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# Kuwait busts raffle fraud network

Lawyers demand fair prize draws



## Opinion

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## Lebanon ... it's either black or white

IT is time for Lebanon to break free from the bottle of chronic crisis caused by a policy that prioritizes the personal interests of certain parties over the national interests of Lebanon.

The time has come for a new era, one that differs from the previous one marked by a lack of openness among the nation's components.

No state, no matter how weak, should be ruled by a party that, at best, represents only 15 percent of one of its sects. This statement is proven by the facts, as this party has oppressively controlled all members of its sect, and has been holding the state captive.

It is now clear to everyone, including the Lebanese President and the Council of Ministers, that there will be no reconstruction as long as Hezbollah continues to control decision-making, whether directly or indirectly.

The rocket fire incident was nothing more than an attempt to provoke a new war. Unfortunately, most Lebanese have yet to recognize this truth.

Even the Speaker of Parliament, a close ally of Hezbollah, recently commented on the launch of a few rockets at Israel, stating, "Lebanon is committed to implementing Resolution No. 1701." In doing so, the Prime Minister absolves himself of any responsibility for these attacks.

As a result, the entire Lebanese political class, as protesters chanted in 2019 "All of you means all of you", must come to terms with the fact that neither the European Union, the West, nor the Gulf states will contribute a single penny as long as Hezbollah continues to oppress the Lebanese with its weapons.

Hezbollah must stop issuing empty slogans

about defeating Israel, and other actions that have led to destruction and bloodshed in the last war. Hezbollah's only goal was to achieve a foreign agenda, which can only be described as a "mid-summer night's dream."

The rational members of Hezbollah, if any, must realize that hot-headed extremists are working to change Lebanon's demographics, and even its geography. If such rational members do exist in Hezbollah, they must make every effort to "Lebanonize" their party, as is the case with all other political factions.

They must prioritize the interests of their country, rather than becoming pawns on a chessboard manipulated by foreign powers for their own agendas, with no regard for the value of Arab blood.

The statements Iran has made over the past decades only reinforce this reality.

In response to the U.S. president's message, Tehran quickly disavowed all its affiliates in the region, except for Hezbollah, a fragment of which remains defiant.

What is really ironic is the excessive naivety with which both the Lebanese and Israeli governments responded to the recent "rocket launch party."

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By Fares Al-Abdan and Jaber Al-Hamoud  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Kuwait's Criminal Investigation and Licensing Department of the Criminal Security Sector's General Department of Criminal Investigation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, identified a network involved in manipulating raffle draw results, and arrested a few of the members of the network, following**

the circulation of a video on social media showing an individual tampering with the prize draw process.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Interior explained that extensive investigations led to the identification of the individual, identified as A.H., in the video. He serves as the Head of the Raffles Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It was discovered that he exploited his position to systematically manipulate multiple raffles for companies that announce prizes for ensuring certain individuals won, and he had obtained financial compensation for doing so.

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Kuwait bids farewell to former Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah at Sulaibkhat Cemetery, with the presence of HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, FM Abdullah Al-Yahya, and dignitaries. - See Page 5



Ministry of Oil photo  
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nembr Fahad Al-Sabah, His Excellency the Ambassador of Iraq to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi, Managing Director of Finance and Planning at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation Bader Al-Attar and officials from both sides.

## Kuwait, Iraq explore joint energy projects and expertise exchange

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Oil, on Monday, explored boosting cooperation in oil and gas sectors along with a delegation from Iraqi Oil Ministry.

In a press release, the Ministry mentioned that the meeting included discussions of developing energy projects as well as exchanging expertise.

The meeting focused on the importance of gaining benefit of technical and technological assets from both sides.

The two sides underscored boosting bilateral relations in oil sector, continuing dialogue and coordination to face challenges as well as establishing projects that would support economic integration, achieve energy security and contribute to regional oil market stability.

Heading the Kuwaiti side was Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Nembr Fahad Al-Sabah, while the Iraqi delegation was headed by Ambassador Al-Manhal Al-Safi.

Amir's speech inspires calls for industrial and trade expansion

## 'Kuwait's competitiveness hinges on economic diversity'

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: A number of economists pointed out that the speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the last 10 days of Ramadan touched on the root cause of the problem on the economic front, as he stressed the need to diversify sources of income and promote rationalization.

They told the newspaper that the era under the leadership of His Highness the Amir is truly an era of economic prosperity; as the country is currently moving toward relying on alternative sources of oil, such as tourism, agriculture and industry.

They called for the implementation of the political leadership's directives on diversifying sources of income, so the economy does not remain subject to a single-income commodity.

Former Minister of Housing and former member of the Supreme Planning Council Yahya Al-Sumait said the speech of HH the Amir regarding diversifying sources of income is in line with the serious efforts adopted by the new reform era, led by His Highness, to build a new Kuwait that reduces dependence on a single income commodity. He stated "this will ensure that the economy no longer relies solely

on oil, especially since the price of oil is vulnerable to international political and financial fluctuations. What if the price of oil drops to \$10 a barrel? How will the State pay salaries and fulfill its obligations?"

He indicated that Kuwait is in dire need of translating His Highness the Amir's speech into real diversification of the sources of income. He revealed that the Supreme Planning Council has studies on reducing dependence on oil and relying on other resources. He called for reviewing these studies, especially since they set 50 percent dependence on oil.

At the same time, he called for adopting a tax policy -- without calling it fees -- to contribute to the national income; while stressing the importance of focusing on industry and all other aspects that strengthen the economy.

Economic expert Mohammed Ramadan said the international organizations have confirmed that Kuwait is moving toward this goal, albeit at a modest pace. "Therefore, we hope that these efforts to diversify sources of income will expand. The government is also seeking to reduce costs by abolishing some allowances and the issue of revoking citizenship will help reduce costs, as the State is no longer obligated to provide housing and other services to those whose citizenship is cancelled," he added.

He believes it is difficult for the economy to grow by relying on industry, as it requires a large workforce; hence, the economy must rely on trade by opening wider areas for import and export, while expanding banking and other services.

Economic expert Abdulaziz Al-Enezi pointed out that the speech of His Highness the Amir touched the hearts of the Kuwaiti people. He said His Highness' words regarding the need to rely on alternative sources of oil have become a necessity to boost national economy, especially since Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, is experiencing a strong era characterized by the need to strive for economic renaissance in various developmental fields. "This is especially true since diversifying sources of income creates numerous job opportunities for graduates," he asserted.

He expressed his satisfaction over the current trend toward various economic sectors, such as tourism and industrial cities, as well as rationalizing spending by eliminating waste.

He stated that diversifying sources of income has numerous benefits, as it expands the economic base and somewhat reduces the national economy's focus on the oil economy.

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UN scales back humanitarian operation in Gaza following ceasefire collapse

## Kuwait blasts Israeli displacement plans in Gaza, West Bank

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflected Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation over the Israeli occupation's establishment of an agency attempting to displace Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

The ministry, in a statement, also uttered strong condemnation over that the Israeli occupation's plans to annex land from the West Bank via including 13 illegal settlements into its so-called "territories", saying it was in violation of international laws and an attempt to legalize colonization of Palestine.

Israeli occupation is forcibly displacing Palestinians and committing severe violations to international laws and norms namely UNSC resolution 2334, which is against illegal Israeli settlement activities attempting to change the demographic nature of occupied lands including that of east Jerusalem, it added.



Palestinians receive bags of flour and other humanitarian aid distributed by UNRWA, the U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees in Jabaliya, Gaza Strip on Tuesday, March 25, 2025. (AP)

The ministry called on the international community to take its humanitarian and legal responsibilities to thwart the occupation's violations against Palestinians and ensure their right for an independent state within the June fourth, 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as the capital.

Meanwhile, Palestinian medics said Israeli strikes killed at least 23 people in the Gaza Strip overnight into Tuesday.

The dead include three children and their parents, who were killed in a strike on their tent near the southern city of Khan Younis, according to Nasser Hospital, which has received a flood of dead and wounded since Israel resumed heavy bombardment of Gaza last week, shattering the ceasefire that had halted the 17-month war.

Continued on Page 5

## Proof of bank payment a must for real estate deals in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: In a move aimed at closing loopholes to curb money laundering, Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait issued a ministerial decision to mandate proof of payment via bank transfer or certified check in order to enhance transparency in real estate transactions, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Sumait explained that Resolution No.

194/2025 regulates the payment of cash value and consideration in all documents, contracts, official debt statements, and mortgages issued by the Ministry of Justice. This decision will help prevent the creation of fake mortgages and debt statements, and tackle legal loopholes that had previously allowed some illicit transactions to occur.

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## Day by Day

HAPPINESS was asked, "When do you settle in the heart?"

She replied, "I will when three things are present:

1. Not grieving over what has passed.
2. Not worrying about what is to come.
3. Being content with what God has decreed."

In times of hardship, patience is tested. In discussions, intellect is measured. In moments of challenge, humanity is revealed.

How beautiful is the human mind when it shines while in the state of understanding the delicate balance between right and wrong.

We believe in Allah alone, the All-Knowing of the unseen.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

2 Mosques witness bloated rush on odd last 10 nights



8 Gulf Bank honors General Traffic Department officers with Ramadan appreciation visit



8 Great turnout at Zain's second Holy Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition

## Ramadan Timings

Iftar ..... Wednesday ..... 18:04  
Imsak ..... Thursday ..... 04:23

## NewsWatch

### Meningitis vaccine required for Umrah

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Ministry of Health has advised citizens and residents planning to travel for Umrah or visit holy sites to receive the quadrivalent polysaccharide or conjugate meningitis vaccine (Neisseria meningitidis) prior to departure. This is in line with the health guidelines issued by Saudi Arabian authorities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry explained that the vaccine is required for all Umrah pilgrims aged two years and older, especially those with chronic illnesses or immunodeficiencies. It is recommended to receive the vaccine at least ten days before travel to ensure effective protection. The vaccine is available at preventive health centers and approved facilities across various health regions.

Also, the ministry said Saudi Arabia had updated its health requirements for travelers coming to perform Umrah and visit the Prophet's Mosque to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and protect public health.







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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Need to modernize education ... we're still moving in an old vehicle

"A DECISION, likely issued by either the Ministry of Justice or the Supreme Judiciary Council, has been made to ban Sharia graduates from practicing law. If this decision stands, Sharia students studying at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies will find limited career opportunities, restricted mainly to roles in mosques, marriage documentation, or teaching Islamic education in Ministry of Education schools," columnist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The demand for professionals in these fields is relatively low, with only a few hundred graduates every four years or more, rather than annually.

"When the College of Law was established at Kuwait University, the study of Islamic Sharia was incorporated into it due to the limited number of students at the time, which was barely enough to fill the seats in the fledgling college. Although Sharia students received their education along with law students in the same college, they were not permitted to practice law or serve as judges, as they had not studied the technical legal subjects required by the law. However, due to political and religious pressure from some MPs and religious parties, the Ministry of Justice eventually allowed graduates of the College of Sharia to practice law and take on judiciary roles.

"Today, after years of controversy, a decision has been issued to rectify the situation and ban graduates of the College of Sharia from practicing law, and likely from holding judiciary positions as well. What does the future hold for current and future students studying at religious institutes and centers? Will they be assigned to administrative positions in government agencies, tasked with issuing religious opinions and advice, or will they continue to ascend the pulpits in mosques as preachers?"

"The number of students currently studying at religious institutes and



Ali Karam

centers is estimated to be in the thousands, far exceeding the labor market demands for the next 20 or 30 years, according to Ministry of Education statistics.

"Is it necessary to continue yielding to religious parties' insistence on enrolling their sons and daughters in religious schools, or is there a more logical solution that should be considered? Is there a need to teach religion and, subsequently, enlighten society about it? Employing individuals in positions unrelated to their expertise only leads to the creation of inefficient employees who earn their salaries with little effort for a lot of money.

"There is a global trend, and one in Kuwait as well, toward shifting to online work. This means that no paper, no pen, and no physical presence are required. One can complete any transaction from home while sipping their morning coffee, in a private corner of a mall café, or at Mubarakiya Market.

"Religious education should not become a source of hardship for Sharia College graduates. Many professions, once seen as a "golden egg" opportunity, have lost their appeal. Today, the "chicken" has grown old and no longer lays eggs. Meanwhile, other professions, like new "chickens" laying gold, platinum, and various precious gems, have entered the labor market.

"Education must be modern and evolve with the progress of society. We are still lagging behind in the educational process, and our ranking on education indicators is shameful compared to that of our sister countries. The state is responsible for preparing our children and grandchildren to engage in life and contribute to the advancement of our nation. We should not remain stagnant while others move ahead. What is truly painful is that we are still moving forward in an old, outdated vehicle.

"We have great hope that Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei will achieve what the late former Minister of Education Ahmad Al-Rubaie could not, which is reforming the inverted pyramid.

"Education is not merely about writing letters or composing trivial love poems. Education is the future of Kuwait, its security, and its safety."

**Also:**

"The concept of identity is multifaceted, shaped by individual, cultural and social factors. Globalization accelerates the exchange of cultures, goods, ideas and knowledge that can have profound effects on identity," **Dr. Lulwa Al-Borshid** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Exposure to diverse cultures can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. While some individuals may experience a richer and more flexible sense of self, others may feel threatened by the potential loss of their original identity.

"Collective identity is also affected by globalization. Digital communities and instant communication allow individuals to belong to groups that transcend geographical boundaries, redefining collective identity based on shared values.

"Globalization could also diminish cultural differences, potentially leading to a more uniform global identity and the erosion of cultural diversity. Individuals from smaller cultures may feel pressured to adapt to global norms, which could result in the loss of their unique cultural characteristics.

"However, globalization can also prompt individuals to reevaluate their identity positively. Many people integrate diverse knowledge and perspectives with their cultural roots, creating a complex identity that reflects both global and local influences.

"In conclusion, identity is not static it is dynamic and evolving. Individuals and communities must balance external influences with their original cultural values to foster diversity and mutual respect in an increasingly interconnected world."



Dr Borshid

## Violations, penalties classified in money-wash and terror cases

Measures applicable to DNFBP: MoCI ruling

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Minister of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) Khalifa Al-Ajeel has issued Ministerial Resolution No. 25/2025 on the rules and procedures for the matrix of violations, penalties and corrective measures applicable to Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBP) in relation to combating money laundering and financing terrorism, reports Al-Anba daily.**

The resolution classifies violations into three risk categories -- low, medium and high with penalties ranging from written warning to license suspension or revocation and fine of KD 500 up to KD 10,000.

### Resolution

Article One states that in implementing this resolution, the definitions provided in Article One of Law No. 106/2013 on Combating Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism will be adopted, along with additional definitions for the three risk levels as follows:

1. Low-risk violations: These are unintentional violations that do not harm an entity's reputation and are minor in nature.  
2. Medium-risk violations: These involve moderate reputational damage.  
3. High-risk violations: These are serious violations that present a significant risk to reputation, both locally and internationally.

Article Two of the resolution specifies that violations are categorized based on the provisions of Law No. 106/2013, its executive regulations and relevant ministerial decisions; depending on the type and severity of the violation. Low-risk violations require the application of precautionary measures as stipulated in Article 15 of the law, including the following:

1. Failure to comply with due diligence procedures for invoices under KD 3,000 due to an unintentional error: the applicable measures and penalties are determined on a case-by-case basis. For fewer than 50 violating invoices, a written warning is issued. If more than 50 invoices are in violation; an order will be issued to enforce compliance with specific procedures, accompanied by a one-month license suspension.  
2. Failure to implement an ongoing training program for facility employees on anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing requirements: the penalty for this violation starts with a written warning. If the violation is repeated, the penalty will escalate to include the requirement to comply with specific procedures and a one-month license suspension.  
3. Failure to submit a transaction based on incomplete or inaccurate documents, without any strong indication of suspicious activity: for violations such as missing payment methods, missing

electronic payment receipts or incomplete information on invoices; a written warning will be issued. For repeated violations, compliance with specific procedures will be required, and if the violation occurs a third time, the license will be suspended for three months.  
4. Failure to comply with other obligations set by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit: the penalty for this type of violation begins with a written warning; and if repeated, the license will be suspended for three months.

For medium-level violations; a fine ranging from KD 500 to KD 3,000 will be imposed as follows:

1. Violation of handling cash exceeding KD 3,000:  
■ If the total number of violating invoices is fewer than 50; a fine of KD 1,000 will be imposed on the total invoices.  
■ If the total number of violating invoices exceeds 50; a fine of KD 3,000 will be imposed on the total number of violating invoices.  
2. Failure to appoint a Kuwaiti compliance auditor:  
■ If a Kuwaiti compliance auditor familiar with anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorism financing (CTF) laws is not appointed, or if the department is not informed of any updates regarding the auditor's appointment; the following measures will apply:  
■ A commitment to appoint the auditor is required.  
■ In case of recurrence, a fine of KD 500 will be imposed.  
3. Failure to implement due diligence for invoices exceeding KD 3,000:  
■ If the total number of invoices is fewer than 50; a fine of KD 1,000 will be imposed.  
■ If the total number of invoices exceeds 50; a fine of KD 3,000 will be imposed.  
4. Failure to maintain financial records for five years:  
■ A fine of KD 1,000 will be imposed for failing to maintain financial records for the required five-year period.  
5. Failure to terminate customer relationship when due diligence measures cannot be implemented:  
■ If due diligence measures cannot be implemented, the relationship with the customer must be terminated. In case of repeat violation, a fine of KD 500 will be imposed.

### Policies

6. Failure to comply with AML/CTF policies, procedures, systems and internal controls:  
■ Non-compliance with the relevant policies, procedures, systems and internal controls, or failure to disseminate them to local and foreign branches (if applicable), will result in:  
■ A fine of KD 500.  
■ In case of recurrence, the fine will increase to KD 1,000; and the license will be suspended until the violation is corrected.

7. Failure to circulate awareness brochures on AML/CTF to employees:  
■ A fine of KD 500 will be imposed for failure to circulate awareness brochures on combating money laundering and terrorist financing to employees.  
■ In the case of a repeat violation, the fine will be imposed again.

8. Failure to implement an electronic invoicing system:  
■ Using manual invoices instead of implementing an electronic invoicing system will require corrective action.  
■ In the case of a repeat violation, a fine of KD 500 will be imposed.

9. Failure to identify the beneficial owner of a purchase transaction:  
■ A written warning will be issued for failure to identify the beneficial owner and maintain their ownership structure.

### Violation

■ In the event of a repeat violation, a fine of KD 500 will be imposed.  
The report identified grave violations, with fines ranging from KD 4,000 to a maximum of KD 10,000 as follows:

1. Failure to notify the Security Council Resolutions Implementation Committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs within three working days after refusing service to a customer due to their inclusion on sanctions lists. This violation results in a fine of KD 5,000 and mandatory adherence to specific procedures. In the case of a repeat offense, the offender will be banned from operating in the relevant sector for one year.  
2. Failure to establish a system to inform employees about individuals listed on local and international sanctions lists, and non-compliance with directives issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This breach results in a fine of KD 4,000 and the implementation of specific corrective actions. For repeat violations, a fine of KD 8,000 will be imposed.

3. Providing a service to a person on local and international sanctions lists constitutes a violation. This leads to a fine of KD 8,000 and requires adherence to specific procedures. In the event of a repeat offense, the business license will be revoked.  
4. Failure to notify the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit within two business days regarding customer data if there is suspicion that funds are linked to money laundering activities; as well as failing to disclose this to the customer. This violation incurs a fine of KD 5,000. For repeat violations, the fine increases to KD 10,000.  
5. Failure to implement enhanced due diligence measures on politically exposed persons: If fewer than 50 invoices are in violation; a fine of KD 4,000 will be applied. For more than 50 violating invoices; the fine increases to KD 8,000.  
6. Failure to submit a facility risk assessment study results in a fine of KD 500. If the violation recurs; the fine is doubled to KD 1,000.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah talks to officials at the police station.

## Governor assesses security readiness

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah visited the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Police Station on Sunday evening for an inspection tour.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the governor was received by Farwaniya Security Director Brigadier General Mohammad Mutlaq Al-Mutairi, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Security Commander Brigadier General Ayed Al-Subaie, and other senior security officials.

The visit aimed to assess security readiness, review preparations for the

last ten days of Ramadan, and discuss important security matters in the region.

At the end of the tour, the governor stressed the importance of supporting security efforts and protecting public facilities and residents, particularly in high-density areas such as Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

He also highlighted the need to find solutions to ease traffic congestion and better serve residents, especially during the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan when large numbers of worshippers are present.



KUNA photo  
Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah receives the Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Lorenzo Morini.

## DM, Italy envoy hold bilateral talks

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA):** Kuwaiti Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah and Italian Ambassador in Kuwait Lorenzo Morini on Monday discussed several issues of mutual interest.

During the meeting, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah commended bilateral relations between both friendly countries, and joint cooperation covering various domains, the Ministry of Defense said in a press release.

## Kuwaiti arrested

### Gun found as car flips over at nature reserve

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** A vehicle overturned in the Umm Qudair Nature Reserve leading to the discovery of a firearm, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

Environmental police officers detained a Kuwaiti youth after he and two others, who required medical treatment, entered the reserve on charges of firearm possession and trespassing in a restricted area.

According to a security source, the officers noticed a four-wheel-drive vehicle inside the reserve. When the driver saw the officers, he attempted to flee, causing the vehicle to overturn. The accident left two individuals injured, one suffered fractures and was transported to Al-Razi Hospital, while the other sustained wounds and bruises and was taken to Al-Adan Hospital. The third individual was uninjured, the source disclosed.

The source stated that a search of the vehicle revealed a firearm, which is believed to be an unlicensed hunting weapon.

Visiting nature reserves requires a permit because these areas are protected to prevent illegal hunting and preserve wildlife, the source explained.

