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Opinion

Oh people of Gaza ... 'A thousand outsider enemies are better than only one saboteur at home'

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

FOR 77 years, the Palestinian cause has been controlled by some extremist people. Since then, they have been happy to invest in the Palestinian cause and take advantage of the suffering of the Palestinian people.

From the time the slogan, "We will throw Israel into the sea," was adopted until the Al-Aqsa Flood; the Palestinians have not found an advocate who can adequately champion their cause. Rather, they

see the so-called 'national liberation movement' as a window into further squandering their legitimate rights.

Hamas, born from the womb of the Muslim Brotherhood, continues to waste any chance to establish a Palestinian State capable of living.

Yesterday, we said that since 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has been a Trojan horse for the realization of projects to fragment the Arab world and to inject Zionist poison into the honey of resisting the occupation. This was clearly demonstrated on Oct 7, 2023; when Hamas turned back the clock with a foolish operation. Its negotiators stayed in the most luxurious hotels, while blood was being shed in the trenches.

The people of Gaza believe that their cause is just and they are more concerned about Palestinian blood

than anyone else.

However, for 18 years, they have been pushed into the tunnel of oppression and starvation. The previously silent majority has now exploded in anger. The truth, which the factions were trying to suppress at all cost, has no longer been challenged. The truth has been exposed, hunger has settled in the stomachs, and killing, which was previously isolated, has become widespread.

The accusation of being a mercenary that those extremist groups used to attribute to whoever does not agree with them is no longer effective. After a long period of suffering, the people have realized that they are the perpetual victims of white-collar parties, careful not to dirty their elegant suits with the dust of suffering. Therefore, they were always keen

on silencing the voices of the hungry and the sick.

For all of this, the Hamas government -- no matter what it does -- will not be able to stem the tide of protests, erupting amid the rubble of destroyed homes. Is this region destined to endure perpetual destruction and killing, such that if it does not come from Israel, it comes from its own people? It was said long ago: A thousand outsider enemies are better than one saboteur at home.

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Kuwait vows justice in raffle fraud

Commerce Ministry to scrutinize draws since 2015 in escalating 'Ya Hala' saga

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Abdullah Al-Ajeel Al-Askar Wednesday briefed the Cabinet on the measures taken by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry regarding the controversial draw during the shopping festival, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He said the case has been referred to the Public Prosecution, along with information on some suspicious activities during the draw.

Al-Askar affirmed the ministry's keenness to apply the law in coordination with security authorities, and pledged to take all necessary steps to assure consumers.

In response, the Cabinet expressed its full support for Minister Al-Askar's legal actions, and stressed the importance of enforcing the law against any offenders.

In a latest development, the Commerce Ministry's truth-seeking committee said on Thursday that draws of banks and commercial enterprises, dating back to 2015, would be scrutinized to determine their lawfulness.

Head of the committee Adnan Abol told KUNA that the date of scrutiny might be stretched back depending on the evidences and legal process.

He revealed that an online platform would be launched for the public to receive complaints and information regarding any suspicious activities in a step to enhance transparency and fairness.

A name-list of individuals supervising the draws is being prepared as part of the current measures, he affirmed, adding that any person suspected of foul play would be sent to competent authorities for investigation.

Meanwhile, the Public Prosecution ordered the detention of a citizen and five residents after extensive investigations into their involvement in serious crimes, such as the forgery of official documents, bribery of a public employee, facilitating the theft of state-owned funds, money laundering, and other major offenses that have caused huge harm to the country's national interests.

These actions come amid circulating reports on social media regarding the involvement of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, who oversaw the raffles for the Kuwait Shopping Festival "Ya Hala".

Investigations revealed that the official exploited his position to manipulate the weekly raffles for prizes sponsored by the festival.

He worked in collaboration with several other defendants, some of whom fled the country immediately after their involvement was exposed.

In an exceptional move, the Public Prosecutor instructed the formation of an integrated investigation team, which began working immediately after the case was discovered, in close coordination with the relevant authorities at the Ministry of Interior.

The Public Prosecution issued arrest and search warrants for six suspects, as well as three international arrest warrants for others who fled the country. Their names have been added to international wanted lists for prosecution and extradition to Kuwait for further investigation.

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Kuwait Cabinet reaffirms reform agenda, national unity following HH Amir speech

KUWAIT CITY, March 27. (KUNA): The Cabinet held its weekly session on Wednesday at Bayan Palace under chairmanship of the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Following the session, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheridah Al-Mousherji stated that the ministers examined the statement that had been addressed by His Highness the Amir to the citizens on Sunday, marking the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan.

The ministers during the session examined His Highness the Amir's speech where he expressed hope to witness in the near future distinguished leaps on the path of reforms and construction, along with abundant accomplishments for the homeland and the citizens.

The Cabinet statement recalled main points in the Amir's speech, noting that sedition seekers have been, in tackling the file of the citizenship, to distort facts, promote rumors and misphrase statements to drive a wedge in the national ranks, encourage complaints and suspicion in the state decisions in this file.

His Highness the Amir had stressed on the keenness of maintaining balance between firmness regarding the national unity and justice, affirming that dealing with this file would be ac-

ording to the laws and humanitarian and living requirements.

His Highness had emphasized that the national unity safeguards the homeland in the face of challenges and hardships, pledging to pursue the march toward reforms, bolstering the independence and placing the higher interests of the country above all.

He also vowed to pursue fighting corruption assuring the people that he is following up closely on work of the state apparatuses particularly in the health, teaching and housing sectors.

Citing further excerpts of His Highness the Amir's Ramadan speech, it noted that he had pledged to combat corruption, resist anybody who tries to undermine security and stability of the homeland or target the citizens' interests.

His Highness had noted that he was also closely monitoring the drafting of legislation and laws, execution of treaties and memoranda of understanding for attaining strategic partnerships, expressing optimism that Kuwait would witness a bright future and the planned accomplishments would materialize as scheduled to boost economic diversification and financial stability.

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'Generosity reflects humanitarian legacy'

Debt relief campaign tops KD 7 million

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Secretariat General of Awqaf sent a letter to the Ministry of Social Affairs announcing its donation of KD1 million for the third National Campaign to Pay the Debts of Citizens.

This increases the total donation collected through the campaign to more than KD 7 million; with 15,325 donors so far.

Sources disclosed the total amount is expected to exceed KD 10 million; especially in the final days of the holy month of Ramadan, as several cooperative societies will donate at least KD100,000.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Minister of



Dr. Amthah Al-Huwailah

Social Affairs and Minister of State for Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthah Al-Huwailah affirmed

Thursday that Kuwait has always crafted historic humanitarian milestones.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the minister highlighted that the generosity demonstrated by the Kuwaiti people in the National Campaign for Insolvent Debtors is yet another shining chapter in the nation's record of benevolence and solidarity.

Al-Huwailah expressed pride and gratitude toward all individuals, institutions, and charitable societies who have contributed to this national initiative, affirming that their compassionate spirit embodies the true values and humanitarian responsibility deeply rooted in Kuwaiti society.

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8 KIPCO reports net profit of KD 15.65 million in 2024

8 ACICO reports 12% rise in gross profit



9 KFH's 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan' campaign achieves success



10 NREC announces a net profit of KD 9.3m for the year ended Dec 31, 2024, marking 126% growth

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Friday 18:05
Imsak Saturday 04:21
Iftar Saturday 18:05

News watch

6 dead after sub sinks in Red Sea

CAIRO, March 27. (AP): Six people died and nine others were injured after a tourist submarine sank in the popular Egyptian Red Sea destination of Hurghada, two municipal officials said Thursday. They were speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

Emergency crews were able to rescue 29 people, according to a statement released by the Red Sea governorate. The submarine, which was sailing off one of the beaches in the tourist promenade area, had carried 45 tourists of various nationalities.

It was not immediately clear what caused the submarine to sink.

In November, a tourist yacht sank in the Red Sea after warnings of rough waters, Egyptian officials said. At least four people drowned, while 33 were rescued.

TEHRAN: Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Thursday that all doors were still opened for indirect talks with the US on the country's nuclear file.

According to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Kharrazi indicated that Iran was ready for indirect talks with the US; however, the outlines of such negotiations must be determined prior. (KUNA)



Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US, Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick.

Sheikha Al-Zain, Lutnick strengthen ties

Kuwait's ambassador outlines economic policies, investments in US during talks

WASHINGTON, March 27, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US, Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah met with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick to discuss bilateral relations and economic cooperation.

In a statement to KUNA on Wednesday, the Kuwaiti Embassy said Sheikha Al-Zain stressed the deep-rooted US-Kuwait partnership and highlighted the diplomatic efforts that led to the formation of

an international coalition to liberate Kuwait in February 1991.

Sheikha Al-Zain underscored the lasting impact of this historic moment on the Kuwaiti people and reiterated Kuwait's profound gratitude to the US for its role in 1991, and in response, Secretary Lutnick reaffirmed the enduring importance of these historical ties.

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Day by Day

THE Public Authority for Civil Information announced that 260,252 Kuwaiti citizens have one wife each, 7,667 have two, 650 have three, and 80 citizens have four wives, as of the end of 2024.

The marriages with four wives are mostly to older unmarried women. May God comfort them.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait weekend weather brings warm days and refreshing nights

KUWAIT CITY, March 27. (KUNA):

The Meteorological Department has forecasted generally hot weather during the day and moderate to cold conditions at night for the upcoming weekend.

According to Dirar Al-Ali, director of the Meteorological Department, the country will experience stable weather due to an extension of a surface air altitude, which will bring some scattered clouds. Winds will be variable in direc-

tion, shifting to southeasterly, light to moderate in speed.

For Friday, the weather is expected to be hot with partial cloud cover. Winds will be southeasterly, light to moderate, at speeds ranging from 8 to 30 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures will range between 29 and 31°C, with the sea experiencing light to moderate waves between 1 and 4 feet.

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Kuwait's skyline dazzles under the Thursday sun, with temperatures peaking between 29 and 31 degrees Celsius, highlighting the city's vibrant energy and stunning architecture.

Photo by Samer Shiqer

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:25	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:44	Maghrib ..	18:03
Zohr	11:54	Isha	19:21

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot and partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold and cloudy with light to moderate

Weather

southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h..

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	32	19	Bubyan	25
Kuwait Airport	31	12	Jahra	31
Abdaly	32	13	Failaka Island	26
			Salmiyah	28
			Ahmadi	27
			Jal Aliyah	30
			Nuwaisib	31



'Laylat-ul-Qadr' or the 'Night of Power'... Worshippers thronged the mosques, especially the Grand Mosque, Kuwait City on the 26th night of Ramadan, anticipating their prayers will be heard by the Almighty Allah. Worshippers overflowed onto the side-walks and roads adjacent to the Grand Mosque.

Kuwait mosques celebrate 26th Ramadan night

In quest of 'Night of Power', better than thousand months

By **Mohammad Al-Ezei**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: In an atmosphere of faith, mosques in the country celebrated the 26th night of the holy month of Ramadan; with tens of thousands of worshippers attending the night of the revelation of the Holy Quran -- the 'Night of Power' that is better than a thousand months.

They devoutly chanted, "O Allah, You are the Pardoner and You love to pardon, so pardon us."

Following the guidance of the pure Prophetic traditions, the mosques held the two night prayers; with the attendance of large crowds of worshippers hoping for Allah's forgiveness, freedom from Hellfire, and the great goodness of this blessed night until dawn.

As the Grand Mosque witnessed an attendance of approximately 140,000 worshippers, setting a record number not seen in years; Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi visited the mosque personally look into the

preparations and oversee the organization.

Al-Wasmi and his accompanying delegation toured the Grand Mosque to ensure all preparations were in place to welcome worshippers and pilgrims on this blessed night.

The Grand Mosque administration announced that the number of worshippers who performed the Qiyam prayer on the 27th night of Ramadan reached 140,000 -- 90,000 men and 50,000 women. The worshippers were led by reciters Ahmad Al-Nafees and Mishari Al-Afasy.

'Eid Mubarak to leaders and Kuwait'

I would like to extend my warmest wishes to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and the Government and people of Kuwait as we celebrate Eid Al-Fitr.

Reflecting on the Holy Month of Ramadan, my team at the British Embassy and I have thoroughly enjoyed immersing ourselves in Kuwait's rich traditions and developing further the people-to-people links that underpin the unique partnership between our two countries. We are, as ever, profoundly grateful to the wonderful hosts who have welcomed us to their iftars, ghabgas and diwanias with typically generous hospitality.

I wish everyone a peaceful and blessed Eid full of quality



Belinda Lewis

time with family and friends. Eid Mubarak!

Belinda Lewis,
British Ambassador to Kuwait



Archbishop Father Bigol Anba Bishoi

Father Bigol says Eid greetings to Kuwait's leadership, people

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Head of the Egyptian Coptic Church in Kuwait Father Bigol Anba Bishoi extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, the government led by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. He wished Kuwait continued progress and prosperity, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Father Bigol also conveyed to the Kuwaiti leadership and people the congratulations of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark in Egypt and all the Diaspora, as well as His Grace Bishop Antonious, Metropolitan of Jerusalem, Kuwait, and the Near East, and their best wishes for the Kuwaiti leadership to continue its path of

progress and success.

Father Bigol said, "I wish all Muslims a joyful celebration and share in their happiness during Eid. We also participated in the social events of the holy month, including visits to diwanias." He stressed that Ramadan in Kuwait is a time to strengthen connections within society, which provide a fresh wave of positive energy to continue the journey and work ahead.

Father Bigol affirmed that the month of Ramadan highlights the hospitality of Kuwait, the deep sense of solidarity among its people, and their care for the less fortunate.

He also referred to the Egyptian Coptic Church's Ghabqa, which has been held for over 25 years under the theme of Love.

Father Bigol expressed gratitude to all those involved, and wished that such occasions bring goodness and peace to humanity.

KD30b debt ceiling to boost financial stability, economy

Law to overhaul local finance markets: Al-Muzaini

KUWAIT CITY, March 27, (KUNA): A decree into law was issued on Wednesday setting ceiling of public debt at KD 30 billion and allowing release of financial instruments with a liability reaching 50 years.

Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Nora Al-Fassam said in a statement that the law enables the State of Kuwait to deal with local and international markets to boost liquidity management.

It is part of the government efforts to bolster financial stability and push forward economic development, in tandem with the State Kuwait vision 2035. Moreover,



Nora Al-Fassam



Faisal Al-Muzaini

it is a crucial step on the path of financial and economic reforms, aimed at establishing a more diversified and sustainable economy for serving the interest of the State and the citizens, she added.

For his part, Faisal Al-Muzaini, Director of Public Debt at the Min-

istry of Finance, disclosed some objectives of the new decree into law such as making financial instruments available for the State in the local and external markets.

Such a situation makes financing in the Kuwaiti dinar or the main foreign convertible currencies possible, thus creating multiple options

for managing the public debts and liquidity.

The new decree into law allows overhauling the local finance markets through creating a referential sovereign return that in turn contributes to boosting attractiveness of the Kuwaiti financial markets, contributes to funding mega development ventures, stimulates the domestic economy, boosts the sovereign credit rating of Kuwait, preserves the sovereign liquidity reserves thus enabling the government to honor its financial liabilities in various economic circumstances.

Al-Muzaini has further pointed out that this decree into law is proclaimed amid rapid changes in international financial markets where acquiring funding in a flexible manner is one of the basic factors for economic stability. Moreover, developing the local debt markets boosts Kuwait's competitiveness as a regional financial hub.

Ministry urged to curb brain drain

Top notch quitting in high numbers puts MoE in jeopardy

By **Abdulrahman Al-Shammari**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Following the resignation of the acting Director of Educational Affairs in the Capital Educational District effective March 31 and in a new development reflecting the increasing number of educational professionals resigning from supervisory positions, educational sector sources confirmed that Director of the Educational Activities Department in Ahmadi Educational District Dr. Majid Al-Ali has submitted his resignation.

This move adds to a series of resignations witnessed by the Ministry of Education recently, par-

ticularly by school principals hence, increasing the number of vacancies in leadership and supervisory positions in the educational sector.

Sources pointed out that Al-Ali's resignation came amid the increasing challenges that educational administrations are facing. They said the departure of educational professionals from educational districts has become a worrying phenomenon, given the increasing number of vacancies in supervisory positions and the resulting administrative vacuum that could affect the stability of the educational and administrative processes in educational districts.

Sources urged the ministry to immediately ad-

dress the talent drain problem, warning that the continuous loss of expertise could negatively affect the quality of educational and administrative performance in schools and educational districts.

"This poses a new challenge for the ministry in terms of addressing such issues and filling up vacancies in a manner that ensures the continuation of educational work," sources added.

They underscored the need to attract young talents and lay down plans to fill vacancies to ascertain the stability of educational leadership, making this a priority in order to prevent the administrative vacancies crisis from worsening; as it could directly impact the entire educational process.

MoH teaches worshipers how to fast, what to eat in Ramadan

By **Marwa Al-Bahawi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Health Promotion Department at the Ministry of Health will conclude its annual campaign to educate worshipers and school students about healthy habits during the holy month of Ramadan on Thursday.

Director of the department Dr. Abeer Al-Bahwa told the newspaper that "this year's awareness plan includes 105 awareness lectures, covering 99 mosques and 16 schools in all governorates."

She revealed that the specialized team in the department organized scientific lectures to educate worshipers about optimal health behavior during



Dr Al-Bahwa

Ramadan, as well as to provide health advice and guidance to patients for safe fasting.

She said the team delivers lectures daily for an hour after the afternoon prayer; providing awareness and guidance, in addition to responding to inquiries. She added the team also provides free biometric testing services for blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol levels and other chronic non-communicable diseases.

The lectures are being offered for the seventh consecutive year in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the Helping Patients Fund, affirming the commitment of the Health Ministry to provide health awareness services throughout Ramadan to contribute to a safe and healthy fast.

The lectures tackle preparation of the body for fasting and learning how to cope with the changes that occur as a result of changes in eating and sleeping habits, and ways to reduce disturbances and achieve the spiritual and physical goals of

fasting without compromising quality of life and productivity.

The lectures cover several other topics like reducing caffeine intake (tea and coffee) in order to mitigate caffeine withdrawal symptoms such as headache, quitting smoking, visiting a physician to assess health condition and determine a treatment and dietary plan to be followed during fasting and adjusting medication dosages to suit fasting periods for patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease, in addition to other conditions like pregnant women, children and the elderly.

Changing daily lifestyle during Ramadan, such as reducing sleep hours and sleeping late after Fajr prayer, increases daytime sleepiness. This disruption to sleep patterns can affect productivity, causing headache and poor concentration. Therefore, the lectures focused on tips for better sleep during fasting.

Other Voices

Abu Khaled ... intercessor for poor

By **Ahmad alsarraf**

Abu Khaled is a dear avid reader and a strong critic who never misses any of my articles. He also sees himself as a staunch defender of the poor.

With some pain, I must strongly object to what I have written several times, and which my colleague Iqbal Al-Ahmad has also addressed, regarding the growing number of sidewalk vendors, particularly fruit vendors, in residential areas. Over the course of almost twenty successive governments, this phenomenon has persisted, resisting any attempts to end it.

Abu Khaled reproachfully says: "... I swear, the street snacks/food have not caused traffic jams. They should be allowed to make a living. They are part of a marginalized and poor class, with children and families to support. How can you call for their impoverishment?"

Abu Khaled is a highly qualified and experienced oil expert, yet he was unable to see the other side of the issue. He focused solely on one aspect, that these people should be left alone, while overlooking the fact that allowing this practice could lead to health, social, and financial problems. This is especially concerning as the vendors continue to add new food items to their displays.

I explained to Abu Khaled that the phenomenon of selling goods, particularly food, on the streets is not only unhealthy but also harmful to legitimate shop owners and grocery stores. These business owners pay high rents for their shops, and in some cases, high down pay-

ments. They are also required to pay fees for various licenses and health certificates for their workers, as well as fulfill other financial obligations.

In contrast, those who display their goods on the streets, regardless of their social status, do so without any approvals or adherence to health or legal standards. Despite all this, we tend to view these violators as helping to support their livelihoods, overlooking the fact that this behavior disregards the laws governing commercial activities in any society.

Describing someone who violates the practice of selling goods on the sidewalks as a "vampire" is both an exaggeration and an injustice to them. I have previously stated that I willingly abandoned any commercial and trading activities. Therefore, both Abu Khaled and I belong to the same category - retirees. However, this does not mean I agree with his characterization of traders as "vampires." The issue is far more complicated than that.

Purchasing food from an unlicensed vendor, which may lead to consumer harm, such as food poisoning due to exposure to germs, dust, and vehicle emissions, is a responsibility that cannot solely be placed on the poor vendor. What if one or more cars stop to buy from these vendors, and their sudden stop causes a traffic accident or obstructs traffic?

We need to issue laws that prohibit such unsanitary and uncivilized practices. The inspectors of the Kuwait Municipality, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Interior should take action to stop this, so that Abu Khaled no longer feels the need to describe a "retired trader" as a "vampire."

□ □ □

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diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Folly of invading Kuwait ... Saddam dug his own grave

"THE historical, lengthy and boring interview that distinguished journalist Ammar Taqi had with Dr. Abdullah Al-Nafisi had nothing new and it was really provocative. Despite boasting about his academic qualifications, his education at the world's most prestigious university, his books and his love for bragging, none of these means the man is worthy of being included among the ranks of scholars, being listened to or being read about," journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Unfortunately, I admit here that my library contains some of his works. I hope the above lines will not be a source of provocation, anger or anything of the sort. The pen, that evil devil, puts me or even forces me into pitfalls and situations I do not wish to fall into. Nevertheless, there is still room for apology and forgiveness -- for us to forgive, pardon and reconcile, or forget and pretend to forget. These are the characteristics of wise and good people.

"After all this, we get to the heart of the matter I intend to write about. Its first speaker is Professor Abdullah Al-Nafisi, the host of the interview, and his discussion of the reasons behind the invasion of Kuwait by a reckless, ignorant and brazen man named Saddam Hussein Al-Tikriti. Al-Nafisi said in his confession that Saddam Hussein emerged from his war with Iran with empty coffers, so he asked Kuwait for \$15 billion. He himself quipped 'what about \$10 billion?' Quite simply and with a cold heart, Al-Nafisi asked Kuwait to submit to Saddam's blackmail at the time. But the question he ignored or evaded was: What could be the guarantee that he would not repeat his request again and again? What if he exploited Kuwait's weakness with other demands, such as occupying the islands and annexing the border oil fields? What guarantee could there be that he would not demand the annexation of Kuwait to Iraq?"

"Saddam Hussein was neither innocent nor his coffers empty. More than \$40 billion were invested abroad for Iraq. Kuwait did not fail to provide financial aid when needed. Kuwait, which made itself the backyard in the absurd war with Iran, paid billions of dollars to purchase weapons from the West despite the fact that the war turned it into a battlefield and other matters that need not be mentioned, lest we reawaken the pain.

"However, it remains to be said: Saddam had his eye on Kuwait as an easy target and a gateway to occupying the entire Gulf but his ignorance, arrogance and the disease of grandeur that plagued him led him to commit the foolishness of invading Kuwait, after all it had of-

ferred to him. A scoundrel remains a scoundrel, even if you made him a saint.

"Saddam Hussein's greed was not limited to nibbling at Kuwait. He rather wanted it to be a paved path for nibbling at the entire Gulf and declaring himself emperor of the region -- from the Ahwaz sheikhdom in Iran to the farthest point of the Gulf. He wanted the great Arab State of the Gulf and Yemen to lay down a triple or quadruple conspiratorial plan to annex Yemen and Jordan, whose king dreamed of making himself sheriff over the Hijaz once again... These are the minds of mules and the dreams of birds.

