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THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025 / RAMADAN 27, 1446 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18858

16 PAGES

**150 FILS** 

#### **Opinion**

## 2.5 million Gazans were deceived by Hamas and suffered from hunger and illness

#### Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

FINALLY, after years of patience, the Gazan people have begun to revolt against Hamas' rule.

For 17 years, they suffered from hunger, oppression, and the suppression of any opinions against the Muslim Brotherhood Group.

Hamas concluded this with the so-called "Al-Agsa Flood" on October 7, 2023, which turned into a devastating "flood of blood and destruc-

tion"

This ongoing cycle has not benefited the Palestinian cause in any way. Instead, it has only led to more innocent lives lost, contributed to the suffering of Gazans, and pushed them further into hunger and

All of this unfolded while regional agreements, particularly the Abraham Accords, were steering the two-state solution toward a potential resolution, strengthening the Palestinian National Authority and consolidating its presence in the occupied territories, especially the Gaza Strip.

However, this did not satisfy the primary benefi-

ciary of the region's escalation, as he, in a moment of recklessness, believed he could control four Arab capitals and thwart any initiative aimed at ending his dominance over Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and the Gaza Strip.

This is why Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the sectarian militias in Iraq depicted the path to paradise as a path of gratuitous death.

They portrayed anyone opposing this vision as a reactionary Zionist agent serving the Zionist-American agenda.

These groups worked to brainwash the people of these regions and countries. After all the suffering, it became clear that they were victims of the whims and desires of mercenaries who had been working to serve the Israeli plan to fragment the Arab states since 1928, with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood Group

**Continued on Page 5** 

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### **Kuwait inflation up** as food leads surge

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau has released data showing an increase of 2.49 percent in the consumer price index (CPI) year-on-year in February.

The Bureau relayed to KUNA that the inflation rate in Kuwait rose by 0.22 percent month-on-month in February compared to January, prompted by the increase of major groups affecting the CPI, especially food, health, clothing and education, excluding transportation.

The CPI for the first group, food and beverages, rose by 5.23 percent in February compared to the same month in 2024, while the price index for the second group, cigarettes and tobacco, rose slightly by 0.07 percent year-on-year.

The statistics agency reported that the index of the third group, clothing, rose by 4.63 percent, while the prices of the, housing services group rose by 0.90 percent, and the inflation rate in the

fifth group, furnishing, rose by 3.04 percent.

It explained that the price index of the sixth group, health, rose by 4.08 percent, while the prices of the, transportation group witnessed a decrease of 1.19 percent in February compared to the same month last year.

The statistics agency indicated that the prices of the eighth group, communications, rose by 0.88 percent on an annual basis, and the inflation rate in the ninth group, recreation and culture, rose by 2.48 percent, while the prices of the tenth group, education, rose by 0.71 percent.

It indicated that the prices of the restaurants and hotels group rose by 2.03 percent on an annual basis in February, while the prices of the miscellaneous goods and services group rose by 5.46 percent. The Bureau pointed out that the inflation rate in

Kuwait, excluding the food and beverages group, rose by 1.93 percent year-on-year in February and by 0.15 percent month-on-month.

#### **TEC** unveils big plans for **Kuwait's tourism growth**

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) Chairman Hamoud Jassim Al-Falah confirmed that the company has offered a number of its facilities as private sector investments, particularly to qualified investors, in compliance with the government's directive to enable the private sector to play a greater role in the local

Al-Falah made the statement during the ordinary General Assembly of the company for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 with 100 percent attendance. He confirmed the approval of the agenda, including the reports of the Board of Directors and the auditor, as well as the audited final financial statements.

He explained that the abovementioned move aims to maximize revenues and achieve long-term financial sustainability.

**Continued on Page 5** 

## MoCI undersecretary resigns over prize draw controversy

Central Bank freezes bank draws pending review

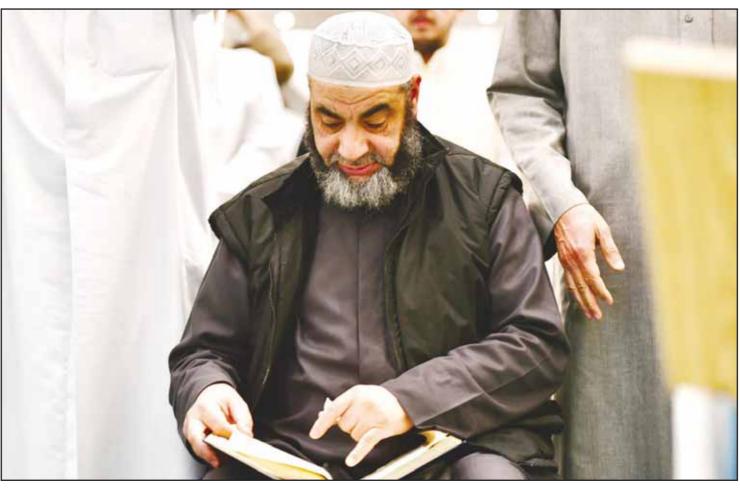


Photo by Mohammad Morsi

A worshiper reads the Holy Qur'an at the Grand Mosque on the 25th night of Ramadan. Muslims toil to earn reward from Allah by fasting from dawn to dusk, praying five times and maintaining good behavior. 'Qiyam' prayer (tahajjud) is being observed in the last days of the holy month.

#### **Eid start hinges on Saturday crescent sighting**

The Ministry of Justice announced that the Crescent Sighting Board will meet on Saturday evening, March 29, at the Supreme Judicial Council to observe and verify the appearance of the Shawwal crescent moon, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The board declared that anyone who confirms sighting the Shawwal crescent moon with their own eyes should contact the board at 25376934. The ministry extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to citizens

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs announced that Eid al-Fitr prayers will be held at 5:56 am in 57 prayer yards throughout the country, in addition to the mosques where Fri-

day prayers are held, reports Al-Seyassah daily. In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Tuesday, the ministry stated that the Assistant Undersecretary for Mosques Af-fairs Bader Al-Otaibi issued a circular specifying the public squares, youth centers, and model sports fields in the country where wor-shippers can gather for Eid prayers.

and has negatively impacted the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's image in the eyes of the citizens. Out of a sense of moral reponsibility as a senior official and in defense of the efforts of all loyal and honest employees of the ministry, I submit my resignation from my position as Un-dersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.'

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Undersecretary** of

the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ziad Al-Najem submitted his

resignation on Tuesday to the Minister of Com-

merce and Industry

Khalifa Al-Ajeel, reports

In his resignation, Al-Najem

stated: "We took the necessary

legal measures against the vio-

lators in the 'draw manipulation

case' without any delay. How-

ever, this heinous incident has exceeded the ministry's scope

Al-Seyassah daily.

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Kuwait has instructed local banks to postpone any upcoming draws until the bank receives the results of the draw process evaluation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a circular issued on Wednesday, the Central Bank stated: "Within the framework of the measures undertaken by the Central Bank to regulate banking activities, ensure the smooth operation of banking operations, and provide an appropriate environment for preserving customer rights in line with a balanced relationship that protects the banking sector, based on Article 71 of Law No. 32/1968 concerning currency, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the regulation of the banking profession and its amendments,

**Continued on Page 5** 

#### Call for UN intervention as strikes claim 7

### Kuwait condemns deadly Israeli attack on Syrian village

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (Agencies): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denounced the deadly attacks launched by the Israeli occupation forces on Koayiah village, Daraa Governorate, south Syria, on Tuesday.

The State of Kuwait renews the call for respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial unity, the ministry said in a press release tonight.

It urges the UN Security Council to shoulder its responsibility for protecting international peace and security and putting an end to the Israeli occupation's systematic violations of international law, which pose serious threat to regional stability, the statement added.

At least seven people were reportedly killed in an Israeli military onslaught on the village located to the west of Daraa.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Wednesday denounced the Israeli occupation forces' aggression on Koayiah in Syria's Daraa Governorate, which claimed multiple casual-

In a press statement, Al-Budaiwi said this aggression by Israeli occupation forces is a continuation of its aggressive attitude of destabilizing regional security and stability.

and residents on this occasion

He underlined the significance of respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as a core pillar of regional and international security and peace, citing the final communique of the 163rd GCC ministerial

**Continued on Page 5** 

#### Day by Day

THE scandal surrounding the draws that has unfolded over the past few days, are they limited to just cars?

Investigate other areas, and perhaps you will discover that the draws aren't just for car prizes and "Ya Hala" sales. In fact, this type of manipulation might also be taking place in hiring processes.

We seem to practice this form of lottery and draws even in matters like appointments or the distribution of houses and plots. Ensure that this practice has not infiltrated

every corner of the state. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

**Zahed Matar** 



The mother of Ali Mohammad al-Hneiss, reportedly killed in an Israeli drone attack that claimed at least seven lives, weeps during his funeral in the village of Koayiah, southwestern Syria, March 25, 2025. (AP)

#### **Ramadan Timings**

Iftar ...... Thursday ........... 18:04 Imsak...... Friday...... 04:22

#### Newswatch

CAIRO: Egypt and Qatar called on Wednesday for a political settlement in the Middle East via establishing an independent Palestinian state as a final solution to avoid instability and ensure regional security.

Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement this came in a phone conversation between Egyptian Foreign Minister **Badr Abdulatty** and Qatari counterpart Sheikh **Mohammad bin Abdulrahman** 

It added that the two official called for bringing back a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip according to the three-stages Jan 19 agreement, which ensured the release of all hostages, allowing humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip, and further talks for stability in the region. (KUNA) 

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on the guarantors of the ceasefire agreement to pressure Israeli occupation into adhering to its commitments, emphasizing that their credibility depends on ensuring the deal's implemen-

President Aoun remarks came during his meeting with the French presidential envoy Jean-Yves Le Drian on Wednesday, discussing security concerns along the Lebanese-Syrian border. (KUNA)

Video clip leads to arrest of drifters endangering lives



**Agility Global PLC reports FY** 2024 net profit of \$128 mln



**AlShamlan: Favorable economic** laws drive growth in capital expenditure & major development plans



**Expected weather for next 24** to moderate southeasterly wind to

By Day: Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.

Bv Night: Rather cold with light

Weather

light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h. Station **Max Exp Kuwait City** Kuwait Airport

12 Bubyan Jahra 15 Failaka Island 26 16 Salmiyah 25 18 Ahmadi Jal Aliyah 13 Nuwaisib





Amir congratulates Bangladesh

President on their National Day



bah also sent a cable of congratulations

to President of the People's Republic of

Bangladesh Mohammad Shahabuddin,

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the President good health

His Highness the Prime Minister

Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad

Al-Sabah then sent a cable of congrat-

ulations to President of the People's

Republic of Bangladesh Mohammad

Shahabuddin on his country's Indepen-

on his country's Independence day.

and well-being.

dence Day.

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: People continued their night prayers at the mosques on the 26th night of the holy month of Ramadan imploring Almighty Allah to forgive their sins, bestow abundance upon them, and grant them forgiveness and mercy.

They also asked Allah to protect Kuwait, its Amir and its people from all harm and to perpetuate the blessings of security and safety for the entire nation.

The halls of the Grand Mosque were filled with worshipers who started arriving since the evening hours opting to perform the night prayer behind a group of imams with melodious voices, carefully selected by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs



Abdaly

10,600 men, women flock to

**Grand Mosque on 26th night** 

Worshipers seek Allah's forgiveness and mercy

O, Allah, please forgive us: Worshipers packed like sardines in one of the mosques south of Kuwait City on the 25th night of holy month of

to create an atmosphere of faith that fosters humility and tranquility.

The Grand Mosque administration announced that the number of worshipers who performed the blessed night prayer exceeded 10,600 -- 6,600 men and 4,000 women -- who were committed to perform the prayer in an atmosphere of tranquility and peace.

Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi led

the worshipers in the first rak'ahs (prayer units), reciting clear verses that touched hearts and moved souls. Sheikh Mishary Al-Afasy completed the final rak'ahs with his mellow voice on this blessed night.

Between the rak'ahs, Sheikh Dr. Bader Al-Hajraf delivered a spiritual speech; discussing the importance of optimism in the life of a Muslim. He stressed that despair and hopelessness have no place in the heart of a believer who trusts in Allah's mercy.

He explained that the Almighty opened the doors of hope to His servants and made repentance open to all who turn to Him. "Therefore, a person should not surrender to distress or frustration, regardless of the circumstances," he added.

He pointed out that optimism is the characteristic of the prophets and righteous people, as they faced trials and tribulations with hearts filled with certainty that relief from Allah was near.

He said Prophet Mohammad was the most optimistic of people, even in the most difficult situation. "He constantly brought good tidings to his companions, instilling in them hope and confidence in Allah's victory. This is what Muslims should emulate in their lives," he asserted.

He called on worshipers to adhere to supplication, ask for forgiveness, believe that ease comes after hardship, and that Almighty Allah does not let down those who turn to Him sincerely and faithfully.

## **Educational districts complaints** on e-platforms keep on piling up

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA):

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a

cable of congratulations to President of

the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Mohammad Shahabuddin, on his coun-

In the cable, His Highness the Amir

wished the President good health and

well-being, and wished Bangladesh and

its friendly people more progress and

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sa-

try's Independence Day.

prosperity

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The average number of complaints submitted through the 'Sahel' and 'Tawasul' platforms in various educational districts exceeded 1,500 per education district.

This number increases daily, putting more pressure on the departments dealing with such a massive volume of complaints that include administrative, educational and personal issues.

Sources from the educational sector revealed that most of the complaints are from schools, many of which are related to disputes within the workplace, particularly between female employees. "This transforms some personal disputes into formal complaints requiring administrative intervention," sources added.

Sources said the department directors in the educational districts open the 'Tawasul' platform through the Kuwait Mobile app daily in order to retrieve complaints and classify them according to importance. Sources disclosed some cases are dealt with in the educational district; while others are submitted to the Education Ministry, particularly those related to promotions or financial and administrative rights.

Sources confirmed that some educational districts formed special task forces to handle complaints more efficiently. "This ensures prompt response to comments and resolves issues in schools and among staff. It aims to reduce pressure on departments dealing with the complaints," sources revealed.

Sources indicated that the educational districts are continuously monitoring these complaints and are keen on developing mechanisms for handling the complaints.

Sources affirmed this move will strengthen communication between educational administrations and field workers; while ensuring that non-essential complaints do not become an obstacle to work in the educational districts.

#### Non-stop medical care eyed for citizens, residents

## 47 health clinics to stay open during Eid holidays: MoH

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Health has announced a comprehensive operational plan for primary healthcare centers during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday in 2025 The plan includes the operation of

47 health centers in various regions of the country for ensuring continuous healthcare services around the clock and providing medical care to both citizens and residents without interruption throughout the holiday , reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry explained that the plan includes a large number of centers operating 24 hours a day, while others will operate from 7:00 am until midnight. Also, one center will operate from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm to meet the diverse needs of patients and reduce pressure on emergency departments in hospitals.

In the Capital Health Zone, six centers will be operational, including Ali Sabah Al-Salem Center in Sulaibikhat, Abdulrahman Al-Zaid Center in Khaitan, and Abdullah Al-Abd Al-Hadi Center in Granada, all of which will operate around the clock. Three additional centers will operate from 7:00 am to midnight, which are Hassan Al-Dehani Center in Adailiya, Abdulaziz Hussein Center in Mishref, and Abdullah Al-Othman Center in Mirgab. In the Hawally Health Zone, six

centers will be operational, including Rumaithiya and Salwa specialized centers, which will operate 24 hours a day. The remaining centers, such as West Salmiya, West Salwa, West Mishref, and Mahmoud Haji Haidar Center in Bayan will operate until midnight.

In the Farwaniya Health Zone, nine centers will be operational, including the South Firdous, West Andalus, and Ardiya centers, which

will provide services throughout the day. Also, Khaitan, Abdullah Mubarak, South Ardiya, South Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Sabah Al-Nasser, and Al-Raqi centers will operate until midnight.

The Ahmadi Health Zone will have the largest number of centers operating during the holiday, with a total of 12 centers, all functioning 24 hours a day. These include the West Sabahiya, Sabah Al-Ahmad A, Fahaheel, Wafra, Al-Egaila, Masayel, Al-Zohor, Ahmadi, Fintas, Industrial Ports, South Sabahiya, and the Women's Center in Ali Sabah Al-Salem.



## diwaniya 🕈 چيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## True national identity only guarantees country's unity

"THE words that affirmed Kuwait's return to its people and its original inhabitants undoubtedly came directly from the leader of decisiveness, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In his speech on the special occasion of the last ten days of Ramadan, he emphasized that national unity cannot be achieved without consolidating national identity until Kuwait returns

to its original inhabitants," columnist **Tariq Id**ris wrote for Al-**Seyassah** daily.

noble will of the Amir of decisiveness and the new era. He supported



turn to the correct democratic path, ensuring that the aspirations of the nation and its people are fulfilled. "This positive national outlook was clearly evident in the inspiring speech delivered by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in

which he announced the strengthening of national identity and the removal of suspicions, so that, with God's help, we may consolidate our national unity and democratic authenticity "Undoubtedly, this message re-

flected the goals, aspirations, and approach of the new era and its wise leadership. Therefore, we must all embrace the principles of this noble national initiative, which the Leader of Resolve sought to consolidate by preserving our national identity without compromise.

"From this moment on, we must work in accordance with this new vision of political leadership to protect our national identity and unity in their truest form. This vision echoes Amir's words in promising to return Kuwait to its authentic people, and practicing democracy rooted in principles established by statesmen with their genuine national values. This pledge was made by the people of Kuwait, under Amir Sabah the First, when they pledged their loyalty, obedience, and defense of Kuwait. Successive generations of Kuwaitis have upheld this firm covenant.

"His Highness the Amir's speech renews the ruler's confidence in these authentic people, who have honored the trust placed upon them by their ancestors and rulers, and strengthens their eternal motto: "Kuwait is one family, with a strong national leadership and a genuine people"

"Amir's speech also presented a clear vision for Kuwait's future. I hope it will be included in school curricula so that we can instill a spirit of optimism, pride, and appreciation for the wise leadership that has firmly embedded unity and national identity in our hearts. I ask Allah to help us carry this sincere message, just as our ancestors and fathers, rulers and ruled, carried it 400 years ago, and preserve it from tampering so that we, in turn, can pass it on to future generations.

"This page, God willing, will remain firmly in our hearts as a part of the new era under the leadership of His Highness the Amir of Resolution, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the faithful Crown Prince, and their wise government.

"May Allah protect our Kuwait, our leadership, and our people from all harm and misfortune, and may Kuwait, its rulers and people, and all who live in it, remain well, healthy, and prosperous every year."



"At a time clashes began on the border between Israeli forces and unknown individuals on the Lebanese side, the US envoy to the Middle East is spreading information that Lebanon may sign a peace agreement with Israel and Syria," Journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"One might consider the news of normalization to be eye-catching, but the reality is not so. Lebanon and Syria share borders with Israel, and the border is a trilateral issue that concerns all of them.

"There are disputed or different border villages between Syria and Lebanon, as well as between Lebanon and Israel. Perhaps, the issue of villages and borders is the most contentious issue between the three countries. Lebanon has always claimed to be the last Arab country to normalize relations with Israel, but in recent months, things have not been the same as they were years ago.

"Hezbollah used to be a barrier to any agreement or normalization. After the assassination of Commander Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy Hashem Al-Moussawi, there is no alternative to fill the void left by the two slain leaders. As for Naim Qassem, in my opinion, he is merely a front for peacemaking, outside of the bravado and bickering that Nasrallah was known for.

'As for the party's representative and guardian, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, who is in his 80s, we must not remove him from his civilian role as a political -- not military, revolutionary and resistance leader.

"The chaotic bickering that occurred a few days ago, and the party's declaration of non-responsibility confirm that someone care about the continuation of the situation on the border.

"Lebanon's path to peace is neither strange nor surprising . Newly elected President Joseph Aoun speaks more about peace than war. The reality, especially for the ordinary citizen struggling to find a livelihood for himself and his fam-



ily, is that he will only strive for peace and security in a country exhausted war.

"But what Kuwait, about which has shack led itself to a decision or law that is

now a thing of the past and is considered obsolete by the statute of limitations, in a case neither of its making nor of its ability to resolve . As much as the people of the

cause are increasing their dinars and dollars, we see those with religious inclinations leaning toward war and opposing normalization. These people may be driven more by religious considerations than by war, bloodshed, victims and losses -- as the case today in Gaza,

neither grapes nor watermelons. Instead, they are threatened with expulsion from Gaza and the establishment of Trump's tourist State. "Lebanon and Syria are the last brave ones who will go for peace, not as a defeat, but as a victory for national interests, with shared borders, shared oil fields; and most

whose people have lost and gained

importantly, peace and national security. "Doesn't all of this deserve peace for people who have suffered for more than half a century from wars, both internal and external, as well as displacement and migration?

"The question is: Will Kuwait remain outside the fold, bound by its own handiwork?"

#### 'Never signed contract with company'

Man encounters fake lawsuit

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: An investigator at a police station in the Capital has summoned the director of a contracting company - an expatriate - for questioning in connection with a forgery charge, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source revealed that a man in his 50s filed a report after discovering that a lawsuit was filed against him. The lawsuit alleged that he failed to comply with the terms of a contract with a contracting company, valued at KD17,000. The man claimed that the company forged his signature on the contract, which he insisted he has no knowledge of.

When questioned about his relationship with the company, the man explained that he only contacted the company for construction work; but had never signed any contract with them.

The disputed contract has been forwarded to forensic experts for examination to verify the authenticity of the signature and confirm the validity of the man's claim

Easy to get bike license: The official gazette 'Kuwait Alyoum' has published Minister of Interior's Resolution No. 348/2025, which amends some provisions of ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976, concerning the traffic law regulations to cancel the clause related to the conditions for issuing a motorcycle license, and make it unconditional, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Article 1 of the resolution removes Clause F in Article 87 of the ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976. Article 2 stipulates that the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior is responsible for implementing this resolution, which will take effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette.



Brigadier General Ahmad Nasser Abdullah and a team of officers during their visit



KFF use such buggies in case of inaccessible spots at the blaze site.

## KFF ensures safety of mosques, places of worship

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Based on the directives of Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, the Director of the Central Operations Department Brigadier General Ahmad Nasser Abdullah and a team of officers responsible for the security of mosques and places of worship conducted an inspection tour of the fire stations in all governorates.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the aim of the tour was to assess the preparedness and safety measures within and around places of worship to ensure the protection of worshippers during the last ten days of the holy month of

Ramadan.

This visit is part of the KFF's comprehensive plans, in collaboration with various government sectors, to ensure that buildings, facilities, mosques, and worshipping places meet safety and fire prevention standards, protect lives and properties, and uphold community security.

## Continuous use of single cutting board can be harmful to health

Eating fish in Ramadan doesn't make one thirsty: expert

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Nutritionist Nawal Al-Jazzaf has warned against using cutting boards made from materials that degrade with frequent use because they can attract bacteria and microbes, reports Al-Anba daily.

This warning is part of an awareness campaign launched by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), which provides tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Al-Jazzaf explained that cutting boards come in various materials such as wood, metal and compressed plastic. She recommended having a separate cutting board for each type of food and ensuring that frequent use does not cause the material to break down and harbor harmful

She also advised using cutting boards made from 18/10 stainless steel and cleaning them with a solution of diluted chlorine or vinegar mixed with water.

In another part of the awareness campaign, Al-Jazzaf addressed the misconception some people have about eating fish during Ramadan, believing it makes one thirsty. She affirmed that fish has numerous

health benefits, not only as a source of animal protein but also as one of the most easily digestible proteins suitable for all age groups, including children over one year old. She clarified that many

people reduce their fish consumption during Ramadan due to concerns about Al-Jazzaf thirst. She recommended

grilling fish as the best cooking method, while highlighting that fish is rich in Omega-3 fatty acids which are also found in other foods like maize and squid. These nutrients help protect the heart from atherosclerosis, strengthen memory, and may prevent Alzheimer's and dementia, she added

Mubarakiya fish shops shut: Head of the Mubarakiya Inspection Center at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Mohammad Ahmad Al-Kandari announced the closure of 11 fish shops in Mubarakiya under the Capital Inspection Department, reports Al-

He explained that the closure was due to the display of spoiled fish unfit for human consumption. The fish on display had deteriorated in color, shape, and smell.