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# MoSA forms new committees to oversee charity aid distribution

KD 6 mln raised for loan repayment

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi announced the formation of six specialized committees with representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Zakat House, General Secretariat of Awqaf, and the Union of Charity Societies and Foundations.

Al-Ajmi revealed that the committees will be responsible for establishing legal guidelines to determine eligibility for charitable aid, ensuring that applicants meet



KUNA photo  
Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, Acting Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs.

the criteria for the campaign, and overseeing the fair and transparent distribution of donations for preventing duplication or illegal exploitation.

He highlighted the successful launch of the campaign to collect donations for repaying loans of those in need, with total donations surpassing KD six million to date.

Al-Ajmi explained that cooperative societies have expressed their

willingness to contribute huge sums, and the ministry is awaiting official checks for these donations. It has contacted the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies for inviting cooperative societies that are interested in donating their annual zakat to do so in accordance with the approved guidelines and frameworks.

There are two main conditions for benefiting from the campaign. First, the debt must not exceed KD 20,000, and second, the applicant must not have benefited from the previous two campaigns.

In addition, Al-Ajmi said the ministry will gather the names of registered beneficiaries from the Unified Aid Platform and forward them to the Ministry of Justice's Department for Sentences Enforcement for necessary actions, ensuring that their cases are resolved in accordance with legal frameworks.

## Modern services meet Ramadan traditions

### Awqaf boosts Grand Mosque services

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** Hamad Al-Meer, Director of the Media and Endowment Development Department at the General Secretariat of Awqaf, stated that as part of its efforts to cooperate, coordinate, and partner with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, the General Secretariat of Awqaf supported the charitable activities carried out during the last ten days of Ramadan at the Grand Mosque, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Meer explained that the Media and Endowment Development Department installed three large screens in the outdoor courtyard and other areas of the mosque for live broadcasts of prayers, lectures, and the sched-

ule of the mosque's reciters.

The department also contributed to the installation of smart interactive screens to offer enhanced services to visitors and worshippers, including touchscreen donations and electronic endowment offerings. A pavilion was set up by the Secretariat to promote the concept of endowments and educate the public about their significance and societal role.

The Secretariat's cooperation with the Grand Mosque administration also included providing daily iftar meals for fasting individuals in the mosque's main tent, in coordination with a charitable organization.



Farwaniya Governorate photos  
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah during the inauguration of the mosque in Jleeb.

## Farwaniya Governor attends inauguration of Al-Othman and Al-Jalal Mosque in Jleeb

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah attended the inauguration of the Abdullah Abdulaziz Al-Othman and Munira Ibrahim Al-Jalal Mosque in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Sunday evening.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the ceremony was also attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Dr. Bader Hajar Al-Mutairi, Director of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Mohammed Mutlaq Al-Mutairi, Director of the Farwaniya Mosques Department Faisal Sayyah Al-Humaidani, Faisal Issa Al-Othman, Nabil Issa Al-Othman, and Yousef Issa Al-Othman.

The mosque was restored through the endowment of the late Issa Abdullah Al-Othman and Taiba Abdulwa-

hab Al-Othman (May God have mercy on them).

During the opening ceremony, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser expressed his keenness to support charitable initiatives and the reconstruction of places of worship.

He hoped that this work would be recorded as a good deed for the Al-Othman family, and highlighted that such efforts are characteristic of both the honorable Al-Othman family and the Kuwaiti people, who are well-known for their dedication to building and restoring mosques, both inside and outside Kuwait.

At the end of the ceremony, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser, Dr. Bader Hajar Al-Mutairi, and other officials were presented with commemorative shields in recognition of their support and participation in the ceremony.

## KD 382K allocated for life-saving treatments

### PHF partners with PAMA to provide aid for kidney, lung cancer patients

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** The Patients Helping Fund (PHF) Society has signed a cooperation agreement with the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA) based on which support totaling KD 382,000 will be provided to assist needy kidney dialysis and lung cancer patients, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This agreement



Dr. Al-Sharhan

will enable the society to supply necessary medications and treatments to a large group of patients who are unable to afford treatment in public or private hospitals.

Meanwhile, Chair of the Board of Directors of PHF Dr. Mohammed Al-Sharhan praised the cooperation, affirming that this support will make a real difference in the lives of many patients who suffer in silence.

He said PAMA's support reflects its strong commitment to its social mission and strengthens the society's ability to provide vital and sustainable assistance to cancer and kidney failure patients.

## Dasman Palace gains historical recognition

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** The Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Chair of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NC-CAL) Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi has issued a decision to officially register the Dasman Palace as a historical site, reports Al-Anba daily.

The decision stipulates the following:

Article 1: The site of Dasman Palace, located in Dasman, Kuwait City is to be

registered as a historical site in the National Register of Historical Buildings under the number "KHBR 11101 12", including all its components and annexes.

Article 2: All relevant authorities are required to implement this decision in accordance with their responsibilities. The decision will take effect from the date of issuance, and all concerned parties will be notified accordingly.



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Queen Cabana (2 persons).  
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Australian University team

## AU spreads generosity with annual 'Ramadan Meal Distribution Drive'

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** In the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan and in line with its commitment to corporate social responsibility, The Australian University (AU) continued its annual tradition of giving back to the community by organizing its annual Ramadan Meal Distribution Drive.

The distribution drive brought together AU staff members and students as volunteers to distribute meals to underprivileged individuals and families in areas with a higher population of laborers. Through such initiatives, AU aims to instill in its students the values of empathy, social responsibility, and the importance of giving back to the community. By actively participating in volunteer work, students develop a deeper

understanding of the challenges faced by others and the impact of even the smallest acts of kindness. AU believes that fostering a culture of compassion and service among its students helps shape them into responsible and socially conscious individuals who will continue to make a difference beyond their university years.

Commenting on the initiative, Ms. May Al Musallam, Senior Manager of Public Relations and Marketing at AU, said: "This annual initiative is a cornerstone of AU's dedication to community engagement and social good. It reflects our values of compassion, unity and generosity. We hope it brings comfort and strengthens the spirit of togetherness during this holy month."





Diplomatic icon Khaled Al-Jarallah laid to rest as diplomats, colleagues and friends pays their respect to the late former Deputy Foreign Minister.

Photos by Samer Shaqir

Diplomatic icon remembered for decades of service

# Kuwait bids farewell to late former Deputy FM Khaled Al-Jarallah

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Kuwait bid farewell to the late former Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah last night, in the presence of the former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, and a number of ruling family members, ministers, ambassadors, diplomats, and former MPs.

Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya praised the late Al-Jarallah's significant contributions, stating that he served the country for over 50 years, and fulfilled his duties with dedication. The minister expressed his condolences, and prayed for patience and comfort for the grieving family.

Meanwhile, former Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad also mourned Al-Jarallah's passing, describing him as a devoted son of Kuwait and a distinguished figure in diplomacy.

Sheikh Dr. Ahmad said, "I worked closely with the late Al-Jarallah, and many others learned from him the principles of sophisticated diplomacy. He was a role model, and admired for his high morals and professionalism. He was a teacher of diplomacy, as he trained generations of diplomats. I am honored to have been one of those who learned under his tutelage. May God have mercy on Abu Hazem, forgive him, and grant him a place in Paradise."

Furthermore, Assistant Foreign Minister

for Consular Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani said Kuwait has lost a great man with a long and distinguished history.

"We were his students, and we will remain his students," he added.

In addition, Assistant Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Ambassador Sami Al-Hamad reflected on the deceased's career, praising his wisdom and diplomatic skill during the most challenging times Kuwait has faced, from the Iraqi invasion to the COVID-19 crisis.

He said, "I worked with the late Al-Jarallah for more than 30 years. During times of crisis, he was an inspiring leader who motivated us to serve our country. He was a brilliant diplomat who approached his country's issues with intelligence and calm, demonstrating an exceptional ability to manage challenges.

We learned patience and wisdom from him. He was a generous, charitable person who helped quietly and without fanfare. He was not just a teacher, but a brother and a friend. He opened the doors of his office to everyone without discrimination and listened to all who came to him, regardless of their position."

In this regard, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Bader Al-Tunaib expressed his grief over the passing of former Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah, stressing that Kuwait has lost "a virtuous man who gave so much to his country."

Al-Tunaib said, "I had the privilege of working with the late Al-Jarallah in both brotherhood and diplomacy during his tenure at the ministry, and we learned so much



The late Khaled Al-Jarallah, former Deputy Foreign Minister

from him. He was a mentor, a supporter, and a teacher in the art of high-level diplomatic engagement. He was not just an official, but a brother and father to all."

Meanwhile, the UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi offered his deepest condolences to Kuwait, describing the late

Khaled Al-Jarallah as a first-class statesman and diplomat.

Also, the Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub expressed his shock upon hearing the news of the passing of the late Khaled Al-Jarallah.

He revealed that he had visited Al-Jarallah at his diwan just last week to offer his congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, and he was warmly received with kindness and a constant smile.

Ambassador Tahboub explained that the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had honored the late Khaled Al-Jarallah with the same honor presented to a group of prominent Kuwaiti figures in 2018, led by the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. During his official visit to Kuwait, President Abbas bestowed the Star of Jerusalem on Al-Jarallah.

In this regard, the Yemeni Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Ali bin Safaa extended his condolences to Kuwait and the family of the deceased, praying that God forgives and has mercy on him.

He said, "During our work with the late Al-Jarallah, he represented a safe haven and a trusted reference in our diplomatic efforts for enhancing strong Kuwaiti-Yemeni relations."

In addition, Chair of the Board of Directors of Bukhameen Holding Group Jawad Bukhameen mourned the passing of the late Khaled Al-Jarallah, describing him as a great figure who served Kuwait for decades, represented it in international forums, and tirelessly defended its interests.

■ Obituary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

"O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him], and enter among My [righteous] servants and enter My Paradise." God's words are true.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and all ministry employees mourn with deep sorrow and grief the passing of the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah.

We recall with pride and appreciation his distinguished diplomatic career in serving the State of Kuwait and safeguarding its interests.

We ask God Almighty to have mercy on the deceased, grant him a spacious place in Paradise, and inspire his family and loved ones with patience and solace.

To God we belong and to Him we shall return.

The late Ambassador Khaled Al-Jarallah served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for many years and was one of the most prominent diplomats who left an indelible mark on Kuwaiti foreign policy.

He was known for his calm and balanced diplomatic style. He played a pivotal role in strengthening Kuwait's international relations and consolidating its position as a pivotal State in the region, holding a number of positions.

He was appointed to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Beirut from 1972 to 1974. He then worked in the headquarters of the Office of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Continued from Page 1

## Lebanon ...

While Beirut may be attempting to avoid escalating tensions with Hezbollah, Tel Aviv has the technical capabilities to determine who launched those missiles.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese political class has no power, and Israel, through its violent response, seeks to establish a new equation at the expense of innocent Lebanese people.

This situation is a direct result of the "illegal weapons", as the Lebanese government and presidency have described them, for controlling decision-making in the country.

To this day, Lebanon has not fully realized the truth: Hezbollah's authority has become limited, especially now that Syria and Iraq have slipped from Iran's control, which has weakened Iran significantly. As for Yemen, the United States and the Guardian of Prosperity International coalition know how to handle the situation there.

Recently, Hezbollah deliberately provoked Syria, not as falsely claimed, by the "tribes." No one can fire a single bullet without the approval of the state, any state.

We witnessed how Hezbollah instigated clashes that led to the loss of innocent lives in both eastern Lebanon and western Syria, where Hezbollah used a massive missile force. Does this serve Lebanon, or does it simply exacerbate its crises?

The world does not respect hesitant policies. It is either black or white. A gray stance indicates weakness. Therefore, the Lebanese must make a decision and consider canceling trips for Lebanon's supporters during the Eid holiday season in response to the launch of five missiles.

The Lebanese must understand that the world, and the GCC states that care for them, will not continue the endless reconstruction of their country whenever Hezbollah attempts to impose foreign policies.

May God protect Lebanon from the

madness of this satanic party called Hezbollah.

## Kuwait busts

During investigations, a network was uncovered that meticulously manipulated multiple raffles. One of the members of the network was an Egyptian employee of a charity society, identified as F.D., who won several prizes, including five cars in her name. Also, two cars were won in the name of her husband, identified as M.G., who is an Egyptian employee of a press company, through a systematic fraud scheme.

After obtaining legal permission, security teams arrested the three suspects. F.D. was arrested while she was attempting to leave the country via Kuwait International Airport.

When questioned, she confessed to her involvement in the fraudulent schemes through her husband, who had a connection with his Egyptian colleague, identified as M.S.

Her husband had suggested that she participate in the raffles, and confirmed a Dominican national, identified as S.Kh., working at a logistics services company would win, under the condition that he would waive the prize in exchange for a sum of money ranging from KD 200 to KD 600 for each prize.

Meanwhile, A.H. admitted to manipulating the raffles in collaboration with S.Kh. and agreed to divide the proceeds between them.

Further investigations revealed that M.S. left the country on March 1, and S.Kh. left on March 23. Both individuals are being pursued and tracked through Interpol in accordance with legal frameworks.

Security authorities have also identified other winners suspected of involvement in similar fraudulent schemes. Their cases are currently under review with relevant authorities, and appropriate legal action will be

taken against them.

Meanwhile, a growing number of lawyers and activists have called for stricter oversight of festival and bank raffles. Social media users have raised concerns about recurring winners, urging authorities to review past draws. Lawyer Salah Al-Hashem, who previously flagged similar issues in 2017, recalled witnessing names being drawn multiple times in a single bank raffle. Despite an investigation committee being formed, no concrete actions were taken at the time.

President of the Kuwait Society for Information Security Dr. Safaa Zaman highlighted the role of technology in providing solutions to deal with these issues, as technological tools are typically known for their integrity and transparency.

She said, "There are many electronic applications available that allow for electronic coupon submissions, random electronic draws, and the selection of multiple winners without any bias or fraud."

Dr. Zaman explained that what sets this method apart is its integrity, speed, ease of participation, and transparency. Also, this method allows for data analysis and provides reports on participation patterns, which help to develop and improve the shopping process. However, there are potential risks related to hacking into these systems and manipulating the selection process.

When choosing electronic systems, they must be secure and equipped with encryption tools to prevent any tampering or fraud. Overall, electronic systems are far superior to traditional methods, offering advantages in terms of ease of participation, coupon completion and submission, monitoring, regulation, and the ability to detect any tampering or attempted manipulation during the draw process.

There are many applications with distinctive features that offer various opportunities for selection. Some of these applications incorporate advanced security measures and artificial intelli-

gence technologies for ensuring a random, unbiased selection process, free from human error or manipulation.

Meanwhile, Lawyer Salah Al-Hashem revealed that he is one of those affected by the draw process, as he raised the issue in 2017 when a winner's name was repeated 18 times in a bank raffle.

He said during his participation in a previous draw with prizes ranging from KD 5,000 to KD 100,000, he noticed that the names of certain winners were repeatedly drawn in subsequent raffles.

Lawyer Al-Hashem explained that he contacted the then Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, who formed an investigation committee headed by Dr. Mohammed Al-Fayli. The committee made some observations regarding the bank raffles, but unfortunately, no further action was taken.

Many users on social media, especially on the X platform, have highlighted the repeated appearance of the same names in festival or bank draws. Some reported that certain winners' names were repeated five or more times, sometimes on a monthly basis. They urged the relevant authorities to review all previous draws.

Furthermore, Lawyer Enaam Hajdar said cheating in competitions or television programs, such as illegal voting or manipulating results, is a violation of the law.

She explained that if the cheating is aimed at making a profit or obtaining financial prizes illegally, it constitutes a breach of the Kuwaiti Penal Code (Article 110 on fraud). Those responsible for cheating could face penalties, including imprisonment or fines, depending on the severity of the offense.

Lawyer Hajdar indicated that all parties involved in supervising and participating in the Ya Hala Festival could be held accountable for failing to ensure the integrity of the competition if it is proven that they neglected to properly monitor the voting process, and they may be subject to fines.

## 'Kuwait's

"It also promotes innovation and the use of technology in various sectors, leading to increased productivity," he added.

He said one of the most important steps towards economic reform is implementing e-government to eliminate bureaucracy. He thinks this will lead to a prosperous and diversified economy, diversify sources of income, and reduce the State's primary dependence on oil export revenues.

He added that in the coming period, Kuwait will be among the leading economic countries. "Kuwait will return to being the Pearl of the Gulf, as it was in the past, when it was the center of attention in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Under the new reform era, Kuwait will enter the competitive race with neighboring countries within the next few years," he stressed.

Economic expert Salah Al-Jimaz said His Highness the Amir's statement on diversifying sources of income is important because Kuwait needs to actively implement diversification to provide multiple alternatives that reduce pressure on oil, which accounts for a very large percentage of income. He underscored the importance of relying on smart sources and the need to restructure some sectors.

He added the government's current approach to curb waste by reducing unjustified privileges for some is aimed at helping the country build a strong and resilient economy.

He proposed reviving some sectors that contribute to diversifying sources of income, such as real estate and services. He noted that the State's current efforts to diversify the food sector through agricultural expansion and air services are contributing to and strengthening the national economy.

He suggested the creation of an environment that stimulates and encourages industry in Kuwait, particularly new industries like medical industry and others.

## Kuwait blasts

On Monday, the UN Secretary-General took the "difficult decision" to reduce the aid operation inside the Gaza Strip following the resumption of deadly Israeli airstrikes - but pledged that "the UN is not leaving" the enclave.

"In the past week, Israel carried out devastating strikes on Gaza, claiming the lives of hundreds of civilians, including United Nations personnel, with no humanitarian aid being allowed to enter the Strip since early March," said a statement released by Guterres' Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric.

"As a result, the Secretary-General has taken the difficult decision to reduce the Organization's footprint in Gaza, even as humanitarian needs soar and our concern over the protection of civilians intensifies."

The UN stressed that it remained fully committed to providing life-saving aid. Around a third of the approximately 100 international staff working in Gaza will be temporarily relocated.

## Proof of

It will also contribute to protecting the real estate market from financial manipulation, increase transparency, and protect both buyers and sellers from fraud and fictitious sales. It empowers real estate registration employees to refuse notarizing contracts unless banking proof of payment is provided, thereby enhancing the confidence of participants in the real estate market by officially documenting all payments.

He said the decision exempts contracts concluded before August 2021, transactions involving the exchange of real estate without cash payment, waivers of debt declarations in lieu of cash payment, and real estate mortgaged to settle a debt owed by the seller.



## INTERNATIONAL

## Int'l students weigh risks of pursuing higher education in US under Trump

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): Since plunging during the COVID-19 pandemic, international student enrollment in the US has been rebounding - a relief to American universities that count on their tuition payments. Two months into the new Trump administration, educators fear that could soon change.

Unnerved by efforts to deport students over political views, students from other countries already in the US have felt new pressure to

watch what they say.

A Ph.D. student at the University of Rochester from South Asia said it feels too risky to speak about issues causes she once openly championed or even be seen near a political demonstration. With reports of travel bans circulating, she likely won't fly home for the summer out of fear she would not be allowed back into the US.

"You're here for an education so you've got to keep moving forward

on that end," said the student, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being targeted by authorities. "But also it's very hard to say, 'OK, I'm at work. I've got to zone out. I can't be thinking about the news.'"

Educators worry it's a balancing act that will turn off foreign students. As the US government takes a harder line on immigration, cuts federal research funding and begins policing campus activism, students are left to wonder if they'll be able to get visas, travel freely, pursue research or even express an opinion.

"It has a chilling effect," said Clay Harmon, executive director of AIRC, a membership organization focused on recruiting and enrolling international students. "Even if there's no direct consequence or direct limitation right now, all of this cumulatively produces an impression that the US is not welcoming, it's not open or that you may be in some kind of danger or jeopardy if you do come to the U.S."

During a recent trip to India, the biggest sender of students to the US, the consensus among recruiting agencies was that far fewer of that country's students are interested in American colleges than in recent years, Harmon said.



In this July 10, 2013, file photo, prospective students tour Georgetown University's campus in Washington. (AP)

## Trump officials texted war plans to group chat in secure app that included journalist

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): Top national security officials for President Donald Trump, including his defense secretary, texted war plans for upcoming military strikes in Yemen to a group chat in a secure messaging app that included the editor-in-chief for The Atlantic, the magazine reported in a story posted online Monday. The National Security Council said the text chain "appears to be authentic."

Trump initially told reporters he was not aware that the highly sensitive information had been shared, 2 1/2 hours after it was reported. He later appeared to joke about the breach.

The material in the text chain "contained operational details of forthcoming strikes on Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, including information about targets, weapons the US would be deploying, and attack sequencing," editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg reported.

It was not immediately clear if the specifics of the military operation were classified, but they often are and at the least are kept secure to protect service members and operational security. The US has conducted airstrikes against the Houthis since the militant group began targeting commercial and military vessels in the Red Sea in November 2023.

Just two hours after Goldberg received the details of the attack on March 15, the US began launching a series of airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen.



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, second from right, walks outside the Oval Office at the White House on March 21, in Washington. (AP)

The National Security Council said in a statement that it was looking into how a journalist's number was added to the chain in the Signal group chat. In addition to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, it included Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Tulsi Gabbard, Trump's director of national intelligence.

Goldberg said he received the Signal invitation from Mike Waltz, Trump's national security adviser, who was also in the group chat.

Hegseth in his first comments on

the matter attacked Goldberg as "deceitful" and a "discredited so-called journalist" while alluding to previous critical reporting of Trump from the publication. He did not shed light on why Signal was being used to discuss the sensitive operation or how Goldberg ended up on the message chain.

"Nobody was texting war plans and that's all I have to say about that," Hegseth said in an exchange with reporters after landing in Hawaii on Monday as he began his first trip to the Indo-Pacific as defense secretary.