"Finally, I say to the professor specializing in Political Science: I wish your books helped you understand what our enemies are planning against us. I wish things were calculated in dollars or dinars, but the \$10 billion were nothing more than a test of intentions. Know yourself and you will know your enemy."

Also:

"During my visit to the Poultry and Agriculture Exhibition in Bangkok, I had the opportunity to visit a greenhouse located on the fourth floor of a building, allocated for strawberry production," former board member of the Public Authority for Agriculture **Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Furaih** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"This idea is not new; as it has been implemented in many countries, including Kuwait.

"In 2017, Burgan Agricultural Company built a greenhouse on the roof of a Kuwait University building. This greenhouse is still used today for agricultural research.

"Utilizing rooftops in cities is a practical solution, especially in Asian countries suffering from high real estate prices. These spaces are used for agricultural projects, in addition to converting some greenhouses into restaurants and cafés, providing a unique experience in an open atmosphere.

"In Kuwait, there are many ready-made spaces, such as parking lots and warehouses that can be used for innovative agricultural projects.

"A space of just 500 square meters is sufficient to establish greenhouses for the production of crops such as strawberries, lettuce and leafy vegetables, using vertical farming and aeroponics -- techniques that have proven highly successful in Kuwait.

"Among the most important benefits of this wonderful project are the reduction of transportation costs due to its proximity to markets and the ease of access to electricity and water sources. It also plays a role in improving the urban environment by cooling the basements of buildings.

"In conclusion, I hope that unused rooftops in Kuwait will be identified and transformed into agricultural production centers, contributing to enhancing food security and increasing local production of leafy vegetables."

All set to enforce traffic laws: Al-Aslawi

Mol instals hi-tech cameras to trap seat belt, phone violators

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Prior to the implementation of the new traffic law on April 22, the Ministry of Interior has completed its preparations for enforcing the new fines, including a public awareness campaign on the law's provisions, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In this regard, Head of the Traffic Awareness Department at the General Traffic Department Major MUSAED AL-ASLAWI said the traffic control and surveillance cameras, along with newly deployed cameras, are capable of monitoring a range of traffic violations, particularly those related to seat-belt use and mobile phone usage while driving.

Major Al-Aslawi revealed the types of traffic cameras deployed at the roundabouts, intersections, and the main and internal roads in various areas of the country.

He explained that different types of cameras are used to monitor traffic conditions, including surveillance cameras, artificial intelligence cameras, point-to-point speed monitoring cameras, and modern cameras designed to detect violations such as "no U-turn" and mobile cameras.

A total of 413 traffic surveillance cameras, located at intersections and linked to the traffic control room, are designed to moni-

tor congestion and alleviate bottlenecks by adjusting signal timings. These cameras also track violations such as mobile phone usage, failure to wear seatbelts, children sitting in the front seats, crossing solid lines, and obstructing traffic. These cameras are monitored by staff in the operations room. They cover all directions at intersections and record the aforementioned violations.

Furthermore, there are 421 fixed traffic enforcement cameras placed on main and internal roads, roundabouts and intersections. These cameras are designed to monitor speeding and red signal violations. The footage from these cameras is carefully reviewed after data extraction to verify recorded violations. If a violation is confirmed, it is sent to the violator via the government application Sahel. If, during the review, it is found that the driver was using a mobile phone or not wearing a seatbelt, these additional violations are added to the main violation.

There are 252 artificial intelligence cameras deployed on most roads and internal areas. These cameras are designed to monitor seatbelt violations, children sitting in the front seats, mobile phone usage while driving, and lack of lane discipline. These AI cameras also undergo a review process, and if a violation is confirmed, a notification is sent to the driver through the Sahel app. Like the traffic enforcement cameras, these AI cameras register seatbelt violations for both the driver and the passenger, while mobile phone usage violations are only recorded for the driver.



Hassan Ali Karam



KUNA photo
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah presents a souvenir to Military Attaché at the Saudi Embassy in Kuwait Brigadier General Farhan Al-Shathri.

Kuwait, Saudi focus on defense ties

KUWAIT CITY, March 27, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, on Wednesday, held discussions with the Military Attaché at the Saudi Embassy in Kuwait Brigadier General Farhan Al-Shathri, focusing on joint military and defense issues.

According to a press statement from the Ministry of Defense, the meeting highlighted the strong fraternal ties between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia, and explored ways to strengthen these relations in various sectors, particularly in the areas of military and defense cooperation.

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Sabah extended a warm welcome to Brigadier General Al-Shathri, offering his best wishes for success in his role.

He also underscored the significance of deepening collaborative efforts to promote the mutual interests of both nations.

Court jails Al-Khalidi for 5 years, Al-Mullah sentenced to 2 years

Bail for ex-MP overturned

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Criminal Court sentenced Salman Al-Khalidi to five-year imprisonment for insulting the Amiri authority on social media.

On February 9, the court, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Osaimi, had adjourned the hearing to April 10 to consider Al-Khalidi's appeal against the prison sentence issued in absentia in a State Security case.

□ □ □

Al-Mullah gets 2 years: The Criminal Court Wednesday sentenced former MP Saleh Al-Mullah to two-year imprisonment with hard labor in a State Security case. The Public Prosecution had previously decided to release Al-Mullah on a bail of KD 1,000 after completing his investigation.

He was charged with challenging the authority and powers of His Highness the Amir and misusing his phone through a post on his X account. Al-Mullah denied the charges against him.

In the grounds for its ruling, the Criminal Court confirmed that it was certain the defendant was referring to His Highness the

Amir, who holds undisputed constitutional rights under the Kuwaiti Constitution.

The court stated that it was clear the defendant, when posting the statement on May 10, 2024, intended to address the current Amir, not the late Amir.

The court rejected the defendant's claim that the post expressed a constitutional rather than a political opinion, explaining that social media was not the appropriate platform for such matters. Instead, it should be the domain of legal research and studies, not public discussion intended to harm or defame the rights and powers of His Highness the Amir of the country.

Kuwait Bar protective shield for lawyers: Al-Suwaifan

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Secretary of Kuwait Bar Association Khaled Al-Suwaifan has affirmed the association's commitment to serve as a protective shield for the legal profession as it has established the foundations for regulating the profession and ensuring its proper performance by adopting professional and ethical standards that raise the quality of legal work in the country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Al-Suwaifan pointed out that the association provides an appropriate environment for lawyers to fulfill their noble mission of defending rights and consolidating the principles of justice by

developing legislation that guarantees the independence of lawyers, as well as offering training courses and legal workshops that keep pace with global developments in the legal field.

He said the association plays a pivotal role in representing Kuwaiti lawyers in international forums and contributes to strengthening communication with legal bodies and unions at the regional and international levels; hence, providing Kuwaiti lawyers with the opportunity to benefit from diverse legal experiences and engage in a global dialogue on developing laws and promoting justice.

He added "we will continue this approach



Al-Suwaifan

and work to provide all the support that Kuwaiti lawyers need, whether by defending their rights or developing systems and laws which enhance their standing and role in achieving justice."

He also emphasized that "the future of the legal profession in Kuwait remains a top priority and we will exert tremendous efforts to guarantee the continuation of this honorable journey."



Mol photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with securitymen.

Farwaniya Gov ensures security at Avenues Mall

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted an inspection visit to the security checkpoint at the Avenues Mall. Timed with the last ten days of Ramadan and the approaching Eid al-Fitr, the visit aimed to monitor the progress of work and discuss the security and organizational aspects.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Sheikh Athbi, during his visit, explored potential solutions that serve public interest.

He praised the efforts and dedication exerted by the security personnel, and their vital role in protecting lives and properties, and serving Kuwait with honor and pride.

Encroachments targeted in Taima, Sulaibiya areas

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Director of the Public Relations Department and official spokesperson for the Kuwait Municipality Mohammad Al-Sindan says the municipality's teams monitoring encroachments on state properties have developed a field plan, in coordination with relevant authorities, to remove encroachments in Taima and Sulaibiya, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Al-Sindan announced the launch of a large-scale campaign by the municipality's teams to remove encroachments in these areas, following the issuance of warnings to violators who exploited state land and obstructed public services, thereby negatively impacting security.

He said the extensive inspection campaign is being conducted by the municipality's encroachment monitoring teams in collaboration with government agencies, including the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Environmental Police, as well as teams from the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

Two elderly persons caught in possession of narcotics

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Rescue police officers have referred two citizens, aged 60 and 48, to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry for investigation regarding the source of narcotics found in their vehicle, reports Al-Anba.

The driver, a 60-year-old citizen, was issued a traffic violation citation for driving under the influence and for violating lane regulations.

A security source revealed that while patrolling in Ali Sabah Al-Salem; the Southern Highway Rescue patrol noticed a vehicle swerving erratically and the driver appeared to be in an abnormal condition. When the patrol officers signaled for the driver to stop; he initially ignored them, but he was eventually forced to pull over. Both the driver and his passenger showed signs of being under the influence, prompting the officers to conduct a thorough search.

The search led to the discovery of a narcotic substance -- most likely Shabu, two white pills believed to be Captagon and two pieces of drug paraphernalia.

Meanwhile, Highway Security personnel arrested an individual found in possession of Lyrica pills, three pills suspected to be Captagon and two electronic cigarettes containing hashish.

In a separate incident, a lane violation on King Fahd Road, heading towards Nuwaiseeb and Taraj, prompted the emergency patrols to stop the vehicle. The occupants were found to be in an altered state, and a subsequent search revealed the narcotic pills and electronic hashish cigarettes.

Residents evacuated

No one hurt in Sabahiya house fire



KFF photo
KFF personnel battle flames.

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Fire broke out in a house in Sabahiya on Wednesday evening.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), firefighters from Mangaf Fire Station rushed to the location and extinguished the fire after evacuating the house.

No casualties have been reported.



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LOCAL

MoE issues decisions to appoint 43 employees to supervisory positions

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has issued 43 decisions related to secondment, delegating, assigning, appointing 43 employees to supervisory positions, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release, the Ministry of Education stated that these steps are part of the comprehensive reform vision spearheaded by Al-Tabtabaei.

The ministry explained that these decisions are aimed at

enhancing job stability and improving overall performance in various sectors and departments, with the goal of boosting administrative efficiency. The decisions are designed to fill supervisory positions, including heads of departments, and to deal with long-standing vacancies, ensuring that these positions are occupied by qualified individuals in accordance with regulations that preserve transparency and fairness.



His Excellency Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Governor of Ahmadi

Prayers for Kuwait's prosperity and unity

Ahmadi Governor extends heartfelt Eid Al-Fitr greetings to leadership

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah extended his heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him), and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (May God protect him), on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr.

According to a press release issued by Ahmadi Governorate, he prayed to God Almighty for many good returns on this occasion, and wished prosperity and bless-

ings to the Kuwaiti people, the political leadership, and the Arab and Islamic nations. He asked God Almighty to grant them good health and wellness and to bless Kuwait with further progress, prosperity, security and safety.

The Ahmadi Governor also extended his sincere congratulations to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, as well as to all citizens and residents.

Unified grading scale for European qualifications

MoHE aligns EU degrees with job market

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal has approved the recommendation of the Committee for the Unification of the Verbal Grading Scale and Academic GPA for Qualifications Issued by European Scholarship Countries.

The committee was formed pursuant to Ministerial Resolution No. 249 dated Aug 12, 2024. It is chaired by acting Undersec-

retary of the ministry Lamia Al-Mulhim.

This step aims to enhance the accuracy of academic assessment, achieve equal opportunities, and keep pace with international academic standards.



Dr. Al-Jalal

Al-Mulhim revealed the committee recommended that the academic qualifications of job applicants be considered in accordance with the approved academic systems and classifications of each European country, given the differences in assessment and grade standards

between countries.

She added "coordination has been made with government institutions by providing them with the standards specific to each country based on European systems (British, French, German, Italian and Spanish) as a proposal for adoption when announcing job vacancies, ensuring that applicants are treated based on approved academic classifications."

She pointed out that the implementation of the recommendation in future job advertisements will undoubtedly contribute to achieving the highest level of compatibility between European academic qualifications and labor market requirements; thereby, attracting talents accurately and effectively.

Agreement empowers researchers

KFAS, ASU sign 5-year agreement to strengthen innovation and research

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) recently signed a cooperation agreement with Abdullah Al-Salem University to strengthen their partnership in the fields of scientific research and technological innovation.

Director General of KFAS Dr. Amina Rajab Farhan said on the sidelines of the signing of the agreement "this partnership embodies the mission of KFAS to strengthen cooperation with leading academic institutions like Abdullah Al-Salem University in order to support young people and researchers in exploring new horizons of knowledge and innovation. We are proud to be part of this ambitious project, which will be beneficial for the Kuwaiti society and improve Kuwait's position as a center for Science and technology."

She disclosed that the agreement is valid for five years and includes areas of cooperation in providing support for scientific research and technological development, while supporting innovation in the knowledge economy field.



KUNA photo

The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and Abdullah Al-Salem University sign a cooperation agreement.

Chairman of the Founding Board of Directors of Abdullah Al-Salem University Dr. Moudi Al-Hamoud affirmed "we are pleased with this fruitful collaboration with KFAS, which is a fundamental pillar in promoting scientific research in the country.

Through this agreement, we aim to enable our students and researchers to benefit from the resources and expertise provided by KFAS, working together to build a generation capable of efficiently facing future scientific and technological challenges.

PAAET approves excellent performance bonus for 950 employees ahead of Eid

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam announced the approval of the excellent performance bonuses for 950 employees at PAAET, affirming that the bonuses will be deposited into the bank accounts of the eligible employees before Eid holidays, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Fajjam explained that the Administrative and Financial Affairs Sector has completed the evaluation of all employees in various sectors of PAAET, and entered the

results into the Integrated Service System, in preparation for awarding the bonus to those entitled to it.

One of the conditions for eligibility is receiving an excellent rating for the year 2024. The bonuses will be awarded based on the employee's grade and job title, including department directors, supervisors, department heads, division heads, and administrative employees ranging from grade A to grade 8 for Kuwaiti employees, as well as non-Kuwaiti employees working under contracting agreements.



Photo by Samer Shaquair

Shoppers stroll past a ready-made clothing store.

Shoppers struggle with 25% increase

Ready-made clothing prices soar

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The ready-made clothing markets flourish every year when Eid Al-Fitr is fast approaching.

A field visit by the staff of the newspaper revealed a 25 percent increase in clothing prices this season compared to last season.

A number of shoppers expressed their dissatisfaction with the rising clothing prices this season, stating that merchants exploit the holidays and occasions to raise prices and offer consolation to low-income earners.

Salah Al-Dakash revealed that he and his children planned to buy Eid clothes, but was surprised by the high prices. He said a regular T-shirt, which used to sell for around KD2,500, now costs more than KD4, while the price of training pants for children that was sold for KD3,500 last year soared remarkably.

He called for the necessary action by official consumer protection agencies to halt this exaggerated rise in clothing prices.

Young Mohammad Ali disclosed that more than 90 percent of ready-made clothing in the market is poorly manufactured, quickly discoloring with use and prone to fluff. "Despite this, they are sold at high prices. Clothing retailers exploit children's joy during Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha by automatically raising prices, which have increased by more than 30 percent this year in spite of their poor quality.

Umm Jumana stated that she only buys ready-made clothing from trusted companies that offer high-quality products. However, she expressed disappointment over high prices, indicating a pair of youth trousers now costs more than KD12. She added the poorly manufactured trousers sell

for around KD3 or slightly more, but their color changes with washing.

She urged the ready-made clothing retailers to reduce prices, especially during special occasions like Eid Al-Fitr, out of compassion for low-income families.

Shopper Jameel Al-Ibrahim raised a major issue: some ready-to-wear stores sell products with defective fitting without the buyer's knowledge. "This is why they are sometimes sold at extremely low prices," he claimed.

He asserted that the ready-to-wear market in the country needs a serious response from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in order to hold accountable merchants who unjustifiably raise prices.

Jamal Al-Arabi, an official at a ready-to-wear store, admitted there has been an increase in ready-to-wear clothing prices due to price hikes in the country of origin due to the high cost of cotton.

He clarified that the rate of increase is not fixed, as the price rather increases before the holidays to compensate for the stagnation they suffered for a long period. He added prices have increased by approximately 23 percent compared to last year's Eid Al-Fitr season.

He continued "ready-made clothing stores in Kuwait are not very active except during the travel season, specifically after the end of May. This activity continues until early July, after which ready-made clothing companies suffer a recession due to the tendency of many expatriates to buy clothes from the Friday Market, especially used products, which are sold at lowest prices, with an item selling for half a dinar. This is why expatriates prefer it, even though most of the Friday Market products are for deceased people or those killed in accidents in general."

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LOCAL

506 individuals stripped of Kuwaiti citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, March 27, (KUNA): The Supreme Committee on Kuwaiti citizenship announced on Thursday the stripping of 506 citizenships with the matter referred to the cabinet.

The decision was made during the committee's meeting on Thursday chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah.

A statement by the Ministry of Interior revealed that one individual had their Article (11) of the citizenship law stripped of due to dual citizenships, 465 individuals had their Article (21 bis A) citizenship stripped of due to fraud, false statements and some had acquired as close relatives, while 40 individuals had their Article (13) citizenship taken due to conflict with the state's supreme interest.

North Kabad treatment plant advances

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The ministerial committee responsible for the memorandum of understanding in the Ministry of Public Works, which is concerned with cooperating with China on the implementation of North Kabad Wastewater Treatment Plant project, held a meeting with a delegation from the Chinese company that will imple-

ment this project. Undersecretary Eid Al-Rashidi and Assistant Undersecretary of the Sanitary Engineering Sector Abdulrahman Al-Enezi attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the participants discussed the full range of ideas for executing this project; which will supply the entire northern region with treated water according to the highest specifications for agricultural, industrial and oil purposes.

Continued from Page 1

Oh people

The usurpation of power is not the result of a moment of political turmoil. In 2007, Hamas turned against everyone. Those who proclaimed their false faith disrespected the Holy Kaaba and broke the agreement signed there. They began practicing their mischief at the behest of the international organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. This is why their habit has been to extinguish any spark of hope, starting with the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in 1993 and it continues up to this day.

On this issue, we must speak realistically. Israel has become a reality, whether we like it or not.

It is supported by the majority of countries around the world, even the most powerful ones. We should not be deceived by the solidarity demonstrations in some European capitals; because they will not change the official decisions of governments, even if they express some sympathy for the Palestinians, while they continue to arm Tel Aviv.

In political realism, "the eye cannot defy the needle;" while anything is possible in dreams. This is the difference that Hamas leaders in and outside Palestine failed to grasp. Consequently, they indirectly served the Israeli agenda. Hence, we must review the history of the cause; starting from the 1936 revolution.

Each time, revolutionary uprisings ended in entrenching the occupation, as if Palestinian leaders worked in the Mossad office.

Moreover, since 1979, the so-called 'Islamic Revolution' has taken its share in exploiting Palestinian blood to realize its dream project. All of this could have destroyed the long-awaited State project.

Regrettably, none of the Palestinian leaders, and some Arabs, have been convinced that Israel does not want peace unless confronted with a serious Arab initiative; as the case with the Arab Initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit. Israel always finds fools among the leaders of organizations who prepare exits to dissuade it from pursuing this initiative.

Today, with the widespread protests against Hamas' practices, everyone is increasingly aware that eliminating the movement's rule over the Gaza Strip is not enough. Rather, its leaders, who have committed a grave crime against their own people, must be brought to justice.

Kuwait vows

During the searches of the suspects' residences and vehicles, large quantities of valuables were seized, including gold bracelets, necklaces, watches, luxury pens, and huge sums of cash believed to be linked to the crimes. Documents, laptops, and mobile phones were also confiscated, containing conclusive evidence of fraud and forgery related to the free draws at the Kuwait Shopping Festival "Ya Hala" as well as previous draws involving other companies.

To ensure full control over the case's evidence, the Public Prosecution issued orders to seize all funds of the defendants deposited in local and international banks, as well as to inquire about their accounts and financial transactions. It also instructed exchange companies to provide detailed records of the defendants' financial activities.

In addition, the seized computers and mobile phones were sent to the General Department of Criminal Evidence's Cyber Crimes Division for examination and analysis, followed by submission of comprehensive and accurate reports on their contents and implications.

The Public Prosecution is expediting its investigations, and summoning relevant employees from various government agencies for questioning on all aspects of the case. Investigations have also expanded to include other incidents confessed by the defendants, with new leads emerging and the investigation continuing to grow to potentially involve additional perpetrators.

Representing several citizens and residents who participated in the Ya Hala Shopping Festival raffles, Lawyer Mohammed Al-Jassim says the manipulation of the raffles has damaged the reputation of the organizing entities and harmed the financial and moral interests of individuals and companies that adhered to all the announced conditions.

He insisted that urgent action by the judicial authorities is necessary, including an immediate order to freeze the bank accounts of all defendants involved in the case.

Lawyer Al-Jassim also called for contacting the General Department of

Criminal Investigation to obtain a list of all bank transfers, both incoming and outgoing, to and from the defendants' accounts during the investigation period.

He said these transfers should be analyzed and cross-checked with the names of previous raffle winners to assess any potential financial connections or direct relationships with the defendants.

Lawyer Al-Jassim requested a comprehensive list of all raffles conducted by the employee of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, including the dates of each transaction, to cross-check the winners' names for any potential repetition or manipulation.

He further requested the records of incoming and outgoing calls of all defendants during the relevant periods, to be compared with the names of the winners and participants.

Lawyer Al-Jassim also called for an extensive investigation into everyone with the authority or responsibility to select names in raffles, recruitment, or other competitions.

He emphasized the need for an investigation into the crime of bribery, highlighting that the crime involves obtaining financial benefits through fraud and manipulation, often disguised as a "prize."

Lawyer Al-Jassim explained that the sale or disposal of these prizes indicates the crime of money laundering and warrants investigation by the State Security and Anti-Money Laundering Department. This includes tracing the origin of the prizes obtained through fraud and determining whether they were used to conceal or transfer illicit funds.

Kuwait's

The ambassador further expressed the pride shared by both nations in their shared history, noting that Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were not only triumphs of military precision and strategic cooperation but also an innovative financial model funded by Kuwait and allied contributions.

She emphasized that Kuwait ensured the US and its taxpayers bore no financial burden for the liberation of Kuwait.

Sheikha Al-Zain pointed out that the contributions from Kuwait and its allies not only covered all expenses but also generated a significant financial surplus, reflecting the exceptional nature of this approach.

She also highlighted the international cooperation that extended beyond the war, citing efforts to combat the massive fires ignited in Kuwait's oil fields during the Gulf War, and noted that Kuwait's resilience and leadership played a crucial role in successfully executing one of the largest and most efficient firefighting operations in history.

She praised the extraordinary efforts of Kuwaiti firefighters, engineers, and oil specialists who worked tirelessly alongside international teams, demonstrating remarkable skills, determination, and innovation in one of the most complex firefighting operations ever undertaken.

She also highlighted that the swift mobilization of joint efforts, combined with the expertise of leading American firms, was a testament to the strength of global cooperation in overcoming environmental and economic crises, while Secretary Lutnick commended Kuwait's partnership with American companies in managing the oil fires.

On economic matters, Sheikha Al-Zain reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to open-market policies that support businesses, emphasizing that the country maintains one of the world's lowest tariff rates, set at a consistent five percent for all trade partners, including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the US.

She also stressed that Kuwait imposes no protectionist tariffs on American products and that many goods, particularly those imported for US military operations, are exempt under national laws and economic agreements.

Secretary Lutnick welcomed these policies, praising Kuwait's openness as a key factor in strengthening future economic relations.

In terms of investment, Sheikha Al-Zain highlighted Kuwait's significant economic presence in the US, represented by the Kuwait Investment Authority, the Public Institution for Social Security, and the private sector.