Al-Kandari affirmed the commitment of PAFN to ensuring consumer safety, providing safe food, and holding accountable those who compromise food quality and cause harm to

### Video clip leads to arrest of drifters endangering lives

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Traffic and Operations Sector of the Ministry of Interior arrested eight reckless drivers who

were captured in videos that are circulating on social media in which they were seen engaging in dangerous behavior on the



Some of the drifters and their cars in police custody.

roads in various areas of Kuwait in a manner that posed a threat to their lives and the lives of others during the recent rainstorm in Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah

The Ministry of Interior stated that the arrests were made based on the directives of Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

It explained that search ar vestigation operations began immediately after the videos were shared. The Security Control Department of the General Traffic Department arrested the reckless drivers by monitoring the circulating videos or identifying them in the field while they engaged in reckless behavior on the roads. Legal



Sheikh Fahad

against them, including impounding their vehieral months and referring them to the Central

measures

were taken

Prison after the necessary legal proceedings were filed.



Marijuana packed in tea bags seized by airport customs.

## Marijuana found in tea bags; 2 held at airport

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport successfully intercepted an attempt to smuggle marijuana through flights arriving from African countries, reports Al-Seyassah daily

The customs administration reported that inspectors became suspicious of the first passenger.

Upon searching their luggage, officers discovered tea

bags filled with marijuana. In a separate case, a second passenger was apprehended after customs officials found bags of marijuana cleverly concealed in his pants. Both individuals were handed over to the appropriate authorities for further investigation.

#### **KFF** retrieve body

#### Man meets fiery death in airport road mishap

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: An individual burnt to death in a traffic accident that occurred on Airport Road on Tuesday evening.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force, Firefighters from Subhan Fire Station rushed to the location after receiving information that a vehicle burst into flames after colliding with

They extinguished the flames and handled the situation. The body of the deceased was handed over to the relevant authorities.



#### PAHW applications exceed available units

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Hathal Al-Enezi on Tuesday submitted a proposal to expand the site of the Naeem Housing Project (low-cost housing) to accommodate the number of applications submitted to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

In the preamble to his proposal, Al-Enezi cited Law No. 33/2016 regarding the Kuwait Municipality; while pointing out the current housing prob-

Al-Enezi said the project is located 45 kilometers from Kuwait City and 16 kilometers from Jahra, indicating that the proposed expansion of the housing area was previously built by the authority to replace Sulaibiya and Taima. He added the project targets several groups, primarily Kuwaiti women who meet the conditions stipulated in the housing welfare regulations.

He further clarified that "this proposal stems from the concern for public interest and the need to find solutions to the housing problems. After conducting a thorough research, it became clear that the number of female citizens who submitted a housing grant application to PAHW has reached 13,058. Since the number of housing units in the aforementioned project is only 9,800; it is not sufficient to meet the demand; hence, the need to expand

## Al-Mishari calls for unified efforts in housing projects

Minister urges timely execution

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari stressed the need to unify efforts in implementing all services related to housing projects to ensure their completion with the highest sustainability standards and to accelerate the pace of implementation in compliance with royal directives.

Minister Al-Mishari made this statement in a press release on Tuesday following the first meeting of the government coordination committee tasked with overseeing the implementation of services related to housing projects. He emphasized the importance of supporting the state's financial sustainability while also fulfilling families' aspirations to live in cities with integrated services and the highest standards of quality of life.

He noted that the Council of Ministers is directly monitoring the work of agencies involved in housing projects and providing them with the necessary support to ensure they meet their obligations.

Al-Mishari underscored the importance of government agencies adhering to project timetables and performance indicators to ensure timely and efficient execution. He explained that an agency's efficiency is measured by its ability to adhere to the plans and schedules it has submitted.



KUNA photo Minister of Housing Abdullatif Al-Mishari and Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan during the first meeting of the government coordination committee to follow up on the implementation of services related to

Similarly, Minister of Public Works and Chairperson of the Public Services Committee at the Cabinet, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, highlighted the significance of joint government coordination among relevant authorities to eliminate any obstacles hindering the implementation of current and future

housing projects.

Al-Mashaan pointed out that ministers conduct monthly reviews to monitor project progress and collaborate with the government coordination committee to submit reports to the Cabinet every three months.

12 classrooms to aid displaced students

## Expansion of Naeem Housing sought Kuwait's Insan Charity opens Aisha **Fakhro Education Center in Yemen**

ADEN, March 26 (KUNA): Kuwait's Insan Charity Society inaugurated the Aisha Fakhro Primary and Secondary Education Center on Tuesday in Yemen's Marib Governorate as part of the Kuwait is by Your Side campaign in its 10th year. The center consists of 12 fully equipped classrooms.

The Kafel Development Foundation stated in a press release that the project was implemented in the Al-Wadi district of Marib Governorate, which is experiencing severe overcrowding due to thousands of displaced families. The initiative aims to ease pressure on other schools and provide a suitable learning environment.

The foundation added that the project includes 12 classrooms for primary and secondary education, two residential apartments, a mosque, a schoolyard, and all necessary furniture and accessories to ensure a proper educational setting.

Deputy Director of the Education Office in Marib, Abdulaziz Al-Bakri, expressed his gratitude to Kuwait for its generous support of the Yemeni people during the inauguration ceremony.

For his part, the Director General of the Planning and International Cooperation Office in Marib, Saleh Al-Saqqaf, emphasized that this initiative



Aisha Fakhro Educational Center meets the needs of hundreds of displaced students in Yemen's Marib Governorate

is a testament to Kuwait's qualitative educational projects. He highlighted Kuwait's role—through its institutions and people-in supporting infrastructure and development, ultimately benefiting Yemenis

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General of the Kafel Development Foundation, Mohammed Makharash, noted that this project is part of a series of ambitious initiatives undertaken by Kuwait's Insan Charity Society to support the education sector across various Yemeni governorates.

Makharash further stated that the project represents a significant advancement in the region's educational system, helping to address school overcrowding and enhancing students' access to quality education.

## Energy Ministry requests approval for GCCIA power import for summer prep

**By Mohammad Ghanem** 

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has referred the request to sign a contract for importing electricity from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) for the months of April and May to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review, audit and approval; say sources who revealed the request was made on Monday.

Sources said the ministry is requesting electricity import from GCCIA during the abovementioned period despite the lower load rates due to the drop in temperatures.

Sources clarified this is to enable the ministry to perform the necessary maintenance on the generation units, ensure they are fully prepared to handle the loads of the coming summer, and address any production shortfalls that may result from increased demand.

Sources indicated that the ministry asked SAB to approve the import of electrical energy from GCCIA for the months of March and April, but the approval was given on March 16 to sign a contract for the import of 300 megawatts for March only at a cost of \$10.814 million (equivalent to KD3.330 million).

For the month of April, SAB asked the ministry to re-submit the request to obtain its approval after estimating the required quantity according to the ministry's response dated March 6, provided the submission is done before starting the import.

### **MoCI Assistant Undersecretary roles end**

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel issued an administrative decision on Tuesday to terminate the assignments of assistant undersecretaries at the ministry, in a move aimed at introducing a new generation of efficient and young leaders, in line with the comprehensive development phase the ministry is currently undergoing, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry explained that the decision aims to improve services and enhance the efficiency of the ministry's sectors. It was based on a comprehensive evaluation of the ministry's administrative and functional performance, and the need to inject new talent into the

#### Farwaniya Governor, PAAAFR officials discuss green development projects

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Adhbi Al-Nasser Al-Adhbi Al-Sabah received in his office acting Director General of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Salem Al-Hai; and other senior officials Hamad Al-Hajji, Hamad Al-Khudair and Hamad Al-Dalak.

During the meeting, the governor congratulated Al-Hai on his new position, wishing him success in his duties.

The officials discussed ways to coordinate efforts to achieve sustainable development; common issues related to developing agricultural services in the governorate, particularly those related to recreational and beautification, such as planting trees and plants along the roads



Farwaniya Governorate photo Sheikh Adhbi Al-Nasser Al-Adhbi Al-Sabah with Salem Al-Hai, acting Director General PAAAFR; and other senior officials Hamad Al-Hajji, Hamad Al-Khudair and Hamad Al-Dalak.

and in public squares; ways to overcome obstacles to the completion of all projects and plans anticipated by the residents of the governorate, especially in new areas; and protection of landscaping facilities from neglect.

The governor praised the tireless efforts of all officials at PAAAFR in developing and main-

At the conclusion of the meeting, Al-Hai expressed his thanks and appreciation to Sheikh Adhbi Al-Nasser for the warm welcome and his continued support of the efforts of the authority; stressing that this cooperation contributes to improving the services provided to the residents

of the governorate.

taining landscapes.

Non-Kuwaiti contracts end by March 2025

### **Kuwaitization policy in full swing**

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) continues to implement the Kuwaitization policy in all government agencies, in accordance with Civil Service Council's Resolution No. 11/2017. As part of this policy, the contracts of non-Kuwaiti employees holding positions that are not rare will not be renewed, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to informed sources, this policy mandates that contracts for non-Kuwaiti employees in positions that are not rare will not be renewed after March 31, 2025. However, the number of such employees is limited, and their retention was intended to help qualify Kuwaiti nationals as part of a strategic plan to enhance national competencies in various fields.

Furthermore, Resolution No. 11/2017 covers job groups with 100% Kuwaitization and others with a rate ranging between 70 percent and 98 percent.

The job groups covered by 100% Kuwaitization are:

- Information systems and technology Maritime
- Arts, media, and public relations ■ Development, administrative follow-up,
- and statistics

■ Administrative support The job groups with Kuwaitization rates ranging between 70 percent and 98 percent

■ Criminal Evidence, Prevention, and Rescue: 98 percent ■ Social Services, Education, and Sports:

97 percent **■** Êngineering: 97 percent ■ Sciences: 95 percent

■ Finance, Economics, and Commerce: 95

Law, Politics, and Islamic Affairs: 88

percent

Crafts: 80 percent

Services: 85 percent

■ Livestock, Agriculture, and Aquatic Re-

sources: 75 percent ■ Teaching, Education, and Training: 70

Meanwhile, for an employee who has shifted to the evening shift to return to the morning

shift, one condition must be met - approval from the relevant government agency. If the employee does not obtain this approval, they will be required to continue working the evening shift for at least seven consecutive

months. This time period is designed to benefit the employee by ensuring they receive the necessary performance report. The sources indicated that the number of

employees wishing to return from the evening shift to the morning shift is minimal, if not zero, as all employees who transitioned to the evening shift did so voluntarily, in line with their personal circumstances.



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(Inclusive of breakfast)

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#### Diplomats emphasize investment, tourism and regional stability

## Kuwait-Greece bonds strengthen on historic foundations

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi described Kuwaiti-Greek relations as "historic; even older than diplomatic relations," indicating there have been historic visits to Failaka Island and the Kuwaiti coast.

During the Greek Embassy's Independence Day celebration, Marafi said that Kuwaiti relations with Greece date back more than 60 years.

"We look forward to strengthening these relations in the coming years. Last year, we had an important visit by the Greek Foreign Affairs Minister to Kuwait. One of the outcomes of this visit was the strengthening of relations, which will become even stronger in the coming years; especially in the areas of investment and tourism, which are important to Kuwaitis."

Regarding the latest developments in the agreements concluded between the two countries, he revealed "we are currently discussing new agreements."

He confirmed there is coordination to hold the European-Gulf meeting in Kuwait in October, but the date will be specified once an agreement is reached between Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union (EU).

On the latest developments about Schengen visa exemption for Kuwaitis, he disclosed "the current advantage we have is the five-year visa. We look forward to discussion this issue at the cent support."

to discussing this issue at the next summit."

On reciprocal visits between officials from both countries and the European countries, he confirmed that he will conduct several visits to European countries, including visits at the deputy foreign affairs minister level.



Ambassadors Sadiq Marafi and Ioannis Plotas participate in the cakecutting ceremony.

Meanwhile, Greek Ambassador to Kuwait Ioannis Plotas affirmed that Kuwait is a key partner for his country in the Gulf region and the Middle East.

wait is a key partner for his country in the Gulf region and the Middle East. He stated "I am fully aware of the historical and strategic importance of the relationship between our countries. This partnership is rooted in shared principles, mutual respect, and a shared vision for regional stability and prosperity. These principles, in particular, have further strengthened the already strong and enduring partnership between Greece and Kuwait for more than six decades."

He added his country considers Kuwait not only an important ally, but also a key strategic partner in the Gulf region and the wider Middle East.

He pointed out "the presence of Greeks in the region dates back to ancient times, a prominent example of which is Failaka Island, where Alexander the Great resided. These strong cultural influences reflect the deep cultural roots that bind our countries, which continue to shape our mutual understanding today. As two maritime nations, Greece and Kuwait share a unique bond; giving us the impetus to explore further and consolidate our strong relationship."

He cited the great potential for Greek companies to actively participate in Kuwait's massive Vision 2035 project; indicating this ambitious initiative is a unique opportunity to strengthen cooperation, and that Kuwait can benefit from Greece's expertise in construction, renewable energy and urban development.

On the National Day of Greece, he asserted with pride and honor "the Greek nation once again celebrates its Independence Day on March 25, the date of the outbreak of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire."

He emphasized that March 25, 1821 marked a new beginning in the historical path of Hellenism. "It was the natural result of our nation's strong will to regain freedom and independence. Despite occurring at a historical stage that the entire world considered unfavorable, it succeeded because no one realized that our nation, beyond the geopolitical ambitions of the 'powers' of the time, possessed an internal strength acquired through thousands of years of struggle and sacrifice," he concluded.



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Ambassadors and dignitaries during the Greek Embassy's Independence Day celebration.

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

#### 2.5 million

The recent demonstrations in Gaza are a direct result of the long-standing patience of a people who have spent 18 years searching for a common ground to awaken Hamas and offer a way out for the suffering population with minimal harm.

As the saying goes, "Pharaoh was asked, 'Who made you Pharaoh?' and he replied, 'I found no one to respond to me.'" Unfortunately, deaf ears were unable to hear the call.

When Hamas seized power in the Gaza Strip, it sought to deceive its people with various religious slogans, convincing them that this was the path to liberation, when in reality, it was a path of falsehood.

The movement's leaders and other groups in Gaza exploited their positions to amass wealth, blackmailing not only the poor but also countries that showed compassion for the Palestinians, all under the pretext of rebuilding Gaza. Meanwhile, people witnessed the lavish lifestyles of the Hamas leaders abroad, while the people of Gaza suffered from hunger and

It came as no surprise that some war profiteers exploited the situation to launch a social media campaign, vowing not to leave Gaza until they had raised \$10 million in donations to build a children's hospital there.

This campaign exposed their blatant exploitation, as the real goal was not Gaza, but rather to raise funds to strengthen the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood Group. This mirrors what occurred during the so-called "Arab Spring" when the Muslim Brotherhood nearly destroyed Egypt, destabilized Tunisia and Syria, and sought to fragment other Arab nations. The same group had launched similar donation campaigns to support the fake revolu-

tions in those countries.

The recent demonstrations in Gaza exposed the emptiness of the slogans. When hunger becomes unbearable, it consumes a person's mind. Intense anger, like a raging torrent, will destroy everything in its path once it finds its way.

way.

How can we fathom the situation when approximately 2.5 million people, who have suffered from hunger, death, destruction, and bloodshed for nearly 540 days, finally erupt?

#### **MoCI undersecretary**

and in consideration of some banks' draws for prizes granted to customers on certain accounts (products), as well as the time that has passed since the implementation of these products, it is necessary to re-evaluate them to ensure the highest degree of transparency, define their requirements, and ensure their proper operation within

the framework of sound governance.

Therefore, your bank must postpone any future draws for these products, effective immediately, until the Central Bank of Kuwait receives the results of the aforementioned evaluation process, so that they can be reviewed accordingly."

#### **Kuwait condemns**

In this regard, the GCC chief called on the international community to take on its due responsibilities by stopping these recurrent Israeli aggressions on Syrian territories, and demanding the occupation to pull out of all occupied Syrian territories.

The Arab parliament condemned on Wednesday the Israeli occupation targeting of Koayiah in Daraa, Syria, which resulted in several casualties. The Arab parliament affirmed that the continuous aggression on part of the Israeli occupation and completes silence from the international community would only embolden such acts against Syrian sovereignty and regional stability.

It called on the UNSC and the world to put an end to the Israeli occupation's actions, expressing solidarity with the Syrian government and people.

An Israeli strike Tuesday in southwestern Syria killed at least six people as Israeli troops occupying the area clashed with local residents, Syria's Foreign Ministry and a war monitor reported.

Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee said troops fired back at gunmen who attacked them, before launching a drone attack.

#### **TEC** unveils

He affirmed these opportunities were offered through a public auction in accordance with the highest standard of transparency; including the Hilton Resort in Mangaf, Ras Al-Ard Club in Salmiya, Egaila Beach and the Messila Beach.

He disclosed that "in 2024, TEC continued to implement its strategy in activating tourism and entertainment sites in the country.

We succeeded in introducing quality projects that had a positive impact on the entertainment services and attracted visitors of all age groups, especially families

We launched the third season of the Winter Wonderland Kuwait in Shaab Park in November 2024, making it the largest entertainment complex in the country. It piqued the interest of most people. We are keen to develop its components to ensure the best entertainment experience."

He added: "We also launched the second season of the South Sabahiya Park project, which spans an area of 107,000 square meters and consists of more than 55 diverse recreational activities like the big and small recreational games and skill games, making it an ideal destination for the entire family.

"We were also keen on developing Balajat Beach by adding a range of new recreational facilities and activities to enhance the site's appeal. These projects and others like them reflect our ongoing commitment to provide unique and innovative recreational services that meet the aspirations of citizens and expatriates. The company also completed the waterfront beautification project, which extends over a distance of 10 kilometers. It consists of walking and cycling paths, 40 electric car charging stations, modern seating areas and carefully designed green spaces to provide a comfortable recreational environment for waterfront visitors. The company was keen on introducing innovative recreational projects in cooperation with private sector entrepreneurs. The second season of the Key Land project opened in its new location on the beach. Balajat, the first family-friendly beachfront amusement park in the country, offers unique entertainment and retail experiences for its visitors. We inaugurated the Joun, an entertainment venue near the Kuwait Towers, featuring a fine dining restaurant and hosting distinguished musical and folkloric events,"

he narrated.

He then pointed out that "believing in the importance of achieving sustainability in all our projects, we continue our commitment to develop the tourism and entertainment sector; while focusing on protecting public funds and enhancing the role of the private sector in boosting the national economy.

# Ministries expand 'Quran education'

Plans for new sites

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi discussed on Tuesday means of joint cooperation between the two ministries, along with a number of issues of common interest.

The Ministry of Education said in a press statement that the two sides discussed mechanisms to develop and improve the current sites allocated for the Ministry of Islamic Affairs' activities related to teaching the Holy Quran. They also explored the possibility of expanding to new cities by utilizing the Ministry of Education's facilities to implement religious and educational activities.

The statement added that discussions also focused on preparing a joint cooperation protocol between the two ministries aimed at establishing an institutional and meth-

odological framework to organize integrated work between the two sides. This framework seeks to ensure the effective implementation of projects and initiatives of a religious and educational nature, aligning with national policies, serving community development goals, and optimizing the available resources and capabilities of both ministries.

It further stated that the Minister of Education welcomed the fruitful cooperation with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and directed the formation of a joint working team between the two ministries. This team will study all current sites allocated for teaching the Holy Quran and assess the feasibility of allocating new sites in emerging cities such as Mutlaa City and Sabah Al-Ahmad City.

The meeting was attended by Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Mansour Al-Dhafiri, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Planning Eng. Mohammed Al-Khalidi, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities Maryam Al-Anzi, along with Undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Dr. Badr Al-Mutairi and Advisor to the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Asim.

## Kuwait Investment Authority - Debts Purchased for the State's Account Settlement and Management Office Announces:



Third: Debts the Authority Considers Excludable

The Added Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable

submitted by the Public Institution for Social Security dated 09/08/2004.

17/04/2019. However, supporting documents validating the debt were not

1) Burgan Bank — K.D 314,970, as per the bank's letters dated 20/07/2003 and

2) Al-Sarraf & Al-Ruwayeh Law Firm - K.D 23,936.500, as per the firm's letter

dated 15/06/2004. However, supporting documents validating the debt were

Request to Amend the Bankruptcy Proceedings Report and

the List of Temporary Debts for the Added Debt

For the Bankruptcy of / Ali Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Mudhaf

Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No.

108/2002 General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 11/06/2002

ndustrial Bank of Kuwait — The debt purchased by the State amounts to KD

Report and the List of Temporary Debts for the Added Debt

For the Bankruptcy of / Ali Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Mudhaf

Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No.

24/2012 General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 08/02/2012

54,658.500, representing the bankrupt's share of the debt guaranteed for

Fanar Al-Khaleej Equipment and Contracting Company, in accordance with

Request to amend the bankruptcy proceedings report and the provisional debt list for the added debt for the bankruptcy of / Abdul Mohsen Mohammed Abdul Latif Al-Duwaisan Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. 2000/43 Bankruptcy General Debts 1, dated 13/2/2001.

The added debt that the Authority, in its capacity, deems acceptable:
Debts that the Authority, in its capacity, deems acceptable:
National Bank of Kuwait, debt purchased by the state amounting to:
65,889/410 KD, the bankrupt's share of the debt guaranteed by Al-Duwaisan International Import and Export and Commission Agent Group, pursuant to Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

Summary of the bankruptcy proceedings report and provisional debt list for the bankruptcy of Hassan Mohammed Al-Faris Al-Aqidi, guarantor of Hassan Al-Faris & Sukkar Ready-Made Garments, Fabrics and Shoes Trading Co. W.L.L. Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. 2010/31, Bankruptcy General Debts 1, dated 2/6/2010.

First: Financial and accounting procedure

1) His share of the debt as of 1/8/1990 amounts to: KD 29,777.500.
2) His share of the debt according to Article 13 amounts to: KD 197,897.400.
3) The collected amounts amount to: KD 1,203.117.

Second: Debts that the Authority deems acceptable:

 The Commercial Bank of Kuwait, a debt purchased on behalf of the state, amounts to: KD 197,897.400, his share of the debt guaranteed to Hassan Al-Faris & Sukkar Ready-Made Garments, Fabrics and Shoes Trading Co. W.L.L, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

 Kuwait Finance House, KD 7,296/850 pursuant to the bank's letter dated 27/7/2010 and Payment Order No. 1995/2573 dated 26/12/1995, in addition to expenses, and Judgment No. 1995/4850 C. C. P. Capital / 16 issued on 3/4/1996, in addition to fees.

Third: Debts that the Authority deems to be excluded:

• Kuwait Finance House, KD 296/420 pursuant to the bank's letter dated
27/7/2010, but he did not submit documents proving the validity of the debt.

Summary of the bankruptcy proceedings report and provisional debt list for the bankruptcy of / Kuwait Development Company for General Trading and Contracting W.L.L., sponsor of / Kuwaiti Italian Steel Buildings Company K.S.C. Closed

Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in case No. 1987/2333 Commercial First Instance / 49 dated 3/12/1987

First: Financial and accounting procedures:
1) The company's share of the debt as of 1/8/1990 amounts to: 348,641 KD.

2) The company's share of the debt according to Article 13 amounts to: 1,510,092/321 KD.