'The president has to comply with Constitution and laws like anyone else'

## WH invokes state secrets privilege in case over deportations under wartime law

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): The Trump administration on Monday invoked a "state secrets privilege" and refused to give a federal judge any additional information about the deportation of Venezuelan migrants to El Salvador under an 18th century wartime law - a case that has become a flashpoint amid escalating tension with the federal courts.

The declaration comes as US District Judge James Boasberg weighs whether the government defied his order to turn around planes carrying migrants after he blocked deportations of people alleged to be gang members without due process.

Boasberg, the chief judge of the federal district court in Washington, has asked for details about when the planes landed and who was on board, information that the Trump administration asserts would harm "diplomatic and national security concerns."

Government attorneys also asked an appeals court on Monday to lift Boasberg's order and allow deportations to continue, a push that appeared to divide the judges.

Circuit Court Judge Patricia Millett said Nazis detained in the US during World War II received better legal treatment than Venezuelan immigrants who were deported to El Salvador this month under the same statute.

"We certainly dispute the Nazi analogy," Justice Department attorney Drew Ensign responded during a hearing of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Millett is one of three appellate judges who will decide whether to lift a March 15 order temporarily prohib-



In this photo provided by El Salvador's presidential press guards, prison guards transfer deportees from the U.S., alleged to be Venezuelan gang members, to the Terrorism Confinement Center in Tecoluca, El Salvador on March 16. (AP)

iting deportations under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. They didn't rule from the bench Monday.

A second judge appeared open to the administration's argument that the migrants should be challenging their detention in Texas rather than the nation's capital. The third judge on the panel didn't ask any questions.

The administration has transferred hundreds of Venezuelan immigrants to El Salvador, invoking the Alien Enemies Act for the first time since World War II.

Also on Monday, attorneys representing the Venezuelan government filed a legal action in El Salvador to free 238 Venezuelans who are being held in a Salvadoran maximum-security prison after the US deported them. President Donald Trump's admin-

istration appealed after Boasberg blocked those deportations and ordered plane loads of Venezuelan immigrants to return to the US. That did not happen.

The Alien Enemies Act allows non-citizens to be deported without the opportunity to go before an immigration or federal court judge. Trump issued a proclamation calling the Tren de Aragua gang an invading force.

Ensign argued that Boasberg's ruling was an "unprecedented and enormous intrusion upon the powers of the executive branch."

"The president has to comply with the Constitution and the laws like anyone else," said Millett, who was nominated by Democratic President Barack Obama in 2013.

Judge Justin Walker, whom Trump nominated in 2020, seemed to be more receptive to the administration's arguments based on his line of questioning. Walker pointed to the government's arguments that the plaintiffs should have filed their lawsuit in Texas, where the immigrants were detained.

"You could have filed the exact same complaint you filed here in Texas district court," Walker told American Civil Liberties Union attorney Lee Gelernt.

"We have no idea if everyone is in Texas," Gelernt said.

Walker also pressed the plaintiffs' lawyer to cite any prior case in which a judicial order blocking "a national security operation with foreign implications" survived appellate review.

Gelernt accused the administration of trying to use the law to "short circuit" immigration proceedings. Plaintiffs' attorneys had no way to individually challenge all the deportations before plane loads of Venezuelans took off on March 15, he added.

"This has all been done in secret," Gelernt said.

Judge Karen LeCraft Henderson, who was nominated by Republican President George H.W. Bush in 1990, was the third judge on the panel. She didn't ask any questions during a hearing that lasted roughly two hours.

Boasberg, an Obama nominee, ruled that immigrants facing deportation must get an opportunity to challenge their designations as alleged gang members. He said there is "a strong public interest in preventing the mistaken deportation of people based on categories they have no right to challenge."



People take part in a protest rally in Belgrade, Serbia on March 24, against a real estate development project that will be financed by the firm of Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, at the site of the former Yugoslav army headquarters destroyed in a US-led NATO bombing campaign in 1999. (AP)

## Protesters in Serbia rally against real estate project

BELGRADE, Serbia, March 25, (AP): Thousands of protesters rallied in Serbia on Monday against plans to turn a former army headquarters destroyed in a NATO bombing into a luxury complex financed by the firm of US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

The protesters in Belgrade demanded that its former status as a heritage site be restored and that plans for the development project be scrapped. The Serbian government last year approved a multi-million-dollar contract with Kushner to build the complex, including a 99-year lease on the land in the heart of Belgrade.

Monday's rally was part of an anti-corruption movement in Serbia that started after a collapse in November

of a concrete canopy at a train station in Serbia's north, which killed 16 people. Critics blamed the crash on government corruption, negligence and disrespect of construction safety rules during renovation.

Monday also marked Remembrance Day for the victims of the 78-day bombing campaign that started on March 24, 1999. Serbs are still angry over the US-led NATO air war, launched to stop Belgrade's crackdown against separatist ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

The bombed-out former military compound has become a symbol of resistance. The development at the site would feature a Trump hotel, luxury apartments, office spaces and shops, along with a memorial for the victims of the bombing.

## US and Russia negotiations on Ukraine likely to continue but nothing yet planned: Kremlin

MOSCOW, March 25, (AP): Further contacts between US and Russian officials on achieving a proposed ceasefire

in Ukraine are likely to follow a round of talks Monday, a Kremlin official said Tuesday, but no concrete plans

have yet been made.

The American and Russian negotiators held talks throughout the day on Monday in the capital of Saudi Arabia to hammer out details on a partial pause in the 3-year-old war in Ukraine, a day after US officials held separate talks in Riyadh with a team from Kyiv.

It has been a struggle to reach even a limited, 30-day ceasefire - which Moscow and Kyiv agreed to in principle last week -- with both sides continuing to attack each other with drones and missiles and disagreement over what kinds of targets would be included in a pause on strikes.

On Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the outcome of the talks in Riyadh "has been reported in the capitals" and was currently being "analyzed" by Moscow and Washington, but that the Kremlin has no plans to release any details of what was discussed to the public.

"We're talking about technical negotiations, negotiations with immer-

sion in details," Peskov said, adding that while there are currently no plans for U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin to speak, such a conversation could be quickly organized if the need arises.

"There is an understanding that the contacts will continue, but there is nothing concrete at the moment," Peskov said. He added that there are no plans to hold a three-way meeting between Russia, the US and Ukraine.

Moscow and Kyiv have taken differing interpretations of what a possible partial ceasefire would look like, even after Trump spoke with the leaders of both countries to advance a pause.

While the White House said a partial ceasefire would include ending attacks on "energy and infrastructure," the Kremlin declared that the agreement referred more narrowly to "energy infrastructure." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he would also like to see sites like railways and ports protected.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, firefighters put out the fire following a Russian attack in Sumy, Ukraine on March 25. (AP)

Trump seeks control of Arctic island

## Greenlanders unite to fend off United States

NUUK, Greenland, March 25, (AP): Lisa Solrun Christiansen gets up at 4 am most days and gets to work knitting thick wool sweaters coveted by buyers around the world for their warmth and colorful patterns celebrating Greenland's traditional Inuit culture.

Her morning routine includes a quick check of the news, but these days the ritual shatters her peace because of all the stories about US President Donald Trump's designs on her homeland.

"I get overwhelmed," Christiansen said earlier this month as she looked out to sea, where impossibly blue icebergs floated just offshore.

The daughter of Inuit and Danish parents, Christiansen, 57, cherishes

Greenland. It is a source of immense family pride that her father, an artist and teacher, designed the red-and-



Boys play on a frozen beach in Nuuk, Greenland on March 11. (AP)

white Greenlandic flag.

"On his deathbed he talked a lot about the flag, and he said that the flag

is not his, it's the people's," she said. "And there's one sentence I keep thinking about. He said, 'I hope the flag will unite the Greenlandic people.'"

Greenlanders are increasingly worried that their homeland, a self-governing region of Denmark, has become a pawn in the competition between the US, Russia and China as global warming opens up access to the Arctic. They fear Trump's aim to take control of Greenland, which holds rich mineral deposits and straddles strategic air and sea routes, may block their path toward independence.

Those fears were heightened Sunday when Usha Vance, the wife of US Vice President JD Vance, announced she would visit Greenland later this week to attend the national dogsled race.



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks during a news conference in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on March 20. (AP)



China welcomes more US lawmakers to visit: Guo

## Chinese FM Wang holds strategic dialogue with Portuguese counterpart

BEIJING, March 25, (Xinhua): Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held the second China-Portugal strategic dialogue at the foreign ministers' level with Portugal's Minister of State and Foreign Affairs Paulo Rangel in Beijing on Tuesday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that China and Portugal have a good tradition of mutual respect and support, and the two sides have properly settled the Macao issue with political wisdom, setting a good example of resolving issues left over from history through friendly consultation.

Last year, China and Portugal jointly celebrated the 45th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties. Leaders of the two countries exchanged congratulatory messages and spoke highly of the successful development of bilateral relations, said Wang.

Noting that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of China-Portugal comprehensive strategic partnership and the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between

China and the European Union (EU), Wang said that China is ready to work with Portugal to build a more stable, fruitful and dynamic China-Portugal relationship and make China and Europe strategic partners of mutual trust and achievements.

Wang also said that Chinese-style modernization is one of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, which will provide greater opportunities for Portugal and other countries in the world. The two sides should actively expand cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, continue to give play to Macao's role as a bridge, and push for greater development of bilateral relations.

Rangel said that he was glad to see the success of the practice of "one country, two systems" in Macao. Portugal attaches great importance to Portugal-China relations and firmly adheres to the one-China policy.

The Portuguese foreign minister said that Chinese investment has played an important role in Portugal's economic and social development. Portugal welcomes more Chinese en-



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, holds talks with Italy's Senate President Ignazio La Russa in Beijing, capital of China on March 24. (Xinhua)

terprises to invest and is willing to strengthen cooperation with China in the fields of economy, trade, energy,

health, finance, infrastructure and green transformation.

Meanwhile, more US lawmakers

and people from all walks of life are welcome to visit China and gain a better understanding of the country. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said on Monday.

The spokesperson made the remarks at a daily press briefing when asked to comment on remarks US Senator Steve Daines made in an interview on his hope to arrange for a bipartisan delegation of senators to visit China later this year, after David Perdue becomes the US ambassador to China.

"China welcomes more US lawmakers and people from all walks of life to visit China and gain a better understanding of China to play a constructive role in promoting the steady, sound and sustainable development of China-US relations," Guo said.

In another development, Zhao Leji, China's top legislator, held talks with Italy's Senate President Ignazio La Russa in Beijing on Monday.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, said that key to the healthy and steady development of China-Italy relations is

the commitment of both sides to mutual respect, seeking common ground while shelving differences, and pursuing win-win cooperation.

China appreciates Italy's adherence to the one-China principle and is willing to tap into cooperation potential in shipbuilding, aerospace and new energy, Zhao said, adding that cooperation in the fields of culture, art, tourism and education should also be strengthened.

He called for increased exchange between the NPC and Italy's parliament within bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

He said China is ready to work with the EU to use the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties as an opportunity to promote the sustained, steady and sound development of China-EU relations, and hopes Italy will continue to play a positive role in this regard.

He said companies from all over the world, including those from Italy, are welcome to seize cooperation opportunities in and grow alongside the Chinese economy.



A road is closed as a wildfire fueled by strong winds spreads in Uiseong, South Korea on March 24. (AP)

## Residents in South Korea's Andong city advised to evacuate as wildfires spread

SEOUL, South Korea, March 25, (AP): Officials in the South Korean city of Andong on Tuesday advised residents to evacuate to safe areas as firefighters struggled to contain wildfires that have ravaged southern regions since last week, forcing thousands to flee and destroying dozens of structures, including a 1,300-year-old Buddhist temple.

Thousands of firefighters in South Korea were battling at least nine wildfires across the country as of Tuesday afternoon, after the blazes fueled by dry winds burned more than 36,300 acres of land in the past five days.

Officials in Andong, a city in the country's southeast, and the nearby town of Uiseong ordered residents in several villages to evacuate to temporary shelters, including an elementary school and indoor gymnasium, as a blaze that began in Uiseong continued to spread from strong winds.

The blaze in Uiseong destroyed Gounsa, a Buddhist temple built in the 7th century, according to officials from the Korea Heritage Service. There were no immediate reports of injuries, and some of the temple's national treasures, including a stone Buddha statue, were evacuated before the fire reached

the wooden buildings.

The Korea Forest Service raised its wildfire warning to the highest "serious" level nationwide, requiring local governments to allocate a larger workforce for emergency response, tighten entry restrictions for forests and parks, and recommend that military units withhold live-fire exercises.

South Korean officials said earlier on Tuesday that firefighters had extinguished most of the flames from the largest wildfires in the country's southern regions, including Uiseong, the neighboring town of Sancheong, and Ulsan city. However, the ongoing dry and windy weather now appears to be causing setbacks.

Four firefighters and government workers were killed in Sancheong on Saturday after being trapped by fast-moving flames driven by strong winds. At least 11 other people have been injured by wildfires around the country since last Friday that forced more than 5,400 to evacuate from their homes and damaged or destroyed more than 150 buildings, according to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

The national government designated the hardest-hit southeastern regions as

disaster zones to focus resources and accelerate recovery efforts.

### Also:

**SEOUL, South Korea:** A motorcyclist who fell into a cavernous sinkhole that opened on a Seoul street was found dead after an overnight search, officials in South Korea's capital said Tuesday.

The roughly 20-meter-wide, 20-meter-deep sinkhole appeared at an intersection in the Myeongil-dong neighborhood in eastern Seoul on Monday afternoon, swallowing the motorcyclist and injuring a woman whose van was passing over the site, according to safety and emergency offices.

The motorcyclist, who was in his 30s, was found before noon on Tuesday, emergency officer **Kim Chang Seob** told a televised briefing. Kim said the man was found wearing a helmet and motorcycle boots, and that rescue workers found his Japanese-made motorcycle and mobile phone before reaching his body. Kim said rescuers used excavators, shovels and other equipment to find him.

Kim said the injured woman didn't fall into the sinkhole and she sustained minor injuries.

## Brazil's court poised to decide if Bolsonaro to stand trial over coup attempt accusation

RIO DE JANEIRO, March 25, (AP): A panel of Brazil's Supreme Court justices were to gather on Tuesday to determine whether former President Jair Bolsonaro and close allies will stand trial on five counts, including attempting to stage a coup.

Prosecutor-General Paulo Gonet charged Bolsonaro last month with plotting a coup after he lost the 2022 election to his opponent and current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Part of that plan allegedly included poisoning Lula and killing Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, a foe of Bolsonaro.

Five Supreme Court justices - including de Moraes, the rapporteur -

will meet from 9:30 a.m. local time in Brasilia to rule on the charges leveled by Gonet. If a majority votes in favor, the accused will become defendants in a criminal case.

Bolsonaro and his alleged accomplices also stand accused of participating in an armed criminal organization, attempted violent abolition of the democratic rule of law, damage qualified by violence and a serious threat against the state's assets, and deterioration of listed heritage.

Bolsonaro has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and says that he's being politically persecuted.

Under Brazilian law, a coup conviction

alone carries a sentence of up to 12 years, but combined with the other charges, he could be sentenced to decades behind bars.

Observers say that it's likely that the charges will be accepted.

"There is no shadow of a doubt that there are very clear elements" that crimes were committed, said Thiago Bottino, a law professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a think tank and university. "The current tendency is that there will be a criminal trial."

Gonet filed charges against a total of 34 people in February. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court will analyze whether to accept charges against eight of them. As well as Bolsonaro, the court will vote on the accusations faced by former Defense Ministers Walter Braga Netto and Paulo Sérgio Nogueira and ex-Justice Minister Anderson Torres, among others. The court will decide on the others' fates later on.

Bolsonaro has sought to shore up political support before the possible trial, including by holding a protest on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro on March 16.

Local media reported that around 18,000 people attended the rally, based on figures from a monitoring project linked to the University of Sao Paulo. Bolsonaro's allies had hoped to draw a crowd of 1 million, which led some analysts to say that his ability to mobilize voters is diminishing.

Bolsonaro called on social media Sunday for a new demonstration on April 6, to be held on one of Sao Paulo's main arteries, Avenida Paulista.



Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro gestures to the crowd upon arriving at a rally in support of a proposed bill to grant amnesty to those arrested for storming government buildings in an alleged coup attempt in 2023, in Rio de Janeiro, March 16. (AP)

## South Sudan teetering on edge of renewed civil war, says top United Nations official

UNITED NATIONS, March 25, (AP): South Sudan is teetering on the edge of renewed civil war, the top UN official in the world's youngest nation warned on Monday, lamenting the government's sudden postponement of the latest peace effort.

Calling the situation unfolding in the country "dire," Nicholas Haysom said international efforts to broker a peaceful solution can only succeed if President Salva Kiir and his rival-turned-vice president, Riek Machar, are willing to engage "and put the interests of their people ahead of their own."

There were high hopes when oil-rich South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after a long conflict. But the country slid into a civil war in December 2013 largely based on ethnic divisions when forces loyal to Kiir, an ethnic Dinka, battled those loyal to Machar, an ethnic Nuer.

More than 400,000 people were killed in the war, which ended with a 2018 peace agreement that brought

Kiir and Machar together in a government of national unity. Under the agreement, elections were supposed

to be held in February 2023, but they were postponed until December 2024 - and again until 2026.



A Sudanese displaced woman holds her child as they take shelter in a school after being evacuated by the Sudanese army from areas once controlled by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Omdurman, Sudan, located across the Nile River from Khartoum, on March 23. (AP)



This image taken from a video provided by UN World Food Program shows Rugombo Stadium where more than 45,000 Congolese refugees are sheltering on March 11, 2025, in Rugombo, Burundi. (AP)

## Sanctions, minerals deal with US won't stop fighting in east: Congo rebel leader

ABUJA, Nigeria, March 25, (AP): The leader of the rebels who captured two key cities in eastern Congo says international sanctions and the planned minerals deal that the country has offered the US will not stop the fighting between their members and Congolese forces in the hard-hit region.

With such sanctions and a bounty placed on the rebel leaders by Congo's government, "we will fight like people who got nothing to lose in order to secure the future of our country," Corneille Nangaa, leader of the Congo River Alliance (AFC) that includes the M23 rebel group, told The Associated Press.

Nangaa also dismissed Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi's comments last week that his country is looking for a minerals partnership with the US that will bring peace and stability for both countries.

Since launching a major escalation of their decadelong fighting with the Congolese forces in late January, the M23 rebels have captured the cities of Goma and Bukavu and several towns in eastern Congo, forcing thousands of soldiers to either flee or surrender and prompting fears of regional warfare involving neighbors whose militaries are also on the ground.

Most of Congo's mineral resources, estimated to be worth \$24 trillion and critical to much of the world's technology, remain untapped, according to the US Department of Commerce last year.

The US government has not publicly spoken about any minerals deal being planned with Congo, which local observers say could be similar to the Trump administration's offer for Ukraine to help end the war with Russia.

"This problem can be better re-

solved by the concerned Congolese, not foreigners with different geopolitical agendas," Nangaa told the AP over the weekend. "Trying to bribe US with mines can undermine US credibility."

Efforts to achieve a ceasefire collapsed last week after the rebels pulled out from talks being facilitated by Angola, condemning European Union sanctions on its leaders.

Nangaa also rejected the outcome of a meeting between Congolese and Rwandan leaders in Qatar, saying such a move to achieve peace without the group's involvement would fail and that the rebels can only have a dialogue with Congo's government if the country acknowledges their grievances and the root causes of the conflict.

"Anything regarding us which are done without us, it's against us," Nangaa said.

## 50 Afghan children released by Pakistan return to homeland

KABUL, March 25, (Xinhua): A total of 50 Afghan children who illegally entered Pakistan have been returned to their homeland Afghanistan, a local media outlet Ariana News reported Tuesday.

In search of jobs in Pakistan, some children as young as 10 were returned to Afghanistan via the Torkham crossing, the media outlet added.

Pakistan has set free hundreds of Afghans from jails and sent them back to their homeland over the past year.

More than 2 million Afghans reportedly have been living in Pakistan. Pa-

kistani authorities have asked Afghans without legal travel documents and resident permits to leave the country.

### Also:

**LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan:** Police have discovered a huge quantity of arms and ammunition, including nearly a dozen assault rifles, during a series of operations in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province, provincial police spokesman **Mullah Ezatullah Haqqani** said Tuesday.

The weaponry, which includes 10

pieces of AK-47, 20 pieces of pistols, hundreds of projectiles, and other military types of equipment, have been discovered and collected from the provincial capital **Lashkar Gah** and some districts over the past three months, the official said, adding all the weaponry was handed over to the concerned body.

Police have also arrested 50 individuals on charges of involvement in criminal activities such as murder, robbery and theft, the official added, saying police won't allow anyone to keep or carry arms illegally.



## Kuwaiti oil drops to \$76.28 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 32 cents to USD 76.28 per barrel on Monday as opposed to USD 76.60 pb last Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

At the global markets, the price of the Brent crude and West Texas Intermediate both went up by 84 and 83 cents to USD 73.00 pb and USD 69.11 pb respectively.

# Business

## 'Our traditions always bring us together' campaign promotes social values

### Gulf Bank honors General Traffic Department officers with Ramadan appreciation visit

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: As part of its commitment to social sustainability and in recognition of the Ministry of Interior's efforts to ensure public safety, a Gulf Bank representative, led by General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mr. Bader Al-Ali, joined officers from the General Traffic Department for a Ramadan iftar.

The event was attended by Brigadier General, Jamal Al-Foudari, Director General of the General Traffic Department, along with several senior officials.

This initiative is part of Gulf Bank's Ramadan campaign, "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together," which includes a series of charitable, social, and sports activities aimed at promoting humanitarian and social values.