She emphasized that Kuwaiti institutions and private investors have made substantial and strategic investments in the US market, reflecting Kuwait's strong confidence in the long-term strength and growth of the American economy, and Secretary Lutnick acknowledged the

importance of these investments in further deepening the economic ties between the two nations.

The meeting concluded with Secretary Lutnick thanking Sheikha Al-Zain for the productive discussions and reaffirming his commitment to strengthening and expanding US-Kuwait relations, and Sheikha Al-Zain, in turn, reiterated Kuwait's dedication to ensuring the continuation and prosperity of these bilateral relations.

Kuwait Cabinet

He had affirmed that Kuwait would maintain a diplomatic approach in dealing with brotherly and friendly nations as with regard of common causes and that it would maintain its unwavering stand against injustice.

Wisdom warrants sensing how huge the responsibility is, thus everybody is required to hold to the national unity and act in a responsible manner to preserve the homeland security and stability, His Highness had stated.

His Highness had warned against wasting time, polarization and disagreements, called for disregarding harmful social media platforms that seek to spread corruption, stressing on the necessity to respect the laws for protecting Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the ministers expressed gratitude toward the well guided instructions by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, affirming that they would be implemented, expressing good wishes for Kuwait and His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

They expressed congratulations on the near advent of Eid Al-Fitr to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and the people of Kuwait.

The Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef welcomed Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem on the occasion of his appointment to the post.

Kuwait weekend

Friday night will bring cooler conditions, with moderate to cold weather and cloud cover. Winds will continue southeasterly, light to moderate, ranging from 12 to 35 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures are expected to be between 13 and 15°C, while the sea will experience light to moderate waves between 2 and 4 feet.

On Saturday, the weather will remain warm with partial cloudiness. Winds will be southeasterly, light to moderate, at speeds of 10 to 38 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures will be between 29 and 31°C, and the sea will have light to moderate waves between 2 and 5 feet.

Saturday night will see moderate to cold conditions with increasing cloud cover. Winds will be southeasterly, light to moderate, sometimes stronger in coastal areas, ranging from 12 to 40 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures will range between 16 and 18°C, and the sea will have light to moderate waves, with some areas seeing waves rise between 2 and 6 feet.

Debt relief

The minister pointed out that the national campaign continues until April 14, providing an ongoing opportunity for everyone to participate in this noble humanitarian endeavor, urging the community to seize this chance to bring smiles, alleviate hardships, support insolvent debtors, and help restore stability and hope to their families.

She underlined that the directives of Kuwait's wise leadership and the deeply embedded humanitarian spirit among Kuwaitis have served as the key driving force behind the campaigns success.

She emphasized that every contribution today is a seed of goodness whose fruits will be harvested by society tomorrow. The minister further cited the noble words of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him): "Allah supports His servant as long as the servant is supportive of his brother."

Al-Huwailah concluded her statement by asserting, "This humanitarian initiative embraced by Kuwaitis will remain an eternal testament to their noble ethics and sincere compassion. History will proudly record that Kuwait has always been, and will always remain, a land of generosity, where its people unhesitatingly provide all they can for the service of their community and their country."

PAHW delivers over 70K services in Q1 via Sahel

Full digital shift on track

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Deputy Director General for Development and Public Relations at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) and the official spokesperson for PAHW Omar Al-Ruwaih stated that the Citizen Services Department provided 70,122 services to citizens during the first quarter of this year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Al-Ruwaih revealed that 97 percent of the services offered by PAHW are available online through the Sahel government application.

He praised the efforts exerted by those responsible for the application and highlighted the ongoing success in facilitating and improving transaction procedures for citizens.

Al-Ruwaih explained that, of the total services provided by PAHW, 67,905 were completed through the Sahel app, and 2,175 through PAHW's centers.

Since the launch of the Sahel app, PAHW has introduced 30 new services to the platform, with more expected in the near future.

The most frequently requested service was the "To Whom It May Concern" certificate, with 58,201 requests submitted.

Also, 2,793 citizens updated their phone numbers through Sahel, and 1,703 families updated their data. A total of 1,656 citizens applied for housing care and rent allowances via the app, and 1,213 others submitted applications for electricity connections.

Al-Ruwaih affirmed that PAHW is committed to achieving a full digital transformation, and that it is actively working on moving all remaining paper-based services to the Sahel app and its electronic systems to further streamline processes and improve citizen access to services.

CSC nominates 289 citizens for employment

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced the nomination of a new batch of 289 male and female citizens registered under the Central Employment System, reports Al-Seyassah daily.




CSC said this batch includes candidates with intermediate and high school certificates who had passed the qualifying course tests.

It explained that a number of candidates with various qualifications were nominated for the first time, in addition to those who did not meet the technical standards of the entities they applied to, as well as candidates who had declined their nominations.

This batch is part of the comprehensive employment plan approved by the Civil Service Council in its

meeting No. 13/2024, aimed at completing the nomination process for those registered under the Central Employment System.

CSC also announced that applications for the 90th employment period will open for those wishing to register under the Central Employment System, starting Friday, March 28 until April 11, through its website - www.csc.gov.kw.

Kuwait Airways Company Job Vacancies Announcement

Kuwait Airways Company announces the Vacancies for the job listed below in accordance with the following specific requirements and specifications:

Required Job	Qualifications	Required Experience
Sr. Expert, Passenger Services	Bachelor's degree in Administration of Science or equivalent.	14 years' experience in various ground handling, sales, or cargo related work.
Expert, Airport Services – Passengers	Bachelor's degree in Administration of Science or equivalent.	12 years' experience in various ground handling, sales, or cargo related work.
Specialist (A), Passenger Services	Bachelor's degree in Administration of Science or equivalent.	8 years' experience in various ground handling, sales, or cargo related work.
Superintendent, Passenger Services	Bachelor's degree in Administration of Science or equivalent.	6 years ground handling experience, inclusive of successfully completing all required training courses.

General Terms:

- Priority for Kuwaitis who meet the requirements.
- The applicant is required to be proficient in Arabic and English (Reading & Writing & Speaking) and proficient in computer applications.
- A minimum of 70% is required to pass the English language test.
- The applicant must successfully pass a set of tests with specified success rates to qualify for a personal interview.
- Applicants shall be subject to the necessary conditions for appointment in accordance with the rules and regulations at Kuwait Airways.
- Compliance with Cabinet Resolution No. 914 issued on 29/06/2010, which includes: (Retired persons are only permitted to apply in the narrowest of limits. For the categories of pilots and flight engineers, they shall be requested, as needed, to ensure continued safe operations).
- Bachelor's degrees that are not recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait will not be considered.
- Applicants must demonstrate good conduct and behavior and must not have been convicted in any case prejudicial to honor or honesty.
- Applicants will be subject to personal interviews and the necessary tests, and in the event of equal ratings, comparison between them will be made according to the following standards of Civil Service Commission Resolution No. (4) of 2001 and in their order:
 - Holding a grade of (90%) or higher for the qualification.
 - Whomever graduated first.
 - Age seniority.
 - Married applicants are preferred over single status applicants.
- Submission and receipt of the application do not imply acceptance. Any application that fails to meet the specified conditions will not be considered, and the company reserves the right to decline or not respond to the applicant.

How to apply:

- Applications shall be submitted on the website: careers.kuwaitairways.com. This shall be within **15 days** from the date of publishing this announcement.
- Documents to be attached to the website:
 - CV.
 - Educational Qualification and professional certificates approved, and equivalency approved by the official authorities in the State of Kuwait.
 - Copy of Civil ID, Passport, Nationality and Birth Certificate.
 - To whom it may concern certificate from The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and Career Progression.
 - Experience Certificates
- Applications that do not meet the requirements or incomplete applications shall be excluded, and this exclusion is considered an official apology without the need to notify the applicant.

Kuwait Airways
28 March 2025



Firefighters work to control the Black Cove Fire on March 26, in Saluda, NC. (AP)

Firefighters make progress on containing Carolina fires

Firefighters announced progress Wednesday night on containing two of the largest wildfires burning in the North Carolina mountains, but they warned that fire danger remained from dry and windy conditions.

The news was worse in South Carolina, where two fires nearly doubled in size Wednesday, but crews kept the blazes away from homes and other structures.

Hundreds of people have been asked to leave their homes in North Carolina and South Carolina as a half-dozen large fires are burning in the Blue Ridge Mountains, spreading smoke into places like Greenville. Millions of fallen trees from September's Hurricane Helene are both providing fuel for the wildfires and hindering firefighters' use of logging roads and paths.

The North Carolina Forest Service said that the Black Cove Fire and Deep Woods Fire were each more than

10% contained on Wednesday night, after days of reporting zero containment for the two blazes. The fires have scorched nearly 10 square miles (26 square kilometers) combined, but the size of the area burned has largely remained the same since the previous day.

About 250 homes have been evacuated in Polk County, where the fires are centered. About two dozen homes and outbuildings have been destroyed in Polk County, spokesperson Kellie Cannon said. Firefighters have managed to save most of the structures near the fires. Only one injury has been reported - a firefighter in North Carolina got his leg caught under a tree, officials said. There is rain in the forecast for the weekend, but it isn't the kind of soaking downpour that can knock a fire out on its own, said National Weather Service meteorologist Ashley Rehnberg in Greer, South Carolina. (AP)

'Last-minute legislation'

Georgia fight over election rules resurfaces

ATLANTA, March 27, (AP) - A bill before a Georgia Senate committee Wednesday could allow a Donald Trump-aligned state board to strike thousands of challenged voters from the state's rolls and would require polling officials to count the number of ballots by hand.

The 26-page House Bill 397 is a wish list from Republicans, including three GOP members who control the State Election Board. The board adopted a series of rules amid intense scrutiny last year, only to see a state court judge throw out most of them, finding that the board had overreached its legal authority. An appeal of that ruling was argued last week before the Georgia Supreme Court.

Supporters of the bill say poll workers need to make sure the number of ballots collected on Election Day matches the total counted by ballot-scanning machines and that the State Election Board needs to hear appeals of challenged voters because counties are turning down thousands of challenges.

The bill would also try to force the state to leave the Electronic Records Information Center, a multistate group that tries to maintain accurate voter rolls. Some question the funding and motives of the group.

Officials who work for Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger warned the Senate Ethics Committee during a Wednesday hearing that if Georgia joins nine other Republican-



Georgia's State Election Board members discuss proposals for election rule changes at the state capitol on Sept. 20, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP)

controlled states in leaving ERIC, it would undermine the state's ability to maintain its voter rolls.

"We firmly believe in using every tool available to us," said Charlene McGowan, the chief lawyer for Raffensperger's office.

County election officials warned that a requirement to count by hand the number of ballots, although not individual votes, could lead to delays in reporting results on election night and mistakes by tired workers, as well as compromise ballot security. That's even though some counties in Georgia conducted hand counts until a few years ago.

"We want full control of those ballots at all times. We want them locked in secure containers and brought back to our office as soon as possible," said

Rebecca Anglin, elections director for Greene County, east of Atlanta.

Finally, opponents questioned whether the State Election Board can adequately or fairly hear appeals of voter challenges. Republican activists challenged more than 63,000 voters statewide last summer. Many of those people have moved away. But most challenges were rejected because county election boards said federal law bars them from removing inactive voters until multiple years elapse.

Don Hackney, a retired Atlanta lawyer, said such appeals belong in court, where they go now, and should not be handled by "a non-elected partisan appointed board" that is "completely ill-equipped to handle the avalanche of challenges."

Assertion strains credulity: Democrats

Trump administration says nothing classified shared on Signal app

WASHINGTON, March 27, (AP) - The Trump administration struggled Wednesday to stem the fallout from revelations that top national security officials discussed sensitive attack plans over a messaging app and mistakenly added a journalist to the chain.

The White House said the information shared through the publicly available Signal app with Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic magazine, was not classified, an assertion that Democrats said strains credulity considering that it detailed plans for an upcoming attack on Yemen's Houthis.

President Donald Trump during an Oval Office appearance to announce new tariffs on imported vehicles seemed frustrated as reporters repeatedly questioned him about the matter.

"I think it's all a witch hunt," Trump said.

The decision on determining whether the information is classified ultimately lies with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who in the chain listed weapons systems and a timeline for the attack - "THIS IS WHEN THE FIRST BOMBS WILL DEFINITELY DROP," he wrote. The Houthis have been wreaking havoc on vital Red Sea shipping lanes since November 2023 as the Israel-Hamas war raged.

Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said the position that the Trump administration is staking out can be described with one word: "Baloney."

"When you describe time, place, type of armaments used: Do they think the American public is stupid?" Warner said in an exchange with reporters.

There are no signs that the controversy will fade soon for Trump, who has said he stands by his national security team and has assailed the reporter's credibility. At the same time, he has made clear his preference for his team to discuss such operations in person and in more secure settings, though it is not yet clear if changes will be implemented as a result.

Sen. Roger Wicker, the Republican chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he and Sen. Jack Reed, the committee's top Democrat, will send a letter to the Trump administration requesting an expedited inspector general investigation into the use of Signal.

They are also calling for a classified briefing with a top administration official "who actually has the facts and can speak on behalf of the administration."



US Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, (left), joined at right by Chairman Tom Cotton, R-Ark, questions Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and CIA Director John Ratcliffe about texted war plans for upcoming military strikes in Yemen to a group chat that included the editor-in-chief for The Atlantic, at a hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on March 25. (AP)

"The information, as published recently, appears to me to be of such a sensitive nature that, based on my knowledge, I would have wanted it classified," Wicker said.

Asked about the call for an inspector general probe, Trump replied, "It doesn't bother me."

But White House officials continue to insist no classified material was discussed in the March 13 to March 15 Signal chain and have launched scathing attacks

on Goldberg. The Atlantic on Wednesday published the full content of the text exchange.

Hegseth, White House national security adviser Mike Waltz and other administration officials on Wednesday uniformly insisted that no "war plans" had been texted on Signal, a claim that current and former U.S. officials have called "semantics."

War plans carry a specific meaning. They often refer to the numbered and highly classified planning documents - sometimes thousands of pages long - that would inform U.S. decisions in case of a major conflict, such as if the United States is called to defend Taiwan.

But the information Hegseth did post - specific attack details selecting human and weapons storage targets - was a subset of those plans and was likely informed by the same classified intelligence.

Hegseth in an X posting said the message chain included, "No names. No targets. No locations. No units. No routes. No sources. No methods. And no classified information." He did not directly address Democrats' concerns about the timing and weaponry details in the chain.

"This only proves one thing: Jeff Goldberg has never seen a war plan or an 'attack plan' (as he now calls it). Not even close," Hegseth, who is traveling to the Indo-Pacific this week, added.

Hegseth told reporters Hawaii he had not texted "war plans" or "attack plans" in the Signal group, pointing out he had called his post a "team update."

"My job, as it said atop of that (post), everybody's seen it now - 'TEAM UPDATE' - is to provide updates in real time, general updates in real time, keep people informed," he said before boarding a plane for Guam without taking follow-up questions. "That's what I did. That's my job."

Waltz, who has acknowledged he built the Signal chain and has taken "full responsibility" for the episode, amplified Hegseth's contention.

"No locations. No sources & methods. NO WAR PLANS," Waltz posted on X. "Foreign partners had already been notified that strikes were imminent. BOTTOM LINE: President Trump is protecting America and our interests."

Several Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee on Wednesday called for Hegseth to step down.

Bosnian court seeks international arrest warrant for pro-Russian Serb leader Dodik

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, March 27, (AP) - A Bosnian court said Thursday it was seeking an international arrest warrant for Bosnian Serb President Milorad Dodik, who is facing legal action for his separatist policies.

The Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina said in a statement that it issued the demand on Wednesday and that the decision is now in the hands of Interpol.

Pro-Russia Dodik, who leads the Serb-run half of Bosnia, has repeatedly called for the separation of the territory

from the rest of Bosnia, fueling fears of instability.

He has faced US and British sanctions for his separatism, but he has had the support of Moscow.

Defying Bosnia's court, Dodik has refused to appear for questioning on suspicion that he violated the country's constitution. He traveled this week to neighboring Serbia, where he attended a gathering with populist President Aleksandar Vucic, before proceeding to Israel.

Vucic has said Serbia would not arrest Dodik and has criticized legal proceedings against him.

The Bosnia court statement also said it is seeking the arrest of Bosnian Serb parliament speaker Nenad Stevandic, who also briefly visited Serbia.

There have been fears of clashes between the police loyal to Dodik and the Bosnian police forces, stoking tensions that have pushed Bosnia to the biggest crisis since more than 100,000 people were killed in an ethnic war from 1992 to 1995.

The conflict in Bosnia ended in a US-brokered peace deal that created two administrations bound by central institutions.



Bosnian Serb President Milorad Dodik speaks after a court sentenced him to one year in prison and banned him from engaging in politics for six years over his separatist actions, during a rally in Bosnian town, Banja Luka, 240 kms northwest of Sarajevo on Feb 26. (AP)

German, Austrian ministers cancel Syria visit due to 'possible threats'

BERLIN, March 27, (AP) - The German and Austrian interior ministers broke off a planned trip to Syria on Thursday because of a possible threat to their delegation, German authorities said.

Germany's Nancy Faeser had planned to visit Damascus with her Austrian counterpart Gerhard Karner, and a German military plane was supposed to fly Faeser's delegation into Syria from Jordan on Thursday morning.

But her ministry said that the two ministers decided to break off the trip before the flight could depart from Amman "because of concrete warnings by German security authori-

ties of a terrorist threat." It added in an emailed statement that a threat to the delegation itself couldn't be ruled out, and that it wouldn't have been responsible to travel in view of that.

The trip hadn't been announced ahead of time. The two ministers had planned to speak with the interior and foreign ministers in the interim Syrian government and with representatives of U.N. agencies.

Germany in particular has been a major destination for Syrian refugees over the past decade.

The German Interior Ministry said Thursday's planned talks were supposed to center on security issues and on "perspectives for the return of Syrian refugees in case of stabilization and peaceful development in Syria." It noted that Germany and Austria are working on being able to deport Syrians who have committed serious crimes, or are deemed a security threat, as soon as possible to their homeland.



Karner

'Search ongoing for US soldiers'

WARSAW, Poland, March 27, (AP) - NATO has clarified comments that Secretary-General Mark Rutte made earlier in the day, when he suggested that four US soldiers who went missing while training in Lithuania had died, even though the US Army said their fate was not yet confirmed.

"The search is ongoing," NATO said in a statement posted on X. "We regret any confusion about remarks @SecGenNATO delivered on this today. He was referring to emerging news reports & was not confirming the fate of the missing, which is still unknown."



Rutte



Officials pose as part of the so-called 'Coalition of the willing' summit at the Elysee Palace on March 27 in Paris. (AP)

'Coalition of the willing' mulls more aid for Ukraine and possible armed force

PARIS, March 27, (AP) - Ukraine's allies from across Europe gathered for talks in Paris on Thursday about how to strengthen Kyiv's hand and its military as it pushes for a ceasefire with Russia, and to consider proposals to deploy European troops in the country in tandem with any peace deal.

French President Emmanuel Macron was hosting the leaders of nearly 30 countries plus NATO and European Union chiefs. The summit comes at a crucial juncture in the more than three-year war, with intensifying diplomatic efforts to broker ceasefires, driven by pressure from US President Donald Trump to end the fighting.

But the conflict is raging on. Russian drone attacks overnight before the leaders met in the luxury of the French presidential palace injured more than 20 people, Ukrainian officials said.

US-brokered agreements this week to safeguard shipping in the Black Sea and halt long-range strikes on energy infrastructure were greeted as a first step toward peace. But Ukraine and Russia have disagreed over the details and accused each other of deal violations, foreshadowing a long and contentious process ahead.

France and Britain are pushing a separate initiative to build a coalition of nations willing in one way or another to support the deployment of a European armed force in Ukraine, with the aim of securing any peace deal by dissuading Russia from attacking the country again. Some European countries are more comfortable with a potential deployment than others - not least because a big unknown is whether Trump would allow US forces and

intelligence agencies to back up any European contingent with air and logistical support and other assistance.

Building a force big enough to act as a credible deterrent - British officials have talked about possibly 10,000 to 30,000 troops - would also be a considerable effort for nations that shrank their militaries after the Cold War but are now rearming. There would also be questions to resolve about who would command the force and how it might respond to a major violation by Russia of any peace agreement. After talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to prepare for the summit, Macron said Wednesday that the proposed European force could deploy to "important towns, strategic bases" in Ukraine and that it could "respond" to a Russian attack if Moscow launched one.

Macron didn't specify what sort of response he envisaged. But he suggested that a Russian attack might not go unanswered, even though the European troops wouldn't be deployed to the frontlines.

"If there was again a generalized aggression against Ukrainian soil, these armies would, in fact, be under attack and then it's our usual framework of engagement," Macron said. "Our soldiers, when they are engaged and deployed, are there to react and respond to the decisions of the commander in chief and, if they are in a conflict situation, to respond to it."

"So we are not on the frontlines, we don't go to fight, but we are there to guarantee a lasting peace. It's a pacifist approach," he said. "The only ones who would, at that moment, trigger a conflict, a bellicose situation, would be the Russians if they decided again to launch an aggression."

'Pyongyang sent 3,000 more troops to Russia'

Kim observes tests of North Korea's new reconnaissance and attack drones

SEOUL, South Korea, March 27, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed tests of newly developed reconnaissance and attack drones this week and called for their increased production, state media said Thursday.

Kim has been emphasizing the development of drones, and the tests were the latest display of his country's growing military capabilities.

Photos released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency showed Kim observing what appeared to be a large reconnaissance drone roughly resembling Boeing's E-7 Wedgetail airborne warning and control aircraft. Other images showed exploding drones crashing into military vehicles used as targets.

The agency said the test demonstrated the reconnaissance drone's ability to track multiple targets and monitor troop movements on land and at sea, potentially enhancing North Korea's intelligence-gathering operations and ability to neutralize enemy threats. The report said the new exploding drones are designed for various attack missions and feature unspecified artificial intelligence capabilities.

Kim expressed satisfaction with the drones' performance and approved plans to expand production, emphasizing that drones and AI should be "top" priorities in efforts to advance his armed forces and adapt them to modern warfare. KCNA said. The agency said the tests took place as Kim visited a drone technology complex and an electronic warfare research group on Tuesday and Wednesday. South Korea's Defense Ministry didn't immediately comment on the North Korean report.

Kim previously inspected other demonstrations of drones that explode on impact in November and August last year.

North Korea also last year accused South Korea of sending its own drones to drop anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets over the North's capital of Pyongyang, and threatened to respond with force if such flights occur again. South Korea's military refused to confirm whether or not the North's claims were true.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have escalated recently as Kim continues to expand his military capabilities, which now includes various nuclear-capable weapons targeting South Korea and intercontinental ballistic missiles potentially capable of reaching the US mainland.



In this photo provided March 27, 2025, by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, (center left in a black jacket), stands by what appeared to be a large reconnaissance drone at an undisclosed location in North Korea, earlier this week. (AP)

Also:

SEOUL: North Korea sent around 3,000 additional troops to Russia in January and February in continued support for Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, South Korea's military said Thursday in its latest assessment.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea has also been sending more missiles, artillery equipment and ammunition to help Russia and that North Korea could increase its weapons supplies further depending on the war situation. Russia and Ukraine recently agreed on a limited ceasefire, though

both sides have accused each other of violations.

The military equipment North Korea has sent to Russia includes a "considerable amount" of short-range ballistic missiles, 170 millimeter self-propelled howitzers and around 220 units of 240 millimeter multiple rocket launchers.