 The amounts collected after the bankruptcy Judgment amount to: 2,109,993/819 KD.
 Second: Debts that the Authority deems acceptable:

Second: Debts that the Authority deems acceptable:

1) The Commercial Bank of Kuwait, a debt purchased by the state amounts to:

1,510,092/321 KD, the bankrupt company's share of the debt guaranteed by

the Kuwaiti Italian Steel Buildings Company according to Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.
2) The Industrial Bank of Kuwait, a debt purchased by the state amounting to: 14 140 971/804 KD, personal debt according to Article 13 of Law No. 41 of

14,140,971/804 KD, personal debt according to Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

3) The Arab International Bank of Bahrain (S.A.) 7,479,899/20 US dollars, according to the bank's letter dated 23/10/2008, according to the budgment No.

2333/1987 dated 3/12/1987, including interest calculated up to the date of the bankruptcy declaration.

Third: Debts that the Authority deems necessary to exclude:

1) The International Bank of Tunisia, 5,116,302/02 US dollars, according to the report of the former bankruptcy administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not

submit official documents proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor did not submit a request to list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of Law No. 71 of 2020.

2) The Gulf Financial Center Company, 90,191,560/12 US dollars, according to the report of the former bankruptcy administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not submit official documents proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor

did not submit a request to list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of Law No. 71 of 2020.

3) Kuwait Investment Company, 1,866,360/500 KD according to the report of the former bankruptcy administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not submit official documents proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor did not

submit a request to list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of Law No. 71 of 2020.

4) Kuwait Investment Company, 8,213/900 KD according to the report of the former bankruptcy administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not submit official documents proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor did not submit a request to list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of

Article 105 of Law No. 71 of 2020.

5) Kuwait Trading, Contracting and Foreign Investment Company,
7,808,969/201 KD according to the report of the former bankruptcy
administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not submit official documents
proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor did not submit a request to
list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of

6) Bahrain and Middle East Bank, 186,216/737 KD according to the report of the former bankruptcy administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not submit official documents proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor did not

submit a request to list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of Law No. 71 of 2020.

7) Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, 445/101 KD, according to the report of the former bankruptcy administrator, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. He did not submit official documents proving the validity of this debt, and the creditor did not submit a request to list his debt to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of Law No. 71 of 2020.

8) Sharjah Insurance and Reinsurance Company: K.D 803.710, as per the report of the previous bankruptcy manager, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. However, no official documents substantiating this debt have been submitted, nor has the creditor filed a request to include their debt with the Authority in accordance with Article (105) of Law (71) of 2020.

9) Gulf Bank: K.D 471,540, as per the report of the previous bankruptcy manager, Mr. Yaqoub Al-Kout. However, no official documents substantiating this debt have been submitted, nor has the creditor filed a request to include their debt with the Authority in accordance with Article (105) of Law (71) of

Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List

For the Bankruptcy of: Adel Ali Abdulrahman Al-Bahar Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. 30/2003 General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 22/04/2003

First: Financial and Accounting Procedures:
1) The debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 2,079,287,613.
2) The debt according to Article 13 amounts to: K.D 7,899,596,107

3) The collected amounts total: K.D 4,226,537.909

Second: Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable:

1) Kuwait Finance House (formerly Ahli United Bank) — the debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 7,899,596.107, in accordance with Article 13 of Law

 Kuwait Finance House (formerly Ahli United Bank) — the debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 20,394,902.192, representing its share of the debt guaranteed for Al-Bahar International Group Company, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

3) Kuwalt Finance House (formerly Ahli United Bank) — the debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 1,537,697.364, representing its share of the debt guaranteed for the Integrated Electrical and Mechanical Works Company, in

accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

4) Real Estate Development and Investment Company (formerly Gulf Real Estate Investment Company) — K.D 102,500.000, as per the company's agent letter dated 26/08/2003, attached with the Court of Cassation ruling No. 120/1999/C/3 issued on 27/11/1999, in addition to legal interest at a rate of 7% annually from 27/08/1981 until the date of the bankruptcy declaration

5) Public Institution for Social Security - K.D 18,229.269, as per the letter

Pursuant to the ruling issued in Case No. 24/2012 General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 08/02/2012, the bankruptcy of Mohammad Hussein Ali Mahmoud was declared, and the ruling became final and binding.

And whereas the managing bank (Commercial Bank of Kuwalt) informed,

And whereas the managing bank (Commercial Bank of Kuwait) informed, through its letter dated 23/09/2019, that the bankrupt's debt amounted to K.D 352,759.158 as at 01/08/1990. The debt amount stated in the bankruptcy declaration ruling, K.D 405,818.843, corresponds to the value as at

31/12/1991, not 01/08/1990, considering that the discrepancy in the ruling is a clerical error, while the details of the debt from its inception to the present are accurate.

Based on the foregoing and in adherence to the authority of judicial rulings, the Kuwait Investment Authority, in its capacity as the «Trustee,» relies on the ruling of the bankruptcy declaration. The Authority has submitted a

report on the bankruptcy proceedings and the list of provisional debts for the aforementioned bankrupt to the Bankruptcy Department via its letter dated 24/02/2025, where a decision was issued approving the publication of the list of provisional debts as follows:

The Added Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable:

Commercial Bank of Kuwait — The debt purchased by the State amounts

 Commercial Bank of Kuwait — The debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 405,818.843, in accordance with Bankruptcy Declaration Ruling No. 24/2012, dated 08/02/2012, as at 01/08/1990.

According to the Provision of Article 111 of Law No. 71 of 2020, "The debtor and each creditor, even if his name is not included in the list of debts, may appeal to the Bankruptcy Department against debts included in the list, within ten days from the date of announcing the list.

Move likely to face swift challenges

## President Trump signs sweeping executive action to overhaul elections in US

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): US President Donald Trump has signed a sweeping executive action to overhaul elections in the US, including requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections and demanding that all ballots be received by Election Day.

The order says the US has failed "to enforce basic and necessary election protections" and calls on states to work with federal agencies to share voter lists and prosecute election crimes. It threatens to pull federal funding from states where election officials don't comply.

The move, which is likely to face swift challenges because states have broad authority to set their own election rules, is consistent with Trump's long history of railing against election processes. He often claims elections are being rigged, even before the results are known, and has waged battles against certain voting methods since he lost the 2020 election to Democrat Joe Biden and falsely blamed it on widespread fraud.

Trump has focused particularly on mail voting, arguing without evidence that it's insecure and invites fraud even as he has shifted his position on the issue given its popularity with voters, including Republicans. While fraud occurs, it's rare, limited in scope and gets prosecuted.

The order's documentary proof of citizenship requirement signals that the president is not waiting for congressional Republicans to pass their long-anticipated Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, or SAVE Act, which has aimed to do the same thing.

Republicans have defended that measure as necessary to restore public confidence in elections. Voting in federal elections by noncitizens is already illegal and can result in felony charges and deportation.

Voting rights groups have expressed concerns that the requirement could disenfranchise people. An estimated 9% of U.S. citizens of voting age, or 21.3 million people, do not have proof of citizenship readily available, according to a 2023 report by the Brennan Center for Justice and other groups.

There are also concerns that married women who have changed their names will encounter trouble when trying to register because their birth certificates list their maiden names. Such hiccups happened in recent town elections in New Hampshire, which has a new state law requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote.



Supervisor of the Checklist for the State of New Hampshire Leslie Dombroski, (left), registers Elise Collins, 18, to vote in Derry, NH on March 11.

Trump's order directs federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security, the Social Security Administration and the State Department to share with election officials federal data that could help them identify noncitizens on their rolls.

It also says the attorney general should "prioritize enforcement of federal election integrity laws" in states that don't share information about suspected election crimes with the federal government.

The order aims to require votes to

Day and says federal funding should be conditional on state compliance. Currently, 18 states and Puerto Rico accept mailed ballots received after Election Day as long they are postmarked on or before that date, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Trump's order is likely to face legal challenges, given that the Constitution gives authority over elections to the states. While Congress has the power to regulate voting - and has done so to pass such laws as the Voting Rights Act - the Constitution makes clear that states have primary authority to set the "times, places and manner" for elections.

Colorado's Democratic secretary of state, Jena Griswold, called the order an "unlawful" weaponization of the federal government and said Trump is "trying to make it harder for voters to fight back at the ballot box.

Democratic Rep. Joe Morelle of New York, the ranking member of the House committee that oversees elections, said the executive order "is not just misguided - it is immoral and illegal."

At least one Democratic attorney on Tuesday threatened legal action. Marc Elias, who has been the subject of Trump's ire, said in a social media pos 'This will not stand. We will sue.'

The executive branch does have some authority over elections, said Justin Levitt, a constitutional law expert and former White House senior policy adviser during the Biden administration. He said some federal agencies provide election support, including the US Election Assistance Commission, which distributes federal grant money to states and runs a voluntary certification program for voting systems. The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency helps election officials protect their systems.

Former President Biden issued an executive order in 2021 directing federal agencies to take steps to boost voter registration, which drew complaints from Republicans who called it federal overreach. Trump has rescinded that order.

Trump's order calls on the Election Assistance Commission to amend voting system guidelines to protect election integrity, including guidance that voting systems should not use a ballot that uses a barcode or QR code in the vote counting process. It said the commission should condition the funding it distributes to states on those new guidelines.

#### Dems keep majority control of Pennsylvania House after poll

HARRISBURG, Pa., March 26, (AP): Democrat Dan Goughnour handily won a special election in western Pennsylvania on Tuesday, keeping majority control of the state House

in his party's hands by a single seat. Gough-

nour bea Republican beat Chuck Davis in a district in the Mon Valley region southeast of Pittsburgh, winning .

Goughnour

seat that became vacant in January with the death of Democratic state Rep. Matthew Gergely

In a second legislative special election Tuesday, in a suburban and farming part of Lancaster County, Democrat James Andrew Malone, the mayor of 4,500-population East Petersburg, was clinging to a narrow lead over Republican Lancaster County Commissioner Josh Parsons. A Democratic flip of that district, if it occurs, would be a major upset but would not alter Republican control of the state Senate

As of late Tuesday, the race was too early to call. With 99% of the estimated vote counted, Malone led Parsons by 482 votes, or 0.89% of nearly 54,000 ballots cast, with an unknown number of provisional ballots left to be counted.

Parsons posted on social media late Tuesday that he was "disappointed in the numbers" and that "it appears we will come up a little short.'

Malone told WGAL-TV the national political environment was a

"Everyday voters are not liking what they're seeing in the federal level. They don't like the chaos," Malone said

No matter the result, the Senate will remain comfortably in Republican control, and the chief executive is Gov. Josh Shapiro, a rising star among Democrats who is seen as a potential 2028 presidential candidate. The partisan divide and power sharing in Harrisburg - a dynamic that has prevailed for much of the past two decades - has prevented major changes in state law.

After the House race was called, Goughnour said, "It's overwhelming, but I feel good." He said his goal was to "maintain common sense in Harrisburg" and give his

#### 'Ukraine ready to observe ceasefire against energy targets'

## **US says it brokered deal to end fighting in Black Sea**

KYIV, Ukraine, March 26, (AP): Ukraine is ready to proceed with a ceasefire prohibiting attacks on energy infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, in line with a deal that was brokered by the United States during three days of negotiations with Ukrainian and Russian officials in the Saudi capital.

Speaking in a video address late Tuesday, Zelenskyy said Ukraine had agreed with US negotiators "that a ceasefire for energy infrastructure can start today." But, he warned, any strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities by Moscow would draw "strong retaliation.

The comments underscored the tenuous agreements that came out of the three days of separate US-Ukrainian and US-Russian talks in Riyadh. Washington said it had agreed with the warring parties to implement a pause on attacks on energy infrastructure as well as taking steps to ensure safe navigation for ships in the Black Sea.

Those talks were part of a broader effort by President Donald Trump's administration toward a limited, 30day ceasefire that Moscow and Kyiv agreed to in principle last week, but has thus far failed to materialize as both sides continue to launch drone and rocket attacks against the other.

While Zelenskyy on Tuesday



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks during a briefing in Kyiv, Ukraine on March 25. (AP)

thanked the US for its efforts to strike an agreement, questions remained over some key details, and a comprehensive peace deal to end the three-year war still looked distant.

On Tuesday, the White House said in separate statements that the sides had "agreed to ensure safe navigation, eliminate the use of force, and prevent the use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea.

Details of the prospective deal were not released, but it appeared to mark another attempt to ensure safe Black Sea shipping after a 2022 agreement that was brokered by the U.N. and Tur-

key but halted by Russia the next year. After the White House issued its statement Tuesday, the Kremlin warned that a potential Black Sea deal could only be implemented after sanctions against the Russian Agricultural Bank and other financial organizations involved in food and fertilizer trade are lifted and their access to the SWIFT system of international payments is ensured.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday evening reacted to those demands, casting them as an example of Moscow "manipulating, twisting agreements, and lying' about the terms of the agreement.

"There are absolutely clear statements that have been published by the White House, everyone can see what is stated there," Zelenskyy said. "And there is something that the Kremlin is lying about again: that supposedly the (ceasefire) in the Black Sea depends on the issue of sanctions.

In an apparent reference to Moscow's demands, the White House said Tuesday the U.S. "will help restore Russia's access to the world market for agricultural and fertilizer exports, lower maritime insurance costs, and enhance access to ports and payment systems for such transactions.

When asked about when Washington might help Moscow achieve those ambitions, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that contacts between Russia and the US "continue quite intensively," and that authorities are "satisfied with how pragmatic, constructive and productive our dialogue

### Change in itinerary for JD Vance brings cautious relief for Greenland, Denmark

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): Greenland and Denmark appeared cautiously relieved early Wednesday by the news that US Vice President JD Vance and his wife are changing their itinerary for their visit to Greenland Friday. reducing the likelihood that they will cross paths with residents angered by the Trump administration's attempts to annex the vast Arctic island, a semi-autonomous Danish territory.

The couple will now visit the US Space Force outpost at Pituffik, on the northwest coast of Greenland, instead of Usha Vance's previously announced solo trip to the Avannaata Qimussersu dogsled race in Sisimiut.

President Donald Trump irked much of Europe by suggesting that

the United States should in some form control the self-governing, mineral-rich territory of Denmark, a US ally and NATO member. As the nautical gateway to the Arctic and North Atlantic approaches to North America, Greenland has broader strategic value



US Vice President JD Vance, (in foreground at right), speaks during a cabinet meeting at the White House in Washington on March 24. (AP)

as both China and Russia seek access to its waterways and natural resources.

The vice president's decision to visit a US military base in Greenland has removed the risk of violating potential diplomatic taboos by sending a delegation to another country without an official invitation. Yet Vance has also criticized longstanding European allies for relying on military support from the United States, openly antagonizing partners in ways that have generated concerns about the reliability of the US.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told Danish broadcaster DR Wednesday that the Vances' updated travel plans are a good thing. The minister said the change was a deescalation, even as he said the Americans are treating it as the opposite, with Vance suggesting in an online video that global security is at stake.

Rasmus Jarlov, a Danish lawmaker and spokesperson on Greenlandic Affairs for the Conservatives, wrote on X that the new schedule means the Vances will avoid any confrontations with Greenlanders. Jarlov noted that, after all, a vice president visiting an American military base is not controversial.

Vance is allowed to visit the space base, said Marc Jacobsen, a professor at the Royal Danish Defense College, because of a 1951 agreement between Denmark and the U.S. regarding the defense of Greenland.



Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono, (left), sits with France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot, right, during their bilateral meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia on March 26. (AP)

#### France, Indonesia vow to boost safety in Indo-Pacific

France and Indonesia 's top diplomats inked Wednesday a new maritime security project aiming "to ensure peace and safety" at sea in the Indo-Pacific region.
French Foreign Minister Jean-

Noël Barrot's visit to Jakarta, his second stop in his four-day Asia tour after Singapore, comes amid ongoing trade tensions between the European Union and He told reporters on Wednesday

that the Indo-Pacific Port Security

Project "is close to my heart," promising France's support.

Neither he nor his Indonesian counterpart Sugiono shared what the project will entail.

Earlier this month, during a discussion of the project at the Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence, Indonesia's naval chief of staff, Admiral Muhammad Ali, said it would address various maritime security challenges, including piracy, terrorism, and illegal activities at sea, and would likely involve collaboration among countries in the Indo-Pacific.

Sugiono, who like many Indonesians uses a single name, said the "maritime collaboration is important

to realize a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific." Barrot said the project will sup-port Indonesia as the world's largest archipelago nation with more than 17,000 islands, with a focus on two Indonesian ports in Jakarta and Surabaya cities "in their sustainability and security." (AP)

## **Authoritarian leader of Belarus sworn for** 7th term, tells critics 'you have no future'

TALLINN, Estonia, March 26, (AP): Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko was sworn in Tuesday to a seventh term, and he mocked those who derided him as "Europe's last dictator" by saying his country has more democracy "than those who cast themselves as its models."

"Half of the world is dreaming about our 'dictatorship,' the dictatorship of real business and interests of our people," Lukashenko, 70, said in his inauguration speech at the Independence Palace in the capital of

Hundreds of opposition supporters living abroad held anti-Lukashenko rallies Tuesday to mark the anniversary of Belarus' short-lived indepen-dence in 1918 following the collapse

of the Russian Empire. Lukashenko marked three decades in power last year, and his political opponents have denounced the tightly orchestrated Jan. 26 election as a farce. The Belarus Central Election Commission declared he won with nearly 87% of the vote after a campaign in which four token challengers on the ballot all praised his rule.

Opposition members have been imprisoned or exiled abroad by Lukashenko's unrelenting crackdown on dissent and free speech.



In this photo released by Belarus' Presidential Press Service, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko takes his oath of office during his inauguration ceremony at the Palace of the Independence in Minsk, Belarus on March 25. (AP)

#### Russia convicts 23 Ukrainians

MOSCOW, March 26, (AP): Russia on Wednesday convicted 23 captured Ukrainians on terrorism charges stemming from the fighting in Ukraine in a trial that Kyiv denounced as a sham and a violation of international law.

The defendants included 14 current or former fighters of the elite Azov brigade, which Russia designated a terrorist group, and nine women and one man who worked as cooks or support personnel, according to Russian media reports and rights activists. Twelve defendants were not in court - 11 had returned to Ukraine in two prisoner exchanges and were convicted in absentia. One more died in custody last year, and the case against him had



Lawyers of Ukrainians captured by Russia during hostilities in Ukraine sit in front of the defendant's cage during a hearing at the Southern District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don, Russia on March 26. (AP)

Conviction of opposition leader overturned

## 24 people dead as wildfires ravage southern South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, March 26 (AP): Wind-driven wildfires that were among South Korea's worst ever were ravaging the country's southern regions, killing 24 people, destroying more than 200 structures and forcing 27.000 residents to evacuate, officials said Wednesday.

The death toll included a pilot who died after a helicopter crashed during efforts to contain wildfires in the southeastern town of Uiseong, one of the hardesthit areas. The aircraft had no other crew members. The National Fire Agency said at least 26 other people sustained varying degrees of injuries.

An ancient Buddhist temple, houses, factories and vehicles were destroyed in the wildfires that have burned 43,330 acres (17,535 hectares), the government's emergency response center said.

In a televised address, South Korea's acting President Han Duck-soo said the wildfires that began last Friday were the worst so far.

"Damages are snowballing," Han said. "There are concerns that we'll have wildfire damages that we've never experienced, so we have to concentrate all our capabilities to put out the wildfires in the rest of this week.'

Han said crews were struggling to extinguish the wildfires because strong winds swept the areas overnight. Han said about 4,650 fire-



Burnt-out houses are seen at a damaged village due to wildfires in Yeongdeok, South Korea on March 26. (AP)

fighters, soldiers and other personnel were working Wednesday with the help of about 130 helicopters. He said that "a small amount" of 5-10 millimeters (0.1-0.3 inches) of rain was expected Thursday.

As of Wednesday evening, firefighters were fighting at least four active wildfires, including in the southeastern coastal town of Yeongdeok, which

alerted residents of the nearest village to evacuate to an indoor gymnasium.

Strong winds and smoke-filled skies forced authorities in the southeastern city of Andong to order evacuations in two villages, including Puncheon, which is home to the Hahoe folk village - a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded around the 14th-15th century. Hikers were advised to leave the scenic

Jirisan Mountain, one of the country's largest national parks, as another fire spread closer.

Observers say the ongoing wildfires are the third biggest in South Korea in terms of land burned. The largest fires were in Andong, the neighboring counties of Uiseong and Sancheong, and the city of Ulsan.

**SEOUL, South Korea:** An appeals court in South Korea overturned an election law conviction against opposition leader Lee Jae-myung Wednesday, potentially clearing the way for him to mount a presidential campaign.

The courtroom victory comes as the country's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol could face an early exit due to his short-lived imposition of martial law and surveys show Lee, leader of the main liberal opposition Democratic Party who narrowly lost the 2022 election to Yoon, is the early favorite to replace him.

Yoon, a conservative, has been suspended from office since the liberal opposition-controlled National Assembly impeached him over his Dec 3 martial law decree plunged the country into political turmoil. The Constitutional Court is deliberating on whether to formally dismiss or reinstate him. If he's removed, there will be an election to replace him within two months.



Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra arrives at parliament before no-confidence vote against her in Bangkok, Thailand on March 26.

#### Thai PM survives challenge by rivals

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra easily survived a no-confidence vote in Parliament on Wednesday, following a two-day debate in which rivals charged that she has mismanaged the country and let her father, a former prime minister, control her administration.

Opposition lawmakers argued that she has been unduly influenced by her father, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin is a popular but highly controversial political figure who was ousted in a 2006 military coup, fled into exile and recently returned to Thailand. Paetongtarn's opponents said her administration has improperly favored the personal and financial interests of her family and her father. They also accused her of tax evasion and mishandling many of the country's chronic problems including the slumping economy, air pollution, crime and corruption.

Paetongtarn received 319 votes, with 161 voting against her and seven abstaining in the first no-confidence vote she faced since she took office last year after another Pheu Thai primé minister was removed by the Constitutional Court after it found he'd committed a serious ethical breach. (AP)

## China gives 3-year sentence to Taiwan-based publisher on charges of inciting separatism

BEIJING, March 26, (AP): The editorin-chief of a Taiwanese publishing house received a three-year prison sentence after a Chinese court convicted him of inciting separatism, a Chinese government spokesperson said Wednesday

The case raised concern about the

risks of publishing books critical of the Chinese government and system, even outside mainland China. Li Yanhe is a Chinese citizen who

had been living in Taiwan, according to Taiwanese media. He was detained two years ago during a trip to China, and Taiwanese media reported last



People gather around tables with newly released books on display during the Taipei International Book Exhibition at the Taipei World Trade Center in Taipei, Taiwan on Jan 31, 2023. (AP)

week that he had been tried and sentenced by a court in Shanghai but gave no details.

The editor was fined 50,000 yuan (\$6,900) in addition to the three-year sentence, Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said at a biweekly news conference on Taiwan-related issues. Li pleaded guilty and did not appeal, he said.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 during the civil war that brought the Communist Party to power in Beijing. The Chinese government claims Taiwan as its territory and says the island must come under its control at some point in the future.

It opposes what it views as separatist activity on the island, which is selfgoverning but has not declared formal ndependence.

Chinese authorities have not said what Li did to be charged with inciting separatism. Gusa Publishing, where Li worked, has published books on topics that are usually censored in China. The company's website includes books on corruption and authoritarian rule in China and on the military's bloody 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests that were centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

### Australia focuses foreign aid spending on Pacific region as US cuts programs

MELBOURNE, Australia, March 26, (AP): Australia plans to spend a larger share of its foreign aid on its neighbors in Asia and the Pacific islands after the United States announced major cuts to development and humanitarian aid abroad.

Three-quarters of Australia's total overseas development aid will directly benefit the Indo-Pacific region, which is a 40-year high proportion, according to documents seen by The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Total aid for the fiscal year beginning July 1 is set to increase by only 136 million Australian dollars (\$86 million) above the current year's spending to AU\$5.097 billion (\$3.22 billion).

