stronger export growth yielded a trade surplus last month after two straight months of deficits, the Finance Ministry said Wednesday.

Japan recorded a trade surplus of 584 billion yen (\$3.9 billion) last month. It had a trade deficit of 415 billion yen

the previous year. The surge in exports outpaced a 7% annual increase in January. Exports totaled 9.19 trillion yen (\$61 billion), while imports fell 0.7% to 8.61 trillion yen (\$57 billion).

In January, imports jumped nearly 17% year-on-year. Japan's exports have surged in recent months as businesses rushed to send overseas shipments before Trump's tariffs kick in.

Higher U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum have already started, but the biggest threat to the Japanese economy

What's On



Photos from the event

Filipinos unite to share blessings during holy month of Ramadan

Spreading kindness: PPO organizes Ramadan iftar donation drive

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: In the true spirit of Ramadan, the Philippine Professional Organization - Kuwait came together for a heart-warming initiative – the Ramadan Iftar Donation Drive – held on March 14, at Old Souk, Salmiya.

As the sun began to set, volunteers gathered to distribute iftar packs, ensuring that hundreds of fasting individuals had something to break their fast with. This simple yet meaningful gesture symbolized generosity, unity, and the power of a community working together to uplift others.

A collective effort of Filipino professionals

This initiative, spearheaded by PPO President Joel Javier, was made possible through the unwavering support and collaboration of various PPO-affiliated organizations in Ku-

wait. Each group played a vital role in organizing, preparing, and distributing the iftar packs.

The following organizations played a key role in the success of this meaningful initiative:

- Philippine Nurses Association Kuwait (PNA-K) – under the leadership of Joel Javier, RN
- Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers - Kuwait Chapter (IIEE-KW) – under the presidency of Engr. Eric R. Castillo, PEE, AER, ACPE
- Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers - State of Kuwait (PSME-K) – under the presidency of Engr. JonilPucaran, PME
- Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers - Kuwait Chap-

ter (PICE-KW) – under the presidency of Engr. Roderick Mangampo

■ United Architects of the Philippines - Kuwait Chapter (UAP-KC) – under the presidency of Ar. Seraida M. Baiddin

■ Teachers/Specialist Organization in Kuwait (TSOK) – under the presidency of Ms. Rosemarie Juarez Lim, LPT, PRO

■ Institute of Electronics Engineers of the Philippines - Kuwait Chapter (IECEP-K) – under the presidency of Engr. Jaymond De Cruz

■ Filipino Psychology Organization in Kuwait (FiPOK) – under the presidency of Ms. Aisha V. Albakit

More than just a donation – a message of unity

The act of giving during Ramadan is more than just charity; it is a powerful reminder of compassion, humility, and solidarity. By coming together as one, Filipino professionals in Kuwait showed that kindness knows no boundaries.

PPO-Kuwait extends its deepest gratitude to all volunteers, donors, and supporters who helped make this event a success. Your generosity and commitment prove that even the smallest gestures can make a significant impact.

As we continue to celebrate Ramadan, let us carry forward the spirit of giving, not just during this holy month but every day.

“Together, we make a difference. Together, we share the blessings.”



Photos from the event.

A night of diplomacy, community, and cultural harmony

FIMA hosts grand iftar celebrating unity, gratitude

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: The Federation of Indian Muslim Associations (FIMA) hosted its Grand Iftar 2025 on March 13, 2025, at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kuwait, bringing together ambassadors, dignitaries, and community leaders in an atmosphere of unity and goodwill.

The event commenced at 4:45 PM with a beautiful recitation of the Holy Quran by Master Ridwan, followed by an English translation by Mubeen Ahmed. Mubeen Ahmed also served as the Master of Ceremony, ensuring a smooth flow of the program.

Siddeque Valiyakath, Secretary General of FIMA, warmly welcomed all distinguished guests, ambassadors, and community leaders. He emphasized the significance of Iftar as a symbol of unity, harmony, and shared values, while acknowledging FIMA's tireless efforts in fostering goodwill, cultural connections, and social service.

FIMA President Kareem Irfan, in his presidential address, highlighted the dedication and contributions of FIMA's 20 member associations in organizing impactful social and community programs. He also expressed gratitude to all attendees for their unwavering support and participation.

Ambassadors and their subordinates from the USA, Spain, Nepal, India, South Africa, Uzbekistan, Brunei, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and other nations graced the occasion, adding to the spirit of international unity.

HE Sheikh Faisal Al Humoud Al Malek Al Sabah delivered an inspiring speech, emphasizing the values of compassion, unity, and cultural harmony. He lauded FIMA's contributions to strengthening social bonds and praised the organization's commitment to charitable and community welfare activities.

Eng. Hussam Sulaiman Al-Mutawa spoke on the

significance of fasting in Islam, shedding light on its spiritual, psychological, and health benefits. He described how fasting fosters discipline, patience, and a sense of empathy for those in need.

Eng. Abdulaziz Al-Duaij, Ex-DCEO of KNPC and Board Member, delivered a thought-provoking speech on the importance of social responsibility and community development. He praised FIMA's initiatives in uplifting the community and emphasized the role of leadership in driving positive change and fostering growth.

HE Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, expressed his appreciation for FIMA's ongoing efforts in uniting the Indian diaspora in Kuwait. He reaffirmed the strong diplomatic and cultural ties between India and Kuwait and commended FIMA's dedication to community welfare, education, and social harmony.

Over 400 people participate in Ramadan event

HMWA organizes grand annual iftar get-together

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Hyderabad Muslim Welfare Association (HMWA) hosted a grand and traditional annual iftar get-together, which held on Friday, March 14 in Masjid Al Muzaini Salmiya Kuwait. Program was well attended by more than 400 people including ladies and children and enjoyed the blessed day of Ramadan.

The program started at 5:00 pm. with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Abdul Kareem Gen. Joint secy HMWA Ateeq-ur-Rahman initiated the program and staged the Master of ceremony in a professional manner.

Distinct guests from Kuwait FIMA president Kareem Irfan graced the occasion, Esdani Basha, Dr. Nayeem HMWA president Haneef IMWA president, Mujtaba Quadri, Dr Arbab and representatives from various social organizations and prominent personalities from India and Hyderabad shared the dais and hailed the activities carried out by HMWA.

President Dr Nayeem addressed and welcomed audience. He highlighted the various welfare activities done by HMWA related to education and uplifting the poor irrespective of cast and creed. He also congratulated the



A photo from the event.

audience for getting yet again precious month of Ramadhan reminded the attendees about the further role needed by everyone for uplifting the society through charity and care

Famous guest Speaker and well-known Radio Kuwait question and answer cleric Sifaat Alam Madani

Sahab was the main Speaker of the day and spoke on the topic KUNTUM KHAIRU UMMAT. As usual he captured the attention of all the attendees through his dynamic addressing style, he also emphasized how Ramadan is the month of patience and Quran, which is the guidance for all mankind, and it shows the straight path to who ever seeks guidance and who obeys Allah. He described the responsibility of the Muslim community to uphold righteousness, guide others toward good, and stand against wrongdoing promoting social harmony, strengthening family bonds, and fostering a sense of unity within the community

He urged people to follow in the remaining days of Ramadan the teaching of Quran and Sunna of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), said only these people will be successful in this world and the life after this world. He said Surely people who extend good work for humanity and follow norms of the religion will always be dominant and successful and be stuck to teaching of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), Shaikh Sifat also highlighted the importance of teaching good forbidding people for evil. He took a good example from

Quran where a bird Hud Hud went to a far region and brought a news of wrongdoing by a community and reported to Prophet Solomon, eventually he requested people to support who are working for a good cause. Hetook an example of Dr Abdul Rahman Alsumaid who left his medical profession and went to Africa and stayed and helped poor peoplehis entire life and extended services across the globe. Finally, he made a note that Ramadan is the month of Duas, and hence we should be steadfast in our Duas seek forgiveness and perform salah prayers not only in Ramadan but also throughout the entire year.

Abdul Azeem Vice president volunteered the entire event and provided much needed coordination to conduct a successful event

All the volunteers and individuals made excellent arrangements and lead the team of members and youth. All the attendees enjoyed delicious Iftar food and Hyderabad Biryani at the end of fasting and prayers

All EC worked diligently to make program successful Mushtaq, Nisar Juddy Sahab, Azeem Sahab, Ifthekar Sahab, Awes, Zafer Mahmood.

Customer satisfaction key

Burgan Bank launches special Ramadan offers with talabat

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: In celebration of the holy month, Burgan Bank announced renewing its collaboration with talabat app during Ramadan, offering customers a special discount of up to 50% on their orders paid for with Burgan credit cards on talabat. The offer echoes Burgan's commitment to elevating its customers' banking experience and adding value to their everyday transactions.