North Korea has sent approximately 11,000 military personnel to fight in the war against Ukraine in its first involvement in a large-scale conflict since the 1950-53 Korean War, and the Joint Chiefs assessed that around 4,000 of them have been killed or wounded.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service previously attributed the high North Korean casualties to the troops' likely struggles in adapting to drones and other elements of modern warfare. North Korean troops are further disadvantaged by the crude tactics of their Russian commanders, who have sent them into assault campaigns without providing rear-fire support, the spy agency told lawmakers in January.

Still, Ukrainian military and intelligence officials have assessed that the North Koreans are gaining crucial battlefield experience and have been key to Russia's strategy of overwhelming Ukraine by throwing large numbers of soldiers into the battle for Kursk.

The South Korean military report came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed his unwavering support for Russia's war in Ukraine during a meeting with a top Russian security official, Sergei Shoigu, last week in Pyongyang. State media reports said Kim and Shoigu reaffirmed their commitment to uphold a major mutual defense treaty agreed upon last year. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko told Russian media on Thursday that the governments were discussing a potential visit by Kim to Moscow but did not specify when it might take place.

"We always talk to everyone about exchanging visits. We are always preparing," he told RIA Novosti.

Kim's military support of Russia has raised concerns that he may receive Russian technology transfers in return, further strengthening the threat posed by his nuclear-armed military. Experts say drones are among the potential areas where North Korea might seek to acquire Russian technology and know-how.

'Glaring violations' of Duterte's rights in ICC arrest – Philippine Senator Marcos

MANILA, March 27, (Xinhua): Philippine Senator Imee Marcos, chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, on Thursday said there were "glaring violations" of former president Rodrigo Duterte's rights in the arrest on March 11.

Marcos released the preliminary findings by the Senate panel at a press conference, saying that the Philippines had no legal obligation to arrest Duterte and turn him over to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague in the Netherlands.

Marcos, an elder sister of Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, said the initial probe also showed that the Philippine government decided to assist the ICC to arrest Duterte, and that the administration "already started preparations prior to March 11."

On March 11, Duterte was detained upon his return to Manila from abroad, following an arrest warrant issued by the ICC over his "war on drugs" campaign, a move he has questioned. He was surrendered to the custody of the ICC on March 12 after being flown from Manila to the Netherlands.

Also:

MANILA: The Philippines' Department



Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte is seen on a screen in the courtroom of the International Criminal Court (ICC) with his lawyer Salvador Medialdea seated left, in The Hague, Netherlands on March 14. (AP)

of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Wednesday said the country brought home 176 alleged Filipino human trafficking victims (HTVs) from illegal scam centers in Myawaddy, Myanmar.

The DFA said in its press release that the latest batch of rescued Filipinos returned to the Philippines on Wednesday morning on a special flight from Bangkok, Thailand. On Tuesday, the DFA

also led the repatriation of 30 Filipino HTVs from Myanmar via Thailand.

"The successful repatriation comes after the week-long shuttle visit of DFA Migration Affairs Undersecretary Eduardo José A. de Vega to Myanmar and Thailand for the 206 Filipinos to return home to be with their loved ones in the Philippines," the department said.

Asia

'Armies advance exchanges': Exchanges between the Chinese and US militaries are progressing as planned, as the two sides have reached initial agreements in this regard, a Chinese military spokesperson said on Thursday.

Speaking at a regular press conference, Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense, said a stable China-US military relationship serves the common interests of both countries and is also the expectation of the international community.

Wu underscored that the development of China-US military ties should adhere to the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation. He called for enhanced communication and dialogue between the two sides to properly handle differences and disputes.

"We hope that, with joint efforts from both sides, the China-US military relations will achieve a sound and stable development," Wu added. (Xinhua)

Crew struggle to contain fire: Helicopters dumped water over a burning forest in South Korea on Thursday as fire crews struggled to contain the country's worst-ever wildfires, which have killed 27 people, forced at least 37,000 others to flee

their homes and destroyed more than 300 structures.

Multiple wildfires fueled by strong winds and dry weather have been raging across South Korea's southeastern regions since last Friday. The government has mobilized thousands of personnel, dozens of helicopters and



Tourists pose for photos in front of creative decorations at a ruins park in Nanhu District of Jiaxing City, east China's Zhejiang Province on March 22. In Zhejiang Province, as the temperature rises, people go out of their homes to enjoy the blossoms in the spring time, showing a lifestyle in harmony with nature. (Xinhua)

other equipment to extinguish the blazes, but gusty winds are hampering their efforts.

Rain was expected later Thursday. But Korea Forest Service chief Lim Sang-seop said the amount - less than 5 millimeters (0.2 inches) is forecast - likely won't help much in extinguishing the wildfires. (AP)

Indonesia arrests smugglers: Indonesian authorities arrested an Argentinian woman and a British man for allegedly smuggling cocaine on the tourist island of Bali, officials said Thursday. The Southeast Asian country has extremely strict drug laws, and convicted smugglers are sometimes executed by firing squad.

An intelligence tip led officers from the National Narcotics Agency to seize 324 grams (0.7 pounds) of cocaine from the woman on Tuesday shortly after she arrived at Bali's Ngurah Rai international airport from Dubai, said Rudy Ahmad Sudrajat, Bali's narcotics agency chief.

The suspect was identified only by her initials. During an interrogation, she said she was promised to be paid \$3,000 after handing over the cocaine she obtained in Mexico to a British man, according to Sudrajat. The officers then arrested the man, whom they suspect is the lowest-level distributor, at a guest house in the Kerobokan neighborhood in Badung district the same day. (AP)

UN warns of a renewed civil war

Machar arrested: South Sudan opp'n

JUBA, South Sudan, March 27, (AP): South Sudan's main opposition party said its leader Riek Machar has been arrested as the UN called on all parties to uphold the 2018 agreement that ended the country's civil war.

The UN had warned on Monday that the country was teetering on the edge of a renewed civil war after fighting in the north between an armed group allied to Machar and government forces.

Machar was "in confinement by the government" and his life was "at risk," opposition spokesperson Pal Mai Deng said in a video address to the media Wednesday night. The head of the UN mission in South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, said following reports of the detention of Machar, all parties should "exercise restraint and uphold the Revitalized Peace Agreement."

South Sudan's five-year civil war, in which 400,000 people were killed, ended in a 2018 peace agreement that brought President Salva Kiir and Machar together in a unity government. Machar is one of the five vice presidents in the country.

Tensions have been increasing between Kiir and Machar's parties and escalated in March when the White Army, an armed group loyal to Machar,



South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, (right), and Vice President Riek Machar, (left), attend a mass held by Pope Francis at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan on Feb 5, 2023. (AP)

overran an army base in Upper Nile state and attacked a UN helicopter.

The government responded with airstrikes, warning any civilian in the area where the army group is based to vacate or "face consequences."

More than a dozen people have died since the airstrikes started in mid-March and the UN warned of a renewed civil war if the leaders do not

put the country's interests first.

"Tonight, the country's leaders stand on the brink of relapsing into widespread conflict or taking the country forward towards peace, recovery and democracy in the spirit of the consensus that was reached in 2018 when they signed and committed to implementing a Revitalized Peace Agreement," Haysom said in a statement on Wednesday night.

Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro to stand trial over alleged coup plan

RIO DE JANEIRO, March 27, (AP): A panel of Brazil Supreme Court justices on Wednesday unanimously accepted charges against former President Jair Bolsonaro over an alleged attempt to stay in office after his 2022 election

defeat, and ordered him to stand trial.

Prosecutor-General Paulo Gonet has accused Bolsonaro and 33 others of attempting a coup that included a plan to poison his successor, current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and kill a

Supreme Court judge.

The justices said seven close allies should also stand trial on five counts: attempting to stage a coup, involvement in an armed criminal organization, attempted violent abolition of the democratic rule of law, damage characterized by violence and a serious threat against the state's assets, and deterioration of listed heritage.

The former president has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and says he's being politically persecuted. A lawyer for Bolsonaro did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"It seems that there is something personal against me," Bolsonaro told journalists after the panel's decision. "The accusation is very serious and (is) unfounded."

Under Brazilian law, a coup conviction carries a sentence of up to 12 years. When combined with the other charges, it could result in a sentence of decades behind bars.

"Coups kill," Justice Flávio Dino said when casting his vote. "It doesn't matter if it happens today, the following month or a few years later."



Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro speaks to the press at Congress in Brasilia, Brazil on March 26, after a panel of Brazil Supreme Court justices accepted charges against him over an alleged attempt to stay in office after his 2022 election defeat. (AP)



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (left), meets with Head of Haiti's Transitional Presidential Council Fritz Jean, (second from right), at the US Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica on March 26. (AP)

Subcontinent

6 killed in SW Pakistan: At least six people were killed in a terrorist attack in Gwadar district of Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province on Wednesday night, the police said.



Sharif

According to the local police, the incident occurred when armed assailants opened fire on civilians in the Kalmat area of Gwadar, leaving five people dead

and another injured. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the incident and ordered an investigation to identify those responsible and ensure their punishment. (Xinhua)

Road accident kills 3: Three commuters lost their lives and two others were injured in a road accident on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway in the eastern Laghman province on Wednesday, the Laghman provincial police office said on Thursday.

The deadly accident took place on the road in Mashali Tangi area of Laghman after a car collided with an oncoming truck, killing three travelers on the spot and injuring two others. (Xinhua)

In Jamaica, Rubio vows to revisit US travel warning

KINGSTON, Jamaica, March 27, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday the State Department will re-evaluate its travel warnings for Jamaica and other countries to ensure they reflect real conditions on the ground.

As part of a tour of the Caribbean, Rubio heard complaints from Jamaican officials about the warning for their country, which is heavily dependent on tourism. The current travel warning for Jamaica advises Americans "to reconsider" visiting the country due to high crime rates.

While agreeing to re-look at the travel advisory, Rubio defended the Trump administration's opposition to a Cuban government program that sends physicians and other medical workers to countries in need of such personnel, including Jamaica.

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness said his nation had benefitted greatly from the program that the Trump administration claims violates international labor standards and amounts to human trafficking in some instances. Rubio's trip will take him from Jamaica to Guyana and Suriname as the administration increasingly turns its attention to the Western Hemisphere. Rubio is also focused on weaning Caribbean countries from their dependence on Venezuelan oil and combating illegal immigration.

President Donald Trump recently announced new sanctions on Venezuelan oil exports. The Republican president has threatened to impose tariffs on goods imported into the U.S. by other countries that buy oil from Venezuela.

On the Jamaica travel warning, Rubio did not promise it would be eased but did say revisions were possible in light of progress the Jamaican government has made in reducing crime.

"We pledged (that) we're going to go back and reevaluate the travel advisories as they currently stand to ensure that they do reflect the reality of the new numbers and what the numbers show," Rubio said, noting that Jamaica has "made very impressive progress in your general numbers overall when it comes to the murder rate and so forth."

Holness said he appreciated Rubio's pledge. "We are committed to working collaboratively to ensure that travel advisories reflect the current realities and promote travel to Jamaica," he said. "I'm confident that the dialogue initiated today will lead to tangible outcomes."

Holness also strongly defended the Cuban doctor program and said Jamaica ensured that the physicians and nurses sent by Havana were protected by Jamaican labor laws.

"Let us be clear, the Cuban doctors in Jamaica have been incredibly helpful to us," he said, adding that Jamaica has a shortage of domestic health workers because many have migrated to other countries.

Kuwaiti oil price rises to \$77.40 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 27, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by four cents to USD 77.40 per barrel (pb) on Wednesday, compared to USD 77.36 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC)

on Thursday.

At global markets, the price of the Brent crude rose by 77 cents to USD 73.79 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate went up by 65 cents to USD 69.65 pb.

Business

KIPCO reports net profit of KD 15.65 million in 2024

'Enhanced performance of our companies lays down a solid base for KIPCO's future outlook'

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – announced a net profit of KD 15.65 million (US\$ 50.80 million) for the year ended December 31, 2024. Earnings per share for 2024 stood at 1.8 fils (US\$ 0.58 cents).

Operational profit increased 13.17% from KD 156.65 million (US\$ 508.52 million) in 2023 to KD 177.28 million (US\$ 575.49 million) in 2024. The increase reflects the enhanced performance of businesses across the KIPCO Group, in particular the growth reported by the banking, foodstuff and petrochemical

services sectors.

The reduction in KIPCO's overall net profit from KD 30.0 million (US\$ 97.39 million) reported in 2023 is due to the one-off gain from the sale of the company's stake in Gulf Insurance Group, which was reflected in the last quarter of the previous year's financial statements.

In 2024, KIPCO's total revenue from operations registered an increase of 16.41% from KD1.28 billion (US\$ 4.16 billion) in 2023 to KD 1.49 billion (US\$ 4.84 billion) in 2024. Shareholder equity went up 3.71% to KD 633.87 million (US\$ 2.06 billion) compared to KD 611.17 million (US\$ 1.98 billion) in 2023.

At year-end, KIPCO's consolidated



Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer

assets increased 5.28% to KD 12.97 billion (US\$ 42.10 billion), compared to KD 12.32 billion (US\$ 39.99 billion) at the end of 2023.

Commenting on the results, Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said:

"The results reported for 2024 reflect the continued success of the company's strategy to preserve and grow stakeholders' value by enhancing the performance of our portfolio investments and achieving sectoral balance in our portfolio. These efforts have resulted in enhanced performance across our major businesses, including banking, financial services,

foodstuff, petrochemical and logistic services. The positive performance of our operating companies lays down a solid base for KIPCO's future outlook and strengthens its financial position."

KIPCO adopts a prudent approach to liquidity and proactive liability management, which adds to the company's financial strength and efficiency in managing its debt and financing portfolio. The company's total repayments and/or exchanges of EMTNs and bonds in 2023 and 2024 came to US\$ 1.15 billion. This is in addition to the full pre-payment of the US\$ 525 million syndicated facility nearly one year ahead of its first maturity.

AFESD and Invest Bank sign \$10 mln trade funding deal

KUWAIT CITY, March 27, (KUNA): The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) on Wednesday signed with Invest Bank an agreement for trade funding worth USD 10 million, where the bank will provide a credit fund for supporting flow of commodities and basic services in and outside Jordan and contribute to developing the private sector.

ADFESD Director General and Chairman Badr Al-Saad said in press release that diversifying financial products is in harmony with the fund's new strategy to bolster financial sustainability and maintain continuous support for the member States.

The Arab fund can create new opportunities to back up local and shar-

ing companies in strengthening the Jordanian banking sector and this is possible through supporting leading banks, namely the Invest Bank.

Muntaser Dawas, Chief Executive Officer of Invest Bank said in a statement the this funding would enhance the bank's ability to support the clients and help them in commercial operations, decrease hazards and make use of new international opportunities.

Invest Bank is listed in Amman stock exchange and manages 12 growing branches in Jordan.

AFESD is a regional financial foundation headquartered in Kuwait. Its operations mainly center on financing public and private investment enterprises.

New loan repayment options in app

Weyay Bank launches major enhancements to mobile app

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Weyay Bank, Kuwait's pioneering digital bank, has unveiled a series of significant enhancements to its mobile banking application, designed to elevate the customer experience with higher security and greater flexibility. The new mobile app update underscores the Bank's unwavering commitment to delivering cutting-edge, secure banking solutions that cater to the evolving needs of its customers in a rapidly digitalizing world.

A key highlight of the update is the revamped app homepage, now featuring engaging welcome messages, fostering a more engaging and relevant user experience.

Furthermore, Weyay Bank has introduced enhanced digital loan repayment options, providing customers with greater flexibility in managing their financial obligations through a variety of payment options that empower them to control their cash flow more effectively.

To refine the customer journey, the app's search functionality for offers and rewards has been introduced with optimized filters for seamless navigation. Allowance customers can also conveniently access detailed cashback information for their "SELECT" card, enabling them to fully leverage their benefits.

In a proactive move to gather customer insights, Weyay Bank has incorporated a customer experience feedback feature, enabling users to share their thoughts and suggestions. This direct line of communication will facilitate continuous improvement and ensure the Bank's services align with individual customer needs.

Security remains a top priority, with Weyay Bank strengthening its online payment security protocols through the newly added in-app payment au-



Mohammad Al-Hunaidi

thentication option. The Bank has also implemented secure digital solutions for email and password recovery with the highest level of security through identity verification via the "Kuwait Mobile ID" mobile application, streamlining the process for customers to regain account access.

Mohammad Al-Hunaidi, Product Owner at Weyay Bank said, "These latest enhancements are integral to Weyay Bank's strategic vision to solidify its position as Kuwait's foremost digital bank, providing an innovative, secure, and convenient banking experience that empowers customers in an increasingly digital-centric world."

This commitment to innovation and customer-centric service has earned Weyay Bank prestigious recognition, including the "Most Innovative App for Young People" award at Global Finance's annual Innovators Awards for 2024 and the "Best Information Security and Fraud Management" award in Global Finance's World's Best Digital Bank Awards for 2024.



Weyay Bank unveils major mobile app enhancements for improved user experience.

Net operating profit jumps 35% to KD 7 mln

ACICO reports 12% rise in gross profit

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: ACICO Group today announced its financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, demonstrating resilient operational performance amidst ongoing strategic financial restructuring aimed at enhancing long-term profitability and sustainable growth.

The Group maintained strong operational results, with gross profit from operations reaching KD 20.9 million in 2024, compared to KD 18.7 million in 2023, excluding the effect of changes in the fair value of investment properties. This represents a 12% year-on-year growth in gross profit, despite a decline in operating revenue, highlighting improved operational efficiency.

Net operating profit reached KD 7.0 million in 2024, up from KD 5.2 million in 2023, excluding the effect of changes in the fair value of investment properties, representing a 35% year-on-year growth.

By the end of the year, ACICO reported a net loss of KD 11 million for 2024, compared to a net loss of KD 6 million in 2023, primarily due to a goodwill impairment of KD 4.5 million.

Commenting on the results, Group Chairman Mr. Emad Abdullah Al-Issa stated:

"ACICO Group continues its journey toward sustainable growth and stronger positioning in its sectors of operations in both local and regional markets. This is made possible by a clear restructuring strategy and significant improvements in operational efficiency. The efforts initiated by the Board of Directors in early 2023 have already resulted in notable gains, enabling the company to meet its obligations, explore new markets and expand into new sectors.

"We are now focused on prod-



ACICO Chairman Emad Al-Issa

uct and service innovation, serving individuals, companies and government entities, while investing in our integrated construction and industrial solutions to support national development projects."

Al-Issa reaffirmed the Group's commitment to working closely with financial institutions to complete the remaining phases of the financial restructuring plan, after successfully settling several major debts during 2024. These efforts enhance the company's flexibility in debt servicing, strengthen its financial stability, and align with its vision of long-term profitability and stakeholder value protection.

He added: "ACICO's success in improving operating profitability and increasing market share places it in a strong competitive position. We remain committed to delivering on the promises made to our shareholders and safeguarding ACICO's legacy as a leader in the building materials sector across Kuwait and the wider GCC region. These achievements form a solid

- Strengthens operational efficiency amid strategic financial restructuring
- Continued financial stability and operational improvements position the Group for future growth

foundation for continued growth and expansion."

Debt Settlements and Financial Restructuring

As part of the Group's financial restructuring strategy, key agreements were concluded and finalized in 2024:

■ Debt Settlement #1: An agreement with a creditor bank to settle all outstanding debt by paying 65% of the total amount (principal, interest and fees), equivalent to KD 3.7 million, while being released from the remaining 35%.

■ Debt Settlement #2: An agreement to settle outstanding debt KD 35.8 million in full through the sale of a company-owned asset, generating a profit of KD 2.4 million.

These settlements reinforce the success of the Group's restructuring strategy and its commitment to stakeholder value creation.

Strengthening Financial Position

Total assets amounted to KD 315 million as of December 31, 2024, compared to KD 358 million in 2023. The decline in total assets reflects a strategic realignment of assets and prudent capital management, including the exit of certain assets and debt settlements as part of the ongoing debt restructuring program.

Total equity declined to KD 27.8 million in 2024 from KD 38.5 million in 2023, impacted by the year's net loss including impair-

ment of Goodwill but still ensuring financial stability and flexibility.

Operational Performance Highlights

The Group executed supply, installation, and construction work across multiple major development projects that advanced into execution during the year. ACICO also signed new contracts for turnkey home construction in Kuwait, particularly in emerging residential areas, highlighting its robust capabilities and market leadership.

Construction and Industrial Projects

Gross profit improved by 12% in the Industrial and Construction sectors with a successful implementation of cost optimization strategies.

Industrial sales remained solid at KD 66.6 million, compared to KD 68.2 million in 2023, despite challenging market conditions.

Cost of goods sold in the Industrial sector decreased to KD 54.3 million from KD 57.2 million in the prior year, underscoring ongoing improvements in operational efficiency.

Real Estate Sector

The Group's real estate sector demonstrated strong performance, increasing net profit to KD 8.5 million in 2024 from KD 7.7 million in 2023. This growth reflects sustained demand and strategic management within the sector.

US sanctions increase pressure on Iran's oil industry

Iranian oil minister urges vigilance against sedition efforts

TEHRAN, March 27, (Xinhua): Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad has called for greater vigilance against seditious bids by the "enemies" of Iran and Iraq, the official IRNA news agency reported on Thursday.

He made the remarks in a phone call with his Iraqi counterpart, Hayan Abdel-Ghani, on Wednesday, pointing to the "friendly and brotherly" relations between Iran and Iraq, and stressing that the two countries should be vigi-

lant against bids by their "enemies to incite sedition."

Paknejad added that Iran's oil sales proceeded within the framework of the "accepted criteria in interactions pertaining to oil trade."

The phone call occurred a few days after the Iranian side rejected as untrue reports that the Iranian oil tankers seized by the U.S. forces in the Gulf used forged Iraqi documents.

In February, the Iraqi side said it was not

involved in purchasing, receiving, or re-exporting Iranian crude oil to help Iran "evade sanctions".

The United States has intensified unilateral sanctions on Iran's oil exports, as U.S. President Donald Trump took an executive action in early February to step up pressure on Iran, which was aimed at bringing the country's oil exports to zero and preventing it from what he claimed obtaining a nuclear weapon.

World Liberty Financial to launch USD1 stablecoin, backed by US dollar

Trump expands crypto empire with new dollar-backed stablecoin

NEW YORK, March 27, (AP): US President Donald Trump's crypto empire is expanding with the recent announcements of a new dollar-backed stablecoin and investment funds for digital assets. The moves are the latest in the norm-defying ways the president has leaned into crypto projects that could significantly boost his personal wealth while in office.

World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency venture Trump helped launch last year, announced Tuesday that it plans to launch USD1, a stablecoin pegged at a 1-to-1 ratio to the U.S. dollar.

Stablecoins are among the fastest growing segments of the cryptocurrency industry. They are typically backed by a government-issued currency, like the dollar, or to gold, making them better suited to commercial transactions than more volatile digital assets like bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies.

"We're offering a digital dollar stablecoin that sovereign investors and major institutions can confidently integrate into their strategies for seamless, secure cross-border transactions," Zach Witkoff, a World Liberty Financial co-founder, said in a statement Tuesday.

World Liberty's announcement comes amid a push by Congress, with strong support by the White House, to pass legislation that supporters say would make it easier for stablecoin companies to operate and grow in the U.S.

Witkoff and his father, Trump's special diplomatic envoy Steve Witkoff, helped launch World Liberty Financial with Trump and his sons last year. Under the terms outlined on the company's website, a Trump-owned company has the "right to receive 75% of the net protocol revenues" from World Liberty Financial after expenses.

On Monday, Trump Media & Technology Group Corp. announced it was partnering with the crypto-trading firm Crypto.com to launch exchange-traded funds for investors to purchase. The funds, which are set to

be released later this year, will include a "unique ETF basket of cryptocurrencies" as well as "securities with a Made in America focus spanning diverse industries such as energy," TMTG said in an announcement.