Neither Foreign Minister Penny Wong nor Minister for International Development and the Pacific Pat Conroy mentioned Washington's foreshadowed cuts in explaining Australia's change in focus.

"Australia's development program is central to ensuring the stability and security of our region," Wong said in a statement.

"In these uncertain times, we are



Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong, (left), waits to shake hands with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, at the State Department on Jan 21, in Washington. (AP)

ensuring more of Australia's development assistance is going to the Pacific and Southeast Asia, where Australia's interests are most at

stake," she added. Conroy said Australia remained committed to multilateral aid chan-

nels despite Australia's shift toward

direct bilateral aid deals.

Australia will suspend or delay AU\$119 million (\$75 million) in payments to the multinational UN Development Program, the Global Partnership for Education and the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Malaria

#### Trump nominates conservative media critic for envoy to S.Africa

JOHANNESBURG, March 26, (AP): US President Donald Trump nominated conservative media critic Leo Brent Bozell III as ambassador

to South Africa. The move Tuesday comes during strained diplomatic relations with the country, including over its stance on the Israel-Hamas conflict. The nomina-

tion of Bozell



comes at a time when relations between South Africa and the US are at a low. Bozell must be confirmed by the US Sen-

The frosty relations saw South Africa's ambassador to the US, Ebrahim Rasool, declared persona non grata by the US government over his comments about Trump and his administration and was forced to leave the country last Friday.

Trump has been critical of South Africa's stance on the Israel-Hamas conflict, including taking Israel to the International Court of Justice and accusing it of committing genocide

He has also falsely accused the South African government of targeting the minority white population in the country and illegally seizing their land through its recently enacted Expropriation Act and offered to grant refugee status to white people who want to relocate to the US.

Trump has also signed an executive order freezing all financial aid to South Africa.

Bozell is a founder of the Media Research Center, the Parents Television Council and other conservative media organizations. His son, Leo Brent Bozell IV, was one of the people who stormed the US Capitol in 2021 and was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison last

Bozell was previously nominated to head the US Agency for Global Media, but his nomination was eventually withdrawn.

South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa is yet to announce the country's new ambassador the US, but this week claimed that reports about white people being targeted in South Africa were based on a "completely false nar-

Deeply unpopular Peru president calls

for general elections in April 2026

## sworn in as prez

NIAMEY, Niger, March 26, (Agencies): Niger's junta leader, Abdourahamane Tchiani, was on Wednesday sworn in as the country's president for a transition period of five years under a new charter that



constitution. The five-year "flexible" transition period begins on Wednesday, according to Mahamane Roufai, the secretary general of the

replaces the West

African nation's

government. He was speaking at a ceremony in the capital Niamey where

the new transition charter recommended by a recent national conference was Tchiani, an army veteran, was also

elevated to the country's highest military rank of army general, cementing his grip on power since June 2023 when he led soldiers that deposed the country's elected government.

The new president would have been in power for about seven years by the end of the transition period, following similar patterns of prolonged stints in power in Africa's junta-led countries, including Mali and Burkina Faso.

## Niger junta leader US Homeland Security Secretary Noem visits high-security El Salvador prison

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem on Wednesday will visit the high-security El Salvador prison where Venezuelans who the Trump administration alleges are members of the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang have been held since their removal from the

Noem's trip to the prison - where inmates are packed into cells and never allowed outside - comes as the Trump administration seeks to show it is deporting people it describes as the "worst of the worst."

Since taking office, Noem has often been front and center in efforts to highlight the immigration crackdown. She took part in immigration enforcement operations, rode horses with Border Patrol agents and was the face of a television campaign warning people in the country illegally to self-deport.

Noem's Wednesday visit is part of a three-day trip. She'll also travel to Colombia and Mexico.

In El Salvador, she'll visit the prison, called the Terrorism Confinement Center, and meet with President Navib Bukele, according to a Homeland Security statement.

The Venezuelans were removed from the US this month after Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 and said the U.S. was being invaded by the Tren de Aragua gang. The Alien Enemies Act gives the president wartime powers and allows noncitizens to be deported without the opportunity to go before an immigration or federal court judge.

A central outstanding question about the deportees' status is when and how they could ever be released from the prison, as they are not serving sentences. They no longer appear in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's online detainee locator and have not appeared before a judge in El Salvador. The U.S. government has acknowledged that many do not have criminal records.

Flights were in the air March 15 when a federal judge issued a verbal order temporarily barring the deporta-tions and ordered planes to return to

The Trump administration has argued that the judge's verbal directions did not count, that only his written order needed to be followed and that it couldn't apply to flights that had al-

#### US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks at US Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak during a tour on March 17, in Kodiak, Alaska. (AP) ready left the U.S. **Mexico and US to discuss security cooperation**

LIMA, Peru, March 26, (AP): Peruvian President Dina Boluarte said Tuesday the country will hold general elec-

tions one year from now in an effort to

end years of instability.

The deeply unpopular Boularte said the April 2026 polls will elect a new president, 130 deputies and 60 senators.

The bicameral election system has not been used since the early 1990s.

In a brief nationwide television address, Boularte did not say if she would be a contender. Boluarte assumed power in Peru in 2022 to complete the term of then-President Pedro Castillo, who was removed from office just two years into his five-year term after attempting to dissolve the legislature to avoid his own removal.

She said the upcoming elections will be "democratic, clean, transparent and orderly.'

Boluarte has a 93% disapproval rating, according to a national poll conducted by Datum Internacional in March. Her term ends on July 28, 2026.

Last week, Peru's Congress voted to remove the interior minister from office after deciding that he had failed to adequately handle rising violent crime in the Andean country.

Public outrage has surged over an increase in killings and other violence, especially the recent killing of Paul Flores, the 39-year-old lead singer of the cumbia band Armonia 10.

MEXICO CITY, March 26, (Xinhua): Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said that she will discuss with visiting U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem bilateral cooperation on security issues on Friday.

"It's a meeting on coordination," the president said during her regular morning press conference, adding that the secretary will be received around 1:00 p.m. (1900 GMT). Several Mexican ministers are also

expected to attend the meeting, including Interior Minister Rosa Icela Rodriguez, Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch and Foreign Affairs Minister Juan Ramon de la Fuente

"It's not that we're going to give her a report, but it is important for her to know the results of the security cabinet," Sheinbaum said.

Friday's talks will follow up on agreements reached during an earlier meeting in Washington, D.C., between Mexican offcials -- the ministers of the navy, defense, foreign affairs, and the Attorney General -- and their U.S. counterparts.

Sheinbaum said the upcoming meet-

ing is not related to tariffs and the April 2 deadline imposed by her U.S. counterpart Donald Trump

Mexico's government is in nego-

tiations with the United States in an attempt to eliminate or reduce a proposed 25 percent tariff on Mexican products that takes effect in April.



A Marine looks towards Tijuana, Mexico, standing between two border walls during a news conference on joint operations involving the military and the Border Patrol, on March 21 in San Diego. (AP)



the Spanish word for corrupt during a march to demand the government provide security against the rising violence in Lima, Peru on March 21. (AP)

## Kuwaiti oil hits \$77.36 per barrel

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 1.08 to USD 77.36 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday, compared to USD 76.28 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Wednesday.

At global markets, the price of the Brent crude rose by two cents to USD 73.02 pb, while the West Texas Intermediate fell 11 cents to USD 69.00 pb.

# Business

Iftar meals served at Soug Sharg with the participation of Al-Kharafi Center's children

## Zain Al-Shuhoor contributions continue during last 10 days of Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Under the umbrella of its community campaign, Zain Al-Shuhoor, Zain continues its charitable contributions during the last ten days of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The company remains committed to offering daily iftar meals in collaboration with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank.

Recently, Zain organized a special visit to the fish market in the Souq Sharq area to distribute iftar meals to the market workers. The visit was joined by Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti, Vice Chairman of the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank, Mishaal Al-Ansari, along with Zain and Food Bank officials, and members of the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team.

The visit witnessed a heartwarming and special participation by children from the Al-Kharafi Center for Children with Disabilities, who joined the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team in distributing the meals – a gesture that highlighted Zain's commitment to integrating people with special needs into meaningful community engagement alongside their peers.



Al-Khashti and Al-Ansari with the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team and children from Al-Kharafi Center.

The iftar initiative is one of the cornerstones of Zain's annual Ramadan program, now in its eighteenth consecutive year. Each day, the company distributes iftar meals in collaboration with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank, with

trucks traveling across the country to deliver meals to densely populated areas and locations with large concentrations of workers, individuals, and underprivileged families.

Zain also provides daily iftar meals at Manahi Al-Dawas Hall in Jleeb AlShuyoukh, bringing the total number of meals distributed throughout the Holy Month to 40,000. Zain's team oversees this initiative directly, with the participation of the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team, comprised of company employees from various departments and



Al-Kharafi Center children take part in distributing iftar meals.

divisions – a step that reinforces Zain's dedication to fostering active commu-

The Zain Al-Shuhoor campaign continues to evolve and expand its programs and initiatives every year. Through this campaign, the company

builds bridges of collaboration with various entities across the country, embodying the spirit of giving that defines Ramadan, and reflecting the deep-rooted values of the Kuwaiti people in helping others and spreading love and peace.

## **Boursa Kuwait closes lower**

General index drops 0.26%

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Wednesday in** the red, with its general index dropping 21.22 points (0.26%) to 8,062.72 points. The session saw 274.5 million shares traded through 16,765 transactions, totaling 98.4 million dinars (\$303 million).

The Main Market Index declined 8.60 points

(0.12%) to 7,245.69 points, with 82.6 million shares exchanged in 5,595 transactions, amounting to 16.12 million dinars (\$49.6 million).

The Premier Market Index lost 25.45 points (0.29%), settling at 8,665.51 points. Trading volume reached 191.9 million shares across 11,170 transactions, valued at 82.2 million dinars (\$253.17 million)

Meanwhile, the Major 50 Index edged up 2.45 points (0.03%) to 7,042 points, with 69.8 million shares traded in 4,693 transactions, totaling 14.6 million dinars (\$44.9 million).

Bank aligns with Kuwait Vision 2035

## **Gulf Bank strengthens financial** literacy with 'Diraya' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Gulf Bank remains committed to supporting the "Diraya" campaign, an initiative by the Central Bank of Kuwait in partnership with the Kuwait Banking Association. The campaign seeks to enhance financial literacy, increase awareness of the banking sector's role, and empower customers to fully benefit from the wide range of services banks offer.

As part of its continued efforts, Gulf Bank actively supports the "Diraya" campaign by sharing educational content through multiple channels, including social media, newspapers, radio, and television. These initiatives aim to maximize outreach and enhance financial awareness among diverse segments of society.

Gulf Bank is dedicated to raising customer awareness about their rights when interacting with banks, in alignment with the Central Bank of Kuwait's directives. The Bank also provides essential guidance on protecting personal banking information, ensuring the safe use of banking cards, and protecting accounts, in an ever-changing financial sector amid growing fraud threats.

Additionally, Gulf Bank highlights the importance of the key principles outlined in the Central Bank of Kuwait's Customer Protection Guide, which is vital in protecting banking clients and fostering a balanced relationship between banks and their customers, in line with global best practices.

The Bank also warns customers about the risks of falling victim to fraud schemes, particularly those involving remote access apps on smart devices, which have recently emerged as a method for stealing banking information. These threats add to the existing risks posed by phishing attempts through phone calls, text messages, and emails.

Gulf Bank advises customers to be cautious when receiving unsolicited emails, text messages, or phone calls from unknown sources, as fraudsters frequently impersonate bank employees. Customers are urged not to respond to these messages or disclose personal banking information to prevent financial loss caused by international fraud networks.



Diraya logo

Additionally, Gulf Bank warns against high-risk investment opportunities that are not regulated or protected by legal frameworks, such as investments in virtual currencies, which are not overseen by the Central Bank of Kuwait or any regulatory authority, either locally or globally

On the other hand, the Bank actively educates customers about safe investment products offered by banks, designed to help manage investments and enhance returns. These products include a range of investment deposits, savings accounts, and both shortand long-term investment plans.Gulf Bank remains committed to promoting financial awareness and safeguarding the security and well-being of its customers in an increasingly dynamic financial environment.

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.

#### Menzies Aviation revenue hits \$2.6 bln, expands in Spain, India & Serbia

### Agility Global PLC reports FY 2024 net profit of \$128 mln

ABU DHABI, March 26: Agility Global PLC, a multi-business owner and operator and longterm investor, today reported full year 2024 results. Earnings were \$128 million, or 1.25 cents per share. EBIT grew 21.4% to \$404 million, and revenue increased 14.5% to \$4,507

Agility Global Chairman Tarek Sultan said: "The past year was an exciting one for Agility Global. With the May 2024 listing of our company on the dynamic, fast-growing Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, we entered a new era of growth. Our three largest operating busi-- Menzies Aviation, Tristar Group and Agility Logistics Parks - took important steps to strengthen their market-leading positions by expanding their footprint and acquiring new customers. Our investment segment reported an increase in the carrying value of our portfolio in 2024, driven by the price appreciation of our largest investment, DSV, following announcement of its planned acquisition of DB Schenker making DSV the world's largest freight forwarder and logistics provider."

Dividends In December 2024, the company paid \$65 million in cash as interim dividends for 2024.

And in-line with the Company's guidance, the board has now recommended distributing another \$65 million as cash dividends for the financial year 2024. That recommendation will be submitted to the General Assembly for approval. This will bring the total cash dividends for 2024 to \$130 million.

FY 2024 Performance **Controlled Segment** 

For FY 2024, the consolidated EBIT of the controlled businesses was \$391 million; EBIT-DA was \$698 million; and revenue was \$4.5 billion. This reflects increases of 13.7%, 13% and 15%, respectively, over 2023.

**Aviation Services: Menzies** 

Menzies Aviation revenue reached \$2.6 billion in 2024, representing 20% growth from 2023. This growth was mainly driven by increase in volumes as a result of new operations launched during 2024. New operations include an acquisition in Portugal, seven new licenses in Spain, expansion into Serbia, a new cargo facility in Bengaluru, India, and new operations at other locations across the globe. Over the same period, EBITDA grew by 20% with almost all material divisions and service lines showing growth.

In addition to the new operations Menzies also successfully negotiated contract renewals with key customers; was awarded a new stateof-the-art cargo facility at the Western Sydney Airport; and rolled out new cargo software (MACH) at 20 airports.

Menzies has had a strong start to 2025 with growth in ground handling, cargo and fueling operations across its 300-airport network in 65

**Fuel Logistics: Tristar** 

Tristar, a fully integrated fuel logistics business, delivered strong performance during 2024. Revenue was \$1.2 billion, an increase of 11.8%. EBITDA reached \$255 million, and EBIT was \$152 million, increases of 16.8% and 29.7%, respectively, over 2023. The top



Tarek Sultan, Agility Global Chairman

line growth was mainly driven by the start of new Sri Lanka retail fuel business, where Tristar received a license to operate 150 Shellbranded fuel stations for a 20-year period.

Tristar group has healthy pipeline of growth opportunities, especially in infrastructure capacity building. Those opportunities are predominately related to the Maritime and Fuel storage business.

Industrial Real Estate: Agility Logistics

Agility Logistics Parks (ALP), a leading developer of warehouse parks and light industrial facilities, reported revenue of \$52 million an increase of 13.2%, EBIT stood at \$67 million including the IP revaluation gain of \$30 million. Adjusting for the IP revaluation in both periods EBIT showed a 25% increase. Strong demand for world-class warehousing in fast-growing MENA markets is fueling the growth of ALP, especially in Saudi Arabia. During 2024, ALP kicked off the construction of the Jeddah logistics park that was previously announced. ALP Saudi Arabia also announced development of more than 100k SQM of warehousing space in Riyadh. ALP will continue to look for opportunities in the markets where it operates and in

new potential markets. **Investment Segment** 

EPS (cent)

Agility Global holds non-controlling minority stakes in a number of businesses, both listed and non-listed. As of 31 December 2024, the carrying value of those stakes was roughly \$5.3 billion an increase of \$815 million from December 31, 2023. The largest holdings in this segment are in DSV and Reem Mall



Agility logo

DSV is a Copenhagen-based logistics company and is expected to become the world's number one freight forwarder when it completes its acquisition of DB Schenker, based in Germany. Agility Global owns 19.3 million shares of DSV today, making it one of the Denmark-based company's largest shareholders.

Reem Mall - Agility Global is an investor in Reem Mall on Abu Dhabi's Reem Island. Agility Global's stake in Reem Mall consists of equity and convertible debt. The mall had a soft opening to the public in February 2023 and launched formally in May 2024. To date, 194 units are trading, and almost 80% of Gross Leasable Area (GLA) is committed. More tenants are expected to announce openings in coming months. The mall is one of the region's first, fully integrated omnichannel retail ecosystem with digital, e-commerce, and logistics capabilities. It brings together all consumer and retail services to ensure a seamless customer

Recap of Agility Global FY 2024 Financial Performance

■ Revenue increased 14.5% to \$4.5 billion. ■ EBITDA increased 17.4% to \$711 million,

with 15.8% margins

■ EBIT increased by 21.4% to \$404 million, with 9% margins.

■ Net profit reached \$128 million, equivalent

to 1.25 cent per share. ■ Agility Global enjoys a healthy balance

sheet with \$11.8 billion in assets and USD 5.6 billion in total equity attributable to the equity holder of the parent company. Agility Global's largest investment, which is DSV, represents around 35% of the total assets.

■ The company's net debt (excluding lease liabilities) was \$2.5 billion. Most of the debt is a result of a funded equity collar on the back of some DSV shares.

■ Operating cash flow was \$627 million for 2024. Agility Global spent \$197 million in net CAPEX and investments during the year.

155.1%

0.49

#### Agility Global PLC Reports FY 2024 Net Profit of \$128 Million FY 2024 FY 2023 Variance 3,936 EBITDA 17.4% 711 606 EBIT 21,4% 333 **Net Profit** 152.8% 50

1.25

#### Chairman Al-Terkait highlights UIC's role in enhancing investment sector

## Union of Investment Companies holds General Assembly for fiscal year 2024

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Union of Investment Companies (UIC) recently held its ordinary General Assembly for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024.

The assembly reviewed the most notable achievements of the union over the past year; in addition to its ambitious strategy for the years 2024-2027, which aims to enhance sustainability in the investment sector, implement the principles of governance, social and environmental responsibility, and support the national

In his speech at the assembly, Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait affirmed that the union plays a pivotal role in supporting the investment sector and developing the economic environment in the country. He said the new strategy of the union is based on four main pillars as follows:

■ Enhance communication and integration with investment companies and stakeholders to ensure strong and effective representation of their interests and the protection of their rights in accordance with the laws and regulations. ■ Strengthen cooperation with institutions and regulatory bodies concerned with

the work of investment companies to ensure a more competitive and attractive investment environment. ■ Raise the level of positive media influence and public awareness to affirm the union's role as a strategic partner in formulating financial and investment policies.

■ Establish a culture of development and training through the Center for Investment Studies in order to develop manpower capable of keeping pace with global transformations in the investment sector. He confirmed that the union worked hard last year to strengthen cooperation with the Council of Ministers, Capital Markets Authority (CMA), Ministry of

Finance, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce

and Industry (KCCI) and Boursa Kuwait to guarantee an improved investment business environment and create new investment opportunities that contribute to achieving sustainable development.

He added that throughout the year, the union undertook several important initiatives and meetings with government agencies and the private sector -- the most notable of which were: ■ Cooperation with the Ministry of Finance to review the government's work plan

for the next four years and provide the union comments on the required economic ■ Meeting with the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Develop-

ment to discuss mechanisms to support investment companies in these projects;



UIC's General Assembly for FY 2024.

■ Meeting with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to discuss the challenges of real estate registration and their impact on investment companies, in addition to facilitating procedures for commercial activity codes;

■ Coordination with CMA regarding the executive regulations for financial technology services, submit proposals to establish a platform for listing startups on the stock exchange, and improve the trading environment for bonds, sukuks and exchange-traded funds;

■ Formation of a coordination committee between the associations of banks, investment, industry and real estate to explore ways to support the national economy

and activate the role of the private sector; ■ Strengthening international relations and opening up to global markets

He clarified that the union's efforts were not limited to developing the local investment environment, as they also fortified international relations and promoted investment opportunities in Kuwait through: ■ Meetings with representatives of foreign embassies to introduce the investment

or business environment in Kuwait; ■ Joint investment forums with India, Indonesia, Uzbekistan and China to discuss

investment opportunities and joint cooperation: ■ Virtual seminar with the Embassy of India on 'GIFT CITY' as a global financial center, to introduce Kuwaiti companies to investment opportunities there.

He went on to say that as part of its efforts to develop human resources in the investment sector; the union, through the Center for Investment Studies, launched more than 99 training programs in 2024 with 1,505 participants. It also offered specialized training programs in cooperation with international institutions like the CFA Institute and LEORON Institute.

In an interview with The Banker Magazine

# AlShamlan: Favorable economic laws drive growth in capital expenditure & major development plans

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan said that rooted in gen.uine economic drivers, Kuwait Finance House Group's sustainable financial growth stems from its diversified activities, and the innovative products and services. KFH Group's strategic positioning in key regional and global markets provides a robust platform for high-value profit streams. The Group's presence in Kuwait, Bahrain, the UK, Egypt, Germany, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia is enhanced by a strategy of integration and harmony, which optimizes the ability to generate profits from diverse market performance.

It serves to note that KFH recorded strong financial performance during 2024 where it reported historic net profit of KD 601.8 million, which is the highest in the Kuwaiti banking sector. Net financing income reached around KD 1.15 billion; an increase of nearly 18.7%. Total operating income reached over KD 1.6 billion, an increase of 11.6%. Net operating income reached over KD 1 billion, an increase of 9%. KFH tops all Banks and all listed companies on Boursa Kuwait with a market capitalization of over KD 13 billion.

#### Supportive economic regulations

In an interview with The Banker Magazine, AlShamlan added that the Gulf Cooperation Council's economic upswing, fueled by increased capital expenditure and large-scale projects, will undoubtedly drive expansion in financing portfolios and boost returns, while favorable discount rate movements will further stimulate financing.

#### Financing and Liquidity Law

AlShamlan emphasized that positive developments in Kuwait's economic regulation strengthen the overall economy. He noted that the Financing and Liquidity Law (Public Debt) directly impacts the economy and the banking sector by enhancing financial stability and increasing confidence among both local and international investors and creditors. This law, which grants the government to

issue up to KD 30 billion in debt instruments over a 50-year period, enables the government to tap local and international capital markets.

He explained that this will improve the government's ability to meet its future financial obligations, ensuring sustainable public spending and supporting the state's development plans through investments in infrastructure, construction, and value-added projects. This will positively influence Kuwaiti banks, improving their liquidity management and fostering general economic development.

#### Mortgage law

AlShamlan highlighted the importance of the upcoming mortgage law, even though its specifics remain undisclosed. He explained it will introduce new financing options to improve liquidity and, as previously announced, will be part of a broader legislative package – including the Real Estate Developer Law – designed to address the private housing shortage. "When finalized, the new mortgage law would positively impact the banking sector in general."

#### **Tam Digital Bank**

AlShamlan said that KFH is leveraging cutting-edge technologies like robotics and AI to streamline back-office operations, utilizing big data analytics for informed business decisions. These advancements showcase KFH's commitment to harnessing frontier and emerging technologies for comprehensive digital transformation.

"tam Bank is part of our offerings. It is the first Sharia-compliant digital bank in Kuwait. The core vision and strategy of tam is revolving around the concept of "Beyond Banking" by mixing banking services and social media experience within the same application," he added. "Our success in digital innovation can be measured by the reach and impact of our services and the expansion of our market share and the value to our customers. Our advanced and sophisticated technological infrastructure supports the implementation of such initiatives, both within the Kuwaiti market and across other markets where the Group



Khaled Yousef AlShamlan

operates."