Commenting on the Bank's latest collaboration with talabat, Mr. Manaf Al-Menaifi, Acting General Manager – Retail Banking at Burgan Bank, said: “In banking, growing competition means growing expectations and value is no longer confined to the core offerings. Customers' choice of Burgan comes with an expectation that their needs will be swiftly and efficiently met and that they will be rewarded for their loyalty with a broad spectrum of exclusive offers and discounts – and that is exactly what we continue to strive for day in and day out, especially during the month of giving and sharing.”

The offer, valid until the end of Ramadan, applies to all talabat orders with a minimum order requirement of KD 10, and a maximum payout cap of KD 5. To redeem the discount, customers can apply the promo code Burgan50multiple times using more than one credit



Manaf Al-Menaifi

card before the offer expires.

Stemming from its institutional philosophy, “Driven by You”, Burgan Bank continues to dedicate its efforts to enhancing its customers' quality of life by understanding their needs and developing products and services that respond to their evolving aspirations. Through its expanding network of valuable partnerships and collaborations, the Bank leverages Kuwait's best tools, innovations, services, and resources to guarantee that every Burgan transaction delivers more convenience than meets the eye.

Order and Enjoy

Up to 50% off on talabat

For Burgan Bank's Credit Cardholders



Burgan Bank digital flyer

Classes start April 12

IMA Kuwait announces admissions for 2025-2026 online Islamic School

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Admissions open for Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait's online weekend Islamic school!

IMA Kuwait is thrilled to announce the commencement of our online weekend Islamic School (IM-AWIS) for the Academic Year 2025-2026!

Program highlights:

Classes start from 12th April 2025 For boys and girls (Ages 5 to 14)

Holistic learning experience with Hifdh, Seerah, Tafseer, Dua, Islamic Manners, Leadership Skills, and more!

Online classes every Saturday (9 AM - 12 Noon) via Zoom

Affordable Fee: 15 KD per quarter

How to Apply?

Fill out the admission form here <https://forms.gle/i2CwfJhX3Uy-3pLW9>

Register on our website www.im-awis.org

Take the appropriate admission test (Not required for Class 1 and 2 students).

For queries: Contact Yunus at 50908108 or email us at imawiskw@gmail.com

Enroll today and let your child embark on a journey of strengthening Faith, Knowledge, Character and personal growth!

Share this with friends and family!

For further details or inquiries, please contact:

Indian Muslim Association (IMA)

Kuwait

Email: pr@imakuwait.org

Phone: 9969 7642 / 6000 1424

Website: www.imakuwait.org

Charged millions for a show that never aired

Hollywood director arrested over \$11m Netflix scam

NEW YORK, March 19, (AP): A Hollywood writer-director was arrested Tuesday on charges that he swindled \$11 million from Netflix for a sci-fi show that never aired, instead steering the cash toward cryptocurrency investments and a series of lavish purchases that included a fleet of Rolls-Royces and a Ferrari.

Carl Erik Rinsch - perhaps best known for directing the film "47 Ronin" - has been charged with wire fraud and money laundering over what federal prosecutors allege was a scheme to defraud the streaming giant.

Prosecutors said Netflix had initially paid about \$44 million to purchase an unfinished show called "White Horse" from Rinsch, but eventually doled out another \$11 million after he said he needed the additional cash to complete the show. Rather than using the extra money to wrap up production, Rinsch



Director Carl Rinsch poses for photographers during a news conference to promote his 3-D film '47 Ronin' in Tokyo, Japan, Nov. 18, 2013. (AP)

quietly transferred the money to a personal brokerage account, where he made a series of failed investments that

lost about half of the \$11 million in two months, according to prosecutors.

The filmmaker then dumped the rest of the money into the cryptocurrency market, which proved to be a profitable move, with Rinsch eventually transferring the earnings into a personal bank account, according to an indictment.

From there, Rinsch spent about \$10 million on personal expenses and luxury items in a spending spree that, according to prosecutors, included about \$1.8 million on credit card bills; \$1 million on lawyers to sue Netflix for more money; \$3.8 million on furniture and antiques; \$2.4 million for five Rolls-Royces and one Ferrari; and \$652,000 on watches and clothes.

Rinsch, 47, was arrested in West Hollywood, California, and had an initial court hearing on Tuesday.

He appeared in a federal courtroom in Los Angeles in a turtleneck sweater

and jeans with shackles on his arms and legs. He did not enter a plea and spoke only to answer a judge's questions. When asked if he'd read the indictment against him, he said "not cover to cover" but told the judge he understood the charges.

US Magistrate Judge Pedro V. Castillo ordered that he be released later Tuesday after he agreed to post a \$100,000 bond to assure he'll appear in court in New York, where his indictment was filed.

His newly appointed attorney, Annie Carney, declined to comment outside court. She said during the hearing that she had not yet seen the prosecution's evidence against Rinsch. When discussing the terms of his release, she said, "the allegations in this case are purely financial." Rinsch's New York court date had not yet been set.

Netflix declined to comment.

Media



'60 Minutes' correspondent Lesley Stahl poses for a photo in her office in New York on Sept. 12, 2017. (AP)

Unfazed by \$20b legal battle

'60 Minutes' unflinching in its White House coverage

NEW YORK, March 19, (AP): As CBS corporate leaders ponder settling President Donald Trump's \$20 billion lawsuit against the network's "60 Minutes," America's storied newsmagazine has produced some fast and hard-hitting stories critical of the new administration in every episode since Trump was inaugurated.

The latest was Sunday, when CBS News helped pay for a performance featuring non-white middle and high school musicians who had won a contest and with it, the right to play with the U.S. Marine Corps Band. The original concert, however, was canceled because of Trump's executive order ending diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Correspondent Scott Pelley narrated six of the show's seven stories since Trump's inauguration, including Sunday's. He examined the administration's policies toward Ukraine and tariffs, looked at changes in the Justice Department and reported on firings of government watchdogs. Shortly after his piece on the dismantling of USAID, Elon Musk suggested "long prison sentences" for those working on the show.

All came at a time when television's most popular and influential news broadcast was being watched to see how it would respond to a unique pressure.

"This may be a lawsuit that is designed to intimidate, but they are clearly making a statement that they will not be intimidated," said Tom Bettag, a longtime television news producer who worked under Mike Wallace and Morley Safer at the CBS show.

Pelley, meanwhile, has quickly become a polarizing figure.

"Another week, another '60 Minutes' story trying to discredit Trump policies," Brent Baker, editor of the conservative media watchdog NewsBusters, wrote on X on Sunday night.

Trump's lawsuit, coupled with a parallel Federal Communications Commission investigation, accuses "60 Minutes" of election interference for the way it edited Bill Whitaker's interview last fall with Trump's 2024 opponent, Kamala Harris.

Two sound bites, broadcast on "60 Minutes" and CBS' "Face the Nation," depicted Harris giving different responses to Whitaker in a discussion about Israel. CBS said Harris made both comments in her answer to Whitaker and that the two shows ended up using different parts of a long sound bite. CBS argued the apparent discrepancy was typical of editing and not, as Trump has suggested, that different remarks by Harris were used to make her look better.

Lawsuit

CBS parent Paramount Global filed new motions in the past two weeks to get both the lawsuit and the FCC probe dismissed. Still, Shari Redstone, head of Paramount, is reportedly anxious for a settlement, much like Disney agreed to pay \$16 million in December to end Trump's lawsuit against ABC News' George Stephanopoulos. Complicating matters is Paramount's proposed merger with Skydance Media, which needs approval from the Trump administration.

Many at CBS News resist a settlement, insisting "60 Minutes" did nothing wrong. The show's executive producer, Bill Owens, told his staff last month that he would not apologize as part of any prospective settlement.

"My precious '60 Minutes' is fighting, quite frankly, for our life," correspondent Lesley Stahl said earlier this month in accepting a First Amendment award from the Radio Television Digital News Association. "I am so proud of '60 Minutes' that we are standing up and fighting for what is right."

Neither Owens nor Pelley would comment on whether the show is trying to deliver any sort of message about the lawsuit through its work. Bettag said he

believed "60 Minutes" is motivated by the importance of the stories.

What the show has done during the past two months is striking, said Bettag, now a journalism professor at the University of Maryland.

"The '60 Minutes' people are such committed journalists that they'd consider it foolish to be doing these stories because of what is a frivolous lawsuit," he said. "The lawsuit pales in comparison with the monumental changes Trump is trying to implement. Those correspondents and producers know that this is a moment that requires their very best work."

Some of the segments were unusually urgent for the newsmagazine, which tends to do longer-range stories that could take months to produce. Pelley's March 2 report about Ukraine came only days after the White House confrontation between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Musk's angry comment on his X social media platform came after Pelley's Feb. 16 story about the billionaire's role in the quick shutdown of the USAID office. "The world's richest man had cut off assistance to the world's poorest families," Pelley said, noting that Musk collects "billions of taxpayer dollars" for his SpaceX company.