TMTG is the parent company of Trump's social media company, Truth Social. Trump has no decision-making role at the company, but he owns a majority stake and is its largest shareholder. TMTG's stock price jumped following the announcement.

The recent announcements add to a growing list of crypto-related projects that Trump has endorsed in ways that critics say are inappropriate for a public office holder.

Just days before taking office, Trump launched his own meme coin that initially saw a massive price spike followed by a prolonged slide. Meme coins are highly speculative assets that often start as a joke and have no real value. Trump has also promoted online watch and sneaker stores that have branched out into selling crypto-related Trump products, including a "Crypto President" t-shirt that sells for \$100,000.

Once a crypto skeptic, Trump has since embraced digital assets and pledged to make the U.S. the "world capital" for cryptocurrencies. He's taken several early steps to help boost the crypto industry, which spent heavily to help Trump win last year's election and has emerged as a potent political force.

Before taking office, the Trump family business released a voluntary ethics agreement that prohibits the president from "day-to-day" decision making of his companies and limits financial information shared with him. But that agreement doesn't bar him from promoting his crypto-related products, like he did on social media Sunday when touting his meme coin.

"I LOVE \$TRUMP - SO COOL!!! The Greatest of them all!!!!!!!" Trump said on Truth Social, which briefly caused a spike in the meme coin's price.

Al-Ruwaieh highlights KFH's role in enhancing social responsibility

KFH's 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan' campaign achieves success



His Excellency the Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah, with the Kuwait Finance House volunteer team.



His Excellency the Governor of Kuwait Capital City, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, with the Kuwait Finance House volunteer team.

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Kuwait Finance House's (KFH) "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" campaign saw remarkable success with its numerous community and volunteer initiatives. This success affirmed the bank's leadership in social responsibility and sustainability, reflecting its prominent position as the largest private sector institution by market value.

The Head of Public Relations and Media at KFH Group, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, said that the community initiatives and unique activities implemented by the bank's volunteer team as part of the "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" campaign have had a positive impact on society. These efforts reinforced the bank's commitment to community engagement and underscored the importance of its role as a leading example of social responsibility.

Al-Ruwaieh highlighted a broad spectrum of social responsibility efforts, encompassing volunteer work, sports programs, public awareness campaigns, health initiatives, and improved community engagement. He emphasized the impactful and well-received nature of these diverse activities.

Iftar meal campaign

Al-Ruwaieh explained that KFH volunteer team, composed of bank employees, distributed approximately 30,000 Iftar meals to those fasting at key locations across several governorates, reaching a wide range of individuals in need. Also, KFH distributed Iftar meals with the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank.

Meal preparation

Al-Ruwaieh highlighted that KFH partnered with Kuwait's best central kitchens to deliver high-quality, nutritious Iftar meals during Ramadan.

Ramdan Majla

He stated that KFH participated in distributing Ramadan "Majla" food baskets to families in need, in collaboration with the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank, and emphasized KFH's commitment to cooperating with official bodies on

such occasions.

Executive Management Involvement

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH's executive management and many employees from various departments, together with the KFH volunteer team, distributed Iftar meals as part of the "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" campaign, showcasing their commitment to promoting volunteerism.

The Governors of Capital and Farwaniya's Participation

Al-Ruwaieh said: "KFH and the Capital and Farwaniya Governorates joined forces to distribute Iftar meals in both governorates, with His Excellency Governor of the Capital, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and His Excellency the Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah. The Governors commended KFH's efforts in promoting humanitarian and Islamic values and strengthening community unity through this initiative."

Sports and Health Activities

Al-Ruwaieh underscored KFH's dedication to promoting sports and health initiatives across all age groups, recognizing their vital role in individual and community well-being. He also announced a diverse range of activities to be held at multiple locations.

V-Fit Challenge

He added that KFH organized the V-Fit virtual walking challenge, the largest of its kind, in collaboration with its strategic partner, the V-Thru application, as part of KFH's commitment to raising awareness of the importance of exercise and public health.

This event, now in its fifth consecutive year, took place at nine locations throughout Kuwait: Avenues Mall, Al Shaheed Park, the Kuwait Towers walkway, Mishref Oasis, and the Abdullah Al Salem, Al Rawda, Al Yarmouk, Jabriya, and Murooj walkways. For every 2,000 steps walked, participants received credits usable within the V-Thru app, encouraging physical



Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh

activity and supporting Kuwaiti youth projects featured on the platform.

Shooting Championship

Al-Ruwaieh said that the inaugural Ramadan Shooting Championship was highly successful, achieved through a strategic partnership with KFH. He further noted that the championship attracted a large number of participants across various categories, and the winners were duly honored.

Quran Recitation Competition

Al-Ruwaieh revealed that KFH organized its twelfth consecutive Ramadan Quran recitation competition, a pioneering community initiative by the bank. Over 500 participants of various ages competed, with 60 winners selected from multiple categories by a panel of certified sheikhs, who maintained high standards.

Gergeean activities

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH organized several Gergeean celebration activities at various key locations. He added that the Avenues Mall's KFH booth drew a significant crowd, benefiting from a vibrant Ramadan and family-friendly atmosphere. This initiative underscores KFH's commitment to celebrating Ramadan, preserving Kuwaiti heritage and customs, and bringing joy to children. Additionally, KFH Volunteer team distrib-

ed Gergeean treats to students at several elementary schools across Kuwait, in coordination with educational and administrative authorities.

KFH's volunteer team, in collaboration with CODED Academy as part of their strategic partnership, organized a Gergeean event for children at CODED Junior Academy.

Iftar banquets with Government Entities

Acknowledging the tireless efforts of state officials from various government entities during the holy month of Ramadan, Al-Ruwaieh noted that KFH continued its efforts to host iftar banquets for on-duty employees. This Ramadan initiative expresses appreciation for their dedication and crucial role in serving the community and ensuring national safety and security.

Hospitality services at mosques

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH provided hospitality services at mosques across all governorates of Kuwait during Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers. The initiative received positive responses from worshippers, security personnel, and mosque organizers for the Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers. KFH continued to offer hospitality services throughout the holy month of Ramadan, specifically during the last ten days of the month, by enhancing its presence at various locations and mosques to support worshippers.

Cooking classes

Al-Ruwaieh stated that KFH offered cooking classes led by renowned Kuwaiti chefs to its female customers and employees, focusing on healthy home nutrition.

Banking Awareness

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH integrated a community experience into cooking classes for female customers to evaluate banking awareness under the Diraya campaign. The participants responded positively and received extensive information on banking awareness.

Holy Quran application

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH is offering the

public the Quran application, which is available on both iOS and Android platforms. This application features exclusive specifications and characteristics for users, making it the top choice for accessing the Holy Quran.

The Quran application has achieved record numbers in user engagement and downloads across various online stores, thanks to its unique features and user-friendly design. Additionally, the app undergoes meticulous monitoring and continuous updates to enhance its development and improve the experience for users worldwide.

Social media channels

Al-Ruwaieh explained that during Ramadan, KFH leveraged its social media platforms to share informative videos on health and wellness, featuring insights from medical doctors and nutrition specialists. Additionally, KFH collaborated with the Ministries of Health and Interior to disseminate public awareness messages. The bank also provided daily Ramadan calendars, hosted competitions, and offered event coverage related to the holy month.

Volunteer team

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that the KFH Volunteer Team, consisting of bank employees, fulfills a crucial community role by executing and overseeing all Ramadan Program initiatives. This fosters a culture of volunteerism among youth and reinforces the spirit of giving within society. He noted the high participation rate of employee volunteers in the "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" campaign, highlighting their dedication to serving diverse community.

Keep It Green

"Through the "Keep It Green" campaign and in partnership with V-Fit, KFH has incentivized participation in the virtual walking challenge with special prizes. This initiative has resulted in thousands of trees being planted, actively contributing to regional climate improvement and fostering greater environmental awareness," Al-Ruwaieh concluded.



A ceremony honoring the winners of the Children's Readers Competition was held in the presence of CEO Khaled Al-Shamlan and Chairman of the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board, Prof. Dr. Sayed Mohammed Al-Tab.



A ceremony honoring the winners of the Girls' Reciters Competition was held in the presence of CEO Khaled Al-Shamlan and Chairman of the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board, Prof. Dr. Sayed Mohammed Al-Tab.



Mohammed Alfares and the Public Relations Team with the Ministry of Interior personnel.



The bank's volunteer team with the Interior Ministry personnel.



The bank's volunteer team provides services in mosques.



Kuwait Finance House volunteer team at Naif Palace.



Distribution of iftar meals.



Gargeean event in schools.



Children's joy at Gargeean.



Gargeean event in schools.

Company releases full-year financial results

UPAC reports KD 1.03m net profit for 2024 amid revenue decline

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), a commercial real estate and facilities management company, today announced its full-year 2024 financial results. Net profit for the year stood at KD 1.03 million, reduced by 36%, or 2.53 fils per share, compared with the same period last year. The company's revenue was KD 8.57 million, down by 15.5%, compared to the same period of 2023. Eng. Hamad Malallah, Chief Executive Officer at UPAC, said:

"UPAC's results are in-line with our expectations and the decrease in profits are mainly attributed to the reduction in revenues due to the end of the T4 parking contract in February earlier this year. "We are committed to providing value for our shareholders while ensuring we continue to provide solid business performance for our customers." Planning for the Al Messilah Beach Project (Plage-2) site has been progressing, where our teams are working on preparing the project



Hamad Malallah



UPAC logo

for its opening and operation, meeting the relevant partners, and potential vendors who we will be working

with us on this exciting new project. Al Messilah Beach, one of Kuwait's prime family entertainment destinations, was developed by Touristic Enterprises Company as part of its role in spearheading growth of Kuwait's tourism sector. UPAC will manage all aspects of the site including leasing, entertainment activities, facility management, and overall project operations. UPAC is a co-investor in Abu Dhabi's \$1.3 billion Reem Mall on Reem Island. The mall is 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 experience. To date, 194 units are trading, and almost 80% of Gross Leasable Area (GLA) is committed. In Kuwait, UPAC manages operations of Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 1 (T1) airport mall, parking, and related facilities, as well as real estate and parking facilities at the Sheikh Sa'ad Airport Terminal (T3), and the development of Al Messilah Beach.

Trump slaps 25 percent tariff on imported autos



New Toyota vehicles are stored at the Toyota Logistics Service Inc., their most significant vehicle imports processing facility in North America, at the Port of Long Beach in Long Beach, Calif., Wednesday, March 26, 2025. (AP)

Move expected to raise \$100 billion in tax revenues

WASHINGTON, March 27, (AP): US President Donald Trump said he was placing 25% tariffs on auto imports, a move the White House claims would foster domestic manufacturing but could also put a financial squeeze on automakers that depend on global supply chains.

"This will continue to spur growth," Trump told reporters. "We'll effectively be charging a 25% tariff." The tariffs, which the White House expects to raise \$100 billion in revenue annually, could be complicated as even U.S. automakers source their components from around the world. The tax hike starting in April means automakers could face higher costs and lower sales, though Trump argues that the tariffs will lead to more factories opening in the United States and the end of what he judges to be a "ridiculous" supply chain in which auto parts and finished vehicles are manufactured across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

To underscore his seriousness about the tariffs directive he signed, Trump said, "This is permanent." Shares in General Motors fell roughly 3% in Wednesday trading. Ford's stock was up slightly. Shares in Stellantis, the owner of Jeep and Chrysler, dropped nearly 3.6%.

Trump has long said that tariffs against auto imports would be a defining policy of his presidency, betting that the costs created by the taxes would cause more production to relocate to the United States while helping narrow the budget deficit. But U.S. and foreign automakers have plants around the world to accommodate global sales while maintaining competitive prices - and it could take years for companies to design, build and open the new factories that Trump is promising.

"We're looking at much higher vehicle prices," said economist Mary Lovely, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "We're going to see reduced choice. ... These kinds of taxes fall more heavily on the middle and working class."

She said more households will be priced out of the new car market - where prices already average about \$49,000 - and will have to hang on to aging vehicles.

The tariffs on autos would start being collected on April 3, Trump said. If the taxes are fully passed onto consumers, the average auto price on an imported vehicle could jump by \$12,500, a sum that could feed into overall inflation. Trump was voted back into the White House last year because voters believed he could bring down prices.

Foreign leaders were quick to criticize the tariffs, a sign that Trump could be intensifying a broader trade war that could damage growth worldwide.

"This is a very direct attack," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said. "We will defend our workers. We will defend our companies. We will defend our country."

In Brussels, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed regret at the U.S. decision to target auto exports from Europe and vowed that the bloc would protect

consumers and businesses. "Tariffs are taxes - bad for businesses, worse for consumers equally in the U.S. and the European Union," she said in a statement, adding that the EU's executive branch would assess the impact of the move, as well as other U.S. tariffs planned for coming days.

As Trump announced the new tariffs, he indicated that he would like to provide a new incentive to help car buyers by allowing them to deduct from their federal income taxes the interest paid on auto loans, so long as their vehicles were made in America. That deduction would eat into some of the revenues that could be generated by the tariffs.

The new tariffs would apply to both finished autos and parts used in the vehicles, according to a White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the taxes on a call with reporters. The tariffs would be on top of any existing taxes and were legally based on a 2019 Commerce Department investigation that occurred during Trump's first term on national security grounds.

For autos and parts under the USMCA trade pact applying to the United States, Mexico and Canada, the 25% tariffs would only apply to non-U.S. content.

The administration is reasoning that there is excess capacity at U.S. automakers that will enable them to ramp up production to avoid the tariffs by manufacturing more domestically, with the official noting that automakers have known since the Trump campaign that tariffs were coming.

The auto tariffs are part of a broader reshaping of global relations by Trump, who plans to impose what he calls "reciprocal" taxes on April 2 that would match the tariffs, sales taxes charged by other nations.

Trump has already placed a 20% import tax on all imports from China for its role in the production of fentanyl. He similarly placed 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada, with a lower 10% tax on Canadian energy products. Parts of the Mexico and Canada tariffs have been suspended, including the taxes on autos, after automakers objected and Trump responded by giving them a 30-day reprieve that is set to expire in April.

The president has also imposed 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports, removing the exemptions from his earlier 2018 taxes on the metals. He also plans tariffs on computer chips, pharmaceutical drugs, lumber and copper.

His taxes risk igniting a broader global trade war with escalating retaliations that could crush global trade, potentially hurting economic growth while raising prices for families and businesses as some of the costs of the taxes get passed along by importers. When the European Union retaliated with plans for a 50% tariff on U.S. spirits, Trump responded by planning a 200% tax on alcoholic beverages from the EU.

Trump also intends to place a 25% tariff on countries that import oil from Venezuela, even though the United States also imports oil from that nation.

Trump's aides maintain that the tariffs on Canada and Mexico are about stopping illegal immigration and drug smuggling. But the administration also wants to use the tariff revenues to lower the budget deficit and assert America's preeminence as the world's largest economy.

Board recommends distribution of 5% bonus shares

NREC announces a net profit of KD 9.3m for the year ended Dec 31, 2024, marking 126% growth

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: National Real Estate Company (NREC) reported its financial and operational results for the year ended December 31, 2024. The Company announced a net profit of KD 9.3 million and a profit per share of 4.91 fils in 2024, compared to a net (loss) of KD (35.2) million and a (loss) per share of (19.8) fils in 2023.

The Company's operating revenue was KD 5.8 million for the year ended December 31, 2024, compared to KD 12.4 million in 2023. Total assets were KD 574 million by December 31, 2024, compared to KD 533 million in 2023.

For Q4 2024, the Company reported a net profit of KD 5.6 million, or a profit per share of 2.97 fils, and operating revenue of KD 2.1 million.

Commenting on the Company's results, NREC Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa, said: "Our FY 2024 results reflect a continued growth trend, driven by strong operational strategies and flexible risk management."

Sultan added: "Despite external challenges, we have maintained steady progress, reinforcing our commitment to long-term value creation for shareholders."

Dividend Recommendation
The Company's Board of Directors has recommended the distribution of 5% bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares) for the year 2024. This recommendation is subject to the approval of the General Assembly of Shareholders.

Sultan stated: "At NREC, our commitment to creating long-term value for our shareholders extends beyond our core real estate business. We are proud to be the largest shareholder in Agility Public Warehousing Company K.S.C.P., holding a 22.3% stake. Agility is a leader in transforming supply chains to be smarter, faster, greener, and more efficient, delivering exceptional growth and value for its shareholders."

Sultan added, "NREC is also an investor in Agility Global, directly and through Agility Public Warehousing. Agility is the majority shareholder of Agility Global, holding a 51% stake. Agility Global, an ADX-listed company, manages some of the world's leading businesses, including Menzies Aviation (the world's largest aviation services company), Tristar (a global fuel logistics provider), and Agility Logistics Parks (one of the largest developers and operators of warehousing and logistics parks in the MEA region)."

He concluded: "Our strategic investment in Agility underscores our belief in the company's continued growth and innovation, further enhancing NREC's long-term value creation for our shareholders."

Company Project Updates
Reem Mall - Abu Dhabi: 197 Actively Trading Units and Promising Outlook Ahead

Sultan stated: "Reem Mall officially opened its doors at the end of May 2024,



Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa

and we're pleased to report that 197 units are already actively trading. This reflects strong early engagement and a growing retail presence. With a solid portion of the mall now operational, we are seeing a vibrant and dynamic retail environment taking shape, driven by both established brands and new entrants. This early success highlights the mall's appeal and its ability to meet the demands of an ever-evolving market."

He continued, "Abu Dhabi's continued recognition as the most livable city in the MENA region offers the perfect setting for Reem Mall's growth. The city's ongoing investments in infrastructure and its focus on creating a vibrant, family-friendly atmosphere provide a strong foundation for the mall's long-term success. Central to Reem Mall's vision is its commitment to delivering memorable experiences for families, with a diverse range of entertainment and retail offerings for all ages. With attractions like Snow Abu Dhabi adding to its appeal, we are confident that Reem Mall will become a popular destination for both residents and visitors, meeting the growing demand for family-focused entertainment."

NREC is a co-investor in Abu Dhabi's \$1.3 billion Reem Mall on Reem Island.

The mall spans an area of 186,000 sqm GLA, making it one of the largest malls in the region. With more than 400 stores, including 80 F&B concepts, and 6,400 parking spaces, it caters to visitors from all over the UAE and beyond. With digital innovations like an aggregated mobile app for hands-free shopping, in-mall navigation, and smart parking, Reem Mall is leading the way in integrated online and in-person shopping.

Grand Heights Residential Development in Egypt: A Sustainable, Gated Community with 83% of Units Sold by End of 2024

Sultan said: "The Grand Heights residential project in Egypt, developed by NREC's subsidiary KUWADICO, is part of a larger land parcel owned by KUWADICO."



NREC logo

■ Operating Revenue: KD 5.8 million
■ EBITDA: KD 19.7 million
■ Total Assets: KD 574 million

He added: "Grand Heights is a fully integrated, gated community that offers a range of modern amenities and services, creating a sustainable, secure, and vibrant living environment for residents. The community features residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, all designed to enhance the quality of life for its diverse population."

"The percentage of units sold across the whole project as of the end of the year 2024 was 83%," Sultan stated. The Grand Heights project is being executed in phases by three sub-developers and covers 3.8 million square meters. It is strategically designed to address the growing housing demand in Cairo and its surrounding suburbs.

South Aqaba Investment Park - Jordan: Strong Occupancy and Stable Rental Revenues amid Regional Geopolitical Tensions

Sultan said: "Jordan's South Aqaba Investment Park continues to maintain a robust 100% occupancy rate for warehouses and full occupancy for industrial buildings by the end of 2024."

"FY 2024 rental revenues reached KD 983 thousand, reflecting a modest 1% increase compared to last year, underscoring a stable operational performance despite ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region," added Sultan.

Optimizing Shareholder Value through Strategic Initiatives

"We remain focused on maximizing shareholder value with a primary goal of strategically divesting assets that no longer align with our long-term objectives. At the same time, we are actively evaluating a range of investment opportunities and exploring restructuring options to strengthen our portfolio further and drive enhanced returns for our shareholders," said Sultan.

Commitment to Sustainability: Driving Positive Impact through ESG Initiatives

Sultan said, "At the group level, we are committed to advancing ESG initiatives that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). We focus on creating a lasting positive impact by integrating sustainability into our operations, promoting environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and ethical governance. We aim to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of communities and drive long-term value, fostering resilient, sustainable growth in the regions where we operate."

Financial Highlights for the Periods Ended December 31, 2024 (Million KD)						
Item	Q4 2024	Q4 2023	Variance (%)	FY 2024	FY 2023	Variance (%)
Operating Revenue	2.1	2.6	-20%	5.8	12.4	-53%
Net Revenue	1.8	1.4	34%	3.9	7.2	-45%
EBITDA / (Negative EBITDA)	8.9	(35.2)	126%	19.7	(24.5)	180%
Net Profit / (Loss)	5.6	(33.7)	117%	9.3	(35.2)	126%
EPS / (Loss per Share) (fils)	2.97	(18.9)	116%	4.91	(19.8)	125%

Canadian PM Carney calls Trump's auto tariffs a 'direct attack' on his country

TORONTO, March 27, (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Wednesday that U.S. President Donald Trump's auto tariffs are a "direct attack" on his country and that the trade war is hurting Americans, noting that American consumer confidence is at a multi-year low.

Trump said earlier Wednesday that he was placing 25% tariffs on auto imports and, to underscore his intention, he stated, "This is permanent."

"This is a very direct attack," Carney responded. "We will defend our workers. We will defend our companies. We will defend our country."

Carney said he needs to see the details of Trump's executive order before taking retaliatory measures. He called it unjustified and said he will leave the election campaign to go to Ottawa on Thursday to chair his special Cabinet committee on U.S. relations.

Carney earlier announced a CAS2 billion (\$1.4 billion) "strategic response fund" that will protect Canadian auto jobs affected by Trump's tariffs.

Autos are Canada's second-largest export. Carney noted the sector employs 125,000 Canadians directly and almost another 500,000 in related industries. "Canada will be there for auto workers," he said.

Trump previously granted a one-month exemption on his stiff new tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada for U.S. automakers.

The president has plucked the U.S. into a global trade war - all while on again, off-again new levies continue to escalate uncertainty.

The Conference Board reported Tuesday that its U.S. 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.

"His trade war is hurting American consumers and workers and it will hurt more. I see that American consumer confidence is at a multi-year low," Carney said earlier while campaigning in Windsor, Ontario ahead of Canada's April 28 election.

The tax hike on auto imports starting in April means automakers could face higher costs and lower sales.

Trump previously placed 25% tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum and is threatening sweeping tariffs on all Canadian products - as well as on all of America's trading partners - on April 2.

"He wants to break us so America can own us," Carney said. "And it will never ever happen because we just don't look out for ourselves, we look out for each other."

China slams US auto tariffs as violation of WTO regulations

Trump offers China tariff cuts in exchange for TikTok deal

WASHINGTON, March 27, (Agencies): US president Donald Trump said late Wednesday he might lower tariffs on China in exchange for finalizing a deal on the popular app TikTok, as the platform nears its final extension deadline on April 5.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Trump stated that "China is going to have to play a role in that, possibly in the form of an approval and I think they'll do that."

He also expressed confidence that Beijing would agree to the proposal, suggesting that he would give "a little reduction in tariffs or something to get it done" adding "every point in tariffs is worth more money than TikTok."

Trump reiterated his willingness to extend the deadline if no agreement is reached by next week.

His remarks followed his signing of an executive order on Wednesday imposing a 25 percent tariff on imported cars.

Trump had previously imposed a 10 percent tariff on Chinese imports in February, later raising it by an additional 20 percent earlier this month.

TikTok proposal comes less than two weeks before the deadline, which requires its Chinese-based company, ByteDance to divest from the app's US operations amid national security concerns

Meanwhile, the US move to impose tariffs on auto imports violates World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations and undermines the rule-based multilateral trading system, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said on Thursday.