The campaign aims to spread joy, foster meaningful connections, and honor individuals and organizations that play a vital role in safeguarding society.

During their visit to the General Traffic Department's Operations Division in Al-Sabahiya, Gulf Bank's delegation conveyed their appreciation for the tireless commitment of traffic officers in upholding road safety and maintaining order.

"As families come together to break their fast during the holy month, the dedicated men and women



Gulf Bank honors Traffic Officers with Ramadan iftar.

of the Ministry of Interior remain on duty, ensuring the safety and security of our roads.

"In appreciation of their sacrifices, we were honored to visit their workplace and share iftar with them, recognizing their invaluable service to the community," said the Bank's representative.

Gulf Bank continues to drive social sustainability through impactful initiatives that benefit both the Bank and the community, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kuwait's Vision 2035.

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

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.

## Global energy demand up 2.2% in 2024, reports IEA

PARIS, March 25, (KUNA): The International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Monday that energy demand in advanced economies climbed after years of decline, driven by rapid electricity growth.

In a report, the agency showed that global energy demand rose by 2.2 percent last year, lower than GDP growth of 3.2 pct, but much faster than the average annual increase in demand of 1.3 pct between 2013 and 2023.

The report noted that emerging and developing economies accounted for more than 80 pct of the increase in global energy demand in 2024, despite slowing growth in China, where energy consumption rose by less than 3 pct, half its rate in 2023 and significantly lower than the country's recent annual average.

The IEA affirmed that the sharp increase in global electricity consumption last year was driven by record global temperatures, which boosted demand for cooling in many countries, as well as increased consumption from industry, the electrification of transportation, and the growth of data centers and artificial intelligence.

In turn, the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, said that there is a lot of uncertainty

in the world today and different narratives about energy, stressing that this new report issued by the agency, which is based on data, "puts some clear facts on the table about what is happening globally."

He added that electricity consumption is certainly growing rapidly, attracting sufficient overall energy demand to reverse years of declining energy consumption in advanced economies.

He also indicated that the result is that demand for all major fuels and energy technologies will increase in 2024, with renewable energy sources accounting for the largest share of this growth, followed by natural gas.

Birol pointed out that the massive expansion of solar, wind, nuclear, and electric vehicle energy is increasingly weakening the relationship between economic growth and emissions.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) is an independent agency that provides comprehensive data, policy recommendations, and support to the global energy sector.

The agency's mission is to promote energy security, economic growth, and environmental sustainability worldwide.

## Great turnout at Zain's second Holy Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition

Around 500 participants competed to embody the Holy Quran's noble values

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Zain successfully concluded its second Holy Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition, which this year witnessed a great turnout from around 500 participants of various young age groups, who competed in memorizing, reciting, and embracing the noble values of the Holy Quran.

The company held an awards ceremony at its headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Head of the Judges Panel and Imam of the Grand Mosque Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi, along with Zain officials, members of the judging committee, winners, and their parents. The top three winners from each of the six categories were presented with cash prizes.

The competition spanned two days at Zain's headquarters and included three different age categories for both males and females: the first category, for children aged 6 to 10, focused on memorizing from Surah Al-Bayyina to Surah An-Naas; the second category, for ages 11 to 15, was dedicated to memorizing Surah Ar-Rahman; and the third category, for ages 16 to 25, focused on memorizing Surah As-Sajdah. The competition was supervised by an official committee accredited by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

As part of its commitment to engaging its employees in its community initiatives and programs, Zain also organized its fifth Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition for its



Al-Gharabally, Al-Damkhi, and Zain's team with the winners.



Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi honor a young winner.



Recognizing a talented winner.

employees and their children, in which the top three winners were honored with encouraging cash prizes.

This initiative came under the umbrella of the Zain Al-Shuhoor campaign, which consistently returns each year with fresh ideas, expanding its programs and initiatives annually.

Through this campaign, the company builds bridges of collaboration with various entities across the country to

embody the spirit of giving that distinguishes the Holy Month of Ramadan, reflecting the genuine values deeply rooted in the people of Kuwait in helping others and spreading love and peace.

Putin praises UAE mediation in prisoner exchange

## Russia and UAE affirm commitment to strengthening OPEC+ partnership

MOSCOW, March 25, (KUNA): Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke to his UAE counterpart Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Monday to discuss the bilateral ties and the joint efforts to ensure stability of the global energy market.

During a phone conversation, initiated by President Putin, both sides affirmed commitment to the partnership in the OPEC+ alliance, the Russian RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Both leaders expressed desire to enhance cooperation across multiple sectors for mutual benefit.

President Putin appreciated the successful UAE mediation which facilitated the exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine on March 19.

On his part, Sheikh Mohammad reiterated the UAE's commitment to continuing its humanitarian efforts and support to all endeavors aiming to reach a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Ukraine.

A step forward in elevating the customer experience

## NBK launches a suite of new features and enhancements for its mobile banking app

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: In line with its commitment to advancing digital banking, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is continuously enhancing its NBK Mobile Banking App by introducing innovative features and refining existing functionalities. These ongoing upgrades are aimed at delivering a seamless, secure, and comprehensive digital banking experience, empowering customers to effortlessly manage their accounts and conduct transactions—anytime, anywhere—without the need to visit a branch.

Driven by its commitment to offering cutting-edge services and products that align with the latest technological advancements while addressing customer needs and feedback, NBK has introduced the following new updates to its NBK Mobile Banking App:

**NBK-Aura**  
The NBK Mobile Banking App now enables NBK Credit Card customers to seamlessly apply for the NBK-Aura World Mastercard Credit Card and NBK-Aura Platinum Mastercard Prepaid Card.

Through its exclusive partnership with Alshaya Group, NBK reinforces its leadership in delivering innovative and distinctive offerings with the launch of two new cards: the NBK-Aura World Mastercard Credit Card and NBK-Aura Platinum Mastercard Prepaid Card. These cards provide exceptional benefits, allowing customers to earn up to 8% in Aura points on purchases. Customers can then redeem



Mohammad Al Dakhil

their points through their Aura app account across 50+ leading brands spanning fashion, beauty, dining, and more, including H&M, Bath & Body Works, Foot Locker, Shake Shack, Raising Cane's, Charlotte Tilbury, and Harvey Nichols.

Through the app, customers have the flexibility to choose how to redeem their Aura points, using them for purchases at participating outlets. These include a diverse selection of international brands managed and operated by Alshaya Group, offering a seamless and rewarding shopping experience.

**Notice Account**  
NBK Offers attractive returns on the customers' deposit with the op-

### AI Dakhil:

- The continuous rollout of new enhancements and services underscores NBK's deep understanding of customer aspirations
- Our innovative solutions showcase our digital leadership, consistently exceeding customer expectations

tion of partial withdrawal with NBK Notice Account. It allows customers to open a new savings account through the NBK Mobile Banking App with flexible withdrawal notice options of 35, 65, or 95 days. Additionally, customers can seamlessly transfer their earned interest to their preferred account, providing greater convenience and financial planning flexibility.

**Update Personal Profile**  
The latest updates to the NBK Mobile Banking App introduce a refreshed, user-friendly interface, enhancing navigation and overall user experience. Customers can now personalize their profiles, update their personal information, and customize the app's interface, including modifying their profile image, for a more seamless and intuitive banking journey.

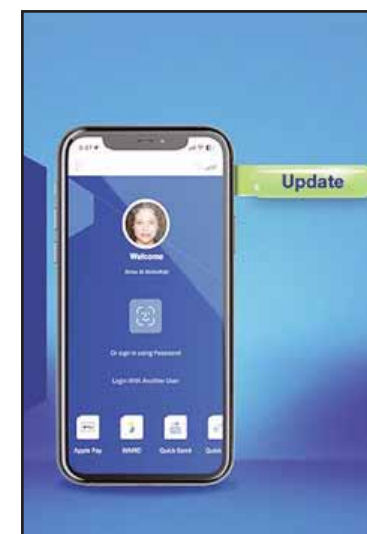
**NBK Smartwealth**  
As NBK recently launched the "NBK Wealth" brand, to become the largest wealth management entity locally and one of the largest regionally, the bank has refreshed that on NBK Mobile Banking App so it will be easier for customers to navigate

between the products and services of "NBK Wealth" through the app and monitor their accounts and funds easily, in addition to changing the minimum subscription limit for investment funds and "Smartwealth" through the NBK Mobile Banking App, from \$500 to \$1,000.

**Update Civil ID**  
NBK Mobile Banking users now will be able to receive notifications to update their Civil ID expiry date through NBK Mobile Banking app in Integration with PACI, where the details reflect immediately right after the update.

**WAMD Eidiya**  
NBK customers can now send cash via WAMD service allowing them to transfer money to up to five family members or friends instantly with just one banking transaction using the mobile number.

**Additional Enhancements**  
As part of the latest NBK Mobile Banking App update, several key improvements have been introduced. These include users can now easily share their account details, re-arrange the display of cards in the dashboard so the customer can view



NBK's new features and enhancements for its mobile banking app.

each card types under its right category, add a personalized nickname to the debit cards, and other enhancements made on the existing services for a better user-friendly experience.

Commenting on the new services and enhancements to the NBK Mobile Banking App, Mr. Mohammad Al Dakhil, Head of Digital Banking Business at National Bank of Kuwait, stated: "As part of our ongoing commitment to digital transformation, we continuously enhance the NBK Mobile Banking App to provide a seamless and advanced banking experience. These updates reflect our digital leadership by offering in-

novative solutions that not only meet but exceed our customers' expectations."

"The continuous enhancements and new services introduced by NBK underscore our deep understanding of our customers' evolving aspirations. The significant growth in banking transactions conducted through the NBK Mobile Banking App is a testament to the high level of customer satisfaction, particularly with the increasing reliance on self-service banking solutions," he added.

He emphasized that NBK remains committed to introducing the latest services through the NBK Mobile Banking App, highlighting that the growing customer demand for the application has significantly boosted its adoption and active usage. This surge has further reinforced its position as the preferred solution for seamless and efficient everyday banking transactions.

The NBK Mobile Banking App offers customers the convenience of managing their finances effortlessly, anytime and anywhere. It enables a wide range of banking transactions, including opening new accounts, tracking account and credit card activity, checking NBK Miles and NBK Rewards Program points, settling credit card payments, and paying various electronic bills. Additionally, customers can locate NBK branches, ATMs, and cash deposit machines across Kuwait, update personal information, and access numerous other services.



Bank encourages healthy lifestyles during Ramadan

# Burgan Bank concludes the holy month's events and initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Burgan Bank successfully concluded its Ramadan community initiatives, which included a wide range of humanitarian and charitable events as well as sports and health activities. The Bank's Ramadan events further served to revive Kuwait's authentic customs and traditions and instill the values of the holy month.

On this occasion, Ms. Hessa Husain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, stated: "Following our annual Ramadan tradition at Burgan Bank, and as part of our dedicated social responsibility and sustainability programs, we were delighted to renew our commitment toward our community by launching several activities during the holy month, reinforcing our direct communication with all segments of society. In line with the Bank's philosophy, "Driven By You", we continue to be inspired and motivated by all members of our community and our partners in various fields to give back by orchestrating impactful initiatives and activities that benefit everyone, cementing our commitment to being a force of positive change within our community."

Al-Najadah added: "Our Ramadan community efforts are also guided by the Bank's vision to be the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait, as well as its supporting mission, values, and strategies to uphold our commitment to serving and investing in our community. In the spirit of the holy month, we pray for our community's health and wellness, and may we revive this Ramadan tradition year after year, as we continue to offer our community our absolute best of everything."

Among Burgan's most notable events and initiatives during Ramadan 2025 were:

**"Teach Them Young" Campaign**

Burgan Bank launched several activities and initiatives under the umbrella of its "Teach Them Young" campaign, which aims to instill various values, customs, and traditions at an early age among children and young adults. These values were captured and spread through the Bank's various initiatives, activities, and TVCs that have been running since the beginning of the year, carrying awareness messages in their folds.

Some of the essential values that the "Teach Them Young" campaign highlights include "one's love of homeland", most notably captured in Burgan's TVC "Teach them that the homeland is a blessing from God, a refuge, and a safe haven; teach them that the homeland is our strength, our identity, and the roots that connect us to our history." This work, presented by Burgan Bank on the occasion of Kuwait's National Day 2025, was performed by artist Huda Hussein, featuring a group of children. The TVC was received enthusiastically, garnering wide interaction and resonance across social media. Similarly, the Ramadan TVC also reinforced the values of the holy month, to "Teach them young the virtues of patience and fasting, of respect and pleasantness in every utterance, and that good, virtuous company elevates one's status."

Under the "Teach Them Young" umbrella, the Bank also encouraged employees' children to participate in the philanthropic initiative of distributing iftar meals to those fasting during Ramadan. The initiative aimed to instill several values in children, including selfless giving, the importance of connecting with others, and the belief



Burgan Bank honors Kuwait's National Day 2025 with a TVC celebrating 'One's Love of Homeland'.



Burgan Bank's 'Teach Them Young' campaign instills Kuwait's values, customs and traditions in children from an early age.



A group photo of children who participated in the iftar meal distribution initiative.



A group photo of Burgan employees and their children who took part in the iftar meals distribution initiative.



Burgan Bank's family gathered for the annual Ramadan Ghabga at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.



Burgan's Ramadan Ghabga featured friendly competitions between teams, creating a lively and vibrant atmosphere.



Volunteers distributing iftar meals.

that a person's value lies in their essence and not their appearance. Teaching children young is important, as Ramadan is an opportunity; and what is learned at a young age lasts a lifetime.

Building on the campaign's momentum which began early this year, Burgan Bank will continue to roll out the "Teach Them Young" campaign throughout the year by sponsoring numerous activities, initiatives, and events that support everything from education to medicine, sports, community, charity, and more.

### Iftar Meals

As part of Burgan's comprehensive Ramadan activities and initiatives, the Bank distributed iftar meals to the fasting community in Souq Al-Mubarakiya and across various neighborhoods in Kuwait. This comes as part of its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank for the second consecutive year, in parallel with the "Teach Them Young" campaign, which saw the participation of a large group of the Bank's employees and their children. This initiative further expands on Burgan's comprehensive social responsibility program, through which it upholds its committed adherence to the highest standards of environmental, social, and governance (ESG). It also aligns with Kuwait's "New Kuwait" Vision 2035 and the Bank's proactive role in strengthening the country's regional and global presence as a role model in the fields of health and volunteerism.

### Health Awareness Messages

In line with its "Because We're Driven By You, Your Health Matters" campaign, Burgan Bank, in collaboration with Kuwait Hospital, spread valuable medical and health awareness messages across social channels in a bid to reach the largest possible audience. As part of the campaign, doctors from across various areas of specialty at Kuwait Hospital delivered awareness videos and medical advice during the holy month, covering dental and oral health during fasting, tips for

patients with chronic diseases to maintain their safety and health, special tips for children fasting, and ways to maintain a healthy, balanced diet during Ramadan.

### "The Workout 2" Fitness Event

For the second year in a row, Burgan Bank strategically sponsored Kuwait's leading fitness event during the holy month of Ramadan, "The Workout 2," in collaboration with Fohgha app, which was met with high interest and enthusiastic participation. This sporting event comes as part of the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility and sustainability programs as well as

its Ramadan activities.

The event was designed to encourage 20 male and female participants, representing 10 teams each Friday, to test their fitness and compete against each other in a fun and engaging environment under the supervision and guidance of certified fitness coaches. Each week, the highest-scoring teams were awarded valuable prizes.

Through its sponsorship of "The Workout 2", Burgan Bank set out to encourage the event participants as well as members of the community to adopt a healthy lifestyle, diet, and exercise routine as an integral part of their daily life. This event reflects the Bank's commitment to public health, which Burgan considers a top priority under the umbrella of its comprehensive social responsibility program.

### Burgan Ghabga

Burgan Bank's family gathered for its annual Ramadan Ghabga at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, amid a family-friendly atmosphere and a notable presence of Senior Management and employees from various departments and branches. In an effort to reinforce employees' social bonding outside the workplace, the event featured a variety of unique and memorable activities and events, including the celebration of the first day of Gargee'an as a family.

In line with the Bank's slogan, "Driven by You", Burgan's management ex-

tended its gratitude and appreciation to employees, emphasizing their role as the primary and true drivers of success, growth, and development, whereby their efforts remain to be the Bank's fuel on its journey to achieving its vision to be the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait. It was also noted that Burgan Bank's success in receiving the Great Place to Work® certification as well as becoming one of the most prominent Kuwaiti banks known for its appealing and inviting work environment - whether to fresh graduates or seasoned professionals - is owed to its employees' unwavering dedication. The staff's commitment to Burgan's core values such as accountability, transparency, teamwork, and passion, was also highlighted as integral to the Bank's success in maintaining its leading position in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

The evening featured several segments, including a review of the Bank's strategy, key achievements, goals, and aspirations for 2025 and the coming years. During the ceremony, the management announced several exciting surprises, including the reduction of working hours to 7.5 hours per day on weekdays and 7 hours on Thursdays, in an effort to maintain a healthy work-life balance and reinforce employees' mental health. A four-day leave per year was also designated for self-care, on top of the annual and sick leave, confirming that employees are a top priority for the Bank and its most valued resource, reflecting Burgan's vision, mission, values, and strategy.

To further its community engagement and sustainability pillars, Burgan Bank, in cooperation with the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank, distributed surplus food to underprivileged families and workers after its Ramadan Ghabga. This initiative reflected the Bank's commitment to investing in food resources through its strategic partnership with the Food Bank, promoting a culture of social responsibility and reducing food waste, while ensuring that support reaches the neediest in a dignified and sustainable manner. It is also worth noting that food products were inspected by a specialized team to ensure safety standards.

### "Let's Be Aware" Banking Awareness Campaign

As a key element of its committed support of the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association's (KBA) "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) campaign, Burgan Bank upheld its efforts to spread banking awareness through several community events and activities during the month of Ramadan. Through these events and activities, the Bank aimed to enhance financial literacy among community members by engaging directly with them during events through conversation as well as sharing print banking awareness brochures. The Bank's dedicated efforts to raise banking awareness also extended to its social media channels, through which it continues to inform its existing and potential customers of the campaign's core messages. This comes as part of the Bank's year-long comprehensive social responsibility program, a cornerstone of its ongoing success and sustainable growth.

The Bank also produced a special Eid Al-Fitr TVC titled "Teach Them Young The Value of Savings", as a joyous celebration of Eid. The TVC captures the most important and beautiful moments of Eid, especially those that center on connecting with family and friends, reinforcing the customs, traditions, and values on which the Kuwaiti society was raised. Among the TVC's most important messages is urging parents to encourage and educate children at an early age to adopt the culture of saving and promote financial and banking awareness in line with the Diraya banking awareness campaign.

## As part of its comprehensive strategy to develop its digital infrastructure

# KIB unveils cutting-edge digital products for enhanced banking experience

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) achieved significant advancements in enhancing its banking services and digital products in 2024. The Bank also introduced innovative financial solutions designed to continually improve the customer experience, meet evolving needs, and ensure secure financial management and transactions at all times. These efforts align with KIB's comprehensive strategy to develop its digital infrastructure, staying at the forefront of banking sector advancements and embodying its main slogan, "Bank for Life".

As part of its ongoing commitment to delivering top-tier digital banking services and products, KIB's Retail Banking Services Department in 2024 introduced several enhancements and exclusive features to the KIB Mobile app. Additionally, it launched the Interactive Teller Machine (ITM), and introduced the innovative KIB Multi-Currency Prepaid Card, offering 12 different currencies. These efforts earned KIB prestigious recognition, including the "Best Retail Banking Products for 2024" award from World Finance magazine for the revamped KIB Mobile app as well as the "Excellence in Financial Innovation, Technological Advancement, and Digital Leadership in Kuwait for 2024" award.

Commenting on the occasion, Othman Tafweq, General Manager of Retail Banking at KIB said: "In 2024, we made remarkable strides in enhancing our digital banking services and investing in the development of our core infrastructure. We introduced innovative solutions designed to meet our customers' evolving needs, delivering a safer and more seamless banking experience. We take pride in the outstanding results achieved through the KIB Mobile app, the growth in the number of customers benefiting from our digital services, and the positive impact on transaction volumes across our electronic channels. As we enter 2025, we remain dedicated to innovation and development, staying at the forefront of digital banking advancements. Our commitment is to save customers time, ensure their satisfaction, and strengthen our position as one of Kuwait's leading banking institutions."

These enhancements and updates drove sig-

nificant positive outcomes in 2024, including a 71% increase in transactions conducted through the Bank's app and electronic channels, a 31.25% growth in customer registrations on the app, and a 72% rise in users of the KIB Rewards Program during the year.

Moreover, in 2024, deposits saw remarkable growth, with a 474% increase in the number of deposits compared to 2023. Wakaladeposits done through the Bank's app grew by 97%. Additionally, transactions made via the KIBPay rapid payment service rose by 29%. The number of customers utilizing the electronic "Know Your Customer" (KYC) service also surged by an impressive 600%. This service enables customers to update their personal information and details anytime, from anywhere, whether inside or outside Kuwait, offering 24/7 convenience.

### New Features on the KIB Mobile App

KIB has expanded the features of its digital platform for individual customers, KIB Mobile, as part of its commitment to a comprehensive digital strategy. These enhancements aim to elevate the customer experience by delivering innovative features that prioritize convenience, security, and ease of use. The updates also ensure more efficient access to products and services tailored to meet customers' needs, aspirations, and modern lifestyles.

The new features KIB introduced to its digital platform in 2024 included the WAMD service, designed to provide customers with a more efficient, seamless, and secure experience for instant payments and money transfers via the KIB Mobile app. Additionally, the Bank joined the Gulf Payments System, AFAQ, enabling fast, secure, and convenient local currency transfers between GCC countries through the app.