#### KFH Egypt

Meanwhile, AlShamlan said: "The Egyptian market offers a range of Islamic banking products and investment structures. However, we see a continued demand for the development and innovation of Sharia-compliant products across various sectors in Egypt, including retail, corporate, and SMEs. Our top priority in Egypt is to meet this demand and increase our customer base by offering innovative Shariacompliant financial products and services, fostering sustainable growth and enhancing customer experience. "Moreover, the presence of KFH, the largest Islamic bank in Kuwait, in the Egyptian market will definitely add value to the customers and to the banking industry as a whole," he explained.

#### **Green Sukuk**

"Sustainability and ESG considerations have become increasingly central to KFH's operations. We in KFH imbedded ESG factors into our core strategies and decision-making processes. Green Sukuk are poised to shape the future of Islamic finance," AlShamlan highlighted. "KFH intends to actively contribute to the green Sukuk market's development by promoting their adoption as a key financing instrument. Is-



KFH Headquarters.

suer decisions are pivotal in defining the nature of these Sukuk, making it crucial for companies and governments to prioritize them as a primary financing instrument," he revealed.

"Building on its leadership and strong performance in the Sukuk sector, KFH, through its investment arm KFH Capital, participated in and arranged several Sukuk issuances. Notably, a growing portion of these were green Sukuk, demonstrating significant progress towards sustainable financing," AlShamlan concluded.

#### Bank announces holiday closures, branch timings for Eid

### ABK extends Eid greetings to Kuwait's leadership and people

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr, hoping it bestows an abundance of blessings

ABK disclosed that its branches will be

closed from Sunday, 30 March 2025 till Tuesday, 1 April 2025 to resume operations on Wednesday, 2 April 2025, if Eid begins on Sunday, March 30 2025.

If the Eid begins on Monday, March 31 2025, the bank will be closed from Sunday, March 30, 2025, until Wednesday, 2 April 2025 to resume operations on Thursday, 3 April 2025. Except Ministry Complex and Liberation Tower branches.

During this time, ABK's branch in Al Khiran Mall will be open to serve customers from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digital platforms throughout the holiday. This includes Online Banking via eahli.com, Mobile Banking through the ABK app, as well as the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 and its ATM network.



## Burgan Bank shares travel safety tips for secure banking during Eid

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: For the fifth consecutive year, Burgan Bank upholds its committed support for the Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) financial literacy and banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) with the support of Kuwaiti banks. As part of its active contribution to the campaign during the festive season of Eid Al-Fitr, the Bank published a series of awareness tips across its social channels and website, underscoring the shared responsibility of achieving the highest degrees of banking safety, especially while traveling.

The Bank's latest awareness campaign covered a wide range of tips for travelers on how to use their bank cards securely while enjoying the exclusive benefits that Burgan offers its various customer segments. The campaign also included vital warnings about the risks of falling victim to scamming attempts as a result of not following the safety precautions.

On this note, Ms. Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "The travel season is always met with great enthusiasm for all the fun and memorable experiences it promises. Just as many travelers go to extra lengths to plan the details of their trips with delicate care, it is equally important to take all safety measures that guarantee secure overseas transactions. Our latest Diraya campaign was designed to ensure that our customers and community members are updated with all the precautionary measures they need during their travels abroad."

Among the first tips the campaign underscored was the importance of downloading the Burgan Mobile application and activating the SMS no-



Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank.

tifications service, which instantly updates the customers on their card transactions. In addition, customers were advised to memorize or save their passwords and PINs separately from bank cards or mobile phones and not to share them with anyone.

The campaignalso highlighted the danger of sharing the one-time password (OTP), confirming that the Bank representatives would never ask customers to reveal any bank-related information or personal data, such as the username, password, or bank card information via email, SMS, WhatsApp, or phone.

As for securing bank accounts from the danger of being hacked, Burgan strongly advised customers to refrain from connecting to public Wi-Fi networks or signing in to their bank accounts from public devices, which can pose a great security risk. The Bank also advised customers to check their bank cards' expiry date and credit limit before traveling. Furthermore, customers were recommended to pay in the



Diraya logo

travel destination's local currency during their trips abroad.

Other fraud risks that customers

were cautioned about included checking for any foreign devices attached to ATMs and covering the keypad while inserting their PIN. In case of facing any trouble, the Bank advised customers to contact the Burgan customer service call center immediately.

Upon returning from their travels, Burgan Bank advised customers to change their bank card PIN and thoroughly check that their card spending activity matches their receipts, urging them to report any discrepancies or unfamiliar transactions found.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank's efforts to spread vital financial literacy awareness tips on its social media accounts align with its comprehensive social responsibility program. In addition to its year-long awareness campaign, the Bank continues to fortify its data protection and cybersecurity systems, guaranteeing top protection for the customers' assets against breach or theft.

## Bank resumes normal operations on April 2

## Warba Bank ensures 24/7 banking services during Eid Al-Fitr holiday

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: On the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, Warba Bank reaffirms its commitment to serving its valued customers by continuing to offer banking services throughout the official holiday period, from Sunday, March 30, to Tuesday, April 1, 2025. Services will be available 24/7 at the bank's branch at Kuwait International Airport T4, ensuring uninterrupted access to essential banking transactions within Kuwait.

In addition, Warba Bank's comprehensive suite of digital services remains fully operational through its mobile application and online platforms. Customers can also reach the bank's call center at 1825555 from within Kuwait, or +965 2228 8888 from abroad. For added convenience, WhatsApp support is available at +965 5162 5555, and customers may also stay updated through the bank's official social media channels.

Commenting on the occasion, Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail, Senior Director of the Branches and Private Bankingat Warba Bank, said:"We extend our warmest congratulations and wishes to His Highness the Emir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the people and government of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. We wish everyone a joyful and blessed Eid.

At Warba Bank, we remain committed to being close to our customers, even during official holi-



Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail

days, by ensuring the availability of our digital and branch services. Our 24/7 airport branch ensures access for all, whether customers are traveling or staying in Kuwait during the holiday."

Al-Shuail added that Warba Bank customers enjoy a seamless digital banking experience that allows them to manage accounts, transfer funds, pay billsand complete other transactions with ease and security via the bank's app. He reaffirmed the bank's dedication to providing Sharia-compliant, innovative banking solutions that align with customer expectations.

In accordance with the circular issued by the Kuwait Banking Association, all Warba Bank branches will resume normal operations on Wednesday, April 2, 2025, and will be fully prepared to serve customers across all locations.

■ 24/7 customer service available via the airport branch, call center, and WhatsApp ■ Full access to electronic services through the website and mobile app

#### A Vision Centered on Customer Service

Warba Bank actively invests in programs and initiatives that contribute to preserving Kuwait's cultural heritage, fostering national pride, and strengthening community bonds. This approach reflects the bank's broader commitment to providing innovative, ethical, and inclusive banking services that resonate with the values of the society it serves.

It is worth noting that Warba Bank has achieved remarkable success in a short period, establishing itself as a leader in Islamic digital banking services. With one of the largest shareholder bases among local banks, Warba is positioned to serve all segments of society. This continued success reinforces Warba Bank's role as a trusted partner that integrates innovation with social responsibility to deliver top-tier financial products and services.

In line with its unwavering commitment to corporate social responsibility, especially during the holy month

## KIB Invest spreads joy this Ramadan with toy donation initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: KIB Invest, the investment arm of Kuwait International Bank (KIB), launched an initiative aimed at bringing joy to children in hospitals during the Holy Month of Ramadan. KIB Investdistributed toys to young patients across various hospitals, at the headquarters of Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH) and the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH). This initiative comes as part of KIB's continuous dedication to corporate social responsibility, especially ini-

tiativesthat serve young children. From his side, KIB Invest CEO Jamal Hamad Al Barrak, stated: "Our Ramadan toy donation initiative is more than just a charitable act—it is a reflection of our values and our role in making a meaningful impact. Partnering with BACCH and KACCH allows us to extend our support where it is needed most, ensuring that children spending the Holy Month of Ramadan in hospitals feel the warmth and spirit of this blessed time. We remain dedicated to initiatives that uplift our community and foster a culture of care.'

Emphasizing KIB Invest's core values, Head of Investor Relations, and Marketing Rakan Al Ahmad, said: "At KIB Invest, we strongly value meaningful engagement with our community beyond financial services, and this initiative reflects that commitment.Spreading joy and comfort to children during Ramadan is not just an act of kindness but a responsibility we take to heart. We are grateful for the opportunity to make a difference in these children's lives



KIB Invest X B&K CSR Initiative

and look forward to continuing similar initiatives in the future. Through meaningful partnerships and impactful initiatives, we look forward



KIB Invest X B&K CSR Initiative

to continuing our efforts to make a difference.'

In her turn, Dr. Tala Al Dabbous, CEO and Director of Clinical Ser-

vices of BACCH and KACCH stated that "Play is a fundamental part of every child's life—a universal language that transcends barriers and brings comfort, especially to those facing illness and critical health challenges. It fosters a sense of normalcy, allowing children to express themselves, navigate the unfamiliar, and experience moments of joy. We are profoundly grateful to KIB Invest for their generous toy donation. Toys serve as essential tools used daily by our child life specialists and play leaders across our nine child life programs in Kuwait to support hospitalized children. Your kindness and dedication to our patients' emotional well-being will leave a lasting impact. We sincerely appreciate your support, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

ence in Rome.

The initiative aimed to bring comfort and joy to children in the heartwarming event that allowed the KIB Invest team to personally engage with the children, offering them moments of joy and distraction from their medical challenges. A memorable experiencehighlighted the shared smiles and happiness between KIB Invest staff, hospital representatives, and the young recipients.

KIB Invest remains committed to making a meaningful difference in society through initiatives that promote kindness, inclusion, and support. By prioritizing the well-being of children in hospitals, KIB Invest continues to strengthen its role as a socially responsible corporate entity dedicated to giving back to the com-

## Consumer confidence sliding in US

Americans' view of their financial futures slumps to a 12-year low

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): U.S. consumer confidence continued its sharp 2025 decline as Americans' views about their financial futures slumped to a 12-year low, driven by rising anxiety over tariffs and infla-

The Conference Board reported Tuesday that its consumer confidence index fell 7.2 points in March to 92.9, the fourth straight monthly decline and its lowest reading since January of 2021. The reading was short of analysts expectations for a reading of 94.5, according to a survey by FactSet.

The business group found that the measure of Americans' short-term expectations for income, business and the job market fell 9.6 points to 65.2.

That's the lowest reading in 12 years and well below the threshold of 80, which the Conference Board says can signal a potential recession in the near future. The proportion of U.S. consumers anticipating a recession remains at a nine-month high, the board reported.

"Consumers' optimism about future income which had held up quite strongly in the past few months - largely vanished, suggesting worries about the economy and labor market have started to spread into consumers' assessments of their personal situations," said Stephanie Guichard, senior economist at The Conference Board.

The administration of President Donald Trump

BANGKOK, March 26, (AP): Asian markets advanced on Wednesday after

a quiet session on Wall Street as buy-

before, fueled by hopes that President

Donald Trump's tariffs may not be as

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.3%

higher to 23,403.40, while the Shang-

hai Composite index slipped less than

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index added

The Kospi in Seoul was up 1.1% at 2,643.94. In Australia, the \$\hat{S}\&P/ASX

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 added

0.2% to 5,776.65 after jumping 1.8%

Monday to one of its best days of the

last year. The Dow Jones Industrial

Average inched up by 4 points, or less than 0.1%, to 42,587.50. The Nasdaq

U.S. stocks have recovered a chunk

of their losses since falling 10% below

their all-time high earlier this month,

for their first "correction" since 2023.

The S&P 500 is now down 6% from

its record, and that drop has left the

market looking less expensive than be-

fore, which had been a major criticism

following its euphoric rise in earlier

being less painful for the global econ-

omy than feared, all the dizzying talk

about them has already soured con-

fidence among U.S. households and

businesses. The fear is that could lead

them to cut back on their spending and

freeze the economy.

But strategists along Wall Street

composite rose 0.5% to 18,271.86.

sweeping as earlier feared.

200 gained 0.7% to 7,999.00.

0.1%, to 3,367.98.

0.7% to 38,027.29.

has largely played down the souring mood among Americans, saying it doesn't necessarily reflect what's happening in the actual economy. This argument is similar to what officials in former President Joe Biden's administration said as high inflation suppressed consumer confidence without

undermining growth.
"I just don't think that there's been a very strong correlation between the confidence data and actual consumer spending in recent years," Stephen Miran, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, told CNBC on Tuesday. "You go out in the street, people are going about their lives, you know, they're getting their paychecks, they're spending their paychecks, the economy is marching on ahead.'

Yet some of the nation's biggest retailers, who have noted a shift in consumer behavior, are telling a different story.

Walmart has thrived with Americans trying to offset higher prices by seeking bargains. Late last month, however, the nation's largest retailer slashed its profit forecast for this year. Its sales outlook was also conservative and the company does not include the potential impact of tariffs in its expectations for 2025.

Target's sales and profit slipped during the crucial holiday quarter, and the company predicted that there would be "meaningful pressure" on its profits to start the year in part because of tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China.

Macy's, Best Buy, Abercrombie & Fitch, Dollar General and others also have grown cautious about their expectations for 2025, with many citing "eco-

Hang Seng rose 0.3% higher to 23,403.40

Asian markets make modest advance after a slow day on Wall Street

nomic uncertainty."

The board's survey showed that purchasing plans for both homes and cars declined. However, in somewhat of a surprise given respondents' anxiety about the future, intentions to buy big-ticket items like appliances increased. The board said that could reflect a desire to buy before the tariffs kick in, leading to price increases.

While inflation has retreated from the highs during the post-pandemic rebound, it has remained above the Federal Reserve's 2% target. Those still-elevated prices, combined with the announced tariffs on many imported goods, have Americans feeling sour about spending as concerns about the economy mount.

Consumers had appeared increasingly confident heading into the year-end holidays and spent generously. One month later, however, in January, U.S. retail sales fell sharply, though cold weather shared some of the blame.

Earlier this month, the government reported that Americans stepped up their spending in February after the sharp early year pullback, but only tep-

The board reported Tuesday that consumers view of current conditions decreased 3.6 points to

The consumer confidence index measures both Americans' assessment of current economic conditions and their outlook for the next six months.

Consumer spending accounts for about twothirds of U.S. economic activity and is closely watched by economists for signs about how the

American consumer is feeling.

## Nissan's new CEO says the automaker

ATSUGI, Japan, March 26, (AP): The chief-executive-to-be at moneylosing Japanese automaker Nissan is determined to speed up decisionmaking to come up with models that

two decades of experience at Nissan Motor Corp., told reporters in embargoed comments for Wednesday that the company's corporate culture is "lacking empathy" and has to change.

"We need to work together as one single team," he said at the Nissan Technical Center in Atsugi city on the outskirts of Tokyo. "We need to work together hand in hand."

Nissan recently appointed Espinosa to take its helm, effective April 1, replacing Makoto Uchida.

Espinosa has his work cut out for him as the maker of the Sentra sedan and Infiniti luxury cars faces yet another crisis, which began decades ago when Carlos Ghosn was sent in by French alliance partner Renault to save it from the

Ghosn was arrested by Japanese authorities in 2018 on financial misconduct allegations but jumped bail

Uchida, chief since 2019 when Ghosn's successor Hiroto Saikawa resigned over a separate money scandal, stepped down after the company projected a loss for the fiscal year through March.

to partnerships, including with parties outside the auto industry,

Japanese rival Honda Motor Co. to set up a joint holding company. They will continue to cooperate on technology development.

The conference, titled "Governing Europe and Italy in the Age of Donald Trump," was hosted by LUISS University on Monday evening and featured prominent speakers, including former Italian Prime Ministers Mario Monti and Giuliano Amato, Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti, European Commission

Vice-President Raffaele Fitto, and LUISS professors. "What we are seeing today is not the only time Europe has faced big challenges," said Monti, who served as Italy's prime minister between 2011 and 2013 during the global sovereign debt crisis. "But we must act together to confront the current challenges.

**US** tariffs, rising debt, and big techies cited

European unity a must to

tackle economic challenges

ROME, March 26, (Xinhua): European unity is vital to tackling economic chal-

lenges ranging from new U.S. tariffs and rising public debt to the expanding influ-

ence of big tech firms, Italian political figures and analysts have said at a confer-

Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 25-percent tariff on aluminum, steel, and related imports, with another round set to take effect on April 2, though details remain unclear. In response, the European Union initially planned retaliatory tariffs for April 1 but postponed them by at least two weeks following a European Council meeting to allow more time for negotiations.

On the sidelines of the conference, economics professor Pietro Reichlin told Xinhua that the Trump administration's unpredictable tariff policies complicate the EU's response strategies. Reichlin stressed the importance of understanding U.S. trade goals to reach an

agreement, pointing to the EU's surplus in goods and the U.S. strengths in services and energy as potential negotiation points. Italy's Finance Minister Giorgetti warned that mounting debt and the growing

influence of big tech firms - particularly U.S. giants such as Google and leading players in artificial intelligence, are increasingly limiting the policymakers' op-According to Eurostat, the EU's average debt stood at 81.6 percent of GDP at the end of the third quarter of 2024 while the eurozone recorded an average ratio

of 88.1 percent. Italy's debt-to-GDP ratio reached 136.3 percent, second only to Speakers stressed the need for greater cohesion within Europe to address ex-

ternal trade pressures, the Ukraine conflict, and internal disputes within the bloc. Amato emphasized that cooperation, not conflict, drives prosperity. Reichlin also stressed the importance of adapting to evolving trade dynamics

with China. "Adjusting trade relations is crucial, as both sides stand to benefit from deeper engagement," he said.

## will move faster to achieve a turnaround

say Nissan - and really sell.

Ivan Espinosa, 46, chief planning officer and a Mexican with

brink of bankruptcy.

and is now in Lebanon.

Espinosa expressed an openness although he declined to give spe-

Nissan recently ditched talks with

Espinosa repeatedly came back to the importance of being nimble. New cars will be developed in 37 months, and offshoot models within 30 months, he said.

Auto production, starting with design and culminating in product tests, takes several years. Bringing a product to market in 30 months would be relatively quick for the industry.

To showcase its turnaround plans, Nissan showed an array of models rolling out in the next two years for the U.S., Europe, Japan and other markets, some of them as mockup

Espinosa and other officials promised a lineup that highlights Nissan's legacy, like the Leaf electric car, and models that sell in greater volumes. It's also bringing out various ecological models, like hybrids, plug-ins and electric vehicles, and cutting-edge technology like selfdriving cars.

When announcing his replacement, Uchida called Espinosa "a car guy.

Espinosa, who drives a Z sportscar, Nissan's flagship nameplate, said he saw himself as "a car lover." He loves the stories behind each car, he said, like how it's developed and becomes loved by customers.

Analysts have so far taken a cautious approach to Espinosa's appointment. As an insider, he takes up where Uchida left off, meaning the verdict is still out.

"We view it as unlikely that Nissan would be open to becoming a subsidiary of Honda at this time, at least until the board has time to assess the effectiveness of Espinosa's strategy, once it is unveiled and put into action," CreditSights analysts Todd Duvick and Will Lee wrote in a recent commentary.

is only worsening. The Conference

A person walks in front of an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei index at a securities firm Wednesday,

March 26, 2025, in Tokyo. (AP)

warn that more sharp swings are still A report on Tuesday showed that pessimism among U.S. households likely on the way with an April 2 deadline looming. That's what Trump has called "Liberation Day," when he will begin tariffs on trading partners that he says will roughly equal what he sees as the burden each of them puts on the United States. Monday's spurt for Wall Street came on hopes that Trump's "reciprocal" tariffs may be more targeted than had earlier been signals a recession ahead." Even if Trump's tariffs do end up

Board's measure of consumer confidence fell by more than expected, mostly because of a tumble for expectations about upcoming conditions in the short term. That dropped to its lowest level in 12 years and is sitting "well below the threshold of 80 that usually Like other recent surveys, the data showed U.S. households are much more concerned about where the econ-

omy is heading than where it is cur-

rently. So far, actual economic activity

and the job market seem to be holding

up despite the worsening moods of

U.S. companies and consumers.

On Wall Street, Trump Media & Technology Group climbed 8.9% after the company behind the president's Truth Social platform said it had reached an agreement with Crypto. com to offer a suite of "America-First" investment funds.

The exchange-traded funds will hold bitcoin and other digital assets, along with what TMTG called "securities with a Made in America focus spanning diverse industries such as energy." Crypto.com will support the backend technology, provide custody and supply the cryptocurrencies for the ETFs, which will operate under TMTG's Truth.Fi brand.

Tesla rose 3.4% after drifting between modest gains and losses following more grim sales figures from Europe. Its stock nevertheless remains down nearly 29% for 2025 so far. Homebuilder KB Home dropped

5.2% after reporting weaker profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Already mired in a slump, homebuilders may face potentially rising costs due to tariffs, which they will have to pass on to buyers. A report on Tuesday morning said U.S. sales of new homes last month were slightly weaker than economists expected.

In other dealings early Wednesday, U.S. benchmark crude oil gained 31 cents to \$69.31 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, was up 30 cents at \$72.69 per barrel.

Treasury chief set to announce further welfare cuts while boosting defense spending

### UK inflation falls by more than anticipated, in a boost to the government ahead of a key statement

LONDON, March 26, (AP): Price rises in the U.K. moderated by more than anticipated in February, official figures showed Wednesday, in a boost for Treasury chief Rachel Reeves before she delivers a statement to lawmakers about the state of the public finances.

The Office for National Statistics said consumer price inflation fell to 2.8% from 3% the previous month. Most analysts had expected a more modest decline to 2.9%

The agency said the price of clothes, particularly women's clothes, was the biggest driver for this fall. The latest figures mean the cost of living is still rising for households across the U.K. - and inflation remains above the

Bank of England's 2% target - but at a much slower rate than

Last week, the bank kept its main U.K. interest rate unchanged at 4.50% even though the economy is barely growing and the nation faces more uncertainty in light of the tariff policies being enacted by the Trump administration in the U.S.

The bigger-than-forecast inflation drop could provide some relief for Reeves as she prepares to deliver her spring statement on Wednesday afternoon.

She is expected to announce spending cuts for some government departments and respond to weaker economic growth projections from the independent forecaster.

Against a backdrop of sluggish economic growth, which caused borrowing to run higher than anticipated, Rachel Reeves will unveil measures intended to meet her self-imposed budget rules.

Reeves' spring statement to Parliament will be made in response to what is likely to be a fairly gloomy economic assessment by the government's independent forecaster, the Office for Budget Responsibility.

The agency is widely expected to slash its forecast for growth, leaving a hole in the government's revenue expectations.

It's also expected to reveal that changes to welfare announced by the government last week will not achieve the 5 billion pounds (\$6.5 billion) of promised savings. That means Reeves will have to find even more money, to the likely unease of many lawmakers in her Labour Party.

Reflecting geopolitical turbulence caused by the return of President Donald Trump, Reeves is also set to tell lawmakers that a "more insecure world" requires a greater focus on

national security. She is due to confirm a 2.2 billion-pound (\$2.9 billion) increase in defense spending, which Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said is the biggest increase since the end of the Cold War.

"This moment demands an active government stepping up to secure Britain's future," she is set to say, according to remarks released by the Treasury.

The British economy, the sixth-largest, eked out modest growth of 0.1% in the fourth quarter, a hugely disappointing outcome for the new Labour government, which has made boosting growth its number one economic policy. Since the global financial crisis in 2008-2009, the British economy's growth performance has been notably below its long-run av-

# Eatures Arabetines Thursday, March 27, 2025



Kenny Chesney performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, on Monday, March 17, 2025 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Record producer Tony Brown speaks at the Americana Honors & Awards show Sept. 22, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)



In this Oct. 16, 1992, file photo, singers June Carter Cash and husband Johnny Cash perform at New York's Madison Square Garden.