Guo's remarks came after U.S.

President Donald Trump's announcement to impose 25 percent tariffs on all vehicles and foreign-made auto parts imported into the United States.

According to reports, the tariffs on automobiles will take effect next week, a move that has already rattled the global auto industry.

"China has noted the responses from major U.S. trading partners," Guo said at a regular news briefing, stressing that there are no winners in a trade or tariff war, and that no country's development and prosperity can be achieved through imposing tariffs.

"The U.S. move violates WTO regulations, undermines the rule-based multilateral trading system, and harms the common interests of all countries. Such an action does not help address Washington's own problems," the spokesperson said.



Photos from the event.



Over 1,000 participants join health and fitness event

AAW sponsors NBK Ramadan challenge through ASICS & Intersport

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) announced the successful conclusion of its sponsorship of the National Bank of Kuwait Ramadan Challenge – a 10-day fitness event organized by Suffix, from March 7 to 17 at Al Shaheed Park that saw over 1,000 participants from all age groups compete daily over 10 consecutive days.

AAW supported the challenge through its distributed brands ASICS and Intersport. Participants had the option to walk or run at their own pace and were provided with tracking devices to record the distance covered. Real-time tracking enabled them to view their progress on a live leaderboard, fostering friendly competition and encouraging social connections – all in the spirit of promot-

ing physical activity and community wellness during the holy month of Ramadan.

As part of this sponsorship, ASICS and Intersport hosted a 5-kilometer race, led by the ASICS Front Runner and Intersport Project Run teams, to encourage participants to go the extra distance. The two brands also offered the challenge winners, three women and three

men in the 20–34 age category, with athleisure and footwear prizes.

AAW's sponsorship of the NBK Ramadan Challenge reflects its commitment to promoting a culture of health and well-being. By partnering with global brands like ASICS and Intersport, AAW continues to inspire individuals to embrace active and healthy lifestyles.



A group photo from the event.

Event highlights Chanakya's leadership lessons

ICAI Kuwait hosts insightful iftar event

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India Kuwait Chapter (ICAI-KC) successfully organized an enlightening session on Chanakya's Leadership and Management Lessons at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel, Kuwait, at the event, attended by over 150 members and distinguished guests, featured renowned leadership coach and mentor Dr. Radhakrishnan Pillai, Director of Chanakya Anvikshiki Pvt. Ltd.

CA Venkata Ramana, Secretary of ICAI-KC, set the tone for the event with an insightful introduction, highlighting the relevance of Chanakya's wisdom in finance and leadership – especially in today's rapidly evolving global economy. He extended his gratitude to Dr. Pillai and all attendees for their presence.

CA Aditya Vikram Dhanuka, Chairperson of ICAI-KC, welcomed members, esteemed guests, past chairpersons, and founding members. He shared updates on ICAI-KC's recent successful events, including CA Family Day and Gully Cricket, which saw enthusiastic participation. A highlight reel of these events was presented to the audience.

The event's Master of Ceremonies, CA Rohit Agarwal, Vice Chairman of ICAI-KC, introduced the distinguished speaker, Dr. Radhakrishnan Pillai—India's No. 1 bestselling business author and a globally recognized thought leader in strategy, leadership, and management. With 24 bestselling

books, including the widely acclaimed Corporate Chanakya and Chatur Chanakya series for children, Dr. Pillai has profoundly influenced the field of leadership studies. As the Founder and Director of the Chanakya International Institute of Leadership Studies (CIILS) at the University of Mumbai and a visiting faculty at premier institutions like IIMs, IITs, IISc, RBI, BSE, and defense academies, he has delivered over 1,000 lectures, shaping leaders across industries. He is also a strategic advisor to over 500 organizations, including major corporations, government bodies, and the Indian Armed Forces.

Key Insights from Dr. Radhakrishnan Pillai's Session
Dr. Pillai began by introducing Chanakya, also known as Vishnu Gupta and Kautilya, who lived in the 4th century BC. Chanakya's profound contributions include his seminal works— Kautilya's Arthashastra and Chanakya Niti – which emphasize the importance of structured knowledge. He elaborated on Kautilya's Arthashastra, a Sanskrit treatise on economics and leadership, comprising 15 books, 150 chapters, and 6,000 shlokas. Covering a wide range of subjects—including economics, statecraft, law, warfare, and strategy—it stands as a comprehensive guide to governance and management. Highlighting Chanakya's brilliance as a polymath, Dr. Pillai emphasized the multidisciplinary nature of his work. He further illustrated, through

real-life examples, how these ancient principles remain highly relevant today, offering valuable insights for becoming a successful leader in any field.

One of the session's highlights was the explanation of the seven pillars of a successful kingdom, which Chanakya defined as:

- 1 Swami (King): The leader
- 2 Amatya (Minister): The advisor or executive team
- 3 Janapada (Country): The market or community
- 4 Durg (Fortified City): Infrastructure and strategic defense
- 5 Kosha (Treasury): Financial strength
- 6 Danda (Army): Governance and enforcement
- 7 Mitra (Ally): Strategic partnerships

Dr. Pillai drew compelling parallels between these pillars and their modern-day equivalents in business and governance, demonstrating their continued relevance in leadership and financial strategy.

The session concluded with a vote of thanks by CA Umesh Soni, Treasurer of ICAI-KC, who expressed appreciation to Dr. Radhakrishnan Pillai for his invaluable insights, as well as to the event's attendees, sponsors, and media partners. Special thanks were extended to our annual sponsors Al Mulla Exchange, NBK, and Cube Innovators for their unwavering support. The evening also featured an engaging Q&A session and a raffle draw.

Bank continues Diraya national campaign

KIB empowers Eid travelers with financial literacy & security tips

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues to play a pivotal role in the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) national campaign for the fifth consecutive year, remaining focused on raising the banking safety awareness of its customers and members of the community. As part of its steadfast efforts in this regard, the Bank is set on enabling stress-free international travel through its comprehensive financial literacy and security initiative, designed to arm customers with the necessary knowledge and tools for a seamless travel experience during Eid Al-Fitr. KIB's unwavering support for the Diraya campaign, which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) in collaboration with local banks, reflects the Bank's commitment to customer empowerment and falls in line with its comprehensive social responsibility program.

Highlighting the significance of the initiative, Basil Al-Suwaidan, General Manager of the Information Security, Privacy, and Anti-Fraud Department at KIB, said: "In an era where travel no longer solely revolves around destinations but extends to seamless experiences, KIB is leading the charge in disseminating vital information about safe banking practices for travelers, in line with the goals of the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign. The Bank is also committed to implementing excellent safety measures that aim to protect its customers' banking information. To this end, the Bank's support for the campaign is not just about preventing fraud; it's about empowering our customers to manage their finances confidently and securely, no matter where they are in the world."

As part of its efforts to spread the Diraya campaign's awareness messages, KIB's travel tips extended from practical advice on card usage and security to leveraging the KIB Mobile application for real-time financial management, allowing customers to monitor transactions, manage card security settings, and receive instant alerts, all designed to offer peace of mind during travel. KIB also emphasized the importance of choosing local currencies for transactions at POS terminals to avoid extra fees, as well as ensuring the physical security of banking cards.

Customers are encouraged to inform the Bank about their destination and planned expenditures, allowing KIB to tailor services and advice specifically to each person's itinerary. The Bank also shared insights into the importance of staying vigilant while using ATMs abroad and the benefits of promptly reviewing account statements upon return, as part of a comprehensive approach to secure and informed financial management while traveling.

"These practices not only safeguard the customer's financial assets but also ensure a smoother travel experience by minimizing possible financial disruptions," Al-Suwaidan said, adding that "KIB is transforming how travelers interact with their money abroad, ensuring that they can focus on enjoying their journey without worrying about financial security."

In his concluding remarks, Al-Suwaidan stated that KIB devotes attention to serving and supporting its customers as they travel abroad, pointing out that the Bank representatives are available for around-the-clock communication, whether through phone calls via the customer service center at the number (1866866), or the number (+96522957300) designated for international calls. Al-Suwaidan also mentioned the Bank's electronic



KIB's Basil Al-Suwaidan



Diraya logo

channels of communication, which include Live Chat and KIB Online services on the website www.KIB.com.kw and the video phone service through the KIB Mobile application on smartphones. Customers can also contact the Bank via the WhatsApp account registered on the local KIB number (1866866). All these communication channels are intended for general inquiries about products and services offered by the Bank all year long.

KIB's tips for using bank cards while traveling:

Before traveling:

1. You should consider updating customer information regularly through visiting a branch or calling the KIB Contact Center.
2. You should contact your bank to inform them that you will be using your credit card during your travel abroad – and make sure that you mention the countries you intend to visit, as well as the travel duration, in order to avoid blocking the card. That is because banks might stop cards suspected of any strange activity in some countries, as a precautionary measure to protect customers.
3. Informing your bank of your flight prior to departure reduces the chances of unusual transactions being flagged as suspicious.
4. Check the expiration/validity date of your bank cards and make sure they cover the period of your travel.
5. Ensure that you have sufficient credit limits available in your credit cards. Also, make sure to check your bank account balance.
6. Make sure to download and activate the KIB Mobile application, while allowing notifications, on your mobile device to keep track of your card usage and expenses while traveling.
7. Make sure you have access to the internet in order to benefit from your online banking services and to facilitate some banking operations.
8. Do not tell anyone your card password or your passcode for 3D Secure.
9. KIB has never and will never ask you for password information via email, text or phone calls. Never

click on any internet link received from emails that you do not know or do not trust.

10. Write down the bank's contact numbers and keep them with you in a safe place away from the cards. Do not write your password anywhere, but memorize it well.

11. Make sure to activate the SMS text messaging service and the app notification service in order for you to be notified of the transactions made on your accounts and cards.

While traveling:

1. It is preferable not to use Wi-Fi services or public computers to access the bank's website and login to bank accounts, or open any message that requires clicking on any internet link on the smartphone or computer.
2. All cards must be kept in a safe place and not left away from you for any reason.
3. Cards should not all be kept in one place or in your wallet. They should be kept out of direct sunlight to prevent damage.
4. Do not give your card or password to anyone. And be sure to keep your card in your hand when you are making purchases. Note that lending your card to a family member or friend, with or without your knowledge, holds you fully responsible for all transactions made on it.
5. When using an ATM, make sure the machine is checked and there are no foreign objects or devices installed on the machine. Your password must also be protected and prevented from being accessed by fraudsters, you can use your shoulders as a barrier while entering the password to prevent intruders.
6. Do not ask for help from anyone, even if they are wearing clothes that are similar to the bank employees or security guards, and remember not to leave the receipt on the machine after the withdrawal process.
7. In case the card gets stuck in an ATM, please contact KIB immediately without leaving the ATM to ensure that the card is blocked by the bank.
8. It is always preferred to pay in the local currency of the country in which you are located and not in the Kuwaiti dinar.
9. Check the screen of the "Point of Sale" device to confirm the amount that you will pay before entering the password.
10. Review your receipts carefully before signing them and before entering your password, and do not leave the line for service fees ("tips" or "total amount") blank without data, and if you do not want to put a specific amount, you must put a line on it so as not to fall victim to fraud.
11. Uphold all your receipts and receipts of rejected transactions, and review your operations and expenses regularly through the KIB Mobile application, its notifications, or SMS text message service.
12. Activate the mobile service (roaming service) or provide an alternative contact number for the bank to enable it to contact you when you are abroad.
13. If your card was lost, or if you face any problem related to credit cards, contact the call center immediately on: (+965022957300), designated for international calls.
14. After returning from travel:
 1. We recommend that you change your password after returning from travel, through the bank's branches or the ATMs deployed by the bank.
 2. Check all statements of accounts for your cards and review all receipts carefully along with your monthly statements when you return to Kuwait, and in case of any discrepancies or suspicious transactions, you must contact the bank immediately.

Bwambale enlightens public on Ramadan's virtues

AMUOBA Kuwait organizes community iftar

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys' Association (AMUOBA) Kuwait Chapter organized a community iftar on 21st March 2025 in Rajdhani Palace, Khaitan.

Iftar parties accentuate community bonding. It is a way to strengthen friendships and relationships, to bring people together, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among the alumni of the association. The dignitaries, heads of the associations, academicians, and well-known personalities from different sections of the Indian diaspora living in Kuwait attended the Iftar organized by AMUOBA Kuwait.

AMUOBA invited Sheikh Hassan Twaha Bwambale, a scholar, a religious preacher, and an educator at Taswul in Kuwait, as a guest speaker to enlighten the gathering on the values and virtues of Ramadan and the Laylat al-Qadr.

Besides having all these accolades, he is also a writer and an excellent speaker. He also serves as a Khatib for the English-speaking mosques in Kuwait, including American Military Bases, and has been delivering sermons in Kuwait since 2002. AMUOBA is truly humbled by his presence, and his address is appreciated a lot by the audience.

The program started with the recitation of the Surah from the Holy Quran by Executive Committee member Shahnavaz Siddique in his mesmerizing voice and the translation by Aayat



A photo from the event.

Tauqir, a student of grade 4 and daughter of EC member Tauqir Ahmed. General Secretary and the convener of the program, Ms. Shazia Mansoor, welcomed the dignitaries, guests, and the alumni of the association.

Later, President of the association, Aslam Parvez, welcomed guest speaker Sheikh H.T. Bwambale, distinguished guests, Advisory board members, Executive Council members, alumni of the association, and all the attendees. Further in the president's fervent speech, he emphasized the upliftment of the weaker section of the society. He appealed to the gathering to become a part of the AMUOBA

Academic Scheme, under which many students are getting free education with the scholarship program and a school is run where education is provided free of cost.

Later, AMUOBA honored their guest speaker, Sheikh H.T. Bwambale, with a moment of appreciation by the president, Aslam Parvez, of the association and a gift as a token of love by Vice President Tariq Waseem.

To honor the guests and alumni and to thank them for accepting our invitation, Vice President Tariq Waseem sincerely extended a vote of thanks; he deeply gratified the gathering for attending the Iftar party on AMUOBA's invitation.

A Ramadan ritual of sound, faith, and community

Musaharati: Ramadan's beloved dawn callers keep tradition alive

CAIRO, March 27, (AP): You wouldn't think that someone who goes around banging a drum in the streets before dawn and waking up the whole neighborhood would be so beloved.

But many children and families love the "musaharati," or "dawn caller," a traditional fixture of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month when the faithful fast from dawn to sunset. It's his job to wake people up in time to have a meal before the daily fast begins.

Across the Muslim world, the sound of a musaharati's drum outside is as much a symbol of Ramadan as the crescent moon and the lanterns that people set up in their houses. He evokes the homey, communal feeling that the holy month brings for many, the feeling that everyone is facing the hunger of the day's fast together - and enjoying the night's meals together.



Mahmoud Fanas, a 'musaharati,' or 'dawn caller,' who beats on a drum to wake up Muslims for a meal before sunrise during Ramadan, teaches a boy how to beat on drum as he walks through old streets in the southern Lebanese port city of Sidon, Lebanon, Sunday, March 16. (AP)

Often the job of musaharati is passed from father to son. So everybody in the neighborhood knows him, and he knows them.

"Wake up, Mayar! Wake up, Menna!" Essam Sayed shouted on a recent night, calling out the names of individual children as he passed outside their houses and slapped the small, brass drum that he inherited from his father.

He rode his donkey, "Saad," through Arab Ghoneim, an impoverished neighborhood south of the Egyptian capital, Cairo. The slap of his leather strap on the drum echoed around the tiny alleyways, strung up with colored tinsel and lights. Neighborhood kids gathered around him, petting and climbing on Saad.

In the Lebanese city of Sidon, Mahmoud Fanas put on a green skullcap and a green shawl over his clean white robe, an outfit that origi-

nally belonged to his father, who was also a musaharati. Then he set out on his pre-dawn circuit through the stone houses in the alleys of the old city, beating a drum.

"Ya nayim, wahhid il-dayim," he called out in Arabic: "Sleepyhead, worship the Eternal One!"

But who needs a musaharati when you can just set the alarm on your phone to wake up for the "suhour," as the pre-dawn meal is known?

"Life is changing rapidly. Technology is destroying our history and causing us to lose our identity," said Fanas, who owns a toy store. He wanted to preserve the tradition of his father, "and God willing, my children will preserve it too."

"The most beautiful thing is when I see the children happy to see me," he said.

The job is disappearing from many places around the Muslim

world. But in many older neighborhoods try to preserve it. In Cairo, Sayed thought at one point about giving up, but people in the neighborhood pleaded with him to continue as a musaharati.

In India, Umar Irshad makes his way through the dimly lit alleys in the labyrinthine heart of Old Delhi, once the seat of the Muslim Mughal emperors. The 59-year-old, one of the last remaining dawn callers in the city, calls out for the devout to wake up, rings doorbells on houses and bangs on the closed shutters of shops.

He too inherited the job from his father. The tradition is fast disappearing from Delhi - and hardline Hindu nationalism in India adds extra pressure. But Irshad, a government employee, says he plans to keep it alive as long as he lives.

"I do it to please my God," Irshad said.

Film



This image released by Amazon MGM Studios shows Jason Statham in a scene from 'A Working Man.' (AP)

The ultimate blue-collar action thriller

Statham takes on the mob in 'Working Man'

LOS ANGELES, March 27, (AP): Jason Statham is cosplaying a construction laborer when "A Working Man" begins. He's making sure the rebar is spaced correctly and the concrete is correctly mixed. But we all know where his real strengths are: Beating up people, ferociously.

Soon enough - faster than this one-time springboard diving champion used to hit the water - Statham will be doing what he does best in an action movie made by millionaires that hopes to tap into blue-collar chic.

Statham plays a sort of hero-laying-low in director and co-writer David Ayer's latest collab - they previously teamed up on "The Beekeeper" - with the addition of a co-writer who knows a thing or two about lone-wolf underdogs - Sylvester Stallone.

When the 19-year-old daughter of his boss is snatched during a night out with girlfriends in Chicago, they turn to Statham, a former anti-terrorist commando for the UK's Royal Marines, which at least explains the British accent.

But he can't help them - he's given up that old life. "I'm a different person now," he says. It's not who I am anymore." Admittedly, he says this shortly after fighting off a gang messing with one of his workers, attacking them with a bucket of nails, an ax and a bag of gravel.

He's a widower and a single father saving up money to fight - legally this time - for more custody by sleeping in his Ram truck. His in-laws want to limit his visitation, alleging he suffers from PTSD, a very cynical use by the movie-makers of a popcorn flick with a body count north of a hundred. "I hurt, too," he tells his daughter.

A visit to an old military buddy - David Harbour, superb - helps change his mind. "God help them," says Harbour's character after the decision is made. He knows what's in store for anyone getting in the way of Statham's oddly named Levon Cade (scramble the letters and you get "Novel Aced," go figure).

So begins Statham's version of "Taken" mixed with a blue-collar version of "John Wick." Our construction worker-turned-vigilante is reassuring to the family of the missing teen. "I'm gonna bring her home. I promise," he vows.

Underworld

We soon plunge into an underworld of Russian mobsters, designer drugs, human trafficking, corrupt cops and a vicious biker gang run by a guy who sits on a throne of motorcycle parts. People are waterboarded, shot, stabbed, smashed with animal skulls, blown up by grenades and burned with hot coffee.

"All of this is for a girl?" asks one incredulous Russian mob boss, who is hogtied and dangled over his own swimming pool as Statham tortures him while munching on some toast he's made in his fancy kitchen.

Shall we talk about the rich now? The upper-level mobsters wear cravats, bow ties and hold gold-tipped walking sticks. One even wears a cape and uses a cigarette holder, like a sort of Mister Burns from "The Simpsons." The drug dealers wear buffoonish designer duds, "do business" in restaurant banquets and all have attaché cases with stacks of banded money, like it's still the '80s. They are all vena, foppish and perverted. The big finale takes place in a tucked-away farm casino with fancy-dressed fat cats.

This is in contrast to Statham, an orange safety vest kind of guy with a soldier's moral compass. He at one point throws into the air enough \$100 bills to buy a Lamborghini. But he's not doing it the money, even though he needs it. He's there for the girl.

"A Working Man" fetishizes its blue-collar ethic at a time when extremely wealthy Americans have taken key roles in the second Donald Trump administration and the world's richest man, Elon Musk, is slicing at government jobs (Veterans are increasingly facing the burden). Trump himself donned an orange vest when he cosplayed a garbage man on the campaign trail. Everyone loves the working class these days.

Anyway, we're not here for a lesson, we're here for some ultra-violence. "A Working Man" does it well, especially a struggle in the confined space of a moving van. The plot gets a little stretched over two hours - including a ludicrous motorcycle chase scene when enough bullets are fired at Statham as were expended in the Battle of Falujah - but a bright moment is having the snatched teen (a very good Arianna Rivas, someone to watch) step into her own power.

"A Working Man" is exactly what you expect when you unleash Statham on a noble mission. "You killed your way into this," he's told by his buddy. "You're gonna have to kill your way out of it." In other words, let Statham work, man.

"A Working Man," an Amazon MGM Studios release in theaters this Friday, is rated R for "strong violence, language throughout and drug content." Running time: 116 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

People

Actor denies charges

Accuser takes stand in Depardieu's trial

PARIS, March 27, (AP): A woman accusing French actor Gérard Depardieu of sexual assault told a landmark trial in Paris on Wednesday that he touched her inappropriately several times on a film set. Three other accusers told the court they suffered similar gestures in separate incidents.

Depardieu, 76, is accused of groping a 54-year-old set dresser and a 34-year-old assistant during filming in 2021 of "Les Volets Verts" ("The Green Shutters"). He denies any sexual assault.

The third day of the trial focused on the testimony of the younger plaintiff, who detailed three separate incidents. She said Depardieu touched her inappropriately when she was alone with him for a brief moment as they were heading towards the film set.

"Out of the blue, he put his hand on me," she said, adding she said nothing because she was "under shock" and "petrified."

In a second incident, she said Depardieu suddenly placed both his hands on her: "I said 'No.' I was scared." She also described telling Depardieu "no" during a third similar incident.

The plaintiff said she reported the issue to her direct manager, who then alerted others in charge of the film production, prompting anger from the actor.

She said she then "minimized" the issue because she wanted to continue to do her job, adding she aimed at "handling it on her own, be strong."

She later decided to file a formal complaint out of solidarity with the other plaintiff and because, she said, "I want people to hear the truth."

Depardieu repeatedly denied the allegations on Wednesday in court, saying: "I'm not like that."

"I think that maybe, I don't know, she was wary because of my reputation of being vulgar, crude, rude," Depardieu said. "But I'm not only that. I still respect people."

The actor also told the court that he is almost always accompanied by aides on the film set, including his body guard, and suggested that he would rarely find himself alone with a film worker.



Depardieu

Leadership tensions

Prince Harry resigns from African charity

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, March 27, (AP): Prince Harry has resigned as a patron of an African charity he co-founded nearly 20 years ago in memory of his late mother, Princess Diana, citing a breakdown in the relationship between board members and the chairwoman.

The Duke of Sussex along with Prince Seeiso of Lesotho, who co-founded Sentebale in 2006, said in a joint statement Tuesday they had quit "with heavy hearts" as patrons in support of the trustees in their dispute with chairwoman Sophie Chandauka.

"It is devastating that the relationship between the charity's trustees and the chair of the board broke down beyond repair, creating an untenable situation," the princes said. "These trustees acted in the best interest of the charity in asking the chair to step down, while keeping the well-being of staff in mind. In turn, she sued the charity to remain in this voluntary position, further underscoring the broken relationship."

Chandauka said she had reported Sentebale's trustees to the Charity Commission in the UK and filed papers in a British court to prevent her removal. In a statement, she made allegations of misconduct at the charity without naming anyone or giving details.