Engaged

Hours later, Musk wrote on X: "60 Minutes are the biggest liars in the world! They engaged in deliberate deception to interfere with the last election. They deserve a long prison sentence."

Other news organizations have done admirable work under difficult circumstances, said Bill Grueskin, a Columbia University journalism professor. Besides Pelley, he cited the news staff of the Washington Post at a time the newspaper's owner, Jeff Bezos, has shown more friendliness to Trump.

Sunday's "60 Minutes" story involved some elite high school students - each of them either of either Black, Hispanic, Indian or Asian descent - who had earned the right to play with the Marine band before the show was called off.

CBS worked with Equity Arc, an organization devoted to increasing the number of minority students playing classical music, to organize a show for family and friends of the students outside Washington, D.C.. Retired members of military bands were brought in to work with the students. CBS News, which wanted to interview the students, paid for the travel and lodging of 22 of them.

Pelley called it the "concert that was not meant to be heard."

"The original Marine Band concert would have been seen by hundreds," he said. "Here tonight, these musicians are being heard by millions."

Pelley's March 9 report, "Firing the Watchdogs," was about Trump's efforts to fire inspector generals and thwart others who protect whistleblowers in government agencies. He quoted Trump as saying the firings were standard for a new administration taking office. "He's wrong," Pelley said.

His story about the US Justice Department examined the resistance among some prosecutors to drop corruption charges against New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

"As he continues to step up his attacks on President Donald Trump and the new administration, Pelley is elbowing aside all others to emerge as Trump's loudest TV critic," wrote Paul Bedard of the Washington Examiner.

In his stories, Pelley's deadpan voice and methodical style could not hide the sharpness of some observations. While narrating the story about USAID, Pelley noted that "It's too soon to tell how serious President Trump is in defiance of the Constitution."

Television



This image released by Disney shows Ellen Pompeo in a scene from 'Good American Family.' (AP)

Pompeo finds her creative challenge in Hulu's show

True-crime drama in 'Good American Family'

NEW YORK, March 19, (AP): If Ellen Pompeo was going to find a new role after 20 years as a series regular on ABC's "Grey's Anatomy," it had to be good. She thinks she found it as a supermom whose world collapses in Hulu's "Good American Family."

"I was looking for a real creative challenge. I think this was an opportunity for me to completely disappear into a role," she says. "Characters like this don't come along all that often."

"Good American Family" fictionalizes the true story of Natalia Grace, a Ukrainian-born orphan with dwarfism, adopted as a child by an American family who soon accuse her of being a troubled adult masquerading as a child.

Pompeo plays the adoptive mother, whose character has become a sought-after speaker and author after raising a son with autism but now finds herself at her breaking point with Natalia, her marriage strained, in legal jeopardy and her reputation in tatters.

"We were taking all of this research that we had and amplifying certain moments or adjusting certain moments for kind of dramatic license," says creator and co-showrunner Katie Robbins, who also created "Sunny" and wrote for "The Affair."

"The thing that was important was to tell a propulsive, compulsively watchable thing. But, at the end of the day, the most important thing was to tell it in an emotionally authentic way to the people involved."

Over the years, the case has been the focus of several TV shows, podcasts and documentaries, including Investigation Discovery's documentary series

"The Curious Case of Natalia Grace."

If viewers hope to get clarity on who the heroes are, they'll not get it with "Good American Family." It tells the story from multiple points of view, flashing forward and back, to create a complex family drama that also has elements of a thriller.

"You really have to pay attention to who's doing the telling," says Robbins. "Using perspective felt like an opportunity both to tell the story in kind of a fresh way, but also to allow us as storytellers to take the viewers on an experience that would help them confront their own biases in unexpected ways."

Perspective

The series starts from the perspective of the adoptive parents - Mark Duplass plays the husband - who eventually turn on their new family member, but then shifts to Natalia (played by Imogen Faith Reid), slowly cracking any snap judgements the viewer may have had going into it.

"Everybody comes into the experience of this story with sort of a different way of looking at it," says co-showrunner and executive producer Sarah Sutherland. "It's sort of like a Rorschach test. I just thought it was super-fascinating to sit with the kind of uncomfortableness of that." The eight episodes that begin debuting Wednesday seamlessly blend darkness and light, showing moments of family levity but also scenes of terror, as when Natalia approaches her parents' bed with a knife.

"In terms of the tone, I am a firm believer that life

is a real genre blend," says Robbins. "The happiest moments in my life have been undercut often with tragedy, and the saddest moments I've often found myself finding something absurdly hilarious. So everything that I write, I try to let all live in that sort of tension because that's what it is to be a person."

At its core, "Good American Family" is about how we are raised and how that can echo through generations. We learn how Pompeo's character was treated by her mother and how Natalia wasn't always raised with familial love, priming them for a face-off.

"We're examining the ways in which one is parented trickles down and affects the way that one is a parent," says Robbins. "It changes the way that you perceive the world. And I think that it's a fascinating thing that runs through the arc of this series."

Pompeo sees an even larger point - how everyone these days has their own definitive version of events and sees things through their own lens.

"Even if you know you're wrong, it takes an extraordinary amount of humility to admit you're wrong. It's so much easier to just go with it, stick to the ego and say, 'I wasn't wrong,'" she says.

"We see that with what's happening in our country right now. People will fight to the death before they admit they were wrong. It doesn't matter what we see, right?" she adds.

"We're seeing things before our eyes, and people are saying something else, and we're choosing to believe what was said instead of what we're seeing. And that is the human condition."

Variety

WASHINGTON: Heavily redacted court filings released Tuesday shed no fresh light on the circumstances under which Prince Harry entered the United States, the latest development in a legal fight by a conservative group that is pushing to find out whether Harry lied about past drug use on his immigration forms.

US Department of Homeland Security officials responded to a request from U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols by saying the records were being "withheld in full" and that all records are deemed "categorically exempt from disclosure."

The case has centered on the circumstances under which Harry - the Duke of Sussex and the son of King Charles III - entered the US when he and his wife Meghan Markle moved to Southern California in 2020. The Heritage Foundation sued after DHS largely rejected its Freedom of Information Act request to release Harry's records. Harry is not a party in the lawsuit.

Heritage has argued there is "intense public interest" in knowing whether Harry received special treatment during the application process, particularly after his 2023 memoir "Spare"

revealed past drug use. Harry has not consented to having his records made public, said Shari Suzuki, an official handling Freedom of Information Act requests for DHS and Customs and Border Protection. (AP)

NEW YORK: A journalist from Iran who prosecutors said was the target of an assassination plot testified Tuesday that Tehran's campaign to silence her left her feeling broken, but that she responded to every threat by planting a flower at her home in New York.

"That's why I have a beautiful, massive garden ... because I face a lot of curses and threats," Masih Alinejad told the jury. The dissident writer testified for more than two hours at the trial of two men charged with trying to kidnap and kill her in 2022. US prosecutors say the murder plot was orchestrated from Iran to stop Alinejad from speaking out about human rights abuses in her home country.

Guided by gentle questioning from Assistant US Attorney Michael Lockard, Alinejad recounted her childhood in Iran and her years as a young journalist trying to cover politics in a country where she frequently clashed with authorities who sought to control the news she produced.

"We don't have free media in Iran,"

she said. She left Iran in 2009 following the country's disputed 2009 presidential election and moved to the United States, where she launched online campaigns to encourage women in Iran to pose for pictures and videos showing their hair, in defiance of a religious rule requiring a head scarf.

In Iran, Alinejad said, a cleric had once told her "I'm going to punch on your face if you don't cover your hair proper." On the stand, Alinejad appeared with curly, black hair styled in big curls.

Alinejad's testimony came a week after a former member of the Russian mob testified that he took photographs and videos outside her Brooklyn home after he was hired to assassinate her. Before he could, he was stopped by police for running a stop sign. He was arrested after a loaded AK-47 assault rifle was found in his backseat.

An author and contributor to Voice of America, Alinejad became a US citizen in October 2019. She has traveled

the world speaking to women and encouraging others to join her movement for freedom of expression by women, particularly those in Iran. (AP)

NEW YORK: Tracy Morgan says food poisoning was to blame for his taking ill during Monday's Knicks-Heat game, and that he's "doing OK."

The actor-comedian posted an update on Instagram Tuesday morning, along with a smiling photo from a hospital bed, thanking fans for their concern. He also suggested humorously that perhaps his health episode spelled good luck for the Knicks.

"I'm doing ok now and doctors say it was food poisoning. Appreciate my MSG family for taking such good care of me and I need to shout out the crew that had to clean that up. Appreciate you!" Morgan wrote.