The updated features include a data update



KIB ITM

service that allows customers to update their personal information anytime, anywhere, whether in Kuwait or abroad, 24/7. This service is part of the comprehensive offerings on the KIB Mobile app. The app also introduced a more flexible registration process through secure authentication via the Kuwait Mobile ID app, simplifying registration steps, enhancing app adoption, and improving the overall customer experience. Additionally, the redesigned KIB Rewards Program makes it easier for customers to browse their favorite products, explore participating brands, and seamlessly redeem points.

Another notable feature is the ability to withdraw previously submitted official complaints, enabling the Bank to respond more flexibly to customer concerns and improving the performance of its customer service and complaints management teams to ensure complete customer satisfaction.

The app also now features an enhanced payment and order list, allowing customers to conveniently view all standing orders, such as bill payments and recurring obligations. This feature offers greater ease of use compared to traditional online banking platforms.

Noteworthy here is that in 2023, the Bank fully revamped the "KIB Mobile" app to deliver an exceptional and advanced banking experience. The updated app provides customers with comprehensive access to financing details, payment schedules, and the ability to manage their accounts, cards, and investments in one place. It also offers specialized solutions, including portfolio management, and enables quick services such as bank transfers, payments, and beneficiary management.

### Launch of the 'Interactive Teller'

In 2024, KIB launched the Interactive Teller Machine (ITM), an innovative solution designed to deliver a seamless and exceptional banking experience for all customer segments. This initiative is part of the Bank's comprehensive strategy to continuously develop its digital banking solutions and services.

The ITM combines the convenience of ATM services with the personalized touch of in-person banking. It enables customers to perform a wide range of transactions, including cash withdrawals, cash deposits, check deposits, check cashing, and printing KIB cards instantly. Additionally, it offers support for general inquiries through high-definition video calls with dedicated service representatives.

In addition to the advanced features of the ITM, KIB customers can continue to benefit from the extensive network of ATMs across Kuwait for essential banking transactions. These include cash withdrawals and deposits, account-to-account money transfers, PIN management, and cardless cash withdrawals using a civil ID and mobile number. Additional services include paying KIB credit card bills, activating new cards, subscribing to SMS banking services, redeeming KIB Rewards points for cash back, and reloading KIB prepaid cards.

### Visa Multi-Currency Card

As part of its comprehensive strategy to deliver innovative banking solutions and products that prioritize customer convenience, KIB has launched the Visa Multi-Currency Prepaid Card. This digital payment solution is tailored to the needs of travelers, providing a seamless banking experience for managing international financial transactions, such as online shopping, expenses for students studying abroad, and other essential requirements aligned with a modern lifestyle.

Customers can request the card digitally through the Bank's app and begin using it within minutes. The card supports 12 different global currencies, with the Kuwaiti Dinar (KD) as the primary currency. Customers can select up to five currencies to add to their wallet, customized to their travel and purchasing needs. Supported currencies include the US Dollar (USD), Euro (EUR), British Pound (GBP), Turkish Lira (TRY), Saudi Riyal (SAR), UAE Dirham (AED), Bahraini Dinar (BD), Qatari Riyal (QAR), Omani Rial (OMR), Egyptian Pound (EGP), and Jordanian Dinar (JOD).

The card also offers competitive exchange rates when converting from Kuwaiti Dinar to any of the supported currencies.

### Contact Center and Social Media

Throughout 2024, KIB's Contact Center handled over 390 thousand calls, averaging 33 thousand calls per month. This reflects the service's efficiency, speed, and convenience in meeting customer needs anytime, seven days a week. Interaction rates across KIB's social media platforms, @KIBPage, also increased by 7% compared to 2023.

In addition to its interactive WhatsApp service, KIB has addressed inquiries and requests from Black segment customers in record times, providing 24/7 support throughout the week.

As KIB moves into 2025, it remains focused on its comprehensive strategy to strengthen its digital infrastructure. The Bank aims to keep adopting cutting-edge banking and financial technologies that align with global standards while customizing them to meet the specific needs of customers in Kuwait, enhancing their overall experience at every level.



Tafweq



Company organized a range of initiatives for worshipers hospitality at various mosques across Kuwait

## stc welcomes worshipers during last 10 days of Ramadan at the Grand Mosque

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, organized several initiatives to deliver care and hospitality to worshipers during the last 10 days of Ramadan at various mosques across Kuwait. Held under the slogan "With good, we go further" Ramadan campaign, the initiative aims to provide worshipers with an exceptional experience during Qiyam prayers, aligning with one of the objectives behind Company's extensive corporate social responsibility framework.

As part of the initiative, stc offered various services to the Grand Mosque and Moza Muhammad Salem Mosque located at Bayan Area, ensuring a comfortable and welcoming environment for worshipers attending Qiyam prayers during the final days of Ramadan. The services provided under stc's care and hospitality initiative included providing refreshments such as water and coffee, providing seats for the elderly, and other additional amenities aimed at enriching the worshipers' experience during this spiritual and significant time during Ramadan. This initiative comes as



A side of the hospitality of worshipers in the last ten days.

an essential part of stc's annual Ramadan campaign, especially since it helps support and enhance the spiritual experience of worshipers through thoughtful and meaningful contributions.



Participation of worshipers in the last ten days.

In the Grand Mosque, stc offered its special services in the Amiri Hall, to create an inviting and pleasant ambiance for senior officials and distinguished guests attending prayers. Additionally, stc sponsored



stc's participation in the Grand Mosque and Moza Mosque.

the various volunteer groups at the Grand Mosque, extending its support to those who dedicate their time and efforts during Ramadan to assist and serve the community. In addition to other services

provided, these activities were designed to create an atmosphere that promotes unity, care and comfort for all worshipers attending prayers.

At Moza Muhammad Salem Mosque, stc also provided its various services throughout the last 10 days of Ramadan, ensuring worshipers could focus on their prayers in a comforting and welcoming environment. The initiative reflects the core objectives behind stc's Ramadan campaign for 2025, supporting the community and creating an impact during the Holy Month.

In a statement, stc expressed that it takes great pride in facilitating the care and hospitality services, which are thoughtfully curated to meet the needs of worshipers. By playing a contributing role in the community, stc believes that such initiatives are capable of making both small and significant differences, reflecting the values of giving and unity during the Holy Month of Ramadan. stc concluded by reaffirming its commitment to delivering meaningful initiatives that serve the community and support its well-being, while finding new ways to have an impact on society where it matters most.

## Trump to put a 25% tariff on countries that buy Venezuelan oil, though the US does so itself

New tariffs would most likely add to the taxes facing China

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): President Donald Trump said Monday he would be placing a 25% tariff on all imports from any country that buys oil or gas from Venezuela as well as imposing new tariffs on the South American country itself.

In a Truth Social post, Trump said Venezuela has been "very hostile" to the U.S. and countries purchasing oil from it will be forced to pay the tariff on all their trade to the U.S. starting April 2.

The tariffs would most likely add to the taxes facing China, which in 2023 bought 68% of the oil exported by Venezuela, according to a 2024 analysis by the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Spain, India, Russia, Singapore and Vietnam are also among the countries receiving oil from Venezuela, the report shows.

But even the United States - despite its sanctions against Venezuela - buys oil from that country. In January, the United States imported 8.6 million barrels of oil from Venezuela, according to the Census Bureau, out of roughly 202 million barrels imported that month.

And on Monday, the Treasury Department issued an extension for U.S.-based Chevron Corp.'s lease to pump and export Venezuelan oil until May 27. The extension, known as a general license, exempts the country from economic sanctions and allows it to continue to pump oil.

In February, Trump had announced



President Donald Trump waves to the media as he walks on the South Lawn of the White House, in Washington, Saturday, March 22, 2025. (AP)

an end to the Chevron-Venezuela relationship, in what became a financial lifeline for the South American country.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro responded by accusing the U.S. of violating international trade rules with an "arbitrary, illegal and desperate measure" designed to "undermine the development" of the South American nation.

"For years, the fascist right, repudiated by the Venezuelan people, has promoted economic sanctions with the hope of bringing Venezuela to its knees," the government said in a statement. "They failed because Venezuela is a sovereign country, because its

people have resisted with dignity, and because the world no longer submits to any form of economic dictatorship."

The U.S. president is arguing that tariffs will bring back manufacturing jobs, rather than worsen inflationary pressures and hinder growth as economists have warned. His latest anecdotal evidence came Monday as Hyundai announced at the White House that it would build a \$5.8 billion steel plant in Louisiana.

"This investment is a clear demonstration that tariffs very strongly work," said Trump, adding that the new plant by the South Korean automaker would create 1,400 jobs.

Hyundai Motor Group's executive chairman, Euisun Chung, told the president: "We are really proud to stand with you and proud to build the future together."

Trump's latest tariffs threat suggests the administration may be willing to take bolder moves against China in its efforts to rewrite the guidelines of the global economy. The Trump administration has already levied universal 20% tariffs on imports from China as an effort to crackdown on the illicit trade in fentanyl, but another 25% import tax on top of that could further escalate tensions between the world's two largest economies.

## U.S. tariffs projected to shrink Finland's GDP by up to 1.6 percent, says report

HELSINKI, March 25, (Xinhua): Tariff hikes proposed by the United States could significantly impact Finland's economy, potentially reducing its gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 1.6 percent, a Finnish research institute warned Monday.

In its latest report, the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy (Etla) said Finland's GDP could decline by between 0.5 percent and 1.6 percent if all proposed U.S. tariffs are implemented.

Exports to the United States accounted for 11 per-

cent of Finland's total exports in 2024. Nearly 60 percent of these were goods - particularly vulnerable to higher tariffs - including machinery and equipment, pharmaceuticals, measuring instruments, and pulp and paper.

Washington has threatened to raise tariffs by up to 25 percent on all imports from the European Union (EU). A 25-percent tariff on steel and aluminum has been in effect since March 12. In retaliation, the EU announced plans to impose counter-tariffs worth 26 billion euros

(about 28 billion U.S. dollars) starting in April.

"It is already clear that the effects of the tariffs President Trump has mentioned on several occasions would hit the Finnish economy hard. If Finland's indirect exports to the U.S. are taken into account, the impact could be even greater," Jyrki Ali-Yrkkö, Etla's research director, said.

He noted that the uncertainty surrounding a potential trade war is also dampening investment sentiment.

More homes put up for sale

## US home sales rose in February as mortgage rates eased

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes rose in February as easing mortgage rates and more properties on the market encouraged home shoppers.

Existing home sales rose 4.2% last month from January to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.26 million units, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday.

Sales fell 1.2% compared with February last year, ending a string of five straight annual increases. The latest home sales topped the 3.92 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet. On an unadjusted basis, sales fell 5.2% from February last year, when the month included an extra day because 2024 was a leap year.

Home prices increased on an annual basis for the 20th consecutive month. The national median sales price rose 3.8% in February from a year earlier to \$398,400, an all-time high for the month of Febru-

ary. All told, the U.S. median home sales price is up 47% over the last five years.

"Home buyers are slowly entering the market," said Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist. "Mortgage rates have not changed much, but more inventory and choices are releasing pent-up housing demand."

The U.S. housing sales began to slump in 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell last year to their lowest level in nearly 30 years.

While the average rate on a 30-year mortgage briefly fell to a 2-year low last September, it didn't stay there long, climbing to just above 7% by mid-January. Mortgage rates mostly declined since then, sliding to an average of 6.76% by the last week of February. The rate averaged 6.67% this week, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

That's more than double the 2.65% record low that

the average rate reached a little over four years ago.

A lag of a month or two usually exists between when a contract is signed and when the home sale is finalized, so the recent pullback in rates may point to improved sales this month as the spring homebuying season gets going.

Still, Yun said a survey of NAR member real estate agents showed that buyer traffic was down in February from a year earlier, while seller traffic was up.

"(The) market clearly needs lower interest rates to fundamentally lift it a little higher on a sustained basis," Yun said.

Rising home prices and elevated mortgage rates, which can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, have frozen out many would-be homebuyers and discouraged homeowners who locked in ultra-low mortgage rates a few years ago from selling.

## Britain's labor market seems resilient amid weak economic performance

LONDON, March 25, (Xinhua): Despite weak macroeconomic conditions this year, Britain's labor market has shown resilience.

On March 14, data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicated that Britain's economy contracted by 0.1 percent month-on-month. While the services sector managed marginal growth of 0.1 percent, both construction and manufacturing contracted, declining by 0.2 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively.

In contrast, the labor market has not loosened despite slowing economic growth. Data released on March 20 indicates that the trend of labor market easing is nearly over.

"Headline unemployment stood at 4.4 percent in the three months to January. Unemployment has stayed relatively stable in recent months, despite a notable decline in business sentiment and hiring intentions," said Yael Selfin, chief economist at KPMG UK.

From November to January, Britain's employment rate stood at 75 percent, marking an increase from both the same period a year ago and the previous three months.

Meanwhile, wages continued to rise, with average earnings excluding bonuses up 5.9 percent year-on-year. And total earnings, including bonuses, climbed 5.8 percent.

The contrast between Britain's sluggish macroeconomic performance and its resilient labor market can be attributed to the country's high level of economic inactivity. The economic inactivity, according to ONS standards, refers to the proportion of people who are neither employed nor actively seeking work.

"The UK's unemployment rate was, unsurprisingly, steady at 4.4 percent in January. This sounds like a robust number, reflecting a resilient and high-performing economy, but things are not as they seem," said Harry Mills, founder of Oku Markets Limited.

The unemployment number is that it only captures those individuals actively seeking work, making it nearly "pointless," said Mills. "The economic inactivity rate was 21.5 percent. A fifth of working-age people aren't working -- that's the number we should focus on."

On the other hand, businesses in Britain face real difficulties hiring workers, as reflected in the continuous rise in employee wages.

"The labor market remains a significant challenge for employers who are struggling with skills shortages, higher wage costs and the imminent hike in employment taxes," said Jane Gratton, deputy director of Public Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, commenting on the latest labor market data.

"While the rise in average earnings is slowing, it continues to add huge cost pressures to business, underlining the competition between firms to attract and retain the right talent," she added.

This helps explain why Britain's labor market remains resilient despite sluggish economic growth. While this stability has kept unemployment from rising sharply, it has also driven up wages, constraining the central bank's flexibility in adjusting monetary policy.

On March 20, the Bank of England announced the decision to maintain its benchmark interest rate at 4.5 percent. Andrew Bailey, governor of the central bank, cautioned that rising wages are likely to fuel inflationary pressures in the coming months.

The central bank now projects Britain's inflation rate to reach 3.75 percent by the third quarter of the year, higher than the 3.5 percent estimated in February.

Given the labor market's resilience, the bank may push back its next rate cut significantly. Some institutions now forecast the first rate cut could be delayed until August, rather than the previously expected May.

Raj Badiani, an economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said, "The foundations of medium-term price stability are not secure. Therefore, the Monetary Policy Committee of the BoE is likely to tread carefully about the timing of the next rate cuts."

The British government has begun addressing structural issues in the labor market, including the persistently high economic inactivity rate. Recently, it announced welfare system reforms, reducing benefits for individuals with disabilities and long-term illnesses while promoting workforce participation.

Data indicate that one in 10 working-age individuals in Britain is receiving disability or sickness benefits, while nearly 1 million young people are neither in education, employment, nor training.

Move aimed at boosting tourism

## Philippines now VAT-free for foreign tourists

MANILA, March 25, (Xinhua): The Philippines is now value-added tax (VAT)-free for foreign tourists, with the signing of the implementing rules and regulations for the VAT Refund for Non-Resident Tourists, the Philippines' Department of Finance (DOF) said Monday.

The move aims to boost tourism and encourage foreign tourists to shop and spend more in the Philippines, thereby bolstering economic growth, the DOF said in a press release.

The department said non-resident

tourists or foreign passport holders may apply for a VAT refund for locally purchased goods from accredited stores equivalent to at least 3,000 pesos (roughly 52 U.S. dollars). The goods must be physically taken out of the Philippines by the tourist as accompanied baggage within 60 days from the date of purchase.

The VAT refund only applies to retail and tangible goods, such as clothing, apparel, electronics, gadgets, jewelry, accessories, souvenirs, food or non-food consumables, and other goods intended for personal use.

## Legal experts say Trump official broke law by saying 'Buy Tesla' stock but don't expect a crackdown

NEW YORK, March 25, (AP): When a White House adviser in the first Trump administration told TV viewers to "Go buy Ivanka stuff," top government lawyers sprang into action, telling her she had violated ethics rules and warning her not to do it again.

Government ethics experts have varying opinions on whether the 2017 criticism of Kellyanne Conway went far enough, but many agree such violations now might not even draw an official rebuke.

A week after President Donald Trump turned the White House lawn into a Tesla infomercial for Elon Musk's cars, a second sales pitch by a U.S. official occurred, this time for Tesla stock.

"It will never be this cheap," U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Wednesday. "Buy Tesla."

Government ethics experts say Lutnick broke a 1989 law prohibiting federal employees from using "public office for private gain," later detailed

to include a ban on "endorsements." Although presidents are generally exempt from government ethics rules, most federal employees are not and are often punished for violations, including rebukes like the one Conway got.

As of Friday, no public action had been taken against Lutnick and it was unclear whether he would suffer a similar fate.

"They're not even thinking of ethics," said Trump critic and former Republican White House ethics czar

Richard Painter of administration officials.

Painter has equally low expectations of that other possible brake to future violations - public opinion: "I don't know if people care."

In his first term, Trump opened his hotel near the Oval Office to foreign ambassadors and lobbyists in what many legal scholars argued was a violation of a constitutional ban against presidents receiving payments or gifts that could distort

public policy for private gain. His company launched a new hotel chain called "America Idea" in hopes of cashing in on his celebrity. Trump even once proposed holding a G-7 meeting of world leaders at his then-struggling Doral golf resort.

But the reaction to Conway's "Ivanka stuff" comment suggested certain lines couldn't be crossed.

Within days of Conway's TV comments, the head of the federal ethics agency, the Office of Government Eth-

ics, wrote a letter to the White House saying Trump's adviser may have broken the law and urging a probe. A White House lawyer then met with Conway to remind her of the law and reported to the ethics office that she had assured him she would abide by it in future.

But this time, there is no head of the Office of Government Ethics. He was fired by Trump. Ditto for the inspector general of various agencies who would head any investigation.



'No Other Land' director beaten by settlers in West Bank

## Oscar-winning Palestinian director detained by Israeli army

JERUSALEM, March 25, (AP) — Israeli settlers beat up one of the Palestinian co-directors of the Oscar-winning documentary film "No Other Land" on Monday in the occupied West Bank before he was detained by the Israeli military, according to two of his fellow directors and other witnesses.

The filmmaker Hamdan Ballal was one of three Palestinians detained in the village of Susiya, according to attorney Lea Tsemel, who is representing them. Police told her they were being held at a military base for medical treatment, but she said Tuesday morning that she had not been able to reach them and had no further information on their whereabouts.

Basel Adra, another co-director, witnessed the detention and said around two dozen settlers — some masked, some carrying guns, some in Israeli uniform — attacked the village. Soldiers who arrived pointed their guns at the Palestinians, while settlers continued throwing stones.

"We came back from the Oscars and

every day since there is an attack on us," Adra told The Associated Press. "This might be their revenge on us for making the movie. It feels like a punishment."

The Israeli military said it detained three Palestinians suspected of hurling rocks at forces and one Israeli civilian involved in a "violent confrontation" between Israelis and Palestinians — a claim witnesses interviewed by the AP disputed. The military said it had transferred them to Israeli police for questioning and had evacuated an Israeli citizen from the area to receive medical treatment.

"No Other Land," which won the Oscar this year for best documentary, chronicles the struggle by residents of the Masafer Yatta area to stop the Israeli military from demolishing their villages. Ballal and Adra, both from Masafer Yatta, made the joint Palestinian-Israeli production with Israeli directors Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor.

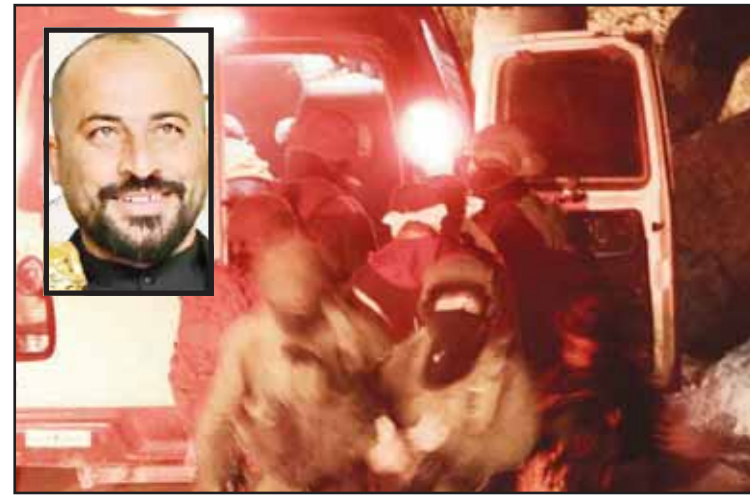
The film has won a string of inter-

national awards, starting at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2024. It has also drawn ire in Israel and abroad, as when Miami Beach proposed ending the lease of a movie theater that screened the documentary.

Adra said that settlers entered the village Monday evening shortly after residents broke the daily fast for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. A settler — who according to Adra frequently attacks the village — walked over to Ballal's home with the military, and soldiers shot in the air. Ballal's wife heard her husband being beaten outside and scream "I'm dying," according to Adra.

Adra then saw the soldiers lead Ballal, handcuffed and blindfolded, from his home into a military vehicle. Speaking to the AP by phone, he said Ballal's blood was still splattered on the ground outside his own front door.