"Beneath all the victim narrative and fiction that has been syndicated to (the) press is the story of a woman who dared to blow the whistle about issues of poor governance, weak executive management, abuse of power, bullying, harassment, misogyny and misogyny," Chandauka said.

Misogyny refers to a combination of racism and misogyny directed toward Black women.

Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso said they would approach the Charity Commission, a government department in the UK that regulates philanthropic organizations.

"What's transpired is unthinkable. We are in shock that we have to do this, but we have a continued responsibility to Sentebale's beneficiaries, so we will be sharing all of our concerns with the Charity Commission as to how this came about," Harry and Seeiso said.



Britain's Prince Harry speaks during the Clinton Global Initiative, on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, in New York. (AP)

Variety

NEW YORK: Longtime CBS Sports college football analyst Gary Danielson will retire after the 2025 season.

That will be his 36th season on television, making him the longest-tenured college football analyst on any network.

"I have discussed the timing of this moment with CBS Sports leadership over the past few years and we felt it was important I remained with the team during our transition to the Big Ten. As we enter our second full season of Big Ten football and my 20th at CBS Sports, the timing just feels right," Danielson said Wednesday in a statement.

Danielson, who will turn 74 in September, played 11 seasons in the NFL before joining ESPN in 1990. He called games for ESPN and ABC for 16 seasons before joining CBS in 2006.

CBS carried the top Southeastern Conference game through the 2023 season. It had a limited Big Ten schedule in 2023

before carrying the 3:30 p.m. Eastern game last season.

PHILADELPHIA: In West Philadelphia where he was born and raised, now there's a street called **Will Smith Way**.

Philadelphia Mayor Chelle Parker and city leaders honored the Oscar and Grammy winner on Wednesday, renaming a street next to Smith's old high school.

"Philly, I love you. I am yours. You are mine," Smith said at a ceremony along a section of 59th Street that now bears his name.

He reminisced about learning the values of hard work and education from his mother and father before hitting it big as an actor and rapper.

"Nobody gets an easy ride," he said.



Smith

"That was one of the things these streets of Philadelphia taught me: that there's nothing wrong with a hard day's work."

Among those who came out to see him was a former teacher who was the first to call him "Prince Charming" - a nickname he changed up a bit for the 1990s TV show "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," in which Smith played a teenager from Philadelphia who goes to live with relatives in Los Angeles. (AP)

WASHINGTON: The Associated Press is returning to a federal courtroom on Thursday to ask a judge to restore its full access to presidential events, after the White House retaliated against the news outlet last month for not following President Trump's executive order to rename the Gulf of Mexico.

In a hearing last month, U.S. District Court Judge Trevor N. McFadden refused the AP's request for an injunction to stop the White House from barring reporters and photographers from events in the Oval Office and Air Force One. He urged the Trump administration to reconsider its ban

before Thursday's hearing. It hasn't.

The AP has sued Trump's team for punishing a news organization for using speech that it doesn't like. The news outlet said it would still refer to the Gulf of Mexico in its style guidance to clients around the world, while also noting that Trump has ordered it renamed the Gulf of America.

"For anyone who thinks the Associated Press's lawsuit against President Trump's White House is about the name of a body of water, think bigger," Julie Pace, the AP's executive editor, wrote in an op-ed for the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday. "It's really about whether the government can control what you say." (AP)

The White House said it has the right to decide who gets to question the president, and has taken steps to take over a duty that has been handled by journalists for decades.

The president has dismissed the AP as a group of "radical left lunatics" and said that "we're going to keep them out until such time as they agree that it's the Gulf of America." (AP)

Tech Tip

Powerful privacy tool

Don't give your email to strangers, use a decoy

LONDON, March 27, (AP): You've heard of burner phones. What about burner email?

So much of the internet now requires that you hand over your email address before you're able to use any services - from an app you've downloaded to signing up for a newsletter or redeeming a special offer online.

But who says you have to give your real email address? Next time you're asked, consider using an email mask.

There are a growing number of services that give out disguised email addresses and relay any messages to your actual address. Experts say this can be a powerful tool to safeguard privacy and security.

Here are some pointers on the whys and hows of email masking:

The idea behind email masking is simple. The masking service gives you a randomized address you can use as a decoy instead of your actual email. It can be a series of unrelated words, or a string of letters and numbers. When someone sends a message to the burner email, it will be automatically routed to your address without anyone knowing.

Providers include privacy-focused search engine DuckDuckGo's Email Protection service, Firefox Relay from browser maker Mozilla, email service FastMail and independent services like Addy.io. The encrypted service Proton Mail offers email masking with its password manager and standalone SimpleLogin service. There are many others.

Features

It's one of the features Apple offers users subscribing to its iCloud+ or Apple One services. When you're using the Safari browser app on your iPhone and need to input your email, you can tap the field above the onscreen keyboard to "Hide My Email," which then creates a random address as a substitute.

It's also available on Mac computers with the desktop Safari browser or Mail app. If you're using a different browser or app, you can still manually create a random email address by going into your iCloud settings.

Most services have a free version with basic options and a premium tier with more features.

Some free services can only receive emails but not reply to them. However, an important feature users should look for is the ability to do both, said Proton CEO Andy Yen.

"Maybe you never reply to a

newsletter and that's fine," said Yen. But it's a problem if, for example, you used your email alias to buy something online and there's an issue with your order that the site needs to ask you about.

"Then the ability to reply is actually pretty important," he said. Most masking services have a dashboard control panel where you can view the various alias addresses you've activated. If you notice one starting to get a lot of spam, just turn it off.

Mask your email when you want to add an extra layer of privacy or protect yourself from data leaks or unauthorized information sharing.

Mask

An email mask is a "general-purpose tool that can be used in any context," says Santiago Andriago, principal product manager at Mozilla.

However, he recommends using it in two key situations. The first is when you're unsure what a website will do with your email address.

"Masking your email gives you control - if you start receiving unwanted messages, you can easily block any emails coming to that email mask," Andriago said.

The second scenario is "when your association with a service could reveal sensitive personal information," he said. For example, if you join an online community for a specific medical condition or a minority group, a data breach could expose your participation.

There are myriad reasons not to give out your email address to anyone who wants it.

It could be sold to marketers or shady data brokers, eroding your privacy by helping them build a profile of you for legitimate or nefarious purposes.

If your address ends up on the wrong mailing list, it could result in more junk or phishing emails. And if an online service is hacked, attackers could make off with logins, passwords and other personal information.

Using unique passwords for all your online accounts - typically with the help of a password manager - is good cybersecurity practice. "But the real pain point for any user is actually not the password getting leaked, but actually the email getting leaked," said Yen.

Changing your password after a data breach is standard practice but it's a lot harder to change another piece of sensitive information, your email address - unless you're using a mask.

US states move to ban or restrict food dyes

Synthetic dyes linked to ADHD, health risks

CHARLESTON, W.Va., March 27, (AP): Synthetic dyes used to make brightly colored cereals, drinks and candies are coming under scrutiny in states across the country, where lawmakers say the federal government has stalled in taking action despite evidence of harmful effects.

West Virginia, which ranks at the bottom in the US for many health metrics, became the first to sign a sweeping statewide ban on seven such dyes this week. Lawmakers in more than 20 states - from deep red West Virginia to heavily Democratic California - are making a bipartisan push to restrict access to the dyes, which have been tied to neurobehavioral problems in some children and of which US Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been an outspoken critic.

"We should not be forced to police our own foods," said Republican Sen. Laura Wakim Chapman, who heads the Senate's health committee and told lawmakers the vote might be the most important of their political careers. "No more toxic colors, no more poisoning ourselves and our children. No more unnecessary risks. Our health is not for sale."

In signing the bill, Republican Gov. Patrick Morrisey referenced Kennedy's slogan in saying, "There's no better place to lead the Make America Healthy Again mission."

The prohibition on certain preservatives and red, blue, green and yellow dyes takes effect for school food in August, and across the state in 2028. It follows narrower bills approved in California last year and Virginia last week that would ban six artificial dyes from being served in public schools beginning in 2027.

Thirty-six color additives are approved by the Fed-



Boxes of Kellogg's Fruit Loops cereal are displayed in a Target store in Pittsburgh, Nov. 16, 2022. (AP)

eral Drug Administration for use in food and drinks in the US. Nine petroleum-based chemical dyes, including Red 3, have been allowed in US food.

Public health advocates have been lobbying for state and federal action for years, pointing to research that links food dyes and other chemical additives to health risks, including exacerbating symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in some children and animal research linking certain additives to cancers.

The European Union and some countries, including Australia and Japan, have banned or restricted the use of certain food dyes because of potential health risks.

In October, dozens of protesters outside the Michigan headquarters of WK Kellogg Co. demanded that the company remove artificial dyes from cereals such

as Apple Jacks and Froot Loops. Kellogg announced that it would remove artificial colors and ingredients from its US products by 2018, but never did so, despite making the change in other countries, such as Canada, where Froot Loops are colored with concentrated carrot juice, watermelon juice and blueberry juice.

The US Food and Drug Administration banned Red 3 from the nation's food supply in January, setting a 2027 deadline for manufacturers to eliminate it from their products. Makers of ingested drugs like cough syrups have until January 2028.

The National Confectioners Association, a trade group for chocolate, candy, gum and mints sellers, said the new regulations will make food more expensive, less accessible and lead to less variety on grocery store shelves. It said states such as West Virginia, where 1 in 4 children live in poverty and many neighborhoods are "food deserts" with limited access to affordable, nutritious food, will be disproportionately impacted.

Charles Leftwich, vice president of food safety and quality assurance for Sysco Corp., the world's largest food service distributor, said food safety policies should be supported by science and "be consistently applied across all geographies."

"We shouldn't have a fragmented approach when it comes to food safety, because it breeds a lack of trust and confidence with within consumers," Leftwich said in an interview with The Associated Press.

School districts in West Virginia have begun phasing out breakfast cereals, strawberry milk or other products in anticipation of the new law's August deadline.

Athletes risk blood clots

Understanding dangers of deep vein thrombosis

NEW YORK, March 27, (AP): Damian Lillard has no timeline to return to the Milwaukee Bucks after being diagnosed with deep vein thrombosis in his right calf.

The blood-clotting disorder also recently cut short Victor Wembanyama's second NBA season for the San Antonio Spurs and a decade ago contributed to ending Hall of Famer Chris Bosh's basketball-playing career. NFL, NHL and Major League Baseball players have also stepped away from their respective sport for some period of time because of it.

Deep vein thrombosis is an abnormal clot within a vessel where the congealing of blood blocks the flow through on the way back to the heart. It is most common in legs but also can happen in the arms, like Wembanyama's right shoulder.

Any number of things can cause deep vein thrombosis, or DVT, ranging from immobility and trauma to family history and dehydration. Symptoms include inexplicable swelling and discoloration or pain, or some combination of those factors, and experts say the worry is the clot traveling through the blood stream causing a pulmonary embolism or death.

Clot

"If you have a blood clot in a vein and a piece dislodges, it just goes with the flow where the blood is going and it ends up in the lung," said Mary Cushman, a hematologist and professor of medicine at the University of Vermont. "When you have a DVT in the leg or the arm, there's a chance that it will break free, and when it breaks free, it can end up lodged in the lung. And if it's large enough, that can kill a person."

Lillard missed multiple games in December because of right calf soreness and has also been listed on the injury report with right hamstring and right groin soreness, though there's no way of saying if that caused the clot or vice-versa.

No matter the cause, it is diagnosed through ultrasound testing, in which a probe presses against the skin like imaging of a baby inside a pregnant woman.

"When you take that probe and press on a vein, you can see the vein like a black area and when you press on it, it will compress," Cushman said.

"When the vein is full of a blood clot, you can't compress. ... You're looking for veins that won't compress because they're full of clots."

Lillard is taking blood thinners, which is the most common course of action. Cushman points out that an on-court (or on-field or on-ice) injury that draws blood would make competing while on anticoagulants more of a risk for athletes.

Dangerous

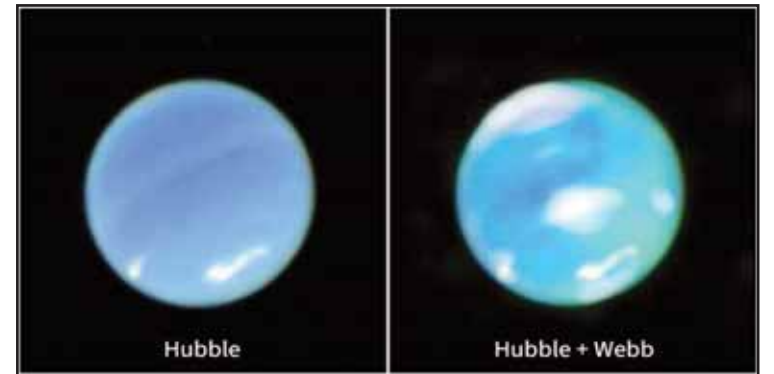
"That does then make certain activities a bit more dangerous," said Julie Partridge, a professor of sport and exercise psychology at Southern Illinois University and the vice chair of the board of directors for the National Blood Clot Alliance. "Obviously, a contact sport like basketball is going to be probably contraindicated, which we saw in Chris Bosh when he had to completely step away because he couldn't come off of those anticoagulants."

Sometimes surgery is involved or blood thinners for the long term. That is why Cushman called the decision for athletes to take time off - and how long they might be out - "really an individualized decision."

"You have to determine a care plan that's best for that person, so that's going to relate to the circumstances where they had their clot and the risk level they're willing to accept," Cushman said.

There are plenty of notable cases. Even beyond Lillard, Wembanyama and Bosh, Detroit's Ausar Thompson missed the end of last NBA season because of a blood clot. In the NHL, Carolina goaltender Frederik Andersen was out four months from late 2023 into 2024, and Vancouver forward Brock Boeser missed Game 7 of a playoff series last spring.

Colorado pitcher Scott Oberg underwent surgery to remove blood clots in his throwing elbow in 2021, and Arizona's Merrill Kelly had thrombosis in his right calf two years later. New England defensive tackle Christian Barmore had a blood clot scare last summer, not long after center Billy Price retired at age 29 because of complications.



In this combination image released by ESA/Webb, (left), an enhanced-color image of Neptune from the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope and right, that image is combined with data from the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope. (AP)

Get set for partial solar eclipse

Webb telescope captures Neptune auroras in detail

WASHINGTON, March 27, (AP): Neptune's glowing auroras are captured in the best detail yet by NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.

Hints of auroras were first faintly detected in ultraviolet light during a flyby of the Voyager 2 spacecraft in 1989. Webb captured Neptune's shimmering lights in infrared light, providing direct evidence they exist.

NASA released the images on Wednesday, and the results were published in the journal Nature Astronomy.

Auroras on any planet occur when electrically charged particles from space enter and collide with molecules in the atmosphere, creating a series of reactions that emits light.

On Earth, auroras tend to occur near the polar regions, producing spectacular northern and southern lights.

Scientists have studied auroras on Saturn and Jupiter for decades, but Neptune, the farthest planet from the sun, has been harder to see up close.

"Neptune has always been elusive," said University of Reading planetary scientist James O'Donoghue, co-author of the new study. Its auroras "had only been seen by Voyager, and we've been trying to see it again ever since."

Neptune's auroras occur near the mid-latitudes of the planet, not the polar regions, because of differences in its magnetic field, which determine the span of auroras, said O'Donoghue.

More than three decades after Voyager 2's pass, scientists have seen Neptune's auroras again with the powerful Webb telescope, producing "the first robust detection," co-author Heidi Hammel of the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, said in an email.

The researchers also revealed that Neptune's atmosphere has cooled significantly since the 1980s, which may have somewhat dimmed the light of the auroras.

Solar eclipse: The moon will appear to take bites out of the sun this weekend during a partial solar eclipse in the Northern Hemisphere - but make sure to protect your eyes.

The eclipse will be visible Saturday across Europe, western Africa, eastern North America and northern Asia. The sun will shrink the most for the northeastern United States, Greenland and eastern Canada.

During a partial solar eclipse, the moon passes between the sun and Earth. The moon casts a shadow on Earth and only partly blocks the sun, making it appear like a crescent. Unlike a total solar eclipse, there's no totality so experts say proper eye protection must be worn the whole time.

"Eclipses are just a game of light and shadow that are played by the sun, moon and Earth," said Auriane Egal with the Planetarium in Montréal.



This May 18, 2021, photo shows a person typing on a laptop on a train in New Jersey. (AP)

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'Connection with Vivid Seats is a breach of trust and a clear conflict of interest'

Chelsea fans ask Premier League to investigate Boehly's links to ticket site

LONDON, March 27, (AP): Chelsea fans have asked the Premier League to investigate co-owner Todd Boehly's links to a ticket resale site that offers some seats for thousands of dollars above face value.

Boehly is listed on the board of directors of Vivid Seats - a company cited by the league as an "unauthorized ticket website" and one that fans should "exercise extreme caution" when using.

Chelsea Supporters Trust pub-

lished an open letter to the league CEO Richard Masters, saying it was time to "act and investigate."

"Vivid Seats continues to list Premier League tickets for above face value at significantly inflated rates and our members have continued to indicate that Mr. Boehly's connection with Vivid Seats is a breach of trust and a clear conflict of interest," the Trust said in a statement.

"Not only does this undermine the efforts of Chelsea FC, the Pre-

mier League, and the Metropolitan Police to combat ticket touting (scalping)," the statement continued, "but Vivid Seats contravenes the Chelsea FC ticketing policy, and is explicitly named by the Premier League as a known unauthorized ticket website."

Boehly and Clearlake Capital bought Chelsea for \$2.5 billion in 2022. The American investor is also part owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Vivid Seats sells tickets to sports and entertainment events. It lists tickets for sale for Chelsea games in the Premier League, Europa Conference League and the upcoming Club World Cup in the United States.

A ticket for an upcoming home game against relegation-threatened Ipswich was listed at 990 pounds (\$1,275), while the asking price for some tickets for a May 3 game against league-leading Liverpool

were more than 3,000 pounds (\$3,800). On Chelsea's own website the top-price general admission adult ticket for a highest demand category AA game is 80 pounds (\$103).

The league warns fans against buying tickets from unauthorized sellers.

"If you buy tickets from an unauthorized source, whether that be an unauthorized website, an online marketplace or a ticket tout outside the ground, you risk not being given en-

try to the match and losing the money you paid," it says in its guidelines.

Chelsea itself describes unauthorized sales as an "increasing problem" and asks supporters to report ticket concerns.

On its website it says "it is illegal to sell, or to offer to sell, tickets to Chelsea Football Club matches without the authorization of the club."

The Associated Press contacted Chelsea, representatives of Boehly and the league for comment.

Knight Riders bounce back



Kolkata Knight Riders' Quinton de Kock plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders at Assam Cricket Association Stadium in Guwahati, India. (AP)

De Kock's unbeaten 97 and spinners lead Kolkata past Rajasthan

GUWAHATI, India, March 27, (AP): Quinton de Kock made an unbeaten 97 off 61 balls as the Kolkata Knight Riders earned an eight-wicket win over the Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League.

The defending champions raced to 153-2 with 15 balls to spare and made amends for their season-opening loss to the Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Rajasthan had earlier stuttered to 151-9 against spinners Moeen Ali and Varun Chakaravathy on a sluggish wicket that suited the slow bowlers. It was Rajasthan's second straight loss.

De Kock read the wicket well and was aggressive against spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, while fast bowler Jofra Archer had second successive forgetful outing with the ball.

De Kock successfully went for television referral against an onfield lbw decision before he

completed his half-century off 35 balls with a six over wide long-on against Hasaranga.

Ali, who bagged 2-20 off his four steady overs of off-spin bowling, struggled for 12 balls in scoring five runs. He got run out after he opened the innings with de Kock, and Hasaranga struck off his first ball by having captain Ajinkya Rahane (18) caught at square leg.

But de Kock then cut loose in an unbroken 83-run stand with Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who remained unbeaten on 22 off 17 balls.

De Kock finished off the game in style by smacking Archer (0-33) for two sixes and a boundary against the Englishman. De Kock hit eight boundaries and six sixes in his aggressive knock as Kolkata cruised to victory in 17.3 overs.

Kolkata's new signing Moeen Ali combined well with Chakaravathy on a dry wicket as both spinners not only dried up runs but also shared four top-order wickets.

In the absence of unwell Sunil Narine, Ali started the Rajasthan slide soon after the batting

powerplay as they slipped from 67-1 to 82-5.

Captain Riyan Parag made a quickfire 25 off 18 balls with three sixes, but skied a catch to De Kock as he mistimed another six down the ground against Chakaravathy.

Yashasvi Jaiswal (29) holed out at long-on in a bid to accelerate against Ali, who then hit the top of Nitish Rana's off-stump when the left-hander tried to open the face of the bat and steer the off-spinner.

In between Ali's twin strikes in successive overs, Chakaravathy had Hasaranga caught at mid-off as the Sri Lankan, promoted to No. 5, fell for a run-a-ball four.

Rajasthan tried to counterattack and brought in impact player Shubham Dubey, but it didn't work as the batter was caught at deep third man after struggling to score 9 off 12 balls.

Dhruv Jorel hit five boundaries and top-scored with 33 off 28 balls and Archer (16 not out) smashed two sixes to help Rajasthan cross the 150-run mark.

Hewitt to chair the board

Villa defender Mings named on Euros board of directors

LONDON, March 27, (AP): Aston Villa defender Tyrone Mings was named on Thursday on the board of directors for the European Championship in Britain and Ireland in 2028.

The 32-year-old Mings is the only player among the three independent non-executive directors helping to organize the tournament.

Mings has played for Villa since 2019 and has made 18 appearances for England, for which he was part of the squad at the 2021 tournament.

He has missed large chunks of the past two seasons because of injuries and will be 35 when Euro 2028 takes place, likely meaning he won't be involved in the England squad then.

Confirmation of Mings' involvement came in the announcement of the company - officially named "UK & Ireland 2028 Limited" - tasked with delivering Euro 2028. English Football Association chair Debbie Hewitt will also chair the Euro 2028 board.

A tournament anchored in England with modern stadiums generating huge matchday revenues was a safe choice for UEFA eyeing its bottom line after the high-maintenance,

low-revenue Euro 2021 that was staged during the pandemic in half-empty venues across 11 countries.

UEFA cash reserves after the pandemic dropped to 360 million euros in its most recent financial report, and Euro 2028 is set to lift the number back above UEFA's target of 500 million euros.

The men's Euros, held every four years, is the foundation of UEFA's finances and funds development payments to its members.

Everton's new waterfront stadium at Bramley-Moore Dock is set to open for the start of next season, replacing the club's long-time home of Goodison Park, and was included in the list of venues hosting Euro 2028 matches announced in April 2023. Bramley-Moore Dock is currently staging test events.

Casement Park, a derelict stadium in Belfast, was also on the initial list but has since been dropped, with the British government unable to commit to providing the funding to redevelop it in time. UEFA says it hasn't yet decided where to reallocate the games that would have been in Belfast.

'Work to be done with RB21 car'

Red Bull drops Lawson and replaces him with Tsunoda

LONDON, March 27, (AP): Red Bull dropped Liam Lawson as the teammate of Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen after just two rounds of the season and replaced him with Yuki Tsunoda on Thursday.

Lawson was given the Red Bull seat despite not having previously driven a full F1 season and struggled immediately. The New Zealander did not score any points, crashed out of the season-opening Australian Grand Prix and qualified in last place for the Chinese Grand Prix and its sprint race.

Tsunoda moves up from Red Bull's second team, Racing Bulls, in time for his home Japanese GP next week. Lawson will take Tsunoda's place at Racing Bulls alongside rookie Isack Hadjar.