#### **Country icons recognized**

## Carter, Chesney, Brown set to join Hall of Fame

NASHVILLE, Tenn., March 26, (AP): June Carter, Kenny Chesney and Tony Brown have been invited to join the Country Music Hall of Fame.

The Country Music Association announced the new 2025 inductees on Tuesday in Nashville, Tennessee.

Carter, the Grammy-winning member of one of country music's pioneering families and the wife of country giant Johnny Cash, joins as this year's veteran era artist. Chesney, who has won the CMA Awards entertainer of the year four times, joins as the modern era artist. And Brown, a Nashville producer who has supervised a wide array of bestselling hits by Vince Gill, Reba McEntire, George Strait and many others, will join the non-performer

The three will be formally inducted during a ceremony in the

Tuesday's celebratory ceremony focused on their contributions to country music over the decades, highlighting their influence, even when they were overlooked at

"Johnny once said that his wife was one of the most neglected artists in country music," said country singer Vince Gill, who introduced the inductees. He said Cash worried that his wife's contributions would "under-recognized simply because she's my wife."

#### **Accomplishments**

"That changes as she takes her rightful place among family, friends and legends in the Country Music Hall of Fame," Gill said.

Some of Carter's accomplishments include writing more than 100 songs, including co-writing "Ring of Fire," a top hit for Cash. The two married in 1968 and recorded several Grammy-award winning hits like "Jackson" and "If I Were a Carpenter."

But Carter had been singing since she was 10, long before marrying Cash. Her mother, Maybelle Carter, was in the Carter Family music act with her cousin Sara Carter and Sara's husband, A.P. Carter. The family act broke up, but mother and daughters June, Helen and Anita continued on as Mother Maybelle & the Carter Sisters, with little June playing autoharp.

The Carters went on to become staples of the Grand Ole Opry country music show in Nashville. Carlene Carter described her mother as a "force of nature" who

was "anchored in love."

"Anything that's good about me is because of that mom," said Carlene Carter, who continued in the family business as a country singer and songwriter.

#### Inducted

Chesney, who grew up in eastern Tennessee, told the crowd on Tuesday that if someone had said he would one day be inducted into the same Hall of Fame class as June Carter Cash, he would have called it "unbelievable."

Chesney's career includes 16 platinum albums and more than 50 Top Ten country hits. After receiving a standing ovation, he said he was just hoping to spread love and positivity through his music.

"I had a really big dream and I'm still pushing that dream as far as I can," Chesney said. "I just wanted to record and write songs that reflected the lives of a lot of people that came to our shows.'

For Brown, getting the call about his induction into the Hall of Fame almost knocked him over. He called it one of the biggest accomplishments of his career.

Every year, the Country Music Hall of Fame chooses just three inductees, one of which rotates between songwriters, recording/ touring musicians and non-performers.

Brown backed Elvis Presley until his death in 1977, then played with Emmylou Harris & The Hot Band, as well as Rodney Crowell & The Cherry Bombs. But he's being honored more for his production work, as president of MCA Nashville, with RCA Records and eventually as cofounder of Universal South Re-

"You make records and you make some money, but this is better than money," Brown said. "This is about making an im-

#### **Books**

#### Nunez, Enright among \$175K literary prize winners

## Singer Cherry, medic Clarke vie for nonfiction award

LONDON, March 26, (AP): A moving memoir by Swedish singer Neneh Cherry and the gripping story of a heart transplant by British doctor Rachel Clarke are among finalists for the Women's Prize for Nonfiction, set up to help fix the gender imbalance in nonfiction publishing.

Cherry's "A Thousand Threads" and Clarke's "The Story of a Heart" are on a six-book shortlist for the 30,000 pound (\$39,000) prize.

The other contenders include two books about nature and the environment: "Raising Hare" by British writer Chloe Dalton, and "What the Wild Sea Can Be" by U.K. biologist Helen Scales.

Also on the list are "Agent Zo," British historian Clare Mulley's biography of a World War II resistance fighter, and China-born British lawmaker Yuan Yang's "Private Revolutions," which explores the lives of young women in modernday China.

British journalist Kavita Puri, who is chairing the panel of judges, said the "eclectic" list includes "narratives that honor the natural world and its bond with humanity, meticulously researched stories of women challenging power and books that illuminate complex subjects with authority, nuance and originality."

The award is a sister to the 30-year-old Women's Prize for Fiction and is open to female Englishlanguage writers from any country in any nonfiction genre. It was established last year in response to statistics showing men in the U.K. buy more nonfiction than women - and write more prize-winning nonfiction

The company Nielsen Book Research found in 2019 that while women bought 59% of all the books sold in the U.K., men accounted for just over half of adult nonfiction purchases. The inaugural winner was Cana-

dian author-activist Naomi Klein for "Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mir-

Winners of both nonfiction and fiction prizes will be announced June 12 at a ceremony in London.

Meanwhile, National Book Award winner Sigrid Nunez and

Neneh Cherry poses for photographers upon arrival at the Burberry Spring Summer 2024 fashion show on Monday, Sept. 18, 2023 in London. (AP)

Booker Prize winner Anne Enright are among eight recipients of literary honors that include a \$175,000 cash award. The Windham-Campbell Prizes are given each year for literary achievement and to enable writers to work independently.

Other winners announced Tuesday include legal scholar Patricia Williams, dramatists Roy Williams and Matilda Feyiay Ibini, poets Anthony V. Capildeo and Tongo Eisen-

Martin and essayist Rana Dasgupta. Based at Yale University, the prizes were established in 2013 by the writer Donald Windham, who drew upon family stocks inherited from his late friend Sandy Campbell. Previous winners include Percival Everett, Ling Ma and Vivian Gornick.

Windham died in 2010.

"It was the late Donald Windham's wish in establishing these prizes to call attention to literary achievement and provide writers with time, space and freedom," prize director Michael Kelleher said in a statement. "This mission remains at the heart of the Windham-Campbell Prizes, and in today's world it is more vital than ever to recognize and support the crucial work and wisdom that writers share with us

#### **Television**



Chase Sui Wonders, (from left), Kathryn Hahn, Seth Rogen, Ike Barinholtz and Catherine O'Hara, cast members in the Apple TV+ series 'The Studio,' pose together on Thursday, March 20, in Los Angeles. (AP)

A satirical glimpse at Hollywood's power games

## 'The Studio' redefines modern Hollywood

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): The studio head has historically been seen as a fearsome and all-powerful figure, capable of ending a career with the snap of a finger or changing lives with an impulsive greenlight. In "The Studio," though, Seth Rogen's studio chief is more Selina Meyer ("Veep") than Louis B. Mayer.

As much as Rogen's Matt Remick, head of the fictional Continental Studios, sits in a sought-after seat of power, he's helpless against larger trends in the film industry. He wants to be making "Chinatown," but instead his most important task is getting a Kool-Aid movie off the ground. Bryan Cranston's Continental chief executive asks: Can he do this? "Oh, yeah!"

"As pitiful as it is, the conflict that my character lives and breathes every second of his life is one a lot of people with his job are facing in real life," Rogen says. "They love movies. They're also responsible to a very specific bottom line and they have to defend the choice they make to a board of people who don't give a s--- about movies."

"The Studio," the 10-episode series debuting Wednesday on Apple TV+, may be the definitive portrait of contemporary Hollywood. If movies like "Singin' in the Rain" and "The Player" captured the movie industry in full swagger, "The Studio" belongs to a more desperate chapter where even the all-powerful feel impotent. Studio heads, too, must tolerate conversations with people who haven't been to the movies in ages, but who loved "The Bear."

In a recent interview, Rogen and Goldberg, the longtime writing, producing and directing duo behind "Superbad," "Pineapple Express" and "This Is the End," said "The Studio" isn't quite a Hollywood postmortem, no matter how much Cranston's performance in the helter-skelter CinemaCon-set finale verges toward

"Weekend at Bernie's" territory. "We're people who have been given great lives from this industry who, in general, though it's been very frustrating, have gotten to do what they want," Rogen says. "The show is very specifically written from the perspective of people that think things can work out in Hollywood."

There always is, and probably always will be, reason for optimism in Hollywood. The next big hit is perpetually just around the corner. But as audiences have become increasingly distracted by streaming, TikTok and video games, the film industry - or at least the major studio version of it has turned into an IP-factory, hoping that franchises, superheroes and horror can sustain itself.

There's still time for a turnaround (there's that optimism again), but ticket sales in 2025 are down 6.9%

from last year and 38.6% from 2019, according to Comscore. The trends are worse if you look at tickets sold rather than dollars earned, since large-format screens beef up ticket prices.

More than that, though, "The Studio" - with a boatload of cameos of everyone from Martin Scorsese to Netflix chief Ted Sarandos to Zoe Kravitz - taps into a deeper demoralization. Flanked by a team of executives (Kathryn Hahn, Ike Barinholtz, Chase Sui Wonders), Remick finds himself - when not directly obstructing filmmakers he adores, like Scorsese and Sarah Polley - beset with questions over whether they've cast a racist Kool-Aid movie, if their "Smile" knockoff "Wink" can work or how to sell a movie with zombie diarrhea.

Matthew Belloni, the former editor of The Hollywood Reporter and founding partner of the media company Puck, appears as himself in the series.

gen and Goldberg have had a role in revealing the inner workings of a Hollywood studio. When their 2014 North Korean comedy "The Interview" led to the hacking of Sony Pictures, the studio's private correspondence landed on the internet. "Without 'The Interview,' a show

He says that there's truth underlying

almost every scene in the "The Studio,"

"It captures the existential dread

that seems to permeate every conver-

sation," says Belloni. "People recog-

nize that the glory days of Hollywood

are over and the whole concept of

what Hollywood even means is being

redefined. And that has caused every-

body in town to go completely crazy.

This show captures that craziness

very, very well."
"The Studio" isn't the first time Ro-

"for better and mostly worse."

like this would have been much harder for us to write," Rogen says, chuckling. 'We got to the CEO-level of problem.

Those problems ultimately included Sony Pictures co-chair Amy Pascal stepping down. Pascal, who has since been a highly successful producer, has remained a mentor to Rogen and Goldberg. In "The Studio," she's fictionalized by Catherine O'Hara as a savvy producer and Remick's former boss.

"One of the biggest misconceptions people seem to have with Hollywood is that it's run by people who only care about money and don't at all care about film," Rogen says. "There's a few of those people,"

Goldberg chimes in.

"They are out there, for sure," continues Rogen. "But in general, the people who have ascended to Amy's level to run studios are people who love movies and can sit in a room with the greatest filmmakers on earth and have an on-the-level conversation about

This image released by Apple TV+ shows Seth Rogen, (left), and Catherine O'Hara in a scene from 'The Studio.' (AP

#### Oscar-winning filmmaker released by Israeli forces

## Palestinian director recalls brutal beating by Israeli soldiers

HEBRON, West Bank, March 26, (AP): Only a few weeks ago, Hamdan Ballal stood on a stage in Los Angeles accepting an Oscar for the film "No Other Land," a documentary depicting his West Bank village's struggle against Israel's occupation.

On Tuesday, Ballal - his face bruised and clothes still spotted with blood - recounted to The Associated Press how he was heavily beaten by an Israeli settler and soldiers the night before. The settler, he said, kicked his head "like a football" during a settler attack on his village.

The soldiers then detained him and two other Palestinians. Ballal said he was kept blindfolded for more than 20 hours, sitting on the floor under a blasting air conditioner. The soldiers kicked, punched or hit him with a stick whenever they came on their guard shifts, he said. Ballal doesn't speak Hebrew, but he said he heard them saying his name and the word "Oscar.

"I realized they were attacking me specifically," he said in an interview at a West Bank hospital after his release Tuesday. "When they say 'Oscar', you understand. When they say your name, vou understand.



Hamdan Ballal, Oscar-winning Palestinian director of 'No Other Land,' is released from a police station in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba a day after being detained by the Israeli army following an attack by Jewish settlers, Tuesday, March 25. (AP)

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to the claims that Ballal was beaten by soldiers. The settler whom Ballal identified as his attacker, Shem Tov Luski - who has threatened Ballal in the past - denied he or the soldiers beat him and told the AP that

he and other Palestinians in the village had thrown stones at his car. He said he didn't know Ballal was an Oscar

The Israeli military said Monday it had detained three Palestinians suspected of hurling rocks as well as one Israeli civilian, who was soon released. Ballal denied throwing stones.

The attack took place Monday night in the southern West Bank village of Susiya. It's part of the Masafer Yatta region featured in "No Other Land," which depicts the Palestinian residents' attempts to fend off settler attacks and the military's plans to demolish their homes.

At around sunset, as residents were ending their daylong Ramadan fast, roughly two dozen Jewish settlers along with police entered the village, throwing stones at houses and breaking property, witnesses say. Around 30 soldiers arrived soon after. Jewish Israelis in an activist group supporting the villagers showed video of themselves also being attacked, with settlers hitting their car with sticks and stones.

Ballal said he filmed some of the damage caused by the settlers. Then he went to his own home and locked it, with his wife and three young children

"I told myself if they will attack me, if they kill me, I will protect my family," he said.

Ballal said Luski approached with two soldiers. He said Luski hit him on the head, knocked him to the ground and kept kicking and punching him in the head. At the same time, one soldier hit him on the legs with his gun butt, while the other pointed his weapon at him, he said.

Lamia Ballal, the director's wife, said she was huddling inside with their children and heard him screaming,

Luski told the AP that he and other settlers had come to the village to help a fellow settler who said he was being attacked by Palestinian stone-throwers. He said dozens of masked Palestinians attacked his car with stones, including Ballal. "He broke my window, threw a stone at my chest," he said.

He said when soldiers arrived, he led them to Ballal's house to identify him as one of the attackers but denied that he hit him or that settlers attacked any property in the village. Luski said he had footage of the night's events but when asked to show it to the AP, he responded with a string of exple-

On Tuesday, a small bloodstain could be seen outside Ballal's home, and the family car's windows were shattered. Neighbors pointed to a nearby water tank with a hole in the side that they said had been punched by the

Lea Tsemel, the attorney representing Ballal and the two other Palestinians detained with him, said they were taken to an army base, where they only received minimal care for their injuries from the attack. She said they had no access to them for several hours after their arrest.

Ballal said he had no idea where he was being held, could see nothing and was "freezing" from the hours spent blindfolded under the air conditioner.

The three were transferred to an Israeli police station at the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba and were

released Tuesday afternoon. "All my body is pain," he told the AP immediately after his release as he walked, limping, toward a hospital in

the nearby Palestinian city of Hebron. Doctors at the hospital said Ballal had bruises and scratches all over his body, abrasions under his eye and a cut on his chin but no internal injuries. The

two other detained Palestinians also had minor injuries. In a widely circulated video from August, Luski and several other masked settlers are seen arguing with Ballal. Luski shouts profanity at him

and tries to provoke him into a fight.

Food

Elevate your Eid feast with mutton pulao, and seviyan

## 'Pakistan' serves up savory recipes for Eid

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): A mainstay at the Eid al-Fitr table of Maryam Jillani's grandmother, Kulsoom, was mutton pulao, an aromatic rice dish prepared in a gently spiced bone broth. It's both comforting and celebratory - and can be absolutely revelatory when paired with a sharp condiment like a garlic chutney.

Dessert included seviyan, sweetened vermicelli noodles simmered in spiced

Here are recipes from Jillani's cookbook, "Pakistan," for the mutton, chutney and seviyan:

Serves 6 to 8 as a main course About 3 pounds bone-in mutton, lamb or beef, cut into 1- to 1 1/2-inch pieces; 4 medium yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced; 4 whole cloves; 2 black cardamom pods; One 2-inch cinnamon stick; 1 tablespoon cumin seeds; 2 tablespoons garlic paste; 2 tablespoons salt, or to taste; 1/3 cup vegetable oil; 3 cups basmati rice, rinsed in

several changes of water Fill a large pot with 8 to 10 cups water. Add the mutton, half of the onions. the whole cloves, cardamom pods, cinnamon stick, cumin seeds, 1 tablespoon of the garlic paste, and 1 tablespoon of the salt. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook the mutton for 1 to 2 hours, depending on the quality of the meat, until it is tender. With a slotted spoon, remove the meat. Strain the solids from the liquid, return the liquid to the pot, and place it by the stove. Discard the solids.

In a clean heavy-bottomed pot, heat the oil until it begins to shimmer. Add the remaining onions and fry on medium-low heat for 12 to 15 minutes until they are a deep golden-brown color. Take care to not let them burn. Stir in the remaining garlic paste and cook for 30 seconds to 1 minute, until the mixture no longer smells

Increase the heat to high and add the mutton and remaining 1 tablespoon salt. Sear the meat, 5 to 7 minutes, until it has browned slightly. Pour in 6 cups of the strained mutton broth (put any leftover broth in airtight containers and freeze for later use). Taste and add more salt as needed. Bring to a boil,

then lower the heat to maintain a simmer. Carefully pour in the rice and let cook for about 10 minutes until the water completely evaporates.

Wrap a tight-fitting lid with a clean kitchen towel and place it securely on the pot. Turn the heat to the lowest possible setting and let the rice steam for at least 10 to 12 minutes until fluffy. Carefully transfer the pulao to a serving platter and fluff with a fork.

Aida Khan, a London-based entrepreneur and chef, shared her mother's recipe for this vibrant, punchy lahsun ki chutney. Its very spicy, so a little goes a long way. Refrigerate this chutney in an airtight container for up to two weeks.

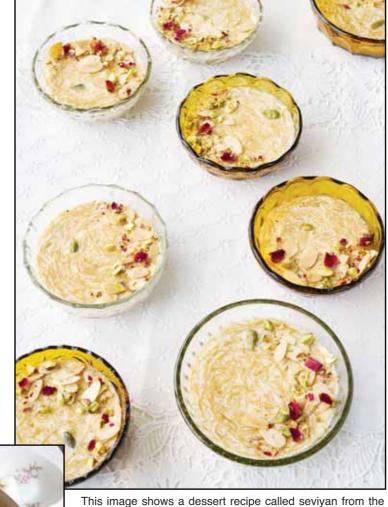
Makes 1 cup

4 heads garlic, cloves separated and peeled; 1-1/2 small red onions, roughy chopped; 1/4 cup red chile flakes; 1 bird's eye chile (optional); 1/2 cup vegetable oil; 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste; 2 teaspoons lemon juice

In a food processor, combine the garlic, onions, chile flakes, and bird's eye chile (if using), and blitz until you have a thick paste.

In a small saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat until it shimmers. Add the garlic and onion paste and salt. Bring it to a simmer, cover the pan, and reduce the heat to low. Cook the chutney for 35 to 40 minutes, stirring occasionally until the garlic and onions have caramelized and the chutney's color deep-

Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the lemon juice and serve. Serves 12



cookbook 'Pakistan' by Maryam Jillani. (AP)



This photo shows a recipe for mutton pulao from Maryam Jillani's book, 'Pakistan.' (AP)

1/4 cup ghee; 6 green cardamom pods, cracked; 5 1/2 ounces seviyan (semolina vermicelli); 8 1/2 cups full-fat milk; 3/4 cup sugar; 2 tablespoons blanched sliced al-

ents used to make the mutton milk thickens but the seviyan pulao. (AP)

In heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, melt the ghee and heat it until it begins to shimmer. Add the cardamom pods and fry for about 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the seviyan and fry over

to 3 minutes until browned slightly. Gradually pour in the milk and bring the pudding to a boil. Lower the heat to medium and stir in the sugar until it dissolves. Keep the milk at a gentle simmer and cook for 15

medium heat for 2

to 20 minutes, stir-This photo shows the ingredi-  $_{ring}\ continually,\ until\ the$ still has some bite.

Transfer the seviyan to a serving bowl. Top with sliced almonds. Let it cool to room temperature before serving. To store, transfer to an airtight container, refrigerate, and use within 2

### As Ramadan ends, Jillani brings Eid feasts

## Cookbook explores Pakistan's diverse cuisine

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): When Maryam Jillani was growing up in Islamabad, the last day of Ramadan was about more than breaking a month-long fast with extended family.

A joyous occasion, the Eid al-Fitr holiday also was marked with visits to the market to get new bangles, wearing her best new clothes and getting hennaed. Not to mention the little envelopes with cash gifts from the adults.

"But, of course, food," said Jillani, a food writer and author of the new cookbook "Pakistan." "Food is a big part of

At the center of her grandmother Kulsoom's table was always mutton pulao, a delicately spiced rice dish in which the broth that results from cooking bone-in meat is then used to cook the rice. Her uncle would make mutton karahi, diced meat simmered in tomato

sauce spiked with ginger and chilies. Cutlets, kebabs, lentil fritters and more rounded out the meal, while dollops of pungent garlic chutney and a cooling chutney with cilantro and mint cut through all the meat. For dessert were bowls of chopped fruit and seviyan, or semolina vermicelli noodles that are fried then simmered in cardamom-spiced milk.

The vegetable sides were the one thing that changed. Since Ramadan follows the lunar Islamic calendar, it can fall any time of year. These dishes, and many of the asso-

ciated memories, make it into Jillani's book, but she would be the first to acknowledge they represent just a sliver of the nation's varied cuisine.

Her father, who worked in international development, used to take the family to different parts of the country. Later, she did her own development fieldwork in education across rural Pa-

Along the way, she found striking differences between the tangier, punchier flavors in the east, toward India and China, and the milder but still flavorful cuisine in the west, toward Afghani-

"I knew our cuisine was a lot more than what we were finding on the inter-



This cover image released by Hardie Grant shows the cookbook 'Pakistan,' by Maryam Jillani. (AP)

After moving to Washington, D.C. as a graduate student, she started the blog Pakistan Eats in 2008 to highlight dishes that were lesser known to Western cooks. Research on the book began 15 years later, and she visited 40 kitchens in homes across Pakistan. "Even though I hadn't lived in Pa-

kistan for over 10 years, each kitchen felt like home," she writes in the book's introduction.

She includes what she calls "superstars" of the cuisine, such as chicken karahi, one of the first dishes Pakistanis learn to make when overseas to get a taste of home. The meat is seared in a karahi (skillet) and then braised in a tomato sauce spiced with cumin, coriander, ginger, garlic and chilies before a dollop of yogurt is stirred into the pot.

Other recipes reflect the diverse nature of Pakistan's migrant communities, such as kabuli pulao, an Afghan rice dish made with beef, garam masala, chilies, sweetened carrots and

"The idea behind the cookbook is to try to play my small part in carving out a space for Pakistani food on the global culinary table," she said.

And of course, honoring her grandmother's mutton pulao.

People

## **#MeToo accountability**

## Gérard Depardieu on trial, and so is France

PARIS, March 26, (AP): Gérard Depardieu once seemed larger than France itself. With his hulking frame, crooked nose, and volcanic charisma, he reigned over cinema for half a century - a national icon as familiar as the baguette.

But this week, the actor who starred in more than 230 films and who inspired writer John Updike to lament, "I think that I shall never view a French film without Depardieu" - sat slumped on a special orthopedic stool in a Paris courtroom.

He faces two counts of sexual assault. If convicted, he could face up to five years in prison and a fine of 75,000 euros (\$81,000).

But more than Depardieu is on For many in France, this case

marks the country's ultimate litmus test - a question not just of guilt or innocence, but of readiness. Can a nation famed for its culture of seduction - and long criticized for shielding its male artists - finally hold one of them accountable?

Depardieu, 76, is accused of groping two women - a set dresser and an assistant - during the 2021 filming of "Les Volets Verts" ("The Green Shutters"). According to complaints and witness statements, he trapped one woman with his legs, grabbed her breasts and waist, and shouted: "I can't even get it up because of this heat!" before crudely inviting her to touch his "big parasol."