Some of the details of Adra's account were backed up by another eyewitness, who spoke on condition of



Hamdan Ballal (inset), Palestinian co-director of Oscar-winning documentary No Other Land, is detained by the Israeli military from his home in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Monday, March 24. (AP)

anonymity out of fear of reprisal.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, along with the Gaza

Strip and east Jerusalem. The Palestinians want all three for their future state and view settlement growth as a major

obstacle to a two-state solution.

Israel has built well over 100 settlements, home to over 500,000 settlers who have Israeli citizenship. The 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule, with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority administering population centers.

The Israeli military designated Masafer Yatta in the southern West Bank as a live-fire training zone in the 1980s and ordered residents, mostly Arab Bedouin, to be expelled. Around 1,000 residents have largely remained in place, but soldiers regularly move in to demolish homes, tents, water tanks and olive orchards — and Palestinians fear outright expulsion could come at any time.

During the war in Gaza, Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank during wide-scale military operations, and there has also been a rise in settler attacks on Palestinians. There has been a surge in Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

### People

#### Assault denied

### Depardieu admits boorish behavior

PARIS, March 25, (AP) — Actor Gérard Depardieu acknowledged Tuesday that he used crude and heated language around a woman who accuses him of sexual assault and grabbed her hips but denied assaulting her, as he testified for the first time at his landmark trial in Paris.

"I understand perfectly if she's a bit upset," he said of the set dresser he worked with on a movie in 2021. He acknowledged that he sometimes has a potty mouth, telling the court: "I am capable of trash talk." And he admitted that he was wrong to use heated language with the woman when they had an on-set argument about a painting.

"I don't have to talk like that, get angry like that, voilà," he said in his gruff, deep voice so familiar to global cinemagoers.

The 76-year-old former Oscar nominee has denied sexual assault allegations filed by the 54-year-old set dresser and a 34-year-old assistant. The women allege that he groped them during filming in 2021 of "Les Volets Verts" ("The Green Shutters"). The actor faces up to five years in prison and a fine of 75,000 euros (\$81,000) if convicted.

Depardieu acknowledged that he did "grab the hips" of the set dresser during their argument on set about whether a painting was good or bad art.

But he said his gesture hadn't been ill-intentioned and argued that she hadn't appeared offended, saying: "She didn't answer as if I was assaulting her."

#### Acknowledged

He acknowledged that sometimes his behavior is regarded as boorish.

"I've always been told I have a Russian nature. I don't know if it's because of the drinking or the vulgarity," he said.

But he said he's not a predator. "I'm not touching the butts of women," he said.

Because of Depardieu's fame and impact on the French movie industry, his trial is seen as an important test of French willingness to confront sexual violence and hold influential men accountable.

France has often been ambivalent — even resistant — toward the #MeToo movement. While Hollywood saw powerful men fall swiftly and publicly, the French film industry was slower to respond. Some dismissed #MeToo as an American export incompatible with French values, citing concerns over free expression and what they viewed as an erosion of flirtation culture.

At the time of the alleged assaults, Depardieu was already under formal investigation for rape. In 2018, actor Charlotte Arnould accused him of raping her at his home. That case is still active, and in August 2024, prosecutors requested that it go to trial.

Prosecutors say Depardieu trapped the set dresser with his legs before groping her waist and breasts in front of witnesses. She says the actor also used obscene language and had to be pulled away by bodyguards.

The assistant director alleged that Depardieu groped her both on set and in the street.

The women sat side by side in court. The Associated Press doesn't name people who say they were sexually assaulted unless they consent to being identified. Neither has done so in this case.

The trial is expected to last at least two days, but could be extended beyond Tuesday, if the chief judge wants more time. The trial was initially scheduled for October, but then postponed because of Depardieu's health. A verdict is expected at a later date.

Depardieu grasped his lawyer's shoulder as he strode calmly into the courtroom. The actor has undergone a quadruple heart bypass and has diabetes, according to his lawyer.



Actor Gerard Depardieu, (left), arrives at his trial for the alleged sexual assaults of two women on a film set in 2021, with his lawyer Jérémie Assous, Tuesday, March 25, in Paris. (AP)

### Music



Will Smith poses for a portrait on Monday, March 17, in Los Angeles. (AP)

'Based on a True Story,' his first music project in 20 years

## Smith channels his introspection into music

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP) — Will Smith could have let his infamous Oscar slap be his cinematic fade out with a career bruised, marriage dissected and reputation in a free fall. But instead of retreating, he turned inward for self-reflection.

In the process, Smith rediscovered a long-neglected creative outlet in music, using the mic as a vessel to voice his thoughts after years of prioritizing his Hollywood dominance.

"I've taken the last couple of years to really do a deep dive on the parts of me that may or may not be in that level of certainty and asking those deep scary internal questions," said Smith, an Oscar and Grammy winner, who will release his fifth studio album "Based on a True Story" on Friday. It's his first music project in two decades since "Lost and Found."

"It really is the result of my initial self-examination," he said. "Every song is about some part of myself that I discovered or wanted to explore, something I wanted to share. It's the most full musical offering that I've ever created."

Smith's new offering features guest appearances from Big Sean, Teyana Taylor, DJ Jazzy Jeff, his son Jaden Smith, Jac Ross and Kanye West's Sunday Service Choir. His album weaves in gospel melodies and messages, but he doesn't call it a full-blown gospel project, despite the success of "You Can Make It," which soared to No. 1 on the Billboard Gospel Airplay chart.

Still, Smith let his renewed faith take the lead, steering his creative direction. He plans to release three albums this year, shaping each project into what he calls seasons.

The first season, Rave in the Wasteland, plays out across the 14 tracks of "Based on True Story" and represents his willingness to learn from life's lessons.

"I've come to some really beautiful answers for myself," Smith said. "My perception of God and reality."

Though Smith, 56, is still a bankable global star, rebuild-

ing trust and momentum has been an uphill battle. He's grappled with harsh realities while trying to move past the backlash from slapping Chris Rock at the Oscars in 2022 and his 10-year ban from the ceremony.

Several entertainers — including Zoë Kravitz, Wanda Sykes and Rob Reiner — criticized Smith's actions. Jim Carrey was particularly vocal, stating that Smith had been "living beyond the bandwidth" and cracked under the pressure.

When asked about Carrey's "bandwidth" remark, Smith agreed but reiterated that he needed to step back to gain a deeper understanding of himself and move beyond his own limitations.

#### Concept

"There's a small self that — the small concept of myself — can get to the end of his bandwidth," he said. "And then, if I back up, there's like an infinite space, where my bandwidth is the bandwidth of life itself. It's like trying to not get stuck in having to be only a narrow band of things, to give myself permission to be wider in the truth of who and what I actually am."

Smith's road to redemption grew tougher when Rock's comedy special reignited the controversy and his wife Jada Pinkett Smith's memoir "Worthy" put their marriage under fresh scrutiny, sparking headlines and endless social media memes.

Smith said the adversity not only tested him but fueled his creativity.

"There's a certain psychological and emotional fortitude that you cultivate from, leaning into the difficulty, not trying to run away," said Smith, who added he sought to build "spiritual confidence" inspired by the resilience of his late grandmother and Nelson Mandela. Along the way, he found Tibetan Buddhist Pema Chödrön's teachings, embracing her mantra of "leaning into the sharp points."

These influences became pillars as Smith explored himself more deeply. The way his grandmother, Mandela and

Chödrön approached life pushed him to channel his journey back into music.

"It is essentially learning how to accept and celebrate my challenges, recognizing that my challenges and my obstacles and my difficulties are actually divine curriculum," said Smith, a four-time Grammy winner, who is known for rap classics such as "Summertime," "Men in Black," "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It" and "Parents Just Don't Understand."

Those tracks had a laid-back feel, but his new album strikes a more serious tone.

"It's what I've been given to learn the truth," he continued. "There's a way that I'm learning to be with hard times when things arise. It's like 'Good, yes, thank you.' I'm willing to learn these lessons."

Believe it or not, Smith is set to embark on his first-ever headline tour this summer.

He is structuring the shows around different phases of his life and career: One featuring Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff, another highlighting his film and TV journey and third act he calls the "new phase, new energy," where Jeff and others will return to the stage.

Smith will kick off his tour including festivals starting June 25 at the Mawazine festival in Morocco and expected to wrap up early September in Paris. He'll perform his past hits from "Miami" to "Summertime" along with songs from the new album across England, France and Germany.

As Smith gears up for his tour, he also has several films in pre-production, including "Fast and Loose," "Hancock 2," "I Am Legend 2" and "Planes, Trains and Automobiles," according to IMDb. He's embracing this next phase of his career with renewed energy.

"This is about to be the greatest creative run of my entire career," he said. "The things that I'm about to do in music and cinema, and just artistic expression and exploration. It's like, I can't sleep at night. I'm so ready to go."

### Variety

WASHINGTON: Washington Nationals TV play-by-play announcer Bob Carpenter is saying, "See you later!" to the club after this season, his 20th in the role with the club's local broadcaster, the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network.

Carpenter announced his plans at the start of MASN's telecast Monday from Nationals Park, where the team was scheduled to host the Baltimore Orioles in an exhibition finale that got rained out. Washington is set to open the regular season Thursday against the visiting Philadelphia Phillies.

Three weeks ago, Major League Baseball



Carpenter

and began playing as the Nationals.

His signature home run call is a pause-filled "See ... you ... later!"

The 72-year-old previously was on TV for

the St. Louis Cardinals and also has worked for the Mets, Twins and Rangers in the majors, plus University of Oklahoma basketball telecasts, in addition to ESPN and other networks.

He has been nominated for six Emmys. Carpenter also is known for creating his version of a baseball scorebook. (AP)

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.: Authorities have released body camera footage from outside the home of Gene Hackman, where the actor and wife Betsy Arakawa were found dead in late February.

The redacted footage shows deputies talking with the two workers who called authorities to report seeing someone lying on the floor inside the home. With no signs of forced entry or other

evidence of suspicious circumstances, the deputies asked about the possibility of a gas leak or carbon monoxide poisoning, and the workers said they didn't see how that could have been the case. "Something's not right," one of the workers said.

Authorities soon determined there were no leaks that could have been fatal, further fueling a mystery that captured the public's attention.

It was solved about a week later when medical investigators confirmed that Hackman died of heart disease with complications from Alzheimer's about a week after hantavirus pulmonary syndrome — a rare, rodent-borne disease — took the life of his wife.

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office released only some of the footage from the investigation. (AP)



## Project uses music and dance to heal Sudan's wounds

## Amid war's roar, Sudanese musicians drum for peace

KHARTOUM, March 25, (Xinhua): In war-torn Sudan, where gunfire and flames drown out daily life, musician Awad Haroun insists that music retains its voice even as conflict engulfs the nation.

Through instruments and traditional dance, Haroun believes peace can emerge from destruction's aftermath.

Sudan has been locked in brutal conflict since April 2023, when fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. United Nations data from conflict monitoring group Armed Conflict Location and Event Data places the death toll at nearly 30,000, while the International Organization for Migration estimates more than 15 million people have been displaced.

Haroun, who performs under the name "Zaytoun," leads the "Ahalina Group" in their "Drums of Peace" initiative. The project uses music, dance, and song as life-affirming acts defying fears and deaths amid the bloody conflict while providing entertainment for those living in displacement camps.

"This is an artistic initiative to disseminate peace culture," Haroun said. "It's about musical drums that encourage coexistence among Sudan's diverse communities and call for silencing the sounds of guns."

"We work to make Sudanese music, folk dances, singing, and all other art forms serve our community as society suffers from war's devastation on all fronts," he added.

## Performs

The group performs throughout Sudan, including Port Sudan in eastern Sudan's Red Sea State. Their venues range from cultural centers to the Red Sea Corniche and displacement shelters.

Performance artist Nada Mubarak said, "We're receiving great response and continuous encouragement. There's a strong interaction with our message, and we hope to create public support for peace and ending the war."

"Sudan is distinguished by its great cultural di-

versity," she said, noting examples like the Kambala dance from the Nuba Mountains that imitates cattle movements. "Music and dance reflect this diversity, which can catalyze unity, peace, and coexistence."

Sudan's arts community has been devastated by the conflict. Festivals, concerts, and theaters have closed, while many artists have fled to neighboring countries.

Folk artist Suha Awad sees "Drums of Peace" as a small but important step towards art scene recovery in Sudan. "We're making the most of every opportunity to restart our activities, offering performances at festivals, celebrations, and public events," Awad said.

Abdul-Jalil Al-Haj, a Sudanese heritage and music researcher, believes music, singing, and dancing represent common ground among Sudan's diverse populations.

"The 'Drums of Peace' initiative is pioneering the promotion of peace culture, now an urgent necessity," Al-Haj said. He sees these art forms as the voice of the people, symbols of identity, and vehicles for preserving cultural heritage.



Dancers from a folk troupe perform a traditional dance in Port Sudan, eastern Sudan, Feb. 26, 2025. (Xinhua)

## Variety

**WASHINGTON:** The co-manager of President Donald Trump's successful 2024 campaign sued the Daily Beast for defamation Monday over stories regarding how much he was paid for his work.

The lawsuit on behalf of Chris LaCivita said the online publication's stories that he was paid \$22 million over two years - later corrected to \$19.2 million - "created the false impression that Mr. LaCivita was personally profiting excessively from his work for the campaign and that he was prioritizing personal gain over the campaign's success."

The Daily Beast said it stood by its reporting and said the lawsuit "is meritless and a transparent attempt to intimidate the Beast and silence the independent press."

Celebrity attorney Mark Geragos is representing LaCivita in the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Richmond, Virginia. The filing was first reported by Axios.

The case continues a trend of aggressive action taken against the news media by Trump and those in his orbit. Trump has sued CBS News for \$20 billion over editing of a "60 Minutes" interview with his 2024 opponent, Kamala Harris, and sued the Des Moines Register over an Iowa election poll that turned out to be inaccurate. ABC News settled a lawsuit with Trump over its incorrect claim that the president had been found civilly liable for raping writer E. Jean Carroll. (AP)

**EL SEGUNDO, Calif.:** Mattel, Inc. has announced it has renewed a multi-year global licensing agreement with Disney for new products commemorating its 30th anniversary and for the upcoming release of June 19, 2026. The agreement extends Mattel's global licensing rights to develop lines of toys for across Action Figures, Vehicles, Radio Control, Games, and Plush.

Disney and Pixar collaborated with Mattel on launching several new Toy Story products earlier this year. The products feature beloved characters from the fan-favorite movie and new packaging inspired by 30 years of Toy Story. The products are available now with more launching later this year.

Some of Mattel's products honoring 30th Anniversary are now available, with exciting releases planned for next year. In 2026, Mattel's Action Figures offering will expand and highlight key movie moments and characters, and UNO will introduce a -themed edition featuring a custom rule inspired by the movie. Mattel will also launch a new Plush range and Radio Control products that bring unforgettable movie moments home, while classics like Kerplunk! and Tumblin' Monkeys continue collaborations for the franchise's latest theatrical chapter. Additionally, Mattel's Little People line will integrate iconic characters and scenes, and a new Imaginext lineup will debut. (AP)

**SEOUL, South Korea:** NHN Corporation is partnering with a Japanese entertainment company KADOKAWA to create a puzzle game based on the intellectual property (IP) of the popular Japanese TV anime 'OSHI NO KO'.

This project marks the first game ever developed based on the 'OSHI NO KO' IP, which has captured the hearts of anime fans worldwide, including Japan, Korea, North America, and Europe. The anime has recently gained even greater attention with the announcement of its third season, set to air in Japan in 2026. (AP)

**MACAO:** With a verdant Loong (Chinese dragon) made of bamboo, a handmade armor performance from Japan, and an elephant hat dance from South Korea showing up in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's, the "2025 Macao International Parade" officially set off on Sunday.

These were part of the 83 performing teams from various cultures across the world.

Upholding the spirit of "Love, Peace and Cultural Integration" while promoting Macao's designation as a "Culture City of East Asia 2025," this year's parade featured local groups and participating groups worldwide, totaling an estimated 1,800 artists. (Xinhua)



Naomi Watts attends the premiere of 'The Friend' at IPIC Theaters on Monday, March 24, in New York. (AP)

## Music

Thrilling return to electro-pop glory

## Gaga reclaims her pop roots in 'Mayhem'

NEW YORK, March 25, (AP): She hath returned: A new Lady Gaga, like the old Lady Gaga, but a different Lady Gaga.

"Mayhem," released recently, is a satisfying full-length project of big pop material, both a return to her roots and a hard press on the gas pedal.

Her 2008 debut "The Fame" introduced a new generation to the addictive properties of expertly crafted electropop. "The Fame Monster" a year later cemented her position as a modern great, a savior of theatrical pop that once recalled Madonna and now serves as a reminder that big belts are cinema. Then came the genre explorations of "Born This Way," "Artpop," "Joanne" (arriving years before pop would go country - she has long been present), and 2020's "Chromatica."

Half a decade later, is the world ready again for her club anthems? Or is "Mayhem" an attempt to revitalize a big pop sound left behind in the streaming era? Can an artist return home without playing some parody of themselves?

The answer, of course, is up to the listener. Some will hear "Ab-racadabra" as life-affirming dance



This cover image released by Interscope Records shows 'Mayhem' by Lady Gaga. (AP)

music. Others will press play on "Killah" and balk at its Gesaffelstein-aided sound. They might read the earworm "Disease" as a song that too easily recalls the mid-2010s of her heyday, but to do so would strip it of stadium-sized pleasures. It is a great song, a familiar song, a return to a classic Gaga. (And for what it is worth, there's a lot more energy there than in the Grammy-winning power ballad "Die with a Smile," her collaboration with Bruno Mars.)

The truth is, Gaga has reclaimed her early dark-pop sensibilities and ushered them into her 2025 reality across "Mayhem." It manifests in a few ways, most prominently in her delivery. Lady Gaga sounds like she is having fun here, from the modular Moog of the ballad fake-out "Vanish Into You" and the "Bad Romance" easter egg of "Garden of Eden," to the springy synth of "Perfect Celebrity," which furthers Gaga's quest to use fame to question fame's legitimacy. Now that is timeless pop meta-commentary.

Autonomy was top of mind for Gaga on "Mayhem," and it's yielded great results. "Something that was really important to me on this was really taking from myself my own inventions," she told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "I was the creator. This was my work. It was just not a character I was playing. It was something that I made."

"Mayhem" will sound familiar to Gaga listeners, there's no doubt about that. But they will hear an evolved version - not an easy play at nostalgia, nor an artist appeasing contemporary trends. It is Gaga staying true to herself, as she has been known to do.

## Music

## Band topples Boss' record

## Maná makes history with tour milestone

NEW YORK, March 25, (AP): Move over, Bruce Springsteen. Come this fall, the Mexican pop-rock giants Maná will break the Boss' record for most arena shows in Los Angeles, with 44 to his 42, during a new arena tour.

"And singing in Spanish! That's the amazing thing," says vocalist Fher Olvera. "We are living history in this country."

The Vivir Sin Aire Tour, named after the hit song from their 1992 album "Dónde Jugarán Los Niños?" kicks off Sept. 5 at the Frost Bank Center in San Antonio, Texas, and concludes April 4, 2026 at the First Horizon Coliseum in Greensboro, North Carolina. It includes a four-night residency at Los Angeles' Kia Forum, placing them just ahead of Springsteen's record.

The band, which celebrates its 40th anniversary next year, will also perform in some cities they have never toured in before: Nashville, Tennessee; Detroit, St. Louis, Baltimore and Montreal among them.

## Proceeds

In the past, proceeds from Maná's tours have funded "scholarships and worked with the farmers," drummer Alex González lists. This time around, part of the proceeds from the tour will benefit their "Latinas Luchonas" program in honor of Rosario Sierra, Olvera's late mother. González describes it as an initiative to assist single mothers.

Their live shows double as "a celebration of the Latin community," says González. "All the Latino community comes, and they also bring their Anglo friends. They learn a little bit of Spanish and they learn a little bit of our culture. And so, it's great. It's just fantastic

playing live."

Audiences can expect to hear classic tunes such as "Rayando el Sol" and "Oye Mi Amor," and a mix of non-singles for the hardcore fans - but they will need to wait a little bit longer if they want a record. The band hasn't added much in that department since their last studio album, "Cama Inendiada," was released in 2015.

"For now, we are very focused (on) this new tour," says Olvera, when asked if there's a new album on the way. "So after this? ... We will see."

## Celebrate

These days, they've got a lot to celebrate. Last month, Maná was among the 14 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame nominees for 2025, becoming the first fully Spanish-language act to receive a nod.

"It's a huge honor for us," says guitarist Sergio Vallin. "I think it is good for the whole community, the Latino community."

When the band received the news, they dedicated the nomination to "all Latinos everywhere, especially the immigrants who are suffering right now" in a statement. González says the band owes their career in the United States to the Mexican and Latin communities, a population he describes as an "essential part of the workforce and the economy of the United States."

"We dedicate this award to all of them, you know, because at the end of the day, all these people, what they're doing is they're putting the bread on the table and they're working very hard," he says.

Referencing the ongoing immigration crackdown in the US, González notes "there's a lot of people that are scared."



Sergio Vallin, (from left), Juan Calleros, Fher Olvera and Alex Gonzalez, of Maná, appear at the Latin Recording Academy Person of the Year gala in their honor on Nov. 14, 2018. (AP)

## McCollough, Hernandez join Loewe as creative directors

PARIS, March 25, (AP): Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez, the celebrated design duo behind Proenza Schouler, will take over as creative directors at Loewe, the Spanish luxury house announced Monday.

Their tenure begins April 7, succeeding Jonathan Anderson, who stepped down last week after an influential 11-year run that elevated Loewe into a major global brand, achieving annual revenues exceeding a reported \$1.5 billion.