"More importantly, the Knicks are now 1-0 when I throw up on the court so maybe I'll have to break it out again in the playoffs," he quipped, ending his post with a #goknicks hashtag. Morgan took ill in the second half of Monday night's Heat-Knicks game, interrupting the action at Madison Square Garden with 6:09 left in the third quarter while workers cleaned up the area around his seat. The delay lasted more than 10 minutes. (AP)

Williams sets spacewalking record for female astronauts

NASA astronauts return to Earth after 9 months stuck in space

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 19, (AP) Stuck in space no more, NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams returned to Earth on Tuesday, hitching a different ride home to close out a saga that began with a bungled test flight more than nine months ago.

Their SpaceX capsule parachuted into the Gulf of Mexico in the early evening, just hours after departing the International Space Station. Splashdown occurred off the coast of Tallahassee in the Florida Panhandle, bringing their unplanned odyssey to an end.

Within an hour, the astronauts were out of their capsule, waving and smiling at the cameras while being hustled away in reclining stretchers for routine medical checks.

It all started with a flawed Boeing test flight last spring.

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



NASA astronaut Suni Williams gives a thumbs-up after being helped out of a SpaceX capsule onboard the SpaceX recovery ship Megan after landing in the water off the coast of Tallahassee, Fla., Tuesday, March 18. (AP)

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.

Wilmore and Williams ended up spending 286 days in space - 278 days longer than anticipated when they launched. They circled Earth 4,576 times and traveled 121 million miles (195 million kilometers) by the time of splashdown.

"On behalf of SpaceX, welcome home," radioed SpaceX Mission Control in California.

Capsule

"What a ride," replied Hague, the capsule's commander. "I see a capsule full of grins ear to ear."

Dolphins circled the capsule as divers readied it for hoisting onto the recovery ship. Once safely on board, the side hatch was opened and the astronauts were helped out, one by one. Williams was next-to-last out, followed by Wilmore who gave two gloved thumbs-up.

Wilmore and Williams' plight captured the world's attention, giving new meaning to the phrase "stuck at work" and turning "Butch and Suni" into household names. While other astro-

naughts 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 record: the most time spent spacewalking over a career among female astronauts.

Both had lived on the orbiting lab before and knew the ropes, and 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.

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.

After splashdown, Musk offered his congratulations via X. NASA's Joel Montalbano said the space agency was already looking at various options when Trump made his call to hurry the astronauts home.

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.

NASA hired SpaceX and Boeing after the shuttle program ended, in order to have two competing U.S. companies for transporting astronauts to and from the space station until it's abandoned in 2030 and steered to a fiery reentry. By then, it will have been up there more than three decades; the plan is to replace it with privately run stations so NASA can focus on moon and Mars expeditions.

"This has been nine months in the making, and I couldn't be prouder of our team's versatility, our team's ability to adapt and really build for the future of human spaceflight," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said.

New insulin delivery tech

Sarepta reports patient death following 'MD gene therapy'

WASHINGTON, March 19, (AP) Sarepta Therapeutics said Tuesday that a patient died while taking its closely watched gene therapy for muscular dystrophy (MD), sending company shares plummeting more than 25%.

The young man died of acute liver injury, a known side effect, Sarepta said in a statement. But the company said the "severity" of the patient's case had not previously been seen with the therapy, called Elevidys. It's the first known patient death with the therapy, which has been used in more than 800 patients, the company said.

In 2023, Elevidys received expedited US approval despite concerns from some Food and Drug Administration scientists about its effectiveness in treating Duchenne muscular dystrophy. It's the first gene therapy approved in the US for the rare muscle-wasting condition, which causes weakness, loss of mobility and early death in males.

The FDA granted full approval last year for Duchenne's patients with a particular genetic mutation, expanding its use to patients 4 and older, regardless of whether they are still able to walk. Previously it was only available for younger patients who were still mobile.

Sarepta said in a statement the patient who died had a recent infection that could have contributed to the liver injury. The company said it plans to update the prescribing information for Elevidys to reflect the case.

Shares of the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based company fell more than 27% Tuesday to close at about \$73 each.

Elevidys uses a disabled virus to insert a replacement gene for producing dystrophin into patient cells. It costs \$3.2 million for a one-time infusion.

Sarepta has received FDA accelerated approval for three other Duchenne's drugs since 2016. None has yet been confirmed to work; studies designed to secure full FDA approval are ongoing.

Insulin: Tandem Diabetes Care, Inc., a leading insulin delivery and

diabetes technology company, has announced the United States commercial launch of Control-IQ+ technology, the latest generation of the company's advanced hybrid closed-loop algorithm. Control-IQ+, compatible with both the t:slim X2 insulin pump and Tandem Mobi System, is now available for people with type 1 diabetes ages 2 years and older and adults with type 2 diabetes. Pumps pre-loaded with the updated software are now shipping to new customers, and all eligible, in-warranty Tandem customers will have access to the new features via remote software update free of charge.

"These new features allow for even greater levels of personalization and flexibility within our algorithm, while still receiving high marks for ease of use across a diverse population of users," said John Sheridan, president and chief executive officer. "We are proud to offer this life-changing technology to millions more people living with diabetes."

New features of the Control-IQ+ algorithm include:

- Expanded weight (20-440 lbs.) and total daily insulin (5-200 units) parameters to accommodate a wider range of insulin requirements.
- Enhanced extended bolus up to 8 hours with Control-IQ+ turned on, for better management for meals with delayed glucose rise or prolonged eating.
- New Temp Basal Rate adjustments allowed when Control-IQ+ is active, to address short-term glucose needs, such as exercise, stress, or illness, while Control-IQ+ is turned on.

Control-IQ+ builds on the existing features of Tandem's industry-leading Control-IQ algorithm, which in addition to adjusting insulin every 5 minutes based on predicted glucose values, also uses a unique AutoBolus feature that calculates and delivers a correction bolus to help with missed meal boluses. Control-IQ+ is also the only AID algorithm that allows users to program extended boluses of up to 8 hours while automation is active to better manage delayed glucose rises or prolonged eating.

Here's what you should know about the disease

Measles cases surge to 320 in US

NEW YORK, March 19, (AP) Measles outbreaks in West Texas and New Mexico are now up to nearly 320 cases, and two unvaccinated people have died from measles-related causes.

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus that's airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines, and has been considered eliminated from the US since 2000.

As of Friday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its count of confirmed measles cases in the US surpassed 2024. Here's what else you need to know about measles in the US.

Texas state health officials said Tuesday there were 20 new cases of measles since last week, bringing the total to 279 across 11 counties - most in West Texas. Two more people were hospitalized, for a total of 36.

Announced

New Mexico health officials announced three new cases Tuesday, bringing the state's total to 38. Most of the cases are in Lea County, where two people have been hospitalized, and the other cases are in Eddy County.

Oklahoma's state health department reported two probable cases of measles last week, saying they are "associated" with the West Texas and New Mexico outbreaks.

A school-age child died of measles in Texas last month, and New Mexico reported its first measles-related death in an adult last week.

Measles cases have been reported in Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an outbreak as three or more related cases - and there have been three clusters that qualified as outbreaks in 2025.

In the US, cases and outbreaks are generally traced to someone who caught the disease abroad. It can then spread, especially in communities with low vaccination rates. In 2019, the US saw 1,274 cases and almost lost its status of having eliminated measles.

The best way to avoid measles is to get the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first shot is recommended for children between 12



Matt Caldwell, (left), a Lubbock Fire Department official, administers a measles, mumps and rubella vaccine to Clair May, 61, at the Lubbock Health Department, Feb. 26, 2025, in Lubbock, Texas. (AP)

and 15 months old and the second between 4 and 6 years old.

People at high risk for infection who got the shots many years ago may want to consider getting a booster if they live in an area with an outbreak, said Scott Weaver with the Global Virus Network, an international coalition. Those may include family members living with someone who has measles or those especially vulnerable to respiratory diseases because of underlying medical conditions.

Presumptive

Adults with "presumptive evidence of immunity" generally don't need measles shots now, the CDC said. Criteria include written documentation of adequate vaccination earlier in life, lab confirmation of past infection or being born before 1957, when most people were likely to be infected naturally.

A doctor can order a lab test called an MMR titer to check your levels of measles antibodies, but health experts don't always recommend this route and insurance coverage can vary.

Getting another MMR shot is harmless if there are concerns about waning immunity, the CDC says. People who have documentation of receiving a live measles vaccine in the 1960s don't need to be re-vaccinated, but people who were immunized before 1968 with an ineffective measles vaccine made from "killed" virus

should be revaccinated with at least one dose, the agency said. That also includes people who don't know which type they got.

Measles first infects the respiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body, causing a high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes and a rash.

The rash generally appears three to five days after the first symptoms, beginning as flat red spots on the face and then spreading downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet. When the rash appears, the fever may spike over 104 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the CDC.