The change is a sign of how cut-throat F1 can be and an admission that Red Bull made the wrong choice in picking Lawson. He completed only 11 career F1 races before this season and was typically slower than Tsunoda across their six races as teammates last year.

"It has been difficult to see Liam struggle with the (car) at the first two races and as a result we have collectively taken the decision to make an early switch," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said in a statement.

"We came into the 2025 season with two ambitions, to retain the world drivers' championship and to reclaim the world constructors' title and this is a purely sporting decision."

Horner acknowledged there was work to be done with the team's RB21 car and said Tsunoda's experience will prove beneficial in helping to develop it.

"We have a duty of care to protect and develop Liam and, together, we see that after such a difficult start it makes sense to act quickly so Liam can gain experience, as he continues his F1 career with Racing Bulls, an environment and a team he knows very well," Horner said.

Replacing Lawson so quickly is in

stark contrast to the patience shown Verstappen's former teammate Sergio Perez, who was handed a two-year contract extension midway through a disappointing 2024 season. The team eventually dropped Perez for Lawson in December after four years.

Lawson spoke publicly about his difficulties with the RB21 car, saying on Sunday it was "tricky" to drive and had a "very small window" for the setup to be competitive. That echoed comments from Perez last year that the car became increasingly difficult to handle as Red Bull's development work leaned toward Verstappen's driving style.

The 24-year-old Tsunoda has been in F1 since 2021 with a career-best championship placing of 12th last year and has yet to finish on the podium. He's previously faced criticism within the broader Red Bull operation for a tendency to vent his frustrations over the radio during races.

Tsunoda's long-term future is complicated by his personal backing from Honda, which is being replaced as Red Bull's engine supplier at the end of the year ahead of a new deal with Ford in 2026. Honda will supply Aston Martin next season.

Racing Bulls team principal Laurent Mekies said he was "incredibly proud" of Tsunoda for making the move to Red Bull. "His progress last year, and more recently from the very start of 2025, has been nothing less than sensational," he said.

Tsunoda becomes Verstappen's sixth teammate in 10 seasons with Red Bull. It's the first time that the main Red Bull team has changed drivers mid-season since 2019 when Pierre Gasly was dropped for Alex Albon after 12 races.

Verstappen is the only Red Bull driver to win a race in almost two years and the only one on the podium in nearly a year. He's scored all of the team's points in the four races since Perez placed 10th in Las Vegas in November.

'Not planning on ordering a replacement trophy'

Odermatt picks up latest crystal trophy and breaks it at WC finals

SUN VALLEY, Idaho, March 27, (AP): Marco Odermatt was in the finish area picking up the pieces after collecting his newest trophy.

Because he broke it. Good thing the Swiss standout has plenty of them.

Odermatt went to toss his giant slalom crystal globe - it's actually glass - into the air when it clanged off the medal around his neck following the GS race at the World Cup finals. The base shattered into several shards.

"I have some pieces of glass now to share with the coaches," Odermatt cracked. "It's a nice story."

Odermatt now has 13 World Cup season-long trophies - four in GS, two in downhill, three in super-G and four for capturing the overall crown.

He can afford to break a few. He's not planning on ordering a replacement trophy, either.

"It will be a nice history about it," he said of the broken GS award.

Odermatt went into the final GS of the season with the crown already wrapped up. He finished the race runner-up to his teammate, Loic Meillard. Then, they received their hardware.



Switzerland's Marco Odermatt celebrates with his trophy after winning the giant slalom season championship at the World Cup Finals in Sun Valley, Idaho. (AP)

First up was the medal ceremony for the winners of the race.

Then, another ceremony to hand out trophies for the season-long standings, in which Odermatt was followed by Norwegian ski racer Henrik Kristoffersen and Meillard.

Odermatt was celebrating with

his Swiss team when the accident happened.

It's not the first time Odermatt has broken a trophy. He went out to celebrate his first World Cup podium finish in 2019 and dropped the trophy.

"I have half a piece of it still at

home," Odermatt said. "It's a nice story."

As for Wednesday's race, Meillard held on to his first-run lead and cruised to the GS win on a sun-splashed course. Meillard finished in a combined time of 2 minutes, 15.21 seconds on a warm day at Sun Valley. He beat Odermatt by 0.95 seconds, while Kristoffersen finished third.

"At the end, what's important is to push each other, try to learn from each other, to always get better year after year," Meillard said of competing against his teammate, Odermatt.

Asked how well Odermatt is racing right now, Meillard cracked: "At the moment, I guess I'm better. But (always) he's pretty good, yes."

To think, Odermatt struggled to start the GS season with two "DNFs" - did not finish. He finished on the podium in the next seven races, including three wins.

"Hopefully it's not bad luck" to break a trophy, Odermatt said with a laugh. "It was probably a little bit of a symbol that my beginning of the season was not the very best. So after recovering from that, winning another globe was incredible."



Red Bull driver Liam Lawson of New Zealand waits in his team garage during the third practice session at the Australian Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park, in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Argentina hopes Messi will play at WC even as team wins without him

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 27, (AP): Argentina is proving it can win without Lionel Messi, just in case he opts not to play in the 2026 World Cup.

After Argentina secured a spot in next year's competition, the main question now is whether the 37-year-old star will play in his sixth tournament and try to win back-to-back championships.

"We will see what happens, there's plenty of time," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "We must go one game a time otherwise (we) will be speaking about the same thing the rest of the year and we need to leave him alone, we will see. He will decide it whenever he wants, let's not drive him crazy with this."

"The best of our teams is always when the No. 10 is playing," De Paul said, "because he is the greatest of all time."

On Tuesday, hours after Argentina qualified for the next World Cup, it went out and handed Brazil its worst-ever loss World Cup qualifying - a 4-1 thrashing. That was days after Argentina's 1-0 victory at Uruguay.

Both victories came without Messi. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner had been ruled out after sustaining a low-grade adductor muscle injury.

Messi, who captained Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title in Qatar, has been sidelined several times by Inter Miami this season because of injury concerns.

His Argentina teammates left no doubt about their hopes for Messi to return.

"With Messi we might have scored two or three more goals," said striker Julián Álvarez, who scored one goal against Brazil.

Bolivia's failure to beat Uruguay on Tuesday assured Argentina - which leads the South American qualifiers with 31 points - of one of the continent's six direct spots for the 48-team World Cup to be co-hosted next year by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

After Tuesday's big win at Monumental de Nunez Stadium, midfielder Rodrigo de Paul seemed to speak for the whole country.



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi (10) attempts a shot during the first half of an MLS soccer match against Atlanta United in Atlanta. (AP)

Arsenal completes dramatic comeback against Real



Arsenal's Katie McCabe and Real Madrid's Athenea del Castillo, right, fight for the ball during the Women's Champions League, quarter-final, second leg soccer match between Arsenal and Real Madrid in London. (AP)

Lyon outclasses Bayern to reach semis

LONDON, March 27, (AP): Alessia Russo scored twice and Arsenal staged a remarkable comeback to reach the Women's Champions League semifinals with a 3-0 win over Real Madrid.

Mariona Caldentey scored the other as Arsenal grabbed three goals in 13 minutes to overturn the team's 2-0 loss in the first leg of the quarterfinal in the Spanish capital last week.

Caldentey, who used to torment Madrid while playing for Barcelona, wheeled away in delight after leveling the tie three minutes after Russo pulled a goal back as Arsenal couldn't have had a better start to the second half.

Russo fired Arsenal in front for the first time in the tie with an acrobatic finish in the 59th. It proved to be the winner in the 3-2 victory on aggregate.

The England star might have had a hat trick only to be denied by a VAR call for offside, then by Madrid goalkeeper Misa in a one-on-one, then by another offside call.

Arsenal needed a save from goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar in stoppage time to prevent Madrid star Linda Caicedo from sending the match to extra time.

Arsenal will face last season's beaten finalist Lyon as it seeks to win the trophy for the second time after success in 2007.

Kadidiatou Diani scored one goal and set up two more as Lyon outclassed Bayern Munich 4-1 in the second leg of their quarterfinal earlier.

The French powerhouse needed a wake-up call before reaching the semifinals for the 13th time. Klara Buhl opened the scoring in the 33rd minute off the far post to claw a goal back for Bayern after losing the first leg 2-0 in Munich.

Lyon, the eight-time champion, emerged reinvigorated after the break and went on to wrap up a 6-1 victory on aggregate with Diani scoring and setting up goals for Melchie Dumornay and Tabitha Chawinga, who both scored in Munich last week.

Dumornay played in Ada Hegerberg to seal the rout with a flourish by shooting the ball through Bayern goalkeeper Maria-Luisa "Mala" Grohs' legs in stoppage time.

Bayern will be left to rue defensive blunders for undermining its comeback hopes.

The other quarterfinal second legs are scheduled for Thursday, with defending champion Barcelona in a comfortable position after a 4-1 win over Wolfsburg in Germany, and Chelsea needing goals as it hosts Manchester City after losing the first leg 2-0.

Barcelona defeated Lyon in last year's final.

Prosecutors seek 15-year prison sentence for Villar

MADRID, March 27, (Agencies): Prosecutors in Spain are seeking a sentence of more than 15 years in prison on corruption charges for former Spanish soccer president Ángel María Villar.

Prosecutors said on Thursday they want Villar to go on trial for alleged irregularities on federation contracts signed when he was in charge. Prosecutors also want seven other people charged.

Villar was head of the federation from 1988 until 2017, when he was fired by Spain's administrative court for sport. He had already been suspended from the post after he, his son, and other officials were detained on suspicion of improper management, misappropriation of funds, corruption, and falsifying documents.

Villar, who has denied wrongdoing, resigned

his vice presidencies of FIFA and UEFA following his detention.

He was replaced at the Spanish federation in 2018 by Luis Rubiales, who resigned in 2023 after his unsolicited kiss on player Jenni Hermoso during the awards ceremony following the Women's World Cup final won by Spain.

Last month, Rubiales was found guilty of sexual assault because of the kiss that sparked one of the worst crises in Spanish soccer.

Former Real Madrid, Chelsea, Atletico Madrid and FC Barcelona defender Marcos Alonso has extended his contract with Celta Vigo until the end of June 2026.

The 34-year-old has been a vital part as Celta looks to qualify for Europe next season, play-

ing 1,889 minutes in 22 La Liga matches, a total only beaten by goalkeeper Vicente Guaita, defender Carl Starfelt and Spain international Oscar Mingueza.

Celta's Director of Sport, Marco Garces, celebrated the news, explaining the defender's contract was automatically renewed because he had played a stipulated number of games.

"Fortunately, he has completed that number of games, because we want him to stay with us. He is having a great season and he is a very important player for us," said Garces, who added that talks to extend the stay of Sergio Carreira and Alfonso Gonzalez were "on the right track." "They are playing well for us and they know that they can perform better here with the style of (Celta coach) Claudio (Giraldez) and the support of the fans," he commented.

Bundesliga resumes

Bayern and Leverkusen assessing damage after international break

BERLIN, March 27, (AP): The Bundesliga returns dented by the international break as Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen assess the toll on their players.

Bayern is without Alphonso Davies and Dayot Upamecano at the decisive stage of the season after both suffered knee injuries in Nations League matches. Davies tore a cruciate ligament in his right knee playing for Canada in the third-place match of the CONCACAF Nations League, while Upamecano damaged his left knee playing for France in both legs of a quarterfinal in the UEFA Nations League.

Leverkusen was concerned about the impact on Ecuador's Piero Hincapié and Argentina's Exequiel Palacios after their late returns from international duty before Friday's Bundesliga match against Bochum.

Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso is under pressure to start Hincapié despite his return less than 24 hours before the match because of a shortage of fit defenders. Edmond Tapsoba, Mario Hermoso and Jeanuel Belocian are all injured. Palacios was back in Leverkusen only on Wednesday.

Bayern's Bundesliga campaign

won't be derailed by St. Pauli on Saturday nor the trip to Augsburg a week later, because it has eyes on a bigger prize on April 8 when Inter Milan visits in the Champions League.

Leverkusen, six points behind Bayern with eight rounds of the Bundesliga remaining, plays Armin-



In this file photo, Dortmund's Nico Schlotterbeck battles for the ball with Wolfsburg's Patrick Wimmer. (AP)

ia Bielefeld in the German Cup semifinals on Tuesday, offering little time for rest after the Bochum match.

A look at what else is happening in the Bundesliga this weekend: Eintracht Frankfurt hosts Stuttgart needing a win to preserve its hold on the last spot for Champions

League qualification, while Stuttgart will look to build confidence after five games without a win before hosting Leipzig in the German Cup semifinals on Wednesday.

Borussia Dortmund hosts Mainz on Saturday with their expected positions reversed. Mainz is third and pushing for Champions League qualification while Dortmund is mired in mid-table after losing its last two league games. New coach Niko Kovac is yet to coax a turnaround.

Borussia Mönchengladbach hosts Leipzig on Saturday in a duel for European qualification.

Tim Kleindienst, who has 15 goals in 25 league appearances for Gladbach, made the most of his call-up for Germany by scoring in both Nations League matches against Italy. The 29-year-old Kleindienst is a late bloomer but has thrived since helping Heidenheim to Bundesliga promotion in 2023.

Victor Boniface made the difference for Leverkusen in the thrilling 4-3 win in Stuttgart. Leverkusen was struggling in attack without injured star Florian Wirtz until Alonso sent the Nigeria forward to reinvigorate the team. With Wirtz still out, Boniface may have found a new role.

Best of the Rest

Kaori 5th in short program: Defending champion Kaori Sakamoto of Japan placed fifth in the women's short program at the 2025 World Figure Skating Championships in Boston on Wednesday, while America's Alysa Liu topped the standings with 74.58 points.

China's An Xiangyi, making her worlds debut, finished 27th with 47.52 points and did not qualify for the free skate.

Sakamoto, the 2022, 2023 and 2024 world champion and 2022 Olympic bronze medalist, scored 71.03 in the short program. The 24-year-old, who also earned a silver at the 2025 Asian Winter Games in Harbin earlier this year, trails Liu by 3.55 points heading into Friday's free skate.

Liu led a tight podium race, narrowly edging Japan's Mone Chiba (73.44) and Isabeau Levito of the U.S. (73.33). Japan's Wakaba Higuchi sits fourth (72.10).

Failing to make the top 24, An, 18, missed the chance of advancing to the free skate.

"There was excitement competing at my first worlds, but also pressure to fight for an Olympic spot," An said. "I'm disappointed I didn't skate well today." In the pairs, Japan's Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara, the 2025 Four Continents champions, led with 76.57 points, followed by Italy's Sara Conti and Niccolò Macii (74.61) and Germany's Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin (73.59). (Xinhua)

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Arsenal's Alessia Russo celebrates scoring their side's fourth goal of the game before being ruled out for offside during the Women's Champions League, quarter-final, second leg soccer match between Arsenal and Real Madrid in London. Arsenal won 3-0. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

Sabah Al-Ahmad tournament ends on a high note



Officials pose with the winning teams after the closing ceremony.

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The fourth edition of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Football Ramadan Tournament for adults and juniors concluded successfully. The "Sabah Al-Ahmad Juniors" team claimed the junior title, while "Al-Kamasha" emerged victorious in the youth tournament.

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Association delivered an outstandingly organized event, earning widespread praise. The tournament fostered a vibrant Ramadan atmosphere, bringing to-

gether the people of Sabah Al-Ahmad for friendly competition. The final day was packed with excitement, surprises, and prizes for the top two teams in both the adult and junior divisions.

Eng. Hamad Al-Marri, Chairman of the Sabah Al-Ahmad City Cooperative Society, congratulated the winning teams and highlighted the impressive finale. He emphasized that the tournament provided a valuable opportunity to promote

teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship, making its fourth edition a resounding success. He also noted that the event fulfilled its mission of fostering healthy competition among participants while offering a high-quality sporting experience during Ramadan.

Al-Marri extended his gratitude to the board members and the tournament organizing committee for their dedication and efforts in ensuring the event's success.

Kazma crushes Yarmouk 118-49

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: Kazma delivered a commanding 118-49 win over Yarmouk in their 16th-round clash at the Basketball Association Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. In another match, Al-Nasr defeated Al-Tadamon 109-83.

Following these results, Al-Safir moved up to fourth place with 21 points, while Yarmouk sits in eighth place with 15 points. Meanwhile, Al-Annabi secured fifth place with 21 points, and Al-Tadamon dropped to ninth with 15 points.

As the second half of the league nears its conclusion, the battle for top positions and a semi-final qualification spot is heating up, with Al-Qurain emerging as the frontrunner for the final ticket.

The league schedule is expected to undergo adjustments to accommodate the crucial AFC Champions League (Wasl) qualifier between Al-Qadsia and Bahrain's Manama, set for April 7 at Etihad Arena. As a result, no league matches will be played at the venue on April 6 and 7.



Yarmouk player dribbles the ball past Kazma player during the league match.

Kazma completely dominated Yarmouk, winning by 69 points and scoring 30+ points in three quarters (36-33-30).

Yarmouk, which has played without a foreign professional this season, saw former international captain Saqr Abdulredha lead the team with 15 points.

UAE joins 10th Arab Handball Cup as Kuwait prepares to host tournament

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The Arab Handball Federation has confirmed the UAE's participation in the 10th Arab Handball Cup for men's national teams, set to take place in Kuwait from May 4 to 12. The tournament coincides with International Handball Federation Week and marks the UAE as the ninth team to join the competition, alongside Kuwait (host), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt.

This edition of the Arab Handball Cup revives the tournament after a long hiatus, with the last event held in 2002. Historically, Egypt won the first two editions (1975, 1977), followed by Kuwait (1979, 1988), Tunisia (1986, 1993), Saudi Arabia (1998), Algeria (2000), and Bahrain (2002). The Arab Handball Federation, established in 1975, is headquartered in Riyadh and comprises 16 national federations.

Meanwhile, the preliminary round of the Merged League Championship concludes today with an exciting showdown between defending champion Kuwait Club and Super Cup winner Kazma at 9:30 PM at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex Hall.

In earlier matchups, Burgan defeated Al-Qurain 29-18, while Qadsia secured a 36-23 victory



Players challenging for the ball.

over Al-Sahel. The updated league standings ahead of the Kuwait vs. Kazma match are:

Kuwait Club - 24 points, Kazma - 21 points, Burgan - 21 points, Sulaibikhat - 16 points, Al-Arabi - 16 points, Al-Salmiya - 14 points (Top six teams qualify for the Premier League), Qadsia - 14 points, Al-Nasr - 14 points, Al-Qurain - 12 points, Fahaeel - 8 points, Al-Tadamon - 3 points, Yarmouk - 2 points, Al-Sahel - 0 points (Teams ranked 7th-14th will compete in the First Division.)

This final preliminary match will determine key standings as teams prepare for the next phase of the championship.

Late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak team wins Fintas Tournament



Winners receive their trophies.

KUWAIT CITY, March 27: The late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak team clinched the Fintas Ramadan Tournament title after securing a 5-3 victory over Faraj Al-Harbi's team in the final match.

Team manager Captain Ahmed Khamis expressed his delight with the triumph, emphasizing that his team consistently participates in Ramadan tournaments, which have become a cherished sporting tradi-

tion during the holy month.

Khamis highlighted the team's previous successes, including winning the Al-Nasr Sports Tournament and the Fahaeel Cooperative Society Tournament. Additionally, the team reached the final of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Tournament, organized by the Public Authority for Sports, and qualified for the Governorates Super Cup.

LA Clippers prevent Knicks from clinching playoff spot

Lakers move into tie with Memphis

NEW YORK, March 27, (AP): James Harden had 29 points, six rebounds and six assists, Kawhi Leonard scored 27 points and the Los Angeles Clippers prevented the New York Knicks from clinching a playoff berth with a 126-113 victory.

Norman Powell added 19 points and Ivica Zubac finished with 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers, who improved to 41-31 and tied Golden State for sixth place in the Western Conference, the final guaranteed postseason place.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 34 points and 13 rebounds for the Knicks, who were looking to follow Cleveland and Boston and become the third team to wrap up a spot in the East.

The Knicks started impressively on the second night of a back-to-back, going 8 for 9 en route to an 18-5 lead. But the Clippers blew by them with a 16-3 run to end the third quarter and broke it open in the fourth.

Lakers 120, Pacers 119

In Indianapolis, LeBron James had a buzzer-beating tip-in to cap a 10-point fourth quarter. Luka Doncic scored 34 points and the Los Angeles Lakers beat Indiana.

James extended his NBA-record streak of 10 or more points to 1,283 games - barely. He was 0 for 6 with three points through the first three quarters. He finished with 13 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists.

Doncic also had seven rebounds, seven assists and made six 3-pointers. Austin Reaves added 24 points as the Lakers snapped a three-game losing streak to move into a tie with Memphis for the fourth seed in the Western Conference.

Benedict Mathurin had 23 points

to lead Indiana. Tyrese Haliburton had a season-high 18 assists and 16 points, the last of which gave Indiana a 119-118 lead with 42.2 seconds left. Indiana had streaks of five straight wins overall and eight straight at home snapped.

Celtics 132, Suns 102
In Phoenix, Kristaps Porzingis scored 30 points, Jaylen Brown added 24 and Boston blew past Phoenix for their seventh straight victory.

The Suns had a four-game winning streak snapped. Phoenix still has possession of the final spot in the Western Conference play-in tournament with nine regular-season games remaining.

Boston took control late in the second quarter, using a 27-6 run to take a 73-54 lead into halftime. The Celtics - playing without injured star Jayson Tatum - hit 10 3-pointers in the first quarter.

Porzingis shot 10 of 15 from the

field, including 4 of 5 from 3-point range. Al Horford, Jrue Holiday and Derrick White all added 16 points.

Kevin Durant led Phoenix with 30 points on 11-of-16 shooting. Devin Booker added 14 points and 10 assists.

Nuggets 127, Bucks 117

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 39 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists in his first game back in nearly two weeks to lead Denver to a victory against Milwaukee.

The triple-double was Jokic's NBA-leading 30th of the season. The reigning NBA MVP missed the team's previous five games with an injured left ankle.

Michael Porter Jr. added 23 points for the Nuggets on a night when he made his first six shots, including his first five 3-pointers.

It was the Bucks' first game since it was announced star guard Damian

Lillard was diagnosed with blood clots in his right calf. Milwaukee was also without two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo, who was sidelined with a sprained left foot that coach Doc Rivers said he was informed of at the team's shootaround Wednesday.

Wizards 119, 76ers 114

In Philadelphia, Alex Sarr scored 24 points and had seven rebounds to lead the Washington Wizards to a victory over the Philadelphia 76ers that snapped a five-game skid.

Justin Champagne added 18 points and had 10 rebounds for the Wizards, who won for the third time in their last 10 games.

Quentin Grimes scored 22 points for the 76ers, who dropped their sixth straight. Guerschon Yabusele added 21 points and eight rebounds.

Champagne scored 16 points in the first half for the Wizards, who led 67-58 at halftime.

Washington went on an 11-0 run in the third quarter to extend its lead to 89-71 with 2:48 left in the period. Tristan Vukcevic put up a team-high 11 second-half points as the Wizards were outscored by four points over the final two quarters, but still secured the victory.

Raptors 116, Nets 86

In New York, Orlando Robinson had 23 points on 10-of-14 shooting and added 12 rebounds to help the Toronto rout the Brooklyn.

Eleventh in the Eastern Conference, the Raptors won their second straight game and handed the 12th-place Nets their fifth straight loss.

Jonathan Mogbo added 15 points and RJ Barrett and Scottie Barnes each had 15. The Raptors won at Washington on Monday night to snap a four-game losing streak.

Nic Claxton led Brooklyn with 22 points and 11 rebounds. Ziaire Williams added 13 points.



Denver Nuggets forward Aaron Gordon, left, drives to the basket as Milwaukee Bucks center Brook Lopez defends in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Denver. (AP)