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Kuwait economy steady despite US tariffs



US President Donald Trump speaks during an event to announce new tariffs in the Rose Garden at the White House, April 2, 2025, in Washington. (AP) — See Pages 9 & 10

- Kuwait's small export volume limits impact
- Experts predict unprecedented inflation
- Global markets tumble

By Najeh Bilal and Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: In light of the implementation of tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on goods imported into the United States – a minimum of 10 percent – similar to those imposed on Kuwaiti exports, the newspaper asked a number of economists about the repercussions of the decision on the Kuwaiti economy.

Specifically, the economists were asked about the extent of the impact of such a decision on the Kuwaiti economy, and if the whole world will witness a price hike wave as a result of the increased tariffs on imports to the United States.

Oil analyst and economic expert Kamel Al-Harami believes the global economy will inevitably be affected by the increased tariffs imposed by the United States at varying rates on some countries.

He pointed out that "this trend will increase global inflation and, consequently, increase prices; especially since other countries may respond in kind to US President Donald Trump and raise tariffs on imports from the United States."

After the US raised tariffs by around 10 percent on Kuwaiti imports, Al-Harami stated that Kuwaiti exports to the US are minimal, and that the US can raise tariffs on oil and gas; but Trump has yet to raise tariffs on oil imports. He pointed out that while the OPEC+ is concerned with all oil transactions in terms of price and countries' share, it cannot stop any increase in tariffs on oil and gas by any country like the United States or others.

Economic advisor and food security expert Mohammad Al-Furaih said America's 10 percent tax on Kuwaiti imports, as the case for many countries, may not significantly impact the Kuwaiti economy in the first place, because the percentage of Kuwaiti exports to the US is very small.

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Index returns to green

Planned power cuts begin as Kuwait electricity load peaks

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The electricity load index returned to the green zone on Thursday; recording 10,050 megawatts at its peak load at 2:00 pm.

Reliable sources attributed this positive development to the entry of two 500-megawatt units that underwent maintenance; hence, increasing production compared to consumption. Sources also affirmed the commitment of the ministry, specifically the Power Generation and Water Distillation Plants Sector, to complete the maintenance works on the units in record time in order to address the challenges posed by increased consumption due to rising temperatures during summer.

"This is in addition to the provision of more quantities from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) for the country to overcome challenges in the summer of 2025," sources pointed out.

On Wednesday, the index remained in the red zone, reaching 10,050 megawatts in the evening, due to high temperatures peaking at 37 degrees Celsius.

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Kuwait airport's baggage system contract extended for six months

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The State Audit Bureau (SAB) has approved the request of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to extend the contract for the maintenance of the baggage inspection system at Kuwait International Airport, which covers Weight Zone Two and Three and the Arrivals Hall.

Sources informed the newspaper that the extension is six months -- from Oct 29, 2024 to April 28, 2025 -- at a total cost of KD 269,000.

Sources revealed that DGCA officially requested the contract extension due to the need to ensure the continued operation of vital inspection systems without impacting travel operations, especially in light of the increasing air traffic.

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Unstable weather to persist until Monday

Thunderstorms, dust to reduce visibility across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 3, (KUNA): The Kuwait Meteorological Department reported that satellite, radar, and monitoring station images indicate cloud cover in the northwest of Kuwait, with a chance of scattered rain showers. Thunderstorms in the west and north of Kuwait may cause reduced visibility due to suspended dust, which is expected to continue

until Friday morning.

In a press release to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the acting Director of the Kuwait Meteorological Department Dherar Al-Ali indicated

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The Kuwait City skyline is shrouded in a thick overcast sky on Thursday, casting a gloomy atmosphere over the bustling metropolis. Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait, Saudi, GCC decry Israeli incursion into Al-Aqsa

KUWAIT CITY, April 3, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by a far-right Israeli minister, calling the act a grave violation of international law. The ministry stated that the minister's incursion, supported by Jewish settlers and Israeli forces, which led to the eviction of Muslim worshippers on Wednesday, is an outrageous provocation to millions of Muslims around the world.

In addition, the Ministry condemned the Israeli occupation's attack on a UNRWA clinic in the Jabalia refugee camp, located in the northern Gaza Strip, stressing that such actions violate international humanitarian law and UN resolutions.

The Ministry called on the international community to ensure the safety of UN personnel and facilities, warning that allowing these Israeli violations to go unpunished would jeopardize efforts to restore peace and stability in the region.

Saudi Arabia also condemned the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque, reiterating its rejection of the Israeli occupation's repeated violations of the mosque's sanctity. The Saudi Foreign Ministry emphasized the need to protect UN agencies and their employees and condemned the targeting of an UNRWA shelter in Jabalia camp. It called on the international community to hold Israel accountable for its actions and to end the occupation's violations of humanitarian law, which undermine peace efforts.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, described the incursion into Al-Aqsa as a blatant violation of Islamic holy sites. Al-Budaiwi noted that these actions by Israeli officials and settlers not only breach international law but also further destabilize the region and provoke Muslims worldwide, escalating tensions and perpetuating violence in Palestine.