Most kids will recover from measles, but infection can lead to dangerous complications such as pneumonia, blindness, brain swelling and death.

There's no specific treatment for measles, so doctors generally try to alleviate symptoms, prevent complications and keep patients comfortable.

In communities with high vaccination rates - above 95% - diseases like measles have a harder time spreading through communities. This is called "herd immunity."

But childhood vaccination rates have declined nationwide since the pandemic and more parents are claiming religious or personal conscience waivers to exempt their kids from required shots.

The US saw a rise in measles cases in 2024, including an outbreak in Chicago that sickened more than 60.

Cat deaths

Another pet 'food' recall

NEW YORK, March 19, (AP) A California pet food maker has recalled its raw chicken products after they were linked to bird flu infections in two cats and suspected in a third in New York City.

The recall is the latest in recent months tied to products potentially contaminated with the virus that has sickened and killed cats in several states, after racing through poultry and dairy cattle in the US and causing illnesses in at least 70 people.

Savage Pet, of El Cajon, California, this week recalled one lot of large and small chicken boxes because they may be contaminated with Type A H5N1 influenza virus.

The boxes are cardboard and contain individual plastic packages of products. The lot code and best-by date 11152026 is stamped on products. The pet food was distributed in California, Colorado, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington state.

New York City health officials this week urged consumers to avoid Savage Pet products because of the cats' illnesses.

One cat fell ill and died this month after eating the Savage Pet products. Final test results are pending, but a preliminary test for H5N1 was "non-negative," which indicates that a certain amount of virus was detected, a department spokesperson said.

Mpox: The cumulative number of laboratory-confirmed mpox cases in Uganda has reached 4,342, with 31 deaths reported since the outbreak was declared in the East African country eight months ago, the Ugandan Ministry of Health said Tuesday.

A total of 25 new cases were recorded in the past 24 hours, with the capital, Kampala, the epicenter of the virus, registering 12 cases, the ministry said in a national situation report issued here.

According to health authorities, the Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners, has intensified preventive measures, including enhanced surveillance, case management, risk communication, community engagement, and public awareness campaigns to curb the virus's spread.

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Davis perfect on six 3s

North Carolina routs San Diego State in First Four

DAYTON, Ohio, March 19, (AP): RJ Davis and his North Carolina teammates certainly looked as though they belonged in the NCAA Tournament.

Davis scored 26 points and shot 6 of 6 from 3-point range to help the Tar Heels silence some skeptics with a dominant 95-68 victory over San Diego State in their First Four match-up.

UNC was a controversial NCAA selection on Sunday, but the Tar Heels played like a team with something to prove.

"We know we deserved to be here," junior guard Seth Trimble said.

North Carolina coach Hubert Davis said his players were simply focused on the task at hand.

"I don't think it was a weight on us to try to get into the NCAA Tournament," he said. "My communication with them is to focus on us. It's not the noise on the outside in terms of comments and critics. Focusing on our preparation, our practice and our play."

Some hot shooting from long range didn't hurt.

RJ Davis' six 3-pointers tied Caleb Love's program record for an NCAA Tournament

game. Love had six against UCLA in 2022.

Hubert Davis went 5 for 5 from deep against Eastern Michigan in 1991.

"As a head coach, I don't know what it looks like to exist without him on the sideline and on the floor, and I don't want to think about it," Hubert Davis said about RJ Davis.

The 14 made 3-pointers were the most for North Carolina in an NCAA Tournament game. UNC drained 13 against Marquette in 2022.

"I know that we hit a record number of 3s here, but made shots come and go," Hubert Davis said. "The thing I was most proud of is we were getting steals and deflections, and I thought our defense was real good."

Trimble had 16 points for the Tar Heels in a matchup of No. 11 seeds. They advanced to play No. 6 seed Mississippi in a South Region game Friday in Milwaukee.

Nick Boyd and Wayne McKinney III each scored 12 for the Aztecs (21-10).

North Carolina shot 61% in the first half and went 7 of 9 from 3-point range. RJ Davis' long 3 just before the halftime buzzer gave the Tar Heels their largest lead to that point, 47-23.

"I think we did a good job of sticking to our game plan and playing Carolina basketball," he

said. "We got out in transition, we shared the ball."

North Carolina (23-13) seemed a long shot to make the tournament with a 1-12 record in Quadrant 1 games, but was chosen Sunday thanks to a strong nonconference schedule and other metrics.

The Tar Heels were out to show the world they belonged, and San Diego State took the brunt of it.

"Obviously, we wish we'd have given them more of a game," Aztecs coach Brian Dutcher said. "We hang our hat on our defense, and we couldn't get stops. We knew we had to play in the 70s to have a chance, and they were up in the 90s."

San Diego State led the nation in field goal percentage defense, but had no answer for the Tar Heels. It was the most points the Aztecs allowed all season. The previous high was 80 in a loss to then-No. 3 Gonzaga on Nov. 18.

North Carolina shot 52.6% from the field, and 58.3% from 3-point range.

"We know who we are on the offensive end," Trimble said. "We know what we're capable of. This doesn't surprise me, what we did tonight. It's what I expect every single night."



North Carolina forward Jae Lyn Withers rebounds during the first half of a basketball game against San Diego State. (AP)

Caicedo stars as Real Madrid blanks Arsenal in women's CL

Lyon beats Bayern



Lyon's Vanessa Gilles, left, jumps for the ball with Bayern's Pernille Harder and Lyon's Wendie Renard, center, during the Women's Champions League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between FC Bayern Munich and Olympique Lyonnais at the FC Bayern Campus in Munich, Germany. (AP)

MADRID, March 19, (AP): Linda Caicedo shined on a rainy evening in the Spanish capital as Real Madrid beat Arsenal 2-0 in the first leg of the women's Champions League quarterfinals.

Eight-time champion Lyon is eyeing the semifinals after a 2-0 win at Bayern Munich in their first-leg quarterfinal thanks to goals from Tabitha Chawinga and Melchie Dumornay.

Bayern goalkeeper Maria-Luisa Grohs saved Lindsey Heaps' penalty before the break and made a host of other saves, too.

Caicedo, the 20-year-old Colombia star, opened the scoring in Madrid's Alfredo di Stefano Stadium and proved a constant source of torment for the Arsenal defenders. Substitute Athenea grabbed the second goal late to put the Spanish side in a promising position to reach the semifinals.

Caicedo capitalized on Arse-

nal defender Leah Williamson's botched effort to cut out Signe Brun- un's pass when she took a couple of strides forward to hold off Arsenal's Emily Fox and fired the ball inside the left post in the 22nd minute.

Beth Mead went closest for Arse-



Real Madrid's Caroline Weir, centre, jumps to control the ball in front of Arsenal's Kim Little, right, during the Women's Champions League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Arsenal at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

nal before the break.

Madrid suffered a blow in the 63rd when Melanie Leupolz went off with an apparent right knee injury after kicking the ball. The 16-year-old Irune Dorado went on in the German midfielder's place.

Arsenal responded with a period of sustained pressure, albeit without reward, and Athenea scored on a counterattack in the 82nd. Arsenal goalkeeper Manuela Zinsberger got her hand to the ball but couldn't keep Athenea's powerful shot out.

"We knew how to endure," Madrid coach Alberto Toril said. "In the Champions League there are important matches that you need to know how to play and that have many mini-matches within the games, and I think we did very well."

Lyon and Arsenal will host their respective second-leg quarterfinal matches next Wednesday.

Madrid, a powerhouse in men's soccer with a record 15 European titles, is bidding to reach the semifinals for the first time. The Spanish club was late to women's soccer in comparison to rivals, only forming its women's team after completing a merger and acquisition of another women's soccer club in 2020.

The big clubs' belated investments in women's soccer have had an adverse effect on clubs like Sweden's Umeå IK and Germany's Turbine Potsdam.

Marsch already spoke extensively last month about the tensions between his home country and Canada.

At a news conference to promote this week's games, Marsch called for the U.S. to "lay off the ridiculous rhetoric about Canada being a 51st state," calling it "unsettling and frankly insulting." "As an American, I'm ashamed of the arrogance and disregard that we've shown one of our historically oldest, strongest and most loyal allies," Marsch added.

Marsch said last month that he expected the geopolitical tensions to fuel his team with national pride. He didn't go that far Tuesday, but acknowledged he had exchanged thoughts with Jon Cooper, Canada's coach at the 4 Nations and two-time Stanley Cup winner.

"I haven't overemphasized this whole political scene, but what I have said is that we know that there's a charged atmosphere around what these international games mean," Marsch said.

Clubs not identified

FIFA report highlights the inequities in women's soccer

ZURICH, March 19, (AP): Despite the growing attention on women's soccer globally, the vast majority of players and teams still struggle for resources and investment.