McCollough and Hernandez, known for pioneering a distinctive American aesthetic since founding Proenza Schouler in 2002, are relocating from New York City to Paris, home to Loewe's creative offices. The designers also plan frequent visits to Madrid, where Loewe originated as a leather-maker serving the Spanish royal family in 1846.

The duo established Proenza Schouler as a downtown darling, referencing cultural touchpoints such as artists Helen Frankenthaler and John Currin, filmmaker Harmony Korine and singer Annie Lennox. While the brand struggled to replicate the immense success of its utilitarian PS1 bag, subsequent collections featured sculptural yet supple shapes, including ruffled totes and crescent-moon wristlets.

"We are incredibly honored to join Loewe, a house whose values and mission align closely with our own," McCollough and Hernandez said in a statement released by Loewe. They

expressed excitement at continuing the brand's celebrated commitment to craft, nurtured under Anderson.

The transition marks another significant reshuffle within luxury conglomerate LVMH, which owns both Loewe and Dior.

LVMH has been recasting key creative roles across brands including Givenchy, Fendi and Dior to reignite growth after luxury's post-pandemic slowdown. Rival groups are making similar moves, with Kering appointing Demna as Gucci's artistic director and Chanel preparing for Matthieu Blazy's debut.

Sidney Toledano, CEO of LVMH Fashion Group, praised McCollough and Hernandez's "eclectic creativity and dedication to craft," calling the duo "a natural choice" to guide Loewe's evolution.

At Loewe, the duo inherits a brand enjoying unparalleled visibility and industry goodwill thanks to Anderson's eclectic and innovative approach. Initiatives such as the Loewe Craft Prize, Salone del Mobile exhibitions and partnerships with influential content creators and celebrities will offer them a powerful platform to amplify their vision far beyond what was achievable at their independent brand.

McCollough and Hernandez stepped down from Proenza Schouler in January but remain on its board. The brand is currently led by CEO Shira Suveyke Snyder, who joined last October and is spearheading the search for a new creative director.



Poliovirus found in sewage across 18 Pakistani districts

Half of Yemeni kids under 5 malnourished: UNICEF

GENEVA, March 25, (Agencies): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned on Tuesday that half of Yemen's children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition among them more than 543,000 face severe acute malnutrition.

Speaking online from the (Sanaa) during a press briefing in Geneva UNICEF's Representative in Yemen Peter Hawkins highlighted that four million pregnant and lactating women are also malnourished perpetuating a vicious cycle of human suffering and health deterioration across generations. He stressed that this catastrophe is "man-made" as the humanitarian crisis in the country enters its tenth year.

Hawkins noted that more than half of Yemen's population depends on humanitarian aid especially given the sharp rise in food import prices which have soared by 300 percent over the past decade.

He explained that ten years of conflict have devastated Yemen's economy and essential infrastructure including ports and critical roadways which serve as lifelines for food and medicine leading to "an unprecedented deterioration in the humanitarian situation."

Hawkins called for urgent funding of USD 157 million to support UNICEF's humanitarian response in Yemen for 2025, noting that only 25 percent of the required funding has been secured so far. He further stressed the need of ensuring unimpeded humanitarian access and called for the immediate release of detained UN staff and other humanitarian workers.

**Poliovirus:** Poliovirus was detected in sewage samples from 18 districts across Pakistan, according to test results from the Regional Reference Labora-

tory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health. The report shown on the website of the Pakistan Polio Eradication Program revealed on Monday that the samples, collected between Feb. 21 and March 6, confirmed the presence of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) in the area, highlighting the ongoing threat of the disease.

The statement added that Pakistan's polio surveillance system network expanded from 65 sites in 2021 to 127 in 2025 with the aim to ensure that poliovirus transmission does not go undetected, even in the most remote areas.

The statement added that the National Polio Eradication Program had been implementing a rigorous vaccination strategy aimed at eliminating the virus and brought a consistent decline in polio cases since September 2024.



A Yemeni walks over the debris of a destroyed building after US airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen, Monday, March 24. (AP)



An undated image from NASA's Webb Space Telescope shows an outflow from a nearby still-forming star in infrared light, with a spiral galaxy off in the distance. (AP)

Telescope captures star in the making

The Webb Space Telescope has captured a plume of gas and dust streaming from a star in the making, with a spiral galaxy as a stunning backdrop.

The composite image makes it look as though the outflow of stellar material is the billowing contrail of a rocket on its way to the galaxy. NASA and the European Space Agency released the photo on Monday.

The outflow is about 625 light-years from Earth in one of the closest star-forming regions of our Milky Way galaxy, according to NASA. A light-year is equivalent to almost 6 trillion miles. (AP)

EU scrubs rocket launch

NASA rover detects largest organic molecules on Mars

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (Agencies): Researchers examining pulverized rock samples aboard NASA's Curiosity rover have discovered the largest organic molecules ever found on Mars, according to a new study published on Monday.

The findings suggest that prebiotic chemistry may have advanced further on Mars than previously observed, according to the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Scientists probed a rock sample inside Curiosity's Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) mini-lab and found the molecules decane, undecane, and dodecane. These compounds, which are made up of 10, 11, and 12 carbons, respectively, are thought to be the fragments of fatty acids that were preserved in the sample.

Fatty acids are key organic molecules on Earth that serve as chemical building blocks of life, according to NASA.

While Curiosity's previous discoveries included small, simple organic molecules, this new finding of larger compounds offers the first evidence that organic chemistry on Mars may

have progressed toward the complexity necessary for the potential origin of life, NASA said.

Launched on Nov. 26, 2011, Curiosity is the largest and most capable rover ever sent to Mars. It landed on Mars on Aug. 5, 2012.

A private European aerospace company scrubbed its attempt on Monday to launch the first test flight of its orbital launch vehicle from Norway.

Unfavorable winds meant that the Spectrum rocket couldn't be launched from the island of Andøya in northern Norway, Munich-based Isar Aerospace said.

The launch is subject to weather, safety and range infrastructure. The company said it could also conduct the test flight later in the week. Another date hasn't yet been set.

The 28-meter (91-foot) Spectrum is a two-stage launch vehicle designed for small and medium-sized satellites.

The company has largely ruled out the possibility of the rocket reaching orbit on its first complete flight, saying that it would consider a 30-second flight a success.

War leaves thousands of kids with lifelong injuries

Gaza's child amputees struggle with recovery amid aid cutoff

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip, March 25, (AP): Five-year-old Sila Abu Aqlan curled her lip in concentration as she practiced walking for the first time on a prosthetic leg at a clinic in Gaza City. The foot of the new leg had a little pink sneaker with a lacy frill, matching her pink hoodie.

It has been nearly 15 months since the little girl's leg was amputated after it was left severely burned from an Israeli airstrike. Finally, she is being fit for a prosthetic.

One of the most shocking sights in Gaza's war has been the thousands of children with amputated limbs from Israel's bombardment. The UN's humanitarian aid organization OCHA called it the "largest cohort of child amputees in modern history."

Amputations

Throughout the 17-month war, supplies and services for children and adults with amputations have fallen far short of demand. Gaza's ceasefire that began in mid-January offered a window for aid agencies to bring in an increased number of prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, crutches and other devices.

Still, it only covered about 20% of the total need, said Loay Abu Saif, head of a disability program run by the aid group Medical Aid for Palestine, or MAP.

The window slammed shut when Israel barred entry of all medical supplies as well as food, fuel and other aid on March 2. Israel's resumption of its military campaign last week, killing hundreds of Palestinians, has only added to the ranks of amputees.

With help limited, children wrestle with the psychological pain of losing a limb along with other traumas.

Sila's mother, father and sisters were all killed in an airstrike on her home in December 2023. Sila suffered severe burns to her right leg. A month



A doctor assists 13-year-old Palestinian Yamen Asfour as he learns to walk on a prosthetic leg at the Artificial Limbs and Polio Center in Gaza City on Feb. 18, 2025. (AP)

of treatment had little effect, and Sila would scream in excruciating pain, her aunt Yasmine al-Ghofary said. Doctors amputated her leg above the knee.

"I try as much as I can to make her happy. But the truth is, there's only so much she can be happy. Pain is pain, and amputation is amputation," al-Ghofary said.

Sila sees other girls playing and tries to keep up with them using her walker but falls down. "She says, 'Why am I like this? Why am I not like them?'" said al-Ghofary.

Airstrike

In October 2023, 11-year-old Reem lost her hand when an airstrike hit nearby as her family fled their home in Gaza City.

Reem can no longer dress on her own, brush her hair or tie her shoes. She gets angry and hits her siblings if she can't find someone to help her, her mother said. Other times, she isolates herself and just watches other children playing.

Screening

AI detects heart risk in patients

CHICAGO, March 25, (Agencies): Cleerly, a leader in AI imaging technology, is proud to support the American College of Cardiology's (ACC) Chicago Community Health Fair. This event was to take place on Tuesday, March 25, at The Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Corps Community Center.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the US and worldwide. The event aims to promote heart health as an accessible and equitable resource for all community members. Attendees will learn about actionable strategies that can improve heart health, including guidance on exercise, healthy eating, and medical interventions. Additionally, the event will feature on-site heart screenings for blood pressure and heart murmurs, as well as informative sessions about heart disease.

Collaboration

In collaboration with local Chicago doctors and Corazon Imaging, Cleerly is providing advanced AI-Quantitative Coronary CT (AI-QCT) analyses for coronary atherosclerotic plaque to patients from the community. Coronary atherosclerotic plaque is a buildup within artery walls that narrows and restricts blood flow to the heart muscle and can lead to cardiovascular complications, including heart attacks. Local doctors will explain the findings to patients and advise them on actionable strategies that can improve heart health.

Just as mammograms are used for early cancer detection, Cleerly uses an AI-enabled platform to analyze advanced imaging to assist in the early identification of patients at higher risk for heart attacks. Along with receiving FDA clearance, Cleerly is also a covered service for Medicare, a status that requires robust clinical support and evidence.

Delegates from across Africa and beyond gathered in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, to discuss strategies for enhancing collaboration between academic institutions and healthcare facilities and harnessing technology to build a more effective and responsive healthcare workforce.

The inaugural Advancing Medical Education in Africa Conference, held on Monday and Tuesday, brought together more than 600 participants, including medical educators, healthcare leaders, policymakers, and students. The conference focused on setting the stage for a new era in African medical education.

Speaking at the event's opening on Monday, Rwandan Minister of Health Sabin Nsanzimana highlighted the need to harmonize medical training with community health needs and called for transforming hospitals into teaching sites.

"Why don't we teach from the hospital and make it a teaching site? Let's not separate academic doctors from clinical doctors. Instead, let's create a system where doctors seamlessly integrate teaching and practice," he said.

Research boosts TNBC treatment

Nanotech offers new hope for breast cancer

SYDNEY, March 25, (Xinhua): Researchers in Australia are developing next-generation nanoparticles to supercharge current treatments for triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), one of the most aggressive and deadly forms of the disease.

The researchers are designing innovative iron-based nanoparticles, or "nano-adjuvants," small enough to fit thousands on a single strand of hair, to strengthen the body's immune response against TNBC, according to the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN) on Monday.

Unlike other breast cancers, TNBC lacks the proteins tar-

geted by some of the conventional treatments used against other cancers, making effective therapy a significant challenge, according to Prof. Yu Chengzhong from the AIBN.

"Despite the promise of immunotherapy, its effectiveness against triple-negative breast cancer is extremely limited, which is leaving too many women without options -- and that's what our research is trying to change," Yu said. The nanoparticles are designed to enhance the activity of T-cells, the white blood cells used by the immune system to fight disease, within the tumor microenvironment, improving the immune system's ability to recognize and attack cancer cells, according to Yu.

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## SPORTS

# Pacers stay hot, Lakers struggles continue

Tatum injured in Celtics win

**INDIANAPOLIS, March 25, (AP):** Tyrese Haliburton finished with 24 points and 11 assists, and Obi Toppin made six 3-pointers and added 20 points to help the Indiana Pacers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 119-103 on Monday night.

The Pacers have won five straight and seven of eight to stay ahead of Milwaukee for the Eastern Conference's No. 4 seed. Haliburton extended his career best streak to 11 consecutive games with double-doubles on a night six Pacers players scored at least 10 points.

Haliburton made three of Indiana's 13 3s.

Naz Reid led the Timberwolves with 20 points and Anthony Edwards added 17 despite being a game-time decision with a hand injury. Rudy Gobert finished with 16 points and 16 rebounds as Minnesota lost for the third time in four games.

**Magic 118, Lakers 106**

In Orlando, Franz Wagner had 32 points and eight assists, Paolo Banchero added 30 points and seven rebounds and Orlando sent Los Angeles to their third straight loss.

Luka Doncic scored 32 points and LeBron James added 24 points and eight assists for the Lakers, who have lost seven of their last 10.

Anthony Black came off the bench and finished with 17 points, five rebounds and six assists for the Magic.

Austin Reaves scored eight of his 17 points in the first quarter for the Lakers, who led by nine points late in the first half but were outscored 34-18 in the third quarter.

**Celtics 113, Kings 95**

In Sacramento, Jayson Tatum had 25 points, seven rebounds, and eight assists before suffering a hard foul and leaving in the Boston Celtics' 113-95 win over the Sacramento Kings on Monday night.

The six-time All-Star was hurt



Chicago Bulls forward Dalen Terry, front, struggles to collect a loose ball as Denver Nuggets forward Peyton Watson defends in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Denver. (AP)

late in the third quarter of the Celtics' sixth consecutive win. After making his fifth 3-pointer of the game, Tatum absorbed a Flagrant 1 foul by Kings 6-foot-11 center Domantas Sabonis. He remained down for several moments before eventually making 1 of 2 free throws and being helped to Boston's locker room.

Kristaps Porzingis had 16 points and seven rebounds after missing Sunday's win in Portland, Payton Pritchard scored 20 points and Derrick White added 12 points and eight assists for the Celtics.

Sabonis made an earlier-than-expected return from an ankle injury and had 16 points and 17 rebounds. DeMar DeRozan added 20 points and 10 assists.

**Suns 108, Bucks 106**

In Phoenix, Devin Booker made a mid-range jumper with 1.7 seconds remaining to lift Phoenix Suns over Milwaukee for their fourth straight win.

It's a crucial victory for the Suns, who stayed in the final position for the Western Conference play-in tournament with eight games remaining in the regular season. Kevin Durant

scored 38 points, while Booker added 19, including the clutch 20-foot jumper after catching the in-bounds pass in the final moments.

Brook Lopez missed a turnaround jumper at the buzzer that could have tied it, ending a frantic final stretch. Milwaukee was led by Giannis Antetokounmpo, who scored 31 points. Lopez added 23.

**Bulls 129, Nuggets 119**

In Denver, Coby White scored 37 points to lead streaking Chicago over short-handed Denver.

Josh Giddey had 26 points and nine assists for Chicago, which fin-

ished its season-long road trip 4-2.

Jamal Murray had 28 points and Peyton Watson scored a career-high 24 points for Denver, which played their fifth straight game without three-time MVP Nikola Jokic. Jokic is expected to return from his left ankle injury during a five-game homestand.

Denver was also without Aaron Gordon (right calf injury management).

**Raptors 112, Wizards 104**

In Washington, Jakob Poeltl had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Toronto beat Washington Wizards to

stop a four-game slide.

Immanuel Quickley had 21 points and seven assists for Toronto. Scottie Barnes finished with 13 points, 10 boards, and eight assists.

Washington lost its fifth consecutive game. Jordan Poole scored 23 points for the Wizards, and AJ Johnson had 17. Bob Carrington finished with 15 points, 11 rebounds and six assists.

**Mavericks 120, Nets 101**

In New York, Naji Marshall scored 22 points off the bench to lead Dallas to a rout of Brooklyn.

P.J. Washington and Spencer Dinwiddie finished with 16 each. Brandon Williams scored 15 and Kai Jones added 13. Anthony Davis, in his first game back after missing six weeks with a groin injury, had 12 points in 27 minutes.

Brooklyn dropped to 23-49 with its fourth straight loss. Nic Claxton led the Nets with 19 points.

**Pelicans 112, 76ers 99**

In New Orleans, Karlo Matkovic had a season-high 19 points and eight assists, Antonio Reeves had five 3-pointers and 17 points and New Orleans beat Philadelphia.

Rookie Yves Missi finished with 16 points and nine rebounds, Kelly Olynyk added 14 points and 11 rebounds, and Keion Brooks Jr. added 10 points for New Orleans, which shot 43% (15 for 35) from long distance.

Two-time All-Star Zion Williamson missed his third straight game for the Pelicans. He has been sidelined since hurting his back in a hard fall in a game against Minnesota on Wednesday. CJ McCollum, who scored 40 points in a loss to Detroit on Sunday, did not play.

Justin Edwards and Jared Butler, from nearby Reserve, Louisiana, scored 19 points apiece as Philadelphia dropped its fifth straight and finished a six-game trip 1-5. Jeff Dowtin Jr., Guerschon Yabusele, and Chuma Okeke each scored 12 points. Quentin Grimes, who scored 26 points in a loss to Atlanta on Sunday, was rested.

**'We've got seven years to make it work - and make it work we will'**

## New Olympic stadium and a crocodile-inhabited rowing course unveiled in Brisbane '32 overhaul

BRISBANE, Australia, March 25, (AP): Sailing the Whitsunday islands. Surfing an iconic Gold Coast break. Rowing in a crocodile-inhabited river in Rockhampton.

Extra tourism-focused venues and a new 60,000-seat Olympic stadium to be built in inner-city parkland have been unveiled as part of a major overhaul of planning for the 2032 Brisbane Games.

David Crisafulli, the third premier of Queensland state in the almost four years since the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2032 Games to the capital of Queensland state, announced the latest plans on a rainy Tuesday.

He said it's not going to be like last year's Paris Olympics or the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, promising instead it'll be uniquely-Queensland.

It's been more than 1,340 days since that IOC decision in 2021, and local organizers still haven't started the Olympic venue construction program.

"The time has come to just get on with it - get on with it, and build," Crisafulli said, marking his 150th day in office. "We are going to start immediately. We've got seven years to make it work - and make it work we will."

A 25,000-seat aquatics center has also been proposed in an Olympic precinct that includes the new main stadium at Victoria Park, a former golf course near downtown Brisbane.

The 11 years that Brisbane had to prepare is now down to seven, and leaders at federal, state and local levels agree it's time to stop squabbling over venues and start building them.

Newly elected IOC president Kirsty Coventry, who oversaw the initial planning stages as head of the

IOC's coordination commission, has been updated on the changes by Andrew Liveris, chairman of the 2032 organizing committee.

"The stage matters," Liveris said. "We've still got 7½ years to go, and we have a plan. This is a go-get-it-done plan."

Brisbane was the first Summer Games host picked in a new process to put a preferred candidate into exclusive, fast-track talks without facing a rival bidder in a vote. With it, the IOC aimed to cut the cost of campaigning and building venues.

Domestic media earlier this week raised concerns about crocodiles at the Olympic rowing venue when it emerged that events would be staged on the Fitzroy River.

Crisafulli confirmed the Fitzroy River venue at Rockhampton, on the central Queensland coast, and said a "multitude" of events had been staged there - including Australia's pre-Olympic rowing camps. He said local kids swam and paddled in the river and crocodiles wouldn't be a problem.

Sarah Cook, the head of Rowing Australia, said the crocodile concerns were overblown in the media. But she raised some issues about the river current and its suitability for Olympic competition.

Liveris, who said World Rowing would visit the venue in May, also wasn't worried about crocs. "There are sharks in the ocean and we still do surfing ... this is can do, not can't do, please flip the mindset here," he said. "Creatures below the water ... that's a bit kind of Hollywood-ish."

It's been a year since local organizers scrapped initial plans to demolish and rebuild the Gabba, an iconic



Queensland Premier David Crisafulli speaks during the announcement of Games Delivery Plan for the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics, in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

cricket ground, as the Games centerpiece when a previous review panel appointed in 2023 recommended a new stadium in city parkland.

The costs soared and the concept lost the support of the Australian Olympic Committee.

The premier at the time, Steven Miles, rejected the recommendations of that review led by former Brisbane Mayor Graham Quirk. Miles instead planned to use a rugby stadium to host the ceremonies, and to renovate the aging facility built to host the 1982 Commonwealth Games.

Crisafulli went to a state election late last year promising no new stadiums, but then instituted another independent review quickly after taking power for the Liberal-National coalition. His cabinet went through the recommendations of the 100-day review and approved new plans Monday.

A group of protesters gathered

outside the riverside location where Crisafulli confirmed the revised venue plan. Dozens more protesters converged on Victoria Park, holding up "Hands OFF Victoria Park" signs and shouting "shame" while listening to news of the announcement.

The Save Victoria Park community group is fundraising for a legal challenge in a bid to prevent the stadium being built in the hilly, 64-hectare (158-acre) park.

Brisbane organizers plan to host Olympic sports in coastal cities and sites from the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coasts in the south to Cairns in Queensland's far north and to the gateway of the Outback at Toowoomba, where an equestrian hub will be built.

The state and federal governments initially agreed a 50-50 funding split on a venue budget of just over 7 billion Australian dollars (\$4.4 billion).

The bulk of federal money was for an indoor arena adjacent to the city center that was initially set to host Olympic aquatics in a drop-in pool and later be transformed to host the National Basketball League and concerts.

That project has been scrapped, with Crisafulli's government aiming to spread the federal funding around other venues and seeking private-sector funding to build a similar arena on state-owned land near the Gabba, outside the scope of the Olympics.

Under the new plan, the Gabba is set to be demolished after the 2032 Games and replaced with housing. The main existing tenants - the Brisbane Lions in the Australian Football League and Queensland Cricket - have endorsed the plan to relocate them to the Victoria Park stadium that will have a post-Olympic and Paralympic capacity of 63,000.