Palestinians attend Eid al-Fitr holiday celebrations at Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem, on March 30, 2025. (Xinhua)

News watch

KUWAIT CITY: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi referred 34 private healthcare facilities to the Medical Liability Authority due to serious violations of medical advertising regulations and controls, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Al-Awadhi

The Ministry of Health clarified that these violations contradict Ministerial Resolution No. 87/2023 and constitute a breach of the principles and ethics of the medical profession.

The ministry confirmed that field monitoring will continue, and immediate legal action will be taken against violators.

It explained that inspection teams discovered advertisements containing inaccurate information and indecent images that violated societal norms. The violating facilities include clinics, medical centers, laboratories, and dental centers.

AMMAN: Israeli occupation killed nine Syrian and injured others in west Daraa, late Wednesday, Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported.

SANA quoted the government in southern Syria's Daraa saying that nine civilians were killed and several injured in Israeli bombardment following an "Israeli incursion, with "the occupation forces advancing for the first time to this depth"

The Israeli occupation launched airstrikes on five different areas throughout Syria, earlier, which left a mass destruction of Hama Air Base along with many injured civilians and military personnel. (KUNA)



8 'InvestGB' organizes an awareness seminar for its employees on occasion of World Autism Day



11 'Minecraft Movie' brings bizarre fun for all ages

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:16 Asr 15:23
 Sunrise .. 05:36 Maghrib .. 18:07
 Zohr 11:51 Isha 19:25

Local

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-50 km/h with a chance for scattered rain and a chance for rising dust over open areas.

By Night: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to easterly wind, with speeds of 08-40 km/h with a chance for scattered rain and a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	35	25
Abdaly	35	23
Jahra	35	26
Salmiyah	32	22
Jal Aliyah	34	25
Nuwaib	35	23
Wafra	34	23



KUNA photo
 Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and her delegation meet Italian Minister of Disabilities Alessandra Locatelli on the fringes of the third Global Disability Summit (GDS) in Berlin.

Kuwaiti and Italian ministers discuss ways to help out handicapped people

BERLIN, April 3, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah met Italian Minister of Disabilities Alessandra Locatelli on the fringes of the third Global Disability Summit (GDS) in Berlin on Wednesday.

In statements to KUNA, Dr. Al-Huwailah said the meeting focused on initiatives, programs and services being offered the people with special needs in both countries.

"We exchanged views on programs for integrating people with disabilities into the community and explored ways to promote cooperation in social areas," she noted.

Also attending the meeting were Kuwait Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled and representatives of the human rights dept of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA).

The two-day summit opened earlier today.

Meanwhile, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah on Thursday also called for devising policies and programs to ensure rights of people with special needs and help them integrate into society and labor markets.

The visiting Kuwaiti minister told KUNA after she took part in a panel discussion, organized by the Arab League, during the Global Disability Summit, hosted by Berlin, that participants addressed crucial issues on empowering this segment, shedding light on the main challenges facing them.

The Kuwaiti delegation that took part in the discussions, in addition to Minister Al-Huwailah, included Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah and Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled.

The third edition of the summit that kicked started on Wednesday would conclude later today.

Kuwait, UN to tackle challenges faced by women with disabilities

Caring for autistic people is humanitarian duty: Dr Al-Huwailah

BERLIN, April 3, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities Heba Hagrass discussed on Thursday means of boosting collaboration to serve this segment of society.

Speaking to KUNA, the Minister, taking part in the 2025 Global Disability Summit in Berlin, said the meeting touched upon multiple topics of mutual interest, including challenges facing women with disabilities.

She stressed the need of taking into account circumstances related to persons with disabilities and economic conditions that aggravate their lives.

She noted that the meeting further dealt with means of improving services and programs provided by governmental agencies to properly meet the needs of persons with dis-



KUNA photo
 Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah in meeting with UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities Heba Hagrass.

abilities.

The Minister also expressed appreciation to Hagrass for readiness to offer technical support and collaboration in training and rehabilitating workers in this field, in accordance with the latest international standards.

Al-Huwailah confirmed to Hagrass that Kuwait is keen on boost-

ing cooperation and coordination with UN agencies to benefit from international expertise in this vital domain.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah.

Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah af-

firmed on Wednesday that Kuwait pays special attention to individuals with autism.

Kuwait reflected its humanitarian and social commitment toward this cherished segment of society, working tirelessly to integrate them into it, safeguard their rights, enhance their capabilities, and support their families by all possible means, Al-Huwailah told KUNA, on the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day, observed annually on April 2.

She noted that the Ministry continues its efforts to develop specialized services, focusing on training and rehabilitation programs tailored to the needs and abilities of autistic people all over the spectrum, in a safe and supportive environment.