FIFA released its annual report on the women's game, highlighting the inequities across the sport.

Soccer's world governing body expanded the fourth edition's scope from 34 leagues to 86 leagues and some 669 teams, providing a more accurate picture of the state of the game. It analyzed data in six areas: sporting, governance, financial landscape, fan engagement, data and digital, and player-related matters.

The report separated the leagues into three tiers, based on various criteria including whether the leagues had senior level competitions, the number of players that were on a 2023 Women's World Cup roster or a premier tournament like the Women's Euros, and the member association's budget for women's soccer.

The report found that the average gross salary across all tiers was \$10,900, but that number was skewed by 16 clubs in the top tier that paid players an average of more than \$50,000. The average salary for top-tier teams was \$24,030 globally - less than a living wage in many places.

Women's soccer is not yet profitable, with top-tier leagues generating an average of \$4.4 million in revenue but spending an average of \$7.6 million. The lowest tier averaged \$76,000 in revenue, with \$182,000 in expenses. FIFA did not identify the individual clubs within each tier.

Only 22% of the clubs surveyed had women's coaches, the report said.

The majority of top-tier leagues had domestic broadcast deals (91%) compared to 32% in the bottom tier. Just 42% of the third-tier teams have a title sponsor, compared to 69% at the top.

The report comes as FIFA introduced two more international club tournaments, the 2026 Women's Champions Cup and the 2028 Women's Club World Cup.

The organization announced earlier this month that 19 teams will take part in the first-ever Women's Club World Cup in January-February 2028.

The new Women's Champions Cup will include the six continental club champions and will be played in January next year.

It is hoped that the competitions spur more investment by keeping attention on the players even when it's not a Women's World Cup year.

"This month FIFA announced the timelines and formats for two new, landmark, global FIFA women's club competitions," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said in a statement Monday. "As we embark on the development of these tournaments, it is equally important that we offer insights and resources to women's football stakeholders so that together we can build on the solid foundations already in place. FIFA will utilize the findings to build tailor-made programs that will support member associations to continue to professionalize women's football - this is critical as we embark on a new era for women's club football on the global stage."



Chelsea's Catarina Macario in action with Crystal Palace's Molly-Mae Sharpe, left, and My Cató during the Women's FA Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Chelsea and Crystal Palace at Kingsmeadow, London. (AP)

Agency blasts politicization of sport

WADA reaffirms support for decision on Chinese swimmers

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, March 19, (Xinhua): The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) reaffirmed its position against the politicization of sport and took a firm stance to support the decision regarding the contamination cases involving 23 swimmers from China at the 19th Annual Symposium here on Tuesday.

In front of almost 1,000 delegates around the world, WADA president Witold Banka said in his opening speech, "At all stages, WADA was confident that it had done the right thing. We fully cooperated with an investigation into our handling of the cases by an Independent Prosecutor, Mr. Eric Cottier, from Switzerland. In the end, that review conclusively showed that WADA had acted correctly and fairly. It concluded that WADA showed no bias towards China; that its decision not to appeal the cases was reasonable; and that it followed the rules." 23 Chinese swimmers tested positive for trimetazidine due to contamination in early 2021, a case which had been thoroughly investigated and whose conclusion was carefully reviewed and accepted by WADA. The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) criticized WADA for accepting the China Anti-Doping Agency (CHINA DADA)'s decision not to punish the athletes.

"Unfortunately, the Chinese swimmers case was treated as an opportunity by a very small number of individuals, particularly in the U.S., to make un-

founded allegations against WADA without any supporting evidence," Banka said. "In the process they called into question the integrity of WADA and its team of around 180 dedicated staff members who work hard each day for clean sport. In truth, this criticism was really an extension of a wider, politically motivated attack against the Agency by those with their own motivations and ambitions." WADA's Executive Committee set up a working group to examine the observations, as well as those of the Anti-Doping Audit Review Committee of World Aquatics on the same topic.

"We have determined that it is useless to argue with people who are unwilling to accept clear evidence, whose only goal is to damage WADA and who have no desire to find a resolution. We have to conclude that they can no longer be thought of as credible clean sport partners. Still, they believe in conspiracy theories. They have doubled down on their claim that there was a cover-up at the highest levels of WADA, World Aquatics, the IOC and the Chinese authorities. And they have done so without a shred of evidence because there is no evidence. How can we take them seriously?" Banka asked.

"The real damage caused by these attacks is on the global anti-doping system itself, not just WADA. They harm all of us in this room, the entire clean sport community and, ultimately, they harm the athletes," he added.

CONCACAF Nations League coaches hope their tourney this weekend has no political undertones

INGLEWOOD, Calif., March 19, (AP): The coaches of the four teams playing for the CONCACAF Nations League title this week think soccer should remain separate from the geopolitical events currently roiling relations among their nations.

Speaking two days before the tournament's semifinal matches at SoFi Stadium, U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino and Canada counterpart Jesse Marsch on Tuesday downplayed the political impact on the latest major international sporting competition to be staged amid President Donald Trump's rhetoric and policies, including his tariff war with Mexico and Canada.

"I think we can't mix political things with sport," Pochettino said. "It's not because I don't want to talk. I have my ideas. But I represent the federation, and I (don't) want to talk about politics."

The U.S. faces Panama in the first Nations League semifinal match on Thursday before Can-

ada takes on Mexico in the nightcap. The championship match is Sunday night.

"I'm not going to get political right now," said Marsch, a Wisconsin native. "I think I've made my statements clear and known. I will say that I do think from watching the 4 Nations in hockey, you can see that the climate for sports in North America has been elevated for national teams. I'm really hopeful that this tournament can be the best reflections of our societies, in that we don't have to waste time booing anthems and getting caught up in politics, and we can just focus on the players and the teams and supporting the love of the game, and then whatever your nationality is, that you can support your team all the way."

That political tension was a recurring theme last month in hockey's 4 Nations Face-Off, where Montreal fans loudly booed the U.S. national anthem. The Canadian team furiously rallied to win the title amid nationalist fervor from both North American powers.

SPORTS

Hawks rout Hornets to sweep 4-game series as Cavs suffer 2nd straight loss



Los Angeles Clippers guard Norman Powell, right, drives past Cleveland Cavaliers forward Isaac Okoro during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Scheierman delivers career night for Celtics in win over Nets

CHARLOTTE, N.C., March 19, (AP): Trae Young scored 31 points, Dyson Daniels added 22 points, seven rebounds and seven assists and the Atlanta Hawks clobbered the short-handed Charlotte Hornets 134-102 on Tuesday night to sweep the four-game season series.

Zaccharie Risacher knocked down four 3s in the second half to finish with 21 points for the Hawks, who snapped a two-game skid.

DaQuan Jeffries and Seth Curry each had 19 points for Charlotte, which played without LaMelo Ball and Miles Bridges.

The Hawks led 70-57 at half-time, then Risacher hit four 3s in the third quarter - including three on three consecutive possessions - to quickly push the lead to 26. Atlanta's lead ballooned to 100-65 late in the third quarter after Young hit a deep 3.

Clippers 132, Cavaliers 119
In Inglewood, Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points and Los Angeles handed East-leading Cleveland their second straight loss.

Ivica Zubac had 28 points and 20 rebounds and James Harden added 22 points and nine assists in the Clippers' fourth straight victory.

Max Strus scored a season-high 24 points for the Cavs, whose 16-

game winning streak ended Sunday against Orlando. Their NBA-best road record dropped to 26-7 after they led by 12 in a 45-point first quarter.

Donovan Mitchell had 18 points and 11 assists and Evan Mobley scored 17 points in his return from a one-game absence with a foot contusion.

Celtics 104, Nets 96

In Boston, Baylor Scheierman scored 13 of his career-high 20 points in the fourth quarter,

Kristaps Porzingis had 25 points and 13 rebounds and Boston beat Brooklyn.

Scheierman took advantage of some bonus playing time as the Celtics rested injured stars Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown against the struggling Nets. Boston still had plenty down the stretch to hold off Brooklyn, which couldn't stop Scheierman's second-half surge.

After beating the buzzer at the end of the third with a 3-pointer that put Boston up 71-70, Scheier-

man hit three more from beyond the arc in the fourth before leaving to a standing ovation with about four minutes left. Scheierman, a rookie out of Creighton, had never scored more than 15 points before Tuesday.

Derrick White scored 18 points, Jrue Holiday had 12 points and eight assists and Payton Pritchard added 10 points for Boston, which won its third straight.

D'Angelo Russell led Brooklyn with 18 points. Ziaire Williams scored 15 and Cameron Johnson and Trendon Watford added 11 points apiece.

Warriors 104, Bucks 93

In San Francisco, Jimmy Butler had 24 points, eight rebounds and 10 assists and Golden State, playing without Stephen Curry, beat Milwaukee.