He denies all allegations "Never, but never, have I abused a woman," he wrote in Le Figaro. "I have only ever been guilty of being too loving, too generous, or having a temperament that is too

#### Symbol

But this is the first time one of the more than 20 accusations against him has reached court.

Once a symbol of France's creative power, Depardieu's career now shadows the nation's delayed reckoning with #MeToo. The courtroom has become the stage for something deeper: a country finally confronting the myths it has long told itself about art, power, and male genius.

Born in 1948 to a workingclass family in Châteauroux, Depardieu's rise was the stuff of legend. A stuttering teen with no formal education, he drifted into acting and exploded onto the French stage with "Les Valseuses" ("Going Places"), a 1974 film so provocative it remains banned in some countries.

From there came a blur of hits: "Jean de Florette," "Cyrano de Bergerac," "Green Card," "The Last Metro," and "Danton." He won a Golden Globe, an Oscar nomination, and the adoration of millions. He played Columbus, the "Asterix" films. He was prolific, omnipresent - messy, magnetic, and untouchable. But the excess was real offscreen too. He crashed his motor-

Jean Valjean, and even Obélix in

cycle while drunk, accepted a Russian passport from Vladimir Putin during a tax dispute, and once urinated in a plane aisle. He boasted of his appetites. France seemed to cheer them on.

That myth - of the lovable brute is now unraveling.

In Hollywood, #MeToo toppled titans. In France, the movement was met with a wary eye. When #BalanceTonPorc ("Expose Your Pig") emerged in 2017, it rattled the country's self-image - particularly in the arts, where seduction and transgression had long been celebrated.

#### **Harassment**

Some warned that #MeToo was killing romance. In 2018, screen legend Catherine Deneuve and 99 other prominent French women published an open letter in Le Monde, scolding the movement for going, in their words, "too far." They championed la liberté d'importuner - "the freedom to bother" - as a pillar of French life, defending the right of men to pursue women without fear of consequence. To many, it sounded less like a defense of flirtation than a permission slip for harassment, cloaked in perfume and nostalgia.

Even President Emmanuel Macron echoed the sentiment. In Dec. 2023 - shortly after a documentary aired footage of Depardieu making sexually suggestive comments about a young girl in North Korea - Macron defended the actor on national television, condemning the backlash as a "manhunt." "Gérard Depardieu makes France proud,"

The remark sparked national outrage - not just for its timing, but for what it revealed: the instinct to protect cultural giants, no matter the cost.

A few weeks later, Macron expressed his "regret" about the comments, saying it's important "for women who are victims of abuse to speak out."

France's reluctance to confront sexual misconduct among its stars has long set it apart.

Roman Polanski, convicted of statutory rape in the U.S. and accused by several other women, continues to work and live freely in France. In 2020, his César Award win prompted walkouts but also a standing ovation. There was little institutional pushback.

In 2022, Johnny Depp was dropped from Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchise after domestic abuse allegations by exwife Amber Heard (he was largely vindicated).



French actor Gerard Depardieu leaves for a break during his trial for the alleged sexual assaults of two women on a film set in 2021, Wednesday, March 26, in Paris. (AP)

#### Japan joins global effort to aid Gaza

## Japan accepts Palestinians injured in Gaza for treatment

TOKYO, March 26, (KUNA): Japan began accepting Palestinians injured from Gaza to provide medical treatment on Wednesday, Defense Minister Gen Naka-

"We have decided to accept those who had been hospitalized in Egypt after suffering injuries in the war in the Gaza Strip. Today, one Palestinian woman from Gaza arrived in Japan and began receiving treatment at the Self-Defense Forces Central Hospital," Nakatani

told reporters.

Another Palestinian is due to arrive in Japan for treatment in the coming days, the minister said. Both Palestinians are supposed to return to Gaza after the treatment and not intended to settle down in Japan, according to Nakatani.

It is the first time that Japan has accepted patients from Gaza since the current conflict started in October 2023. This is part of medical assistance in response to the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza and the request from the World Health Organization (WHO), the ministry said in a press release.

With the cooperation of the Egyptian government, Japan has been considering the possibility of treating a small number of patients who have become injured or ill in Gaza, it said. Japan will make utmost efforts to provide adequate medical care to them, it



Doctors assist five-year-old Palestinian Sila Abu Aqlan to put on her new prosthetic leg at the Artificial Limbs and Polio Center in Gaza City, on Feb. 18, 2025, (AP)

#### **New outbreak**

'Cancer keeps mutating ... there's no cure'

## soar in the US

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): The measles outbreaks in West Texas and New Mexico have surpassed a combined 370 cases, and two unvaccinated people have died from measles-related

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus that's airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines, and has been considered eliminated from the US since 2000.

Already, the US has more measles cases this year than in all of 2024, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said last week. Here's what else you need to know about measles

Texas state health officials said Tuesday there were 18 new cases of measles since Friday, bringing the total to 327 across 15 counties - most in West Texas. Forty people have been hospitalized since the outbreak began. Lamb County was new to the list, with one case

New Mexico health officials announced one new case Tuesday, bringing the state's total to 43. Most of the cases are in Lea County, where two people have been hospitalized, and two are in in Eddy County.

Oklahoma's state health department has nine total cases as of Tuesday, including seven confirmed cases and two probable cases. The first two probable cases were "associated" with the West Texas and New Mexico outbreaks.

#### Respond

A school-age child died of measles in Texas last month, and New Mexico reported its first measles-related death in an adult last week.

Measles cases also have been reported in Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont and Wash-

An outbreak in Kansas has grown to 10 cases across three counties - Grant, Morton and Stevens counties. A state health department spokesperson did not respond to emails about whether the outbreak is linked to the situation in Texas or New Mexico.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an outbreak as three or more related cases. The agency counts three clusters that qualified as outbreaks in 2025 as of Tuesday.

In the US, cases and outbreaks are generally traced to someone who caught the disease abroad. It can then spread, especially in communities with low vaccination rates. In 2019, the US saw 1,274 cases and almost lost its status of having eliminated measles.

The best way to avoid measles is to get the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first shot is recommended for children between 12 and 15 months old and the second between 4 and 6 years old.

People at high risk for infection who got the shots many years ago may want to consider getting a booster if they live in an area with an outbreak, said Scott Weaver with the Global Virus Network, an international coalition.

## Measles cases What is glioblastoma, the aggressive brain cancer that killed US lawmaker?

SALT LAKE CITY, March 26, (AP): The death Sunday of former US Rep. Mia Love, the first Black Republican woman elected to the US House, has brought renewed attention to an aggressive form of brain cancer that killed her at age 49.

The former lawmaker from Utah had undergone treatment for glioblastoma, a malignant brain tumor, and received immunotherapy as part of a clinical trial. Her daughter said earlier this month that she was no longer responding to treatment.

Love died at her home in Saratoga Springs, Utah, according to a statement shared by the family

Love, born Ludmya Bourdeau, was a daughter of Haitian immigrants and a pioneering Republican congresswoman who represented Utah on Capitol Hill from 2015 to 2019.

She entered politics in 2003 after winning a seat on the city council in Saratoga Springs, 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Salt Lake City, and later became the city's mayor. While in that role, Love spoke at the 2012 Republican National Convention and drew rousing cheers with her criticisms of then-President Barack Obama.

That year, she narrowly lost a bid for the House against the Democratic incumbent. She ran again two years later and defeated a first-time candidate by about 7,500 votes, becoming the first Black Republican woman elected to Congress.

Love was diagnosed with glioblastoma in 2022. She said her doctors estimated she had only 10-15 months to live, but she surpassed that.

She described during a speaking engagement in Salt Lake City how she discovered the tumor. Love said she



Mia Love, the Republican nominee in Utah's 4th congressional district, smiles after speaking during a rally in Lehi, Utah, Oct. 8, 2014. (AP)

was on vacation with her family and developed a bad headache when the plane landed. When she went to the beach, the sun's reflection on the water made her headache unbearable. Her husband brought her to the hospital, and a series of X-rays revealed a tumor

Love rushed home to Utah and had surgery to remove about 95% of the tumor. Biopsy results revealed it was cancerous and likely to spread to surrounding brain tissue.

She entered a clinical trial at Duke University's Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center in Durham, North Carolina, that involved using her body's immune system to attack the tumor. At first, the tumor shrank, but eventually it stopped responding to

"Glioblastoma is the most ag-

gressive primary brain tumor that's known to mankind, and there is no cure for it," said Dr. Yasmeen Rauf, a neuro-oncologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who treats the disease. "It keeps mutating. No matter what you do, it always comes back.'

A glioblastoma is a fast-growing glioma, a type of tumor that arises from glial cells, which protect nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

While there is no known cure, aggressive treatments such as surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and other targeted therapies may slow the growth of the tumor. Even if a surgeon is able to remove all that can be seen, Rauf said there are typically still some tumor cells left in the brain that cannot be seen and will multiply

#### **Doctors faced tough choice after breathing crisis**

### Pope Francis' doctors considered 'letting him go'

ROME, March 26, (AP): Pope Francis' medical team briefly considered suspending treatment after a Feb. 28 breathing crisis but instead decided on an aggressive course that put his organs at risk, the doctor coordinating the pope's hospital care said in an interview published Tuesday.

Dr. Sergio Alfieri said the 88-yearold pontiff and people close to him alike understood "that he might not survive the night," after the bronchospasm attack during which the pope inhaled vomit.

"We needed to choose whether to stop and let him go, or to push it and attempt with all of the possible drugs and the treatments, taking the very high risk of damaging other organs,' Alfieri told told the Milan daily Corriere della Sera. "In the end, that is the path we chose."

Francis was released Sunday after 38 days of treatment for double pneumonia, under doctors' orders to observe two months of convalescence during which he should avoid large gatherings. The pope appeared weak

and frail when he greeted the crowd outside the Gemelli hospital before his discharge.

The Vatican has not indicated

whether the pope would participate in any Holy Week activities leading up to Easter on April

20. His planned

meeting next

III in the Vati-

can was post-

poned on mu-

tual agreement

on Tuesday to

allow the pope

with

Charles

month

King

to rest



Pope Francis

Alfieri that the pope remained "alert" throughout the Feb. 28 ordeal and that his personal health care assistant, Massimiliano Strappetti, "who knows perfectly the pontiff's wishes," urged them "to try every-

thing. Don't give up.' Alfieri acknowledged that the treatment risked damaging the pope's kidneys and bone marrow, "but we continued, and his body responded to the treatments and the lung infection improved.'

The medical bulletin that night said that the pope had suffered a bronchiospasm so severe that he inhaled vomit worsening his respiratory picture.' Doctors used a non-invasive aspiration to clear his airways.

Three days later, in a second life-anddeath crisis, the pope suffered a pair of acute bronchiospasms episodes. Doctors used a camera tube with a device to remove mucus plugs that yielded abundant secretions. The bulletin emphasized that the pope "always remained alert, oriented and collaborative."

Alfieri said he believed that prayers for the pope help keep him alive, something that the doctor said is backed by scientific literature.

"In this case the whole world was praying. I can say that twice the situation was lost, and then it happened like a miracle," the doctor said, adding that "of course he was a very cooperative

Glaucoma screening

Foreign Body removal

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

#### 'Calming brain activity'

### Meditation helps children cope with trauma, stress

By Hilary A. Marusak Wayne State University

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

The Research Brief is a short take about interesting academic work

Children actively meditating experience lower activity in parts of the brain involved in rumination, mind-wandering and depression, our team found in the first brainimaging study of young people under 18 years old, published in 2022. Over-activity in this collection of brain regions, known as the default mode network, is thought to be involved in the generation of negative self-directed thoughts such as "I am such a failure" - that are prominent in mental disorders like depression.

In our study, we compared a simple form of distraction - counting backward from 10 - with two relatively simple forms of meditation: focused attention to the breath and mindful acceptance. Children in an MRI scanner had to use these techniques while watching distressinducing video clips, such as a child receiving an injection.

We found that meditation techniques were more effective than distraction at quelling activity in that brain network. This reinforces research from our lab and others showing that meditation techniques and martial arts-based meditation programs are effective for reducing pain and stress in children with cancer or other chronic illnesses - and in their siblings - as well as in schoolchildren during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study, led by medical student Aneesh Hehr, is important because meditation techniques such as focused attention on the breath or mindful acceptance are popular in school settings and are increasingly used to help children cope with stressful experiences. These might include exposures to trauma, medical treatments or even COVID-19-related stress.

Researchers know a lot about what is happening in the brain and body in adults while they meditate, but comparable data for children has been lacking. Understanding what is happening in children's brains when they meditate is important because the developing brain is wired differently from the adult brain.

These findings are also important because caregivers and health care providers often use distraction methods like iPads or toys to help children cope with pain and distress, such as medical procedures. However, those techniques may largely rely on the prefrontal cortex, which is underdeveloped in youth.

This means that stress and emotion regulation techniques that rely on the prefrontal cortex may work well for adults but are likely to be less accessible to children. Meditation techniques may not be dependent upon the prefrontal cortex and may therefore be more accessible and effective for helping children manage and cope with stress.

We still have a great deal to learn about how meditation affects brain development in children. This includes what types of meditation techniques are most effective, the ideal frequency and duration, and how it affects children differently.

Our study focused on a relatively small sample of 12 children with active cancer, as well as survivors who may have experienced significant distress over the diagnosis, treatment and uncertainty about the future. Future studies with larger sample sizes - including children with a wider diversity of diagnoses and exposures to early adversity or trauma - will help researchers like us to better understand how meditation affects the brain and body in children. Our findings underscore the

need to understand precisely how meditation techniques work. Exciting studies have begun to examine how participating in mindfulness and meditation-based programs can shape brain functioning in children.

Understanding how these techniques work is also essential for optimizing how they could be applied in health care settings, such as coping with needle-related procedures or for helping children manage the negative effects of stress and trauma. (AP)

#### Slovakia declares FMD emergency

PRAGUE, March 26, (Xinhua): The Czech Republic on Tuesday dispatched a team of 16 firefighters to neighboring Slovakia to assist in efforts to contain the spread of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

According to the Czech Fire and Rescue Service, the firefighters will support their Slovak colleagues with decontamination operations as part of the emergency response.

The Slovak government declared a state of emergency on Tuesday after confirming additional FMD cases at a fourth farm. The latest case was identified in the Dunajska Streda district, near the previously affected southern villages of Medvedov, Narad, and Baka, where the disease was first confirmed last Friday.

In response to the outbreak, the Czech Republic last week reinstated border controls with Slovakia. Czech police and veterinary inspectors are enforcing a ban on livestock imports from affected areas at four major border crossings.

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lyer blazes a masterful unbeaten 97 off 42 balls

## **Kings edge Titans in high-scoring thriller**

AHMEDABAD, India, March 26, (AP): Shreyas Iyer blazed a masterful unbeaten 97 off 42 balls and started his new stint as captain of Punjab Kings with a 11-run victory over Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League.

with a 11-run victory over Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League.

Iyer, who led Kolkata Knight Riders to the title last year, smacked nine sixes and five fours as he anchored Punjab to 243-5 with Shashank Singh hammering 44 not out off just 16 balls.

Gujarat ran out of steam in the death overs to finish at 232-5 despite Sai Sudharsan (74) and Jos Buttler (54) keeping them in the hunt at the home ground.

Captain Shubman Gill and left-hander

Captain Shubman Gill and left-hander Sudharsan scored over 12 an over in the powerplay before Glenn Maxwell broke the quick stand when he found the leading edge of Gill's bat off his fifth ball.

But Sudharsan kept going at a healthy rate and smashed six sixes and five boundaries as he added further 84 runs off just 40 balls with Buttler.

Iyer's ploy to bring back his ace fast bowler Arshdeep Singh paid off in the 13th over when Sudharsan timed the ball well on the leg side but found the fielder in the outfield.

Punjab's impact player Vijaykumar Vyshak bowled well in the death overs and the pressure finally got onto Buttler, who was bowled by Marco Jansen off the inside edge in the 18th over.

Sherfane Rutherford made 46 off 28 balls before Arshdeep had the West In-



Punjab Kings' captain Shreyas Iyer plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Punjab Kings at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, India. (AP)

dian left-hander bowled through an inside edge in the final over to seal the game.

Punjab opener Priyansh Arya made a brisk 47 off 23 balls and dominated the powerplay before Iyer showed his intent of scoring big when he hit his fourth ball for a six after he came to bat at No. 3.

Rashid Khan (1-48) took the wicket in his first over when Arya was caught at short cover and Sai Kishore (3-30) was on a hat-trick as he squeezed the runs. Glenn Maxwell could have survived but he didn't go for a lbw television referral against Kishore.

Iyer hit Kishore and Rashid for two sixes each. Gujarat seemed to have clawed its way back when Marcus Stoinis was dismissed while going for reverse sweep against Kishore in the 16th over before Shashank and Iyer exploded in the final 28 balls.

#### Bid to protect 'integrity of competition' in women's sport

## World Athletics to require chromosome testing for women's track & field athletes

NANJING, China, March 26, (AP): World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said Tuesday that the track and field's governing body has approved the introduction of cheek swabs and dry blood-spot tests for female athletes to maintain "the integrity of competition"

The planned changes include reinstating a version of chromosome testing that was discontinued in the 1990s, requiring athletes who compete in the female category to submit to a cheek swab or dry blood-spot test for the presence of a gene that indicates whether the athlete has a "Y" chromosome present in males.

Coe told a news conference that athletes will have to take the test just once during their career.

"It's important to do it because it maintains everything that we've been talking about, and particularly recently, about not just talking about the integrity of female women's sport, but actually guaranteeing it," Coe said after a two-day meeting of the World Athletics Council in Nanjing. "We feel this is a really important way of providing confidence and maintaining that absolute focus on the integrity of competition."

It's unclear whether the tests will be in place before the world championships in September. Coe said that the new regulations will be drafted and that a testing provider will be confirmed over the next few weeks.

Coe, the two-time Olympic champion who was unsuccessful last week in his bid to become IOC president, has been vocal about "protecting the female cat-

egory" in track and field. He has said the International Olympic Committee needs to take a leadership role in the transgender debate instead of letting each individual sport decide its own regulations.

World Athletics, which in 2023 banned transgender athletes who had transitioned male to female and gone through male puberty, announced in February proposed recommendations that would apply strict transgender rules to athletes who were born female but had what the organization describes as naturally occurring testosterone levels in the typical male range.

Those recommendations came only days after U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order barring transgender athletes from competing in girls' sports in the U.S. and pressured the Olympics to do the same. Los Angeles will host the 2028 Summer Games

Asked whether World Athletics felt the policy would withstand legal challenges, Coe said he was confident after an exhaustive review.

"I would never have set off down this path in 2016-2017 to protect the female category in sport" without being "prepared to take the challenge head on," Coe

He added: "We've been to the Court of Arbitration on our DSD regulations. They have been upheld, and they have again been upheld after appeal. So we will doggedly protect the female category, and we'll do whatever is necessary to do it."

## Miami stifles Warriors in rout

Towns' triple-double lifts Knicks over Mavericks

MIAMI, March 26, (AP): Bam Adebayo scored 27 points, Tyler Herro scored 20, and the Miami Heat spoiled Jimmy Butler's return game with a one-sided 112-86 win over the Golden State Warriors on Tuesday night.

Alec Burks scored 18 for Miami, which never trailed. The Heat were 17 for 25 from the 3-point range.

In his first game back in Miami since a trade last month, Butler had 11 points. Jonathan Kuminga scored 15, Brandin Podziemski had 14, and Gui Santos scored 13 for Golden State.

The Warriors played without Stephen Curry, who held out for a second straight game with a pelvic contusion.

Golden State never led for only the fifth time this season, and the Heat became the second team this season to hold a 20-point lead on the Warriors in multiple games. The other is Cleveland.

Knicks 128, Mavericks 113
In New York, Karl-Anthony Towns had 26 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple-double in more than three years, helping the New York Knicks defeat the Dallas Mavericks.

OG Anunoby had 35 points, and Josh Hart added 16 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his ninth triple-double of the season. New York (45-26)

shot 59.6% and won its second straight.
Naji Marshall had a career-high 38
points, and Brandon Williams chipped
in 22 points. The Mavericks (35-38)

fell for the 10th time in 13 games.

Thunder 121, Kings 105

In Sacramento, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points to lead the Oklahoma City to their seventh straight win and 60th of the season with a victory over the Sacramento.

Chet Holmgren added 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Alex Caruso scored 15 to give the NBA-leading Thunder their 14th win in 15 games.

Cavaliers 122, Trail Blazers 111
In Portland, Darius Garland had 27
points and eight assists to Cleveland to

a win over Portland.

Ty Jerome scored 25 points off the bench and Evan Mobley had 21 points and 12 rebounds in the win.

Portland's Scoot Henderson and Shaedon Sharpe each had 18 points in the loss.

Cleveland (58-14) has a five-game lead over Boston for first place in the Eastern Conference with 10 games left to play.

Portland (32-41) is 3½ games behind Phoenix for 10th place in the Western Conference and the final spot in the play-in tournament.

The Cavaliers were without star guard Donovan Mitchell, who is managing a left groin injury.

Rockets 121, Hawks 114



San Antonio Spurs forward Harrison Barnes (40) is fouled by Detroit Pistons center Isaiah Stewart (28) while taking a shot during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Detroit. (AP)

In Houston, Jalen Green scored 32 points and had 11 rebounds and Hous-

ton beat Atlanta.
Fred VanVleet shot 5 of 14 from the field, including 3 for 8 from 3-point range, and went 8 for 8 from the line to add 21 points. Tari Eason had 14 re-

Dyson Daniels led the Hawks with 19 points, eight rebounds, 10 assists and four steals. Trae Young added 19 points and 12 assists for Atlanta. Grizzlies 140, Jazz 103

In Salt Lake City, Desmond Bane scored 21 points, Jaren Jackson had 19 and Memphis, playing without Ja Morant, used a dominant second half for a win over the Utah.

After getting hit in the face, Jackson left the court and went to the locker room with 7:39 left in the third quarter but returned to the bench late in the

game. He wasn't needed as the Grizzlies outscored the Jazz 76-38 in the second half for their second win in their last six games.

The Grizzlies have floundered since residing near the top of the standings earlier in the season. Once injuries hit, especially Morant's aliments (currently a hamstring strain), Memphis has dropped out of most championship contender conversations.

ler conversations.

Pistons 122, Spurs 96

In Detroit, Marcus Sasser scored a career-high 27 points in 26 minutes off the bench and Detroit routed San Antonio Spurs for their second consecutive victory without injured star Cade Cunningham.

Tobias Harris added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Pistons (41-32), who pulled within a percentage point of Milwaukee (40-31) for fifth place in the Eastern Conference. Jalen Duren had 14 points and seven assists, and Ausar Thompson finished with 14 points and six boards.

Magic 111, Hornets 104
In Charlotte, Paolo Banchero scored
32 points, Franz Wagner had 26 points
and Orlando used a late run for a win

over Charlotte.

LaMelo Ball led the Hornets with
25 points and nine assists, while Josh
Green and Nick Smith Jr. had 13 points
each.

Orlando's Wendell Carter Jr. had a game-high 11 rebounds. Banchero also had seven rebounds and six assists.

#### Positive results for the test runs

## Testing begins at Cortina's controversial sliding track

ROME, March 26, (AP): When Italian skeleton competitor Mattia Gaspari became the first athlete to test the controversial sliding track for next year's Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics, he did so in a sort of tunnel under a temporary roof built of wooden beams and white plastic paper.

That's because the sliding center in Cortina d'Ampezzo is still under construction and the only part that is really finished is the track structure.

Still, getting to this point little more than a year after construction began is a big achievement for the Italian government, which rebuilt the century-old track despite calls from the International Olympic Committee to hold bobsled, luge and skeleton athletes at a venue in nearby Austria or Switzerland instead.

"It's really been quite an adventure," Infrastructure and Transport Minister Matteo Salvini said Tuesday.