She pointed out that this global even serves as an opportunity to express appreciation and full support to families exerting immense efforts in caring for their children with autism, emphasizing her continuous support to the Public Authority for Disability Affairs and all dedicated professionals and specialists, who diligently provide essential psychological and social support.



KUNA photo
 Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah meets Gesa Brautigam, Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy Ambassador and Director for Human Rights and Global Health.

Human rights issues top discussions

BERLIN, April 3, (KUNA): Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah met Gesa Brautigam, Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy Ambassador and Director for Human Rights and Global Health, on the fringes of the third Global Disability Summit (GDS) in Berlin on Wednesday.

The discussions focused on the bilateral

ties in various fields and cooperation in the field of human rights in the framework of both countries' membership in the UN Human Rights Council, Ambassador Jawaher told KUNA.

She also met with German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Svenja Schulze and other senior officials on the first day of the summit.

Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital achievement wins laurels

Medical team pulls accident-hit woman from jaws of death

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: In a medical achievement considered one of the most complex rescue and treatment cases a multidisciplinary medical team at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital succeeded in saving the life of a young woman who was involved in a horrific traffic accident, reports Al-Anba daily.

The accident resulted in severe injuries, including the loss of a large portion of the woman's skull and scalp, exposure of the brain, lacerations to the eyelids, and major loss of soft tissue in the upper extremities; leading to exposure of nerves, joints and bones, in addition to severe back burns.

Immediately after the accident, the injured woman was admitted to the intensive care unit at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, where she spent nearly three months receiving continuous medical care and underwent more than 20 complex surgeries. A specialized team from several medical departments was in charge of her treatment; consisting of plastic and reconstructive surgery, neurosurgery, orthopedics, ophthalmology and eyelid surgery, urology, intensive care and anesthesia, pediatrics and microbiology.

The plastic and reconstructive surgery team played a pivotal role in the patient's treatment, performing a series of delicate and advanced

surgeries like free microscopic flaps to cover the brain and exposed nerves, eyelid reconstruction to protect vision, upper limb reconstruction using microvascular-supported skin flaps, nerve repair and transfer to preserve motor function in the hands, and treatment of the burns on her back using artificial skin (Matriderm from Central Circle) and fish skin (Kerexis from Medvigon).

Plastic and burn surgery specialist and Director of the plastic surgery program Dr. Khaled Al-Tarrah told the daily that "this case embodies the spirit of specialization in plastic surgery, from saving lives to restoring function, as we addressed complex challenges that required the utmost precision and cooperation."

Dr. Hiba Al-Khasham, a plastic and burn surgery consultant and head of the Plastic Surgery Unit at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, disclosed "what we have achieved is the result of a remarkable integration between specializations. We are proud of the entire plastic surgery team -- from consultants to resident colleagues who have proven their competence in providing medical care. We will also not forget the vital role played by Dr. Aber Kalander and Dr. Hussein Al-Moussawi."

Dr. Sara Bou Abbas, a consultant in internal

medicine and intensive care and head of the intensive care unit stated "this is one of the most complex cases we have encountered, as the patient required precise, round-the-clock medical care to control multiple complications."

She added "her rescue was not just a medical achievement, but also a testament to the importance of cooperation between all departments."

President of the Kuwait Plastic Surgeons Association and head of the plastic surgery team Dr. Hisham Burzaq stressed "it is a very proud feeling to see doctors I have worked with and trained in the past handling such complex cases with high level of competence and cooperation."

He added that "seeing our colleagues today, working together as mature surgeons within a cohesive unit to save a young girl, is the truest expression of the spirit of progress and professionalism in plastic surgery in Kuwait. I am proud of them all."

The medical team and all the staff at Jaber Hospital expressed their pride and appreciation for this achievement, which serves as an exemplary model of medical integration and cooperation and represents a beacon of hope for the patient and her family.



Photo by Samer Shaqir
 A view of high-rises in Kuwait City, looking over the shoulder of iconic Kuwait Towers.

PAAET hosts reception to mark Eid

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam hosted a reception at the headquarters of the authority to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr.

PAAET officials, faculty, administrators and staff attended the event; during which they exchanged warm greetings and well-wishes.

Al-Fajjam conveyed his heartfelt greetings and best wishes for a joyous Eid Al-

Fitr, while emphasizing the importance of cooperation and collaboration in achieving the goals of PAAET. He reaffirmed the dedication of PAAET to develop academic and training programs that equip students with the skills they need to enter the labor market. He also acknowledged the hard work and commitment of PAAET employees in supporting the educational process.

The reception fostered a warm and familial atmosphere, reflecting the strong bond among PAAET members as they celebrated the festive occasion together.

More 'higher education' institutions named in US

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal on Thursday issued a ministerial decision to add a number of academic programs and degrees to the list of higher education institutions in the United States of America recommended by the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education.

The decision aims to expand the options for Kuwaitis who want to complete their studies abroad, in line with labor market and development needs.

The list includes the University of Delaware