Curry, who recently became the first player in NBA history to make 4,000 3-pointers, was given the night off for a mental and emotional break by Warriors coach Steve Kerr.

Buddy Hield had 15 points and six rebounds off the bench to help the Warriors improve to 5-1 on a seven-game homestand. Brandin Podziemski started in place of Curry and had 17 points and seven rebounds.

With 13 games remaining in the regular season, Golden State is 40-39 and remains in the No. 6 slot in the Western Conference.



Golden State Warriors forward Jimmy Butler III, center, and Milwaukee Bucks center Brook Lopez, left, compete for possession of the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

Saudi Arabia at home to China

Japan on cusp of being first qualifier to join co-host nations at 2026 World Cup

TOKYO, March 19, (AP): It's a simple equation for Hajime Moriyasu and his Japan team this week: beat Bahrain and a 2026 World Cup spot is guaranteed.

Japan will become the first qualifier to join tournament co-hosts the United States, Canada and Mexico if it defeats Bahrain at Saitama Stadium on Thursday.

After six wins and two draws in an undefeated run so far, the Samurai Blue is heavily-favored to secure its eighth successive appearance with victory against Bahrain, a team it defeated 5-0 in September. Another win would put Japan at least 10 points clear of the third-place team with just three games remaining in Group C.

"Nothing is decided yet and I believe we should prioritize how we can play to our abilities to win the game right in front of us, and make sure of securing World Cup qualification," Moriyasu, who led Japan to the second round of the 2022 World Cup, said.

Moriyasu has selected a mostly Europe-based roster containing Liverpool's Wataru Endo and Kaoru Mitoma of Brighton and Hove Albion, also in the English Premier League. Japan is coming off two away wins in qualifying in No-

vember, beating Indonesia 4-0 and China 3-1.

There's a fierce five-way tussle for the second automatic spot behind Japan, with Australia just a point ahead of the other four teams.

The Socceroos, who have appeared at the last five World Cups, host third-place Indonesia in Sydney. It will be Patrick Kluivert's first game as head coach of Indonesia after replacing Shin Tae-yong in January.

Indonesia last qualified for the World Cup in 1938 - competing then as Dutch East Indies - and is on a high after beating Saudi Arabia in its last qualifier in November. The Saudis, aiming for a seventh World Cup appearance, will be at home to China, which has only qualified once.

South Korea leads Group B with 14 points and can take a major step toward an 11th successive appearance with a win over Oman in Goy-

ang, just north of Seoul.

Coach Hong Myung-bo has been frustrated at the Achilles tendon injury that has made star defender Kim Min-jae of Bayern Munich unavailable, publicly criticizing the German club.

"Unfortunately, Bayern Munich did not properly protect the player to prevent injury," Hong said. "So we've ended up in a situation where we have to play these important matches without a key player."

Iraq, three points behind in second place, takes on Kuwait and third-place Jordan is at home to the Palestinian team.

Iran will be virtually assured of a seventh qualification if it beats United Arab Emirates in Tehran to move nine points clear of the third-place team.

Uzbekistan is in second spot and hosts Kyrgyzstan, and Qatar, in fourth spot and six points behind the automatic places, takes on last-place North Korea.

The top two nations in each of the three six-team groups in the third round are guaranteed a spot at the 2026 World Cup. Third- and fourth-place finishers will advance to a fourth round, where direct spots are on offer for winners of the two three-team groups.



Wang Yudong (2nd left) of China attends a training session for the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers match between Saudi Arabia and China in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (Xinhua)

Bielsa names six newcomers for qualifiers

Bruno rues Neymar's absence

RIO DE JANEIRO, March 19, (Xinhua): Brazil midfielder Bruno Guimaraes said Tuesday that Neymar's injury-enforced absence from the World Cup qualifiers against Colombia and Argentina would be a "great loss" for the five-time world champions.

Brazil's talisman was ruled out of the clash against Colombia in Brasilia on Thursday and Argentina in Buenos Aires next Tuesday after suffering a thigh injury while playing for Santos.

"We will miss him - not only the players but also the fans," Guimaraes told reporters. "He is a leader, our number 10, the best player we have had in the last 10 years. We hope he recovers soon. It is a great loss for us." Neymar has been replaced in manager Dorival Junior's 23-man squad by teenage forward Endrick, who will vie for a place in Brazil's attack alongside Real Madrid teammates Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo.

Brazil is currently fifth in the 10-team South American zone qualifying group with 18 points from 12 games, seven points behind leaders Argentina.

Two victories could be enough to secure Brazil a place at next year's World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada, while two defeats would leave its campaign on shaky ground.

"I think that everyone who plays for Brazil is used to pressure," said Guimaraes, who was a part of the Newcastle United team that beat Liverpool in the League Cup final on Sunday, ending the Tyneside club's 70-year major trophy drought.

"We wear the most prestigious shirt in football and our mentality is that we have to fight like lions every day. With two wins we can move towards qualification, but two losses would put more pressure on us. We have to overcome that pressure and make sure that we are at our best,"



Brazil's coach Dorival Junior controls the ball during a national soccer team training session, in Brasilia, Brazil. (AP)

he added.

Uruguay manager Marcelo Bielsa named six uncapped players in his squad on Tuesday for the FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Argentina and Bolivia.

The newcomers are forward Pablo Suarez, midfielder German Barbas, midfielder Erico Cuello, defender Patricio Pacifico, center-back Paolo Calione and winger Lucas Agazzi, all from local clubs.

As expected, Bielsa also called up Liverpool forward Darwin Nunez, Real Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde, Tottenham midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur and Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo.

Uruguay will meet Argentina in Montevideo on Friday and Bolivia in El Alto next Tuesday.

The Celeste is currently second in the 10-team South American qualifying group with 20 points from 12 matches, five points behind leaders Argentina. Enditem

Best of the Rest

New Zealander makes history: New Zealander Sam Ruthe became the youngest athlete to run a sub-four minute mile when he broke the mark Tuesday 24 days short of his 16th birthday.

Ruthe ran 3 minutes, 58.35 seconds in a paced mile at the Mt. Smart Stadium in Auckland. New Zealand Olympian Sam Tanner and Ben Wall, who were his pacemakers, also went under four minutes.

Ruthe is the first 15-year-old to run under the 4-minute mark. Athletics New Zealand said Norway's two-time Olympic champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen set the previous mark for youngest runner to go under 4 minutes for the mile when he ran 3:58.07 in 2017 when he 16 years, 250 days old. (AP)

Pakistan's Khushdil Shah fined: Pakistan allrounder Khushdil Shah has been fined 50% of his match fee and incurred three demerit points for breaching the ICC code of conduct against New Zealand during the first Twenty20 on Sunday. Khushdil ran into New Zealand bowler Zac Foulkes while taking a single in the eighth over. Foulkes had his back to the batter, who struck him with his left shoulder.

No hearing was needed because Khushdil accepted sanctions imposed by match referee Jeff Crowe. It was Khushdil's only offense in the past 24 months. Khushdil top-scored for Pakistan with 32 while New Zealand won the match by nine wickets. (AP)

Yamal shows award ambition: FC Barcelona winger Lamine Yamal doesn't hide his ambition to win the coveted Balon d'Or award for the best player in the world, but says his first ambition is to help his club win titles.

"The first thing is for Barca to win titles, and everything else will follow," said Yamal in an interview with Spanish sports paper, Diario AS, adding the Balon d'Or was "something that usually comes with team titles." He said winning the "Champions League with Barca and the World Cup with Spain" were his "two biggest dreams." The youngster predicted a close battle in the closing weeks against Real Madrid.

"It's nearly always Barca-Madrid at the end of the day. Atletico (Madrid) make it difficult and I'm not giving them up as finished yet, but at the end it's always (Real) Madrid and Barca who are left, and the same in the Copa del Rey and Champions League," he commented.

Yamal also spoke about his special affinity for the Champions League, where Barcelona plays against Borussia Dortmund in the quarter-finals.

"It's a competition that has captivated me since I heard the Champions League anthem on TV when I was a child. Imagine coming home late on a Tuesday after training with the youth team, turning on the TV with my parents, and watching the European Cup. It's something very special," said Yamal, who was reluctant to talk about negotiations over his new contract, with his current deal due to expire at the end of June 2026.

"I don't think anyone is thinking about that at the moment: we're all focused on finishing the season with titles, we are in the decisive stretch of the season, and that's all I'm thinking about. I won't talk about the (contract) renewal until the end of the season," assured Yamal. (Xinhua)

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Scotland's Andrew Robertson, centre, and teammates attend a training session at Lesser Hampden, Glasgow, Scotland. (AP)

Sports

Oman hosts South Korea as Jordan faces Palestine

Crunch time: Kuwait gears up for high-stakes World Cup qualifier in Basra

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BASRA, Iraq, March 19: Kuwait faces a crucial test in its quest to qualify for the 2026 World Cup as it takes on Iraq this Thursday at 9:15 pm at Basra International Stadium in the seventh round of Group B qualifiers.