"I want to thank the construction firm, which was the first one to believe in this, and the journalists who motivated us," said Salvini, who is also the deputy premier, citing articles claiming that the project would never be done. "Well, here we are."

Olympic bronze medalist Dominik Fischnaller was the second athlete down the track on his luge before Simone Bertazzo and Eric Fantazzini made a two-man bobsled run.

Simico, the government agency in charge of the 118 million euro (\$128 million) project, reported positive results for the test runs. But it will be officials from the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation, International Luge Federation and the IOC to determine whether to bestow pre-

liminary certification - homologation is the technical word - for the track. Preliminary approval would be a big step in avoiding a backup Plan B option that the IOC had demanded and which would require moving the three sliding sports all the way to Lake Placid, New York, if the track in Italy wasn't finished in time. Lake Placid officials were hopeful that, if the sliding events were going to be awarded to the U.S., the official word would

come by the end of March.

Construction on the Cortina track began in February last year. The pre-homologation plan calls for athletes to begin their initial runs from the junior start, well below the ramps from where they would begin to race for World Cup and Olympic competitions. Sliders would move up the track slowly throughout the coming days.

There are testing events at the Cortina track for all three sliding sports - bobsled, skeleton and luge - scheduled for throughout the fall. Those are important so that sliders can familiarize themselves with the track and feel safe there when competing at the Olympics. Safety has taken on more importance since the death of Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili in a training crash hours before the start of the opening ceremony for the 2010 Vancouver Games.

Luge athletes are scheduled to have an international training period at the new track from Oct. 27 through Nov. 2, then return for a test event there in the final week of November. The bobsled and skeleton tours will hold their international training period from Nov. 7-16, followed by the season-opening World Cup races there from Nov. 17-23.

The 1.749-kilometer (1.09-mile) track features 16 curves with an estimated top speed of 145 kph (90 mph) with run times slated for 55-60 seconds.

Athletes from 12 nations are involved in the tests this week It's about 60

Athletes from 12 nations are involved in the tests this week. It's about 60 athletes in all, about half of them being Italian sliders. Coaches representing at least 23 different sliding nations were also invited to view this week's events.



Construction work takes place at the Cortina Sliding Center, venue for the bob, luge and skeleton disciplines at the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italy. (AP)

**UAE** fires head coach Bento

## Double injury blow for Bayern as Davies & Upamecano both sidelined

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MUNICH, March 26, (AP): Bayern Munich has been left without two of its top defenders after Alphonso Davies and Dayot Upamecano both picked up serious injuries on international duty.

Memphis Grizzlies center Jay Huff (30) dunks against Utah Jazz forward

Brice Sensabaugh, left, and Utah Jazz center Walker Kessler (24) during

the second half of an NBA basketball game, in Salt Lake City. (AP)

Davies' season seems to be over after Bayern said he would be out for "several months" with a torn cruciate ligament in his right knee. The left back went off injured while playing in Canada's 2-1 win over the United States in the CONCACAF Nations League.

Bayern predicted central defender Upamecano will be out for "several weeks" with a problem in his left knee following his return from playing both legs of France's quarterfinal win over Croatia in the UEFA Nations League.

"In international breaks there is unfortunately always a danger that players come back injured, and this time it has hit us especially hard," Bayern's board member for sport Max Eberl said. "The absences of Alphonso Davies and Dayot Upamecano weigh heavily on FC Bayern."

Eberl said the team would "pull even closer together now" to make up for losing Davies and Upamecano. "The quality is there to keep on pursuing our big goals."

The injuries could mean Bayern relies more on central defender Kim Min-jae, who returned to training Monday after an Achilles tendon injury forced him to miss international games for South Korea. It could also mean more game time for Bayern's fringe players like center back Eric Dier, left back Raphael Guerreiro and versatile defender Hiroki Ito.

Bayern next plays St. Pauli in the Bundesliga on Saturday and faces Inter Milan in the quarterfinals of the Champions League next month.

ABU DHABI, March 26, (AP): Paulo Bento has been fired as head coach of the United Arab Emirates soccer team just hours after a 2-1 win over North Korea kept alive its slim automatic hopes of qualification for the 2026 World Cup.

That victory, which came with a goal in the 98th minute, puts the UAE four points behind second-place Uzbekistan in Group A with two games remaining. The top two teams from each of the three Asian groups are guaranteed a place in the tournament to be hosted next year by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

"The UAE Football Association has decided to dismiss the head

coach of the national team, Paulo Bento, along with his coaching staff," the UAE football association posted on social media.

The 55-year-old Portuguese coach led South Korea to the knockout stages of the 2022 World Cup, 10 years after he took Portugal to the last four of the European Championships. He was appointed in July 2023 to succeed Rodolfo Arruabarrena.

If the UAE misses out on second place, then there is another round of qualification as the teams that finish third and fourth in their respective groups play off for two remaining World Cup places.

UAE's next qualifier is against Uzbekistan at home on June 5.

Al-Ittihad player dribbles the ball past Al-Qadsiya player.

## **Al-Qadsiya Asian Champions League hopes** hang in the balance after loss to Al-Ittihad

#### By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Al-Qadsiya basketball team faced its second defeat against Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad Club, losing 88-74 in the third match of the Asian Gulf Zone (Super League) title competition. The match took place at the Basketball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-

Abdullah Complex. Al-Ittihad secured qualification by winning two of the three playoff matches, as per the tournament's rules.

Despite the setback, Al-Qadsiya still has a chance to advance to the Asian Champions League quarter-finals. It must defeat Bahrain's Manama in its upcoming match on April 7 in Bahrain to secure the eighth and final spot in the Asian League. Meanwhile, Al-Ittihad will face Shabab Al-Ahli from the Emirates in a playoff series for the Gulf Super League title. The series will follow a best-of-three format, with matches scheduled for April 8, 15, and 22. The winner will advance to the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League, ensuring both Al-Ittihad and Shabab Al-Ahli a place in the prestigious competition.

# Nigeria's qualifying hopes dealt major late blow; Egypt, Morocco move closer

Congo moves top of Group B on 13 points, one ahead of unbeaten Senegal



Tanzania's Mudathiri Yahya Abbas, left, is challenged by Morocco's Youssef En-Nesyri during the World Cup Group E qualifying soccer match between Morocco and Tanzania at the Stade municipal d'Oujda, Morocco. (AP)

CAIRO, March 26, (AP): Nigeria conceded a last-minute goal in a major blow to its World Cup qualifying hopes, when Egypt and Morocco all but booked their places at next year's tournament

Zizo's goal was enough for unbeaten Egypt's 1-0 win over Sierra Leone in Cairo, while Morocco looks assured of qualifying with a ninepoint lead over its rivals after a 2-0 win over

Real Madrid's Brahim Díaz scored a penalty after Nayef Aguerd broke the deadlock on a rebound for Morocco's fifth win from five games in Group

Zizo struck just before the break for Egypt to maintain a five-point lead over Burkina Faso, which had defeated Guinea-Bissau 2-1 on Monday in Group A.

Zimbabwe's Tawanda Chirewa scored in the final minute to silence the home fans in Uyo, Nigeria as the visitors claimed a 1-1 draw.

Nigeria star Victor Osimhen put the Super Eagles on course to claim just their second win in Group C after Friday's 2-0 victory over Rwanda had rekindled Nigeria's qualification hopes.

But the 21-year-old Chirewa, a late substitute, equalized in the 90th to earn Zimbabwe's draw.

Meanwhile, South Africa defeated Benin 2-0 to consolidate the top spot. Bafana Bafana leads with 13 points from six rounds, five clear of Rwanda (which drew with Lesotho 1-1) and Benin. Nigeria stayed fourth in the group with just seven points.

Only the nine group winners secure automatic qualification. The four best-placed runners-up will compete to be the African contender in FIFA's six-country playoff for the last two qualification spots at the World Cup next year in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Wolfsburg forward Mohammed Amoura scored a hat trick as Algeria defeated Mozambique 5-1 to open a three-point lead over the visitors in Group G. Guinea's qualification hopes are all but over after a 1-0 loss to Uganda, the team's third defeat leaving it eight points behind Algeria in fifth.

Cape Verde remained top of Group D with a 2-1 win in Angola, though Cameroon responded with Vincent Aboubakar scoring twice in a 3-1 win over Libya. Cape Verde stayed a point ahead of Cameroon.

Sudan lost control of Group B with David Sebit scoring in stoppage time to earn South Sudan a 1-1 draw.

It allowed both Congo and Senegal to take advantage, which they did with 2-0 wins over Mauritania and Togo, respectively.

Congo moved top of Group B on 13 points,

one ahead of unbeaten Senegal and Sudan. Sudan dropped to third on goal difference.

Ghana moved atop Group I by scoring a total of eight goals in back-to-back wins over Chad and Madagascar, helping ease the disappointment of failing to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations in November.

Otto Addo's team eased to a 5-0 rout of Chad in Accra on Friday, then enjoyed a 3-0 win over Madagascar on Monday to seize control of the group.

Comoros, the surprise early leader, stayed three points behind Ghana on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Chad.

Ivory Coast needed goalkeeper Yahia Fofana at his best as it held on for a 1-0 win over Gambia on Monday to stay a point above Gabon atop Group F

Sébastien Haller's early goal was enough for the Elephants to win in Abidjan, keeping the team top after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had scored twice for Gabon to beat Kenya 2-1.

Ivory Coast, the reigning África Cup champion, had previously beaten Burundi 1-0 in Morocco on Friday, while Gabon had a 3-0 win over the Seychelles on Thursday.

Tunisia consolidated top spot in Group H on Monday with two late goals to beat Malawi 2-0. Four rounds of qualifiers remain.

## Preliminary round of the Volleyball League wraps up

#### By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The preliminary round of the Volleyball League wraps up today with a key match between Kazma and Qadsia at 9:00 pm at the Kuwait Volleyball Association's Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Halls Complex in Sabah Al-Salem. In a previous match, Al-Arabi triumphed over Al-Nasr with a dominant 3-0 victory (25-17, 25-8, 25-16).

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 28 points, followed by Kazma and Al-Shabab (24), Qadsia (22),

Al-Arabi (18), Burgan (16), Al-Nasr (11), Sulaibikhat (9), Yarmouk (5), Al-Tadamon (3), and Al-Sahel (2).

The top six teams—Kuwait Club, Kazma, Al-Shabab, Qadsia, Al-Arabi, and Burgan—have secured their spots in the Premier League, which will commence on April 13. The league will be contested on a home-and-away basis, followed by a "golden square" featuring the top four teams, with the first facing the fourth and the second facing the third

and the second facing the third.

Meanwhile, Al-Nasr, Al-Sulaibikhat, Al-Yarmouk, Al-Tadamon, and Al-Sahel will compete in the first division across three stages.



Players battling for the ball.

## **New Zealand beats Pakistan by 8 wickets with 10 overs to spare**

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 26, (AP): Jimmy Neesham took 5-22 and Tim Seifert blasted 97 from 38 balls as New Zealand beat Pakistan by eight wickets with 10 overs to spare in the fifth Twenty20 international Wednesday. New Zealand completed a 4-1 series win.

Neesham became the fourth New Zealander - after Tim Southee, Lockie Ferguson and Adam Milne - to take five wickets in T20 internationals as the Blackcaps restricted Pakistan to 128-9 after winning the toss.

Seifert and Finn Allen then launched New Zealand's run chase at an astonishing pace, rushing to 45-0 after three overs, to 50 from 22 balls and finally to 82-0 at the end of the six over power player.

While Allen was left almost a spectator, Seifert raced to his 10th T20 half century from 23 balls with five sixes and five fours. The pair put on 93 for the first wicket in 6.2 overs before Allen was out for 27 from 12 balls.

Seifert carried on at an unbroken pace, hitting 10 sixes and six fours and finishing the New Zealand run chase with four sixes in the 10th over. "After I nearly got hit in the head by that first ball, I thought there's only one way to play," Seifert said. "One thing I'm proud of is that I came into the

series and played the way I wanted to play.

"The wickets were very bouncy and to be able to play as I wanted to play is the thing I'm most proud of."

In contrast, Pakistan was 27-3 after the power play and 52-4 at the midpoint of their innings, struggling against the bounce produced by the New Zealand bowlers.

Opener Hasan Nawaz was out for a duck, continuing an extraordinary start to his international career. In his five T20 matches so far, he has made 0, 0, 105 not out, 1 and 0.

Captain Salman Ali Agha made 51 from 39 balls and put on 54 for the sixth

wicket with Shadab Khan who hit 28 from 20 balls.

Shadab was out in contentious circumstances. Neesham lost control of the first ball of the 17th over which the umpire ruled was four wides. Shadab believed and replays suggested the ball had missed the pitch and therefore

#### \$125 million up for grabs

## FIFA reveals \$1 bln prize pool for Club World Cup

ZURICH, March 26, (AP): The winner of FIFA's first 32-team Club World Cup in the United States could earn \$125 million as details of a \$1 billion prize money fund were finally published Wednes-

FIFA said it allocated \$525 million in guaranteed fees for teams taking part in the June 14- July 13 tournament, ranging from \$38.19 million to the top-ranked European team - likely Real Madrid

- to \$3.58 million for the Oceania representative Auckland City.

A further \$475 million is earned by results in the 63 games, with \$2 million paid for winning group stage games, \$7.5 million for playing in the round of 16 and \$40 million to the team that wins the final at MetLife Stadium near New York.

The golden trophy has been sitting in the Oval Office at the White House this month after FIFA



Atletico Madrid's Pablo Barrios fights for the ball with Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe during the Champions League round of 16. (AP)

President Gianni Infantino delivered it to President Donald Trump.

The prize fund was delayed until a global broadcast deal was belatedly agreed in December with streaming service DAZN, which then got a major investment from a state-backed sports agency in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia was also confirmed in December

by FIFA as the host of the men's 2034 World Cup.
Each of the 12 European teams in the Club
World Cup lineup will be paid at least \$12.81 million as an entry fee. Payments will be decided by
"a ranking based on sporting and commercial criteria," FIFA said, without providing details.

Manchester City, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, and Chelsea also qualified by either winning a Champions League title from 2021 to 2024 or having consistent results in the competition over those four seasons.

Countries were capped at two entries unless

Countries were capped at two entries unless they had three Champions League winners. Salzburg of Austria qualified for the final European team, despite never advancing beyond the round of 16, because higher-ranked clubs like Liverpool and Barcelona were blocked by the country cap.

The six South American teams each will get a \$15.21 million entry fee.

Teams from Africa, Asia and the CONCACAF region of North America - including Lionel Messi's Inter Miami, despite not winning the MLS Cup title last season - each will get \$9.55 million for playing

Leon of Mexico is currently contesting its removal from the competition by FIFA because it is in shared ownership with Pachuca, which also qualified

ownership with Pachuca, which also qualified.
FIFA aims to pay \$250 million to clubs worldwide who did not qualify for the tournament. It is unclear how many clubs will be paid or how much they will get





Egypt's Mohamed Salah, right, is challenged for the ball by Sierra Leone's Alhassan Koroma at a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Cairo International Stadium. Egypt won 1-0. (AP) - See Page 15

# Sports

## Kuwait's World Cup hopes in jeopardy

Al-Hajri attributes loss to exhaustion

By Khaled Al-Enezi and **Hassan Mosa** 

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Kuwait is "logically" out of contention for a third or fourth-place finish - which would secure a spot in the 2026 World Cup playoffs – but a "math-ematical" possibility, albeit highly improbable, still remains after 1-0 loss to Oman.

To keep its slim hopes alive, the Blues must win both of their remaining matches in June against Palestine and South Korea, while relying on Oman to lose against both Jordan and Palestine.

Currently, South Korea leads the group with 16 points, followed by Jordan (13), Iraq (12), Oman (10), Palestine (6), and Kuwait (5). Given that Kuwait is the only team yet to secure a victory - having settled for five draws and three defeats - its chances now depend on an unlikely series of results.

Despite this, Kuwait's progress under Argentine coach Juan Pizzi has been notable, as the team has begun to develop a clearer identity on the field. However, fans aspire to more than just improvement - they want tangible success and a return to the World Cup, especially with Asia's expanded qualification spots increasing their chances of



Players vie for the ball during World Cup qualifying match between Kuwait and Oman.

competing on the global stage for the first time in 44 years.

Beyond World Cup ambitions, the 2027 Asian Cup looms as a crucial objective. Kuwait must prioritize youth development and establish a wellstructured preparation plan to build a competitive squad capable of delivering strong performances

The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) expressed its gratitude to the fans for their unwavering support during the match against Oman. The association also extended its appreciation to government agencies, including the Ministries of Interior, Health, Municipality and Urban Planning, and Electricity and Water, as well as the Public

Authority for Sports, the General Fire Department, the Union of Cooperative Societies, organizing committees, and

The federation emphasized that the team gave its best effort to satisfy its supporters. Looking ahead, the focus will remain on strengthening the national team and ensuring continued backing to achieve the best possible

Assistant Coach Ahmed Abdul Karim apologized to all those who supported the Kuwait in its 2026 World Cup qualifier against Oman, acknowledging the "significant" impact of Yousef Nasser's absence.

In a post-match press conference, after a narrow 1-0 loss to Oman, Abdul Karim explained, "The technical staff tried to adjust by compensating for Nasser's absence and fielding a balanced lineup, but things didn't go as planned for the Blues." He also mentioned that Oman's defense had done a commendable job in shutting down

Fahad Al-Hajri attributed the loss to "exhaustion and insufficient recovery time." He acknowledged that the team had performed well in the first half but felt fatigue set in due to the short rest after the Iraq match. Al-Hajri also praised Oman's factical play, particularly their collective movement and ability to close spaces. He thanked both the players and the fans for their continued support.

Oman's coach, Rashid Jaber, commented on the match, saying, "The Blues performed admirably on their home turf in front of their fans. We took control in the second half but squandered several opportunities to seal the win." Jaber added, "qualification is now within reach for all teams, and we must wait for the next two

#### **Defending champion hands Brazil heaviest qualifying loss**

## Argentina seals World Cup berth



Argentina's Nicolas Tagliafico scores his side's third goal against Brazil during a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Tuesday, March 25, 2025. (AP)

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 26, (AP): Defending champion Argentina had to put the celebrations on hold for a while after securing a place at the 2026 World Cup before kickoff against arch-rival Bra-

Bolivia's failure to beat Uruguay meant Argentina had enough cushion in South American qualifying to secure one of the continent's six direct spots for the 48-team World Cup set to be co-hosted next year by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

After Bolivia's 0-0 draw with Uruguay at El Alto, Argentina beat Brazil 4-1 in front of 85,000 fans at the Monumental de Nunez Stadium despite Lionel Messi's absence.

Brazil's worst deficit in South American World Cup qualifying history compounded pressure on coach Dorival Júnior, who took over in January of last year.

Brazil is in fourth place in South American qualifying with 21 points, 10 behind Argentina but only two behind second-place Ecuador, which was held to a 0-0 draw by Chile. Third-place Uruguay and fifth-place



From left, Argentina's Leandro Paredes, Enzo Fernandez and Thiago Almada celebrate defeating Brazil during a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

Paraguay also have 21 points, and Colombia is one point behind them in sixth. Seventh-place Venezuela has 15 points after a 1-0 win over 9th-place Peru.

Brazil was missing three regular starters - goalkeeper Alisson, defender Gabriel Magalhães, and midfielder Bruno Guimarães - and wasn't really competitive from start to finish.

It's the first time Argentina has won both matches against Brazil in a World Cup qualifying tournament. The home victory was also Argentina's first against the Brazilians since qualifying for the 2006 World Cup.

Argentina has led South American qualifying from the start, with few hiccups and major away wins at Brazil and Uruguay. But coach Lionel Scaloni has not fielded 37-year-old Messi in several games, which still raises doubts about whether the star will play at the World Cup next year.

Messi has an injury to his adductor and was not included in Argentina's squad for the two latest matches. Argentina scored its two first goals in only 12 minutes of play, both thanks to accurate passing and some clumsy Brazilian defending.

Julián Alvarez netted the first in the 4th minute after Marquinhos, Murillo, and Guilherme Arana failed to reach the ball. The Argentina striker shot between the legs of goalkeeper Bento from close range.

Argentina scored again eight minutes later with Enzo Fernández, once again from close range, after a low cross by Gonzalo Molina.

Brazil got one back via Matheus Cunha in the 26th after a mistake by Cristian Romero, who lost the ball to the Brazilian by the edge of the box. Enzo Fernandez found Alexis Mac Allister bursting into the penalty box unmarked 11 minutes later to make it 3-1 to Argentina.

During the break, Brazil sought to get some grip by boosting its presence in the midfield with Joao Gomes and the substitution of Murillo and striker Rodrygo. But it was to no avail, with Giuliano Simeone scoring for Argentina in the 71st minute.

## **Top six relegation spots up for grabs** as the Zain Premier League resumes

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Zain Premier League resumes with a pivotal match between Al-Nasr and Al-Fahaheel at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, marking the start of the eighteenth and final round.

The round continues tomorrow, Friday, with two key fixtures: Khaitan faces Al-Qadsia, while Kazma takes on Al-Yarmouk. The round will conclude on Saturday, with Kuwait Club playing against Al-Tadamon and Al-Arabi squaring off against Al-Salmiya.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 44 points, closely followed by Al-Arabi, who trails due to a difference in matches played. Al-Qadsia holds 32 points, Al-Salmiya has 28, Fahaheel is at 25, Al-Tadamon has 20, Kazma sits at 16, Al-Nasr has 12, Khaitan has 11, and Yarmouk rounds out the table with 6 points.

After this round, the top six teams will advance to the single-round "Championship" league, while the bottom four teams will compete in the "Relegation League," also in a singleround format, with two teams set for



A file photo of players challenging for the ball during the Zain Premier

relegation to the First Division.

The league had been paused since February 28th due to Al-Arabi's participation in the AFC Challenge Cup, Al-Qadsia's run in the Gulf Champions League, and Al-Azraq's involvement in the 2026 World Cup

This round is crucial for teams looking to accumulate points and strengthen their positions before the final stage of the league.

In today's match, Al-Nasr is aiming to avenge its earlier defeat to Al-Fahaheel, who had triumphed 3-1 in the first division. Al-Nasr is hoping for a morale-boosting win before entering the Relegation League, while Al-Fahaheel is determined to secure victory and climb the standings.

### **Sulaibikhat completes Premier League lineup**

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Sulaibikhat handball team secured its place in the Premier League with a commanding 37-26 victory over Yarmouk at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Halls Complex in final round of the 58th "Merged" League. In another notable result, Al-Nasr triumphed 37-32 over Al-Tadamon. League standings

Kuwait Club 24 points, Kazma 21, Burgan 19, Sulaibikhat 16, Al-Arabi 16, Al-Salmiya 14 (with all points from the preliminary round retained for the Premier League, played over three stages), Al-Nasr 14, Al-Qurain 12, Al-Qadsiya 12, Khaitan 8, Fahaheel 8, Al-Tadamon 3, Yarmouk 2, and Al-Sahel 0 (playing in the First Division League over two stages with points retained from the preliminary round).

Sulaibikhat Manager Hussein Saywan extended his congratulations to the club's board of directors and fans on the team's qualification for the Premier League. He expressed gratitude to the management for their unwavering support throughout

"We have a plan in place to prepare the team for the Premier League during the league's suspension for the Arab Cup in May," Saywan said. "An external training camp will be held in Bahrain and Qatar from April



Sulaibikhat player makes a goal attempt against Yarmouk.

24 to May 5, as the league will be paused ten days before the Arab

Saywan also praised the team's performance in the preliminary

round, highlighting the success of the Cairo training camp before the season, the activation tournament in December, and the hard work of the technical staff and players.

ARAB 🕈 TIMES

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IN FREE KUWAIT Published by: Arab Times Publishing House

Companies and Official Departments KD 45

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Tel: **99659717 - 50232062** E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com **Annual Subscriptions:** Individuals KD 30

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