Watkins suffers injury

## USC reaches Sweet 16

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP): JuJu Watkins went down with a season-ending knee injury five minutes into Monday night's game. Top-seeded Southern California kept going without its star player, pummeling Mississippi State 96-59 to reach the Sweet 16 of the women's NCAA Tournament for the second straight year.

Watkins scored three points on free throws before injuring her right knee. The crowd went silent as she writhed in pain and clutched her knee while her teammates looked on helplessly and coach Lindsay Gottlieb rushed to her side. Watkins was carried off the floor by multiple people.

Her teammates were terrific in her absence. They kept their poise while building leads of 28-8 after one quarter, 50-27 at halftime and 75-42 after three. The Trojans hit buzzer-beaters to end each of the first three quarters and they celebrated by jumping around on the court.

Kiki Iriafen, a Stanford graduate transfer, scored a season-high 36 points on 16-of-22 shooting and grabbed nine rebounds. She left with 6:29 remaining and the crowd chanting, "Kiki! Kiki!" Freshman Avery Howell added 18 points, hitting four 3-pointers.

"What a performance by this group," USC coach Lindsay Gottlieb said. "You never want anyone to go down, especially someone like JuJu that we all lean on in so many ways, but this team rallied. They rallied for her, they rallied for each other, our fans had our back. I'm just really proud and I think we showed what kind of team we are."

The Bulldogs were led by Jerkaila Jordan with 17 points. "My prayers and thoughts are with JuJu," MSU coach Sam Purcell said. "I'm hoping the best for her because she's special."

The Trojans (30-3) were up 34 points in the third. Their fans loved it, getting on their feet and roaring, especially when Iriafen waved both arms in the air, urging them on.

"It's hard when you have such a key player not with you," Iriafen said. "For us, it was just making sure we got the job done. We want our season to be extended."

Mississippi State couldn't handle the bigger Trojans, who instead of being deflated without Watkins seemed hell-bent on punishing their opponent.

The Bulldogs (22-12) had more than just the Trojans to contend with. The home crowd, angered by the loss of one of the game's biggest stars, booed every time MSU touched the ball and their cheerleaders heard it, too, getting jeered during a halftime routine.

"It just shows how ride-or-die our fans are," Iriafen said.

The victory keeps the Trojans on a potential collision course with Paige Bueckers and UConn in the regional final in Spokane, Washington. They got knocked out by the Huskies in last year's Elite Eight.

Losing Watkins early in the game gave the Trojans a chance to showcase their depth. They had five players in double figures, including three of their seven freshmen.

The Bulldogs are known for their defensive prowess, but USC forced them into 20 turnovers that led to 27 points for the Trojans.

The Trojans play fifth-seeded Kansas State (28-7) in the Spokane 4 regional semifinals on Saturday.

## Yamal hits back at Van der Vaart after Spain's Nations League win

MADRID, March 25, (AP): Lamine Yamal has made it clear he wasn't happy with criticism from former Netherlands player Rafael van der Vaart.

Yamal helped Spain get past the Dutch in the quarterfinals of the Nations League on Sunday.

After the penalty shootout, the 17-year-old Yamal lowered his shorts just below the waist, directly addressing Van der Vaart's reported comments as a Dutch television pundit that he was bothered by the Spanish teenager's attitude last week during the 2-2

draw in the first leg in the Netherlands.

Van der Vaart was quoted by Spanish media as saying that Yamal didn't seem motivated, noting he was playing with his shorts lowered and with gestures that showed indifference. He said Yamal was handily defeated in his duel with Dutch left back Jorrel Hato in that first leg.

Yamal's teammate, Nico Williams, also lowered his shorts alongside Yamal after the shootout win in Va-

lencia.

On Instagram, Yamal posted the photo of him and Williams with shorts lowered and a couple of images of Van der Vaart. Beside laughing emojis, he wrote, "Shorts down, one goal, one missed penalty, and into the semifinals."

The post included images of Yamal playing and celebrating with his Spain teammates.

Yamal scored in extra time of the 3-3 draw, then suffered Spain's lone penalty miss in a

shootout won 5-4.

Yamal's Barcelona teammate Ferran Torres was among those commenting on Yamal's Instagram post to support him.

Van der Vaart played for Barcelona rival Real Madrid from 2008-10, and made more than 100 appearances with the Netherlands in the 2000s.

Spain, the defending European champion, is trying to win its second straight Nations League title.



Spain's Lamine Yamal, left, duels for the ball with Netherlands' Ian Maatsen during the UEFA Nations League quarterfinal second leg match between the Netherlands and Spain at Mestalla stadium in Valencia, Spain. (AP)

### Change Name

I. Joao Baptista Conceicao Rebelo, s/o Cruz Paulo Rebelo and late Saude Fernandes, holder of Passport no. S 5770233 r/o H.No. 902/1, Sibrete Velim, Salcete, South Goa 403723, have changed my name from Joao Baptista Conceicao Rebelo to Joao Baptista Conceicao Rebelo. Hereafter in all my dealings and documents I will be known as Joao Baptista Conceicao Rebelo. sd/-  
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In collaboration with ASICS

## AAW Gold Sponsor of 4th edition of Al Qabas Ramadan Padel Tournament



ASICS Pavilion at Al Qabas Padel Championship.



Sarah Al-Foudari, Marketing Director, and Khaled Al-Mutawa, Corporate Relations Manager at Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Company honored at Al Qabas Ramadan Padel Tournament.



A shot from the ASICS stand during the award ceremony.

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Kuwait: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW), in collaboration with ASICS, the renowned Japanese sportswear brand, announced its Gold sponsorship of the 4th Al Qabas Ramadan Padel Tournament. Held from March 9-16 at Dasman Al Yousifi

Court, the event attracted approximately 650 participants, reinforcing AAW and ASICS' commitment to promoting an active, healthy lifestyle in Kuwait.

ASICS showcased its latest padel footwear, the GEL RESOLUTION X, at an interactive booth where

participants could try on the shoes and make on-site purchases. The booth featured a premium footwear display, enhancing the brand's presence at the event. To further support the padel community, ASICS gifted players t-shirts and vouchers, encouraging their participation and

passion for the sport.

AAW and ASICS are committed to corporate social responsibility, driving initiatives that promote community well-being and sustainable development. The two brands actively support local sports initiatives, advocating for a healthier lifestyle and youth em-

powerment, through events such as the ASICS x Al Khiran Run 2024, ZAIN Ramadan Wellness Challenge 2024, and the NBK Ramadan Challenge 2025.

Since its launch in 2018, ASICS has established itself as a leading sportswear and footwear brand in the

sports and lifestyle sector in Kuwait. The brand offers an extensive range of products for various sports, including tennis, squash, volleyball, and other indoor sports. ASICS store locations in Kuwait include The Avenues, 360 Mall, Al Khiran Mall, and Assima Mall.

## Sharma blaster earns Delhi dramatic one-wicket win over Lucknow in IPL



Delhi Capitals' Faf du Plessis plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants at ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium in Visakhapatnam, India. (AP)

### Pant suffers defeat in first game as Super Giants skipper

**VISAKHAPATNAM, India, March 25, (AP): Ashutosh Sharma's blistering 66 off 31 balls snatched for Delhi Capitals a dramatic one-wicket victory over Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League.**

Sharma lifted left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed for a straight six to carry Delhi to 211-9 with three balls to spare, and handed Rishabh Pant, the IPL's most expensive player, defeat in his first game as Lucknow skipper.

Pant, who was bought by Lucknow for \$3.2 million, fell for a six-ball duck but Nicholas Pooran (75) and Mitchell Marsh (72) smashed half-centuries which lifted Lucknow to 209-8.

Lucknow controlled the game well until Sharma exploded alongside Vipraj Nigam, whose own quickfire

39 off 15 helped to give Delhi hope. Delhi was set back inside the powerplay when it lost four wickets. Shardul Thakur dismissed Jake Fraser-McGurk (1) and Abishek

Porel (0) in his first over. When Tristan Stubbs was clean-bowled by impact substitute Manimaran Siddharth for 34 in the 13th over, it seemed all over for



Delhi Capitals' Ashutosh Sharma celebrates after their win against Lucknow Super Giants during the Indian Premier League cricket match at ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium in Visakhapatnam, India. (AP)

Delhi at 113-6.

But Sharma and Nigam smashed the bowlers at will before Nigam top-edged in the 17th over with Delhi still needing 42 off 23 balls.

Mitchell Marsh was the eighth man out when he couldn't read Ravi Bishnoi's googly and skied a catch to Pant, and Kuldeep Yadav was run out in the penultimate over in a bid to give the strike to Sharma.

With six needed off the final over, Mohit Sharma survived a close stumping chance as the ball deflected off his bat before he stole a single off Ahmed. Sharma then finished off the game in style by hitting his fifth six and stunned Lucknow.

Pooran and Marsh launched Lucknow with a combined 13 sixes and dozen boundaries before wickets fell in quick succession in the last seven overs.

Marsh, playing this IPL only as a batter, and Aiden Markram (15) set the tone for a big total with a 46-run opening stand that included 21 runs from Mitchell Starc's (3-42) second over.

## Kuwait Club edges Al-Qadsiya in five-set thriller to stay top



Kuwait Club player spikes the ball as Al Qadsiya players defend.

**By Khaled Al-Enezi**

**Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff**

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Kuwait Club triumphed over Al-Qadsiya in a marathon showdown, securing a 3-2 victory (23-25, 31-29, 22-25, 25-17, 15-13) in what has been the most intense match of the season at the Volleyball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Halls Complex.

With this win, the Whites retained their lead in the standings with 28 points, ahead of Kazma (24 points), Al-Shabab (24 points), Al-Qadsiya (22 points), Burgan (16 points), and Al-Arabi (15 points). All six teams have secured qualification for the Premier League, set to begin on April 13.

The competition will follow a home-away format, leading to a golden square playoff where the top four teams will face off—1st vs. 4th and 2nd vs. 3rd—to determine the league champion.

Meanwhile, Al-Nasr (11 points), Al-Sulaibikhat (9 points), Al-Yarmouk (5 points), Al-Tadamon (3 points), and Al-Sahel (2 points) will compete in the First Division over three rounds.

Kuwait Club continues to dominate, maintaining an undefeated record under the guidance of new Brazilian coach Oliveira, who replaced Turkish coach Taner Atik.

Al-Qadsiya faces a tough challenge in their final Premier League match tomorrow against Kazma at Al-Itihad Hall, in a crucial battle that could shape the final standings.

### Best of the Rest

**Myanmar earns four medals:** Myanmar secured one gold, two silvers and one bronze medal at the 2025 ISTAF Sepak Takraw World Cup, according to the Myanmar Sepak Takraw Federation.

Myanmar participated in five events, claiming one gold in the women's double event, two silvers in the men's double event and mixed quadrant event, and one bronze in the men's quadrant event, Min Min Htike, executive of the federation told Xinhua on Tuesday.

The competition, which took place in India's Bihar state from March 20 to 25, was a valuable learning experience for Myanmar's preparations ahead of the 33rd SEA Games in December in Bangkok, he added. (Xinhua)

**Brennan powers to win:** Britain's Mat-

thew Brennan of Visma-Lease-a-Bike produced a stunning finish to win the first stage of the Volta Ciclista a Catalunya (Tour of Catalonia) cycle race.

It looked as if a tough 178-kilometer stage, with constant climbs and descents that started and finished in Saint Feliu de Guixols in constant pouring rain, was going to be decided two kilometers from the finish when Dutch rider Tibor del Grosso of Alpecin-Deceuninck was able to ride off the front of the main group of riders on a dangerous twisting descent.

It looked as if Del Grosso was set to win, but 19-year-old Brennan showed his strength as he overtook Del Grosso a handful of meters from the finish line for just his second professional win.

"I worked very hard to be at the head of the race, we know how important the descent was going to be, but the end was difficult and I gave it everything," said Brennan at the finish line. (Xinhua)

### Osasuna loom

## Defenders missing for Barca, international break threatens to take toll on key players

MADRID, March 25, (Xinhua): FC Barcelona coach Hansi Flick is likely to have only two central defenders available for his side's rescheduled La Liga game at home to Osasuna on Thursday night.

The match was originally scheduled to be played on March 8, but was postponed after the sudden death of Barca team doctor Carles Minarro just hours before kickoff, and now goes ahead despite protests from both Barcelona and Osasuna, given that it is now played before the end of the international break.

Barcelona duo Raphinha and Ronald Araujo have to play South American qualifying games late on Tuesday, with Brazil and Raphinha facing Argentina and Araujo's Uruguay playing Bolivia.

Flick is also likely to be without Pau Cubarsi, who had to be substituted in Spain's 2-2 draw with the Netherlands last Thursday with an ankle injury and missed Sunday's return

leg to start treatment with his club. That leaves the coach with just

Eric Garcia and Inigo Martinez available, with Martinez returning

to work at the start of the week after he had to pull out of the Spain squad with a knee problem.

The coach must also be worried about the shape of Lamine Yamal, who played all 120 minutes in Spain's dramatic penalty shoot-out win over the Netherlands on Sunday.

Pedri also returns after playing a major role in Spain's qualification, although he was substituted on Sunday.

That is important as there is little chance for a rest over the coming month, because after facing Osasuna on Thursday night, Barca then face Girona on Sunday afternoon.

On April 2, Barca visit the Metropolitan Stadium for the second leg of their Copa del Rey semifinal after a 4-4 draw in the first leg. On April 5, they play Betis in La Liga (again with less than 72 hours to recover) before hosting Borussia Dortmund on April 9 in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinal.



Spain's Pedri, foreground, duels for the ball with Netherlands' Tijjani Reijnders during the UEFA Nations League quarterfinal second leg match, at Mestalla stadium in Valencia, Spain. (AP)

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Former FIFA President, Sepp Blatter, centre, and his lawyer Lorenz Erni, right, after the verdict at the special appeals court, in Muttenz, Switzerland. (AP)

# Sports

## Australia takes a big step toward 2026 World Cup



Zhang Yuning of China (front right) vies with Jackson Irvine (front left) of Australia during the 2026 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier Group C match between China and Australia in Hangzhou, China. (Xinhua)



Japan's Ao Tanaka, right, and Saudi Arabia's Musab Aljwayr battle for control of the ball during the World Cup 2026 Group C qualifying soccer match between Japan and Saudi Arabia at Saitama Stadium 2002 in Saitama, north of Tokyo. (AP)

### Saudi Arabia draws 0-0 at already-qualified Japan

**TOKYO, March 25, (AP): Australia took a big step toward securing a spot at the 2026 World Cup with a 2-0 win over China in Hangzhou on Tuesday that also ended the hosts' hopes of automatic qualification.**

First-half goals from Jackson Irvine and Nishan Velupillay were enough for the Socceroos. With two games in Group C remaining in the third round, Australia is three points clear of third-placed Saudi Arabia, which drew 0-0 at already-qualified Japan.

The top two from each of the three groups of six in Asia are guaranteed a place at the expanded 48-tournament co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, while the teams that finish third and fourth will advance to a further stage to compete for two more places.

It was a comfortable win for Australia. Irvine, who scored twice in the 5-1 win over Indonesia on Thursday, needed just 16 minutes to make room inside a crowded area to curl home a shot into the corner.

To make matters worse for China, 13 minutes later

goalkeeper Wang Dalei spilled a tame shot from Velupillay which then rolled over the line.

China has yet to return to the World Cup since its 2002 debut and remains bottom of the group.

Saudi Arabia is still in the hunt for a seventh appearance after a battling goalless draw in Japan. The hosts dominated at Saitama Stadium but were unable to get the breakthrough.

In Group B, South Korea stayed top but dropped two points for the second time inside a week, drawing 1-1 at home to Jordan.

South Korea needed just six minutes to take the lead when Lee Jae-sung arrived late to divert Son Heung-min's corner into the net from close range.

A win would have put the Koreans on the brink of an 11th successive appearance but Jordan was level on the half hour. Mahmoud Al-Mardi pounced on the loose ball to shoot home, though the shot was deflected off a Korean defender.

South Korea has 16 points, three more than Jordan. Iraq, in action against the Palestinian team later, is in third with 12 points.

## Kuwait Club edges Kazma to win Futsal Federation Cup



Kuwait Club players celebrate after winning Futsal Federation Cup.

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** Kuwait Club secured the Futsal Federation Cup, edging past Kazma in a dramatic penalty shootout after a thrilling 3-3 draw in regulation time.

The final, held at Kazma Club's indoor hall, showcased an intense battle between the two

sides. Italian Guilherme Stringari netted a brace for Kuwait Club, while Abdulrahman Al-Tawil added a goal to complete its tally. On the other side, Brazilian Lucas and Romanian Macha found the net for Kazma, forcing the match into penalties.

In the decisive shootout, Kuwait Club held its nerve, clinching a 5-4 victory to lift the trophy.

Kuwait Club advanced to the final after a commanding 5-2 semi-final win over Yarmouk, while Kazma secured its spot with a dominant 7-3 victory over Al-Nasr.

## Hegazy makes winning start, Kuwait Club routs Al-Salmiya

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25:** New Al-Ameed handball coach Saeed Hegazy successfully marked his debut by leading the Kuwait Club to a dominant 44-32 victory over Al-Salmiya in the 12th round of the "Merged" League at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Hall.

Hegazy, who replaced Haitham Al-Rashidi, is no stranger to Kuwait Club, having previously coached the team for several years, during which he secured multiple league and cup titles.

Despite already securing a Premier League qualification spot, Kuwait Club faces a crucial test in the 13th and final round of the preliminary stage against Kazma. The Whites will be eager to avenge their only domestic defeat this season while also aiming to clinch the Super Handball title against the league leader.

Kuwait Club currently leads the standings with 24 points (a perfect record), followed by Kazma (21 points), Burgan (19 points), Al-Arabi (16 points), Sulaibikhat (14 points), and Al-Salmiya (14 points). The rest of the standings include:

Al-Qurain – 12 points, Al-Qadisiya – 12 points, Khaitan – 8 points, Al-Fahaheel – 8 points, Al-Tadamon – 3



Kuwait Club is tackled as he goes for a goal.

points, Al-Yarmouk – 2 points, Al-Sabel – 0 points.

Al-Qadisiya vs. Al-Sabel (9:00 pm): A must-win for Al-Qadisiya, who still has an outside chance of reaching the Premier League, but only if Al-Salmiya loses to Khaitan and Al-Qurain loses to Burgan – along with Al-Qadisiya securing a 26-goal margin win over Al-Sabel.

Al-Qurain vs. Burgan (10:30 pm): A crucial match that could impact the final standings.

'Proceedings have definitively failed'

## Blatter, Platini acquitted again at 2nd trial of financial wrongdoing

**MUTTENZ, Switzerland, March 25, (AP):** Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini won again in court Tuesday and now lead 2-0 in trial verdicts against Swiss federal prosecutors.

Once soccer's most powerful men, former FIFA president Blatter and former UEFA president Platini were acquitted for a second time in a case now in its 10th year on charges of fraud, forgery, mismanagement and misappropriation of more than \$2 billion of FIFA money in 2011.

Blatter, now aged 89, gave little reaction listening to the verdict of three cantonal (state) judges acting as a federal criminal appeals court. Sitting in the row in front of Platini, Blatter alternately tapped his fingers on his desk or held his left hand over his mouth.

Only when the 55-minute verdict statement was over did Blatter smile before reaching across to shake his lawyer's hand. Blatter then shared a long hug with his daughter, Corinne.

"You have seen my daughter was coming with tears because she believed in (her) father and I believed in myself," said Blatter, who spoke of a sword of Damocles being removed from over his head. "To wait such a long time affects the person and my family was very much affected."

Platini sat with his arms folded or rubbing his hands as he listened to a translator sitting beside him relating the court's verdict in German into his native French.

"This persecution by FIFA and some Swiss federal prosecutors for 10 years is now finished, is now totally finished," Platini said leaving the court, insisting his honor was restored. "So I'm very happy."

The attorney general's office in Switzerland had challenged a first acquittal in July 2022 and asked for sentences of 20 months, suspended for two years. The indictment alleged the payment "damaged FIFA's assets and unlawfully enriched Platini."

"Michel Platini must finally be left in peace in criminal matters," his lawyer Dominic Nellen said in a statement. "After two acquittals, even the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland must realize that these criminal proceedings have definitively failed."

### Finland misses chance to stay perfect

## England stays on course for World Cup

**LONDON, March 25, (AP):** Reece James scored a brilliant free kick and Eberechi Eze grabbed his maiden international goal as England beat Latvia 3-0 in a World Cup qualifier at Wembley Stadium.

Earlier, Finland gave up a two-goal lead in Lithuania and drew 2-2, missing the chance to maintain a 100% record.

Kaen Kairinen put the Finns ahead after four minutes and Joel Pohjanpallo doubled their lead from the penalty spot 13 minutes later. But Armandas Kucys pulled a goal back for Lithuania just before halftime and Gvidas Gineitis equalized with a 30-meter strike in the 69th.

Poland tops Group G with six points, two ahead of Finland, one of the teams that has never before qualified for the World Cup.



England's Harry Kane, right, makes an attempt to score during a World Cup qualifying soccer match between England and Latvia at Wembley stadium in London. (AP)

In Group H, Bosnia and Herzegovina beat Cyprus 2-1 at home to stay perfect.

Ermedin Demirović put the Bosnians 1-0 up midway through the first half and Ioannis Pittas headed home an equalizer for Cyprus on the stroke of halftime. However, Haris Hajradinović fired into the top corner early in the second half to add to their opening win over Romania last week.

Romania got its first points after winning at San Marino 5-1. The fifth team in Group H, Austria, has still to kick off its campaign.

James, making his first start in 2 1/2 years, curled a 25-meter free kick into the top corner after 37 minutes. The goal was his first in 18 England appearances and broke down a stuffy Latvia side.