Elsewhere in the group, Oman will host South Korea at 2:00 pm, while Jordan faces Palestine at 9:15 pm.

Kuwait Currently, sits in fifth place with 4 points, in a group led by South Korea (14 points), followed by Iraq (11 points), Jordan (9 points), and Oman (6 points). Palestine remains at the bottom with 3 points.

Under Argentine coach Juan Pizzi, the

Blues are still seeking their first victory in the group after drawing four matches and losing two. However, the challenge will be tough against an Iraqi side aiming for the top spot. The two teams previously played to a draw, despite Iraq being reduced to ten men for more than 83 minutes after Rebin Solava's red card.

Kuwait has been preparing intensively, holding a training camp in Dubai since March 9, which included a 3-1 friendly win over China. A positive result against Iraq would boost the team's chances of securing third or fourth place – both of which lead to the decisive round of qualifiers. It would also serve as a morale boost ahead of its home clash against

Oman next Tuesday in the eighth round.

Iraq, on the other hand, looks to capitalize on home advantage and edge closer to securing one of the two automatic qualification spots. However, the team will be without Stoke City forward Ali Al-Hammadi, who has been ruled out due to injury and will also miss the match against Palestine next Tuesday.

The match will be officiated by a Chinese refereeing team, led by Fu Maning as the main referee, with Zhou Fei and Zhang Cheng as assistants. Zhang Li will serve as the fourth official, while Fei Ming and Jin Jing will oversee the VAR system.



Players hold their final training session before Iraq showdown.

Gritty Kazma wins Handball Super Cup

Al-Salmiya takes third place

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: Kazma Club secured the 2024-2025 Handball Super Cup title after a hard-fought 34-32 victory over Kuwait Club in an exciting final. The match, held in a packed arena, ended in a 25-25 draw, forcing the teams into two overtime periods. In the first overtime, Kazma led 30-25, and the match was ultimately decided in the second extra time.

In the third-place match, Al-Salmiya triumphed over Al-Arabi with a 36-29 win.

Following the final, the winners were crowned by Handball Federation President Fouad Al-Balushi, Secretary-General Qaed Al-Adwani, and Treasurer Khaled Talib, alongside Kazma Club Treasurer Omar Al-Mulla and Kuwait Club members Deen Al-Deen and Balsam Al-Ayoub. The match showcased stellar performances, with goalkeepers Abdulaziz Al-Dhafiri (Kazma) and Hassan Safar (Kuwait Club) playing pivotal roles in pushing the game into extra time.

This marks Kazma's second Super Cup title, following their victory in the 2022-2023 season. Kuwait Club has won three titles: 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2023-24.

Qaed Al-Adwani, Secretary-General of the Handball Federation, praised Kazma's victory and congratulated the club's board, players, and staff. He highlighted the development of Kuwaiti handball, noting that teams like Kazma, Kuwait Club, Qadsia, and Al-Salmiya are all competing at a high level. "The upcoming matches in the Golden League will raise the standard of local championships," he said.

Omar Al-Mulla, Treasurer of Kazma Club and Head of the Handball Team, reflected on the challenges of the Super Cup final, noting that Kuwait had led by a considerable margin at one point. However, Kazma's resilience and determination proved their worth, showing they were capable of achieving the impossible. He attributed this success to the unwavering support of Kazma President Asaad Al-Banwan, a key supporter of Al-Safir Handball. Al-Mulla also mentioned that players would be rewarded for their efforts.

Kazma goalkeeper Abdulaziz Al-Dhafiri commended the strong performance from both teams, acknowledging the challenges faced during the match. "We controlled the game, especially in the second half," he said. "We deserved the title thanks to the dedication of the players, staff, and the support of the club."

Kazma President Asaad Al-Banwan congratulated the team, highlighting their hard work and dedication. "This title came after great effort," he said. "Congratulations to Al-Safir, and hard luck to Kuwait Club. We wish them the best in their future matches."



Kazma players celebrate after winning the Super Cup.

Al-Ittihad edges Al-Qadsiya to force decider



Al-Ittihad players dribble past Al-Qadsiya player during the match.

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

JEDDAH, March 19: The Saudi Al-Ittihad Jeddah basketball team edged past Al-Qadsiya with a 74-71 victory in the second match of the West Asia Basketball League (Gulf region) semi-finals at Green Hall in Jeddah. With this result, the battle for a spot in the final remains undecided, as the two teams will face off in a decisive third match on the 25th of this month at the Kuwait Basketball Association Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. Al-Qadsiya had previously claimed victory in the first game of the playoff series.

Meanwhile, the UAE's Shabab Al-Ahli secured its place in the final after defeating Bahrain's Al-Manama 88-81. This marked its second consecutive win in the series, following a dominant 104-91 victory in the first match in the UAE.

The clash between Al-Qadsiya and Al-Ittihad was a tightly contested affair, with the outcome hanging in the balance until the final seconds. Al-Qadsiya's professional player, Cedric Henry, came close to forcing overtime but narrowly missed a three-pointer in the dying moments. The game saw shifts in momentum, as Al-Ittihad dominated the first half with a 43-32 lead, while Al-Qadsiya fought back in the third and fourth quarters, outscoring its opponent 39-31.

For Al-Qadsiya, standout performances came from Al-Humaidi (15 points), Cedric Henry (19 points), and David Elono (12 points). On the other side, Al-Ittihad's top scorers were Kyron DeShields (23 points), Mohammed Al-Marwani (15 points), and recent addition Tevin Mack (17 points).

In other league action, a single second-division match is scheduled for 9:45 PM today, as Al-Qurain takes on Al-Tadamon at Al-Ittihad Hall.

Al-Dhafiri: Kuwait's performance in Gulf Cup fuels World Cup hopes

BASRA, Iraq, March 19: Kuwait's Ahmed Al-Dhafiri emphasized the significance of the Blues' upcoming matches in the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup against Iraq and Oman.

"Despite the challenges ahead, the team has shown remarkable progress, especially after reaching the Gulf Cup semi-finals, which has given us a major morale boost," Al-Dhafiri stated.

Reflecting on previous performances, he said, "We played two outstanding matches against Jordan – both in Amman and at Jaber International Stadium. Jordan is a strong team, having finished as runner-up in the Asian Cup. To compete at that level and control the game, particularly in the second match, was a technical breakthrough for us. It boosted the players' confidence, and since then, we've seen clear improvement in



Ahmed Al-Dhafiri

our performance."

Al-Dhafiri also praised head coach Juan Pizzi, highlighting his experience and impact on the team. "He has a distinguished track record and has effectively utilized the players to bring out their best. This has fostered a strong bond between the squad and the coach, leading to positive results.

Our performance in the 26th Gulf Cup strengthened the fans' confidence in the team and enhanced the harmony between players and the coaching staff, which will be crucial in the qualifiers."

Looking ahead to the Iraq match, he acknowledged the challenge: "Iraq is one of Asia's strongest teams, boasting many talented players. It also has the advantage of playing at home in front of its fans, but we are confident in our ability to secure a positive result."

As for the Oman match, he noted, "Oman is one of the top teams in the Gulf region and has a solid squad. However, our immediate focus is on Iraq, where we aim to put in a strong performance."

Al-Dhafiri concluded with determination: "We will fight to keep our qualification hopes alive. I truly believe we have what it takes to make our fans proud."

Germany prepares for Nations League clash with Italy

BERLIN, March 19, (Xinhua): The German national team gathered for a team dinner at an Italian restaurant before departing for Milan on Wednesday, setting the stage for the first leg of their UEFA Nations League quarterfinal against Italy.

Head coach Julian Nagelsmann made his first major squad decisions, naming Hoffenheim's Oliver Baumann as the starting goalkeeper and selecting Tim Kleindienst as the primary striker. Kleindienst, who plays for Borussia

Monchengladbach, has been in strong form this season, contributing 15 goals and six assists in 25 league games. Meanwhile, Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen is expected to return from injury.

Inter defender Yann Aurel Bisseck received his first national team call-up, but the biggest story was the return of Leon Goretzka, who rejoined the squad after an 18-month absence. Nagelsmann spoke of his determination to rebound from Germany's disappointing

exit at Euro 2024, where a controversial handball decision played a role in their elimination against Spain.

"My lingering anger has turned into unwavering determination to succeed," the 37-year-old former Bayern Munich coach said. "If you feel the same, let's aim for the Nations League title and the 2026 World Cup." Germany's defensive lineup appears settled, with Joshua Kimmich, Antonio Rudiger, Jonathan Tah, and either Maximilian Mittelstadt or David Raum expected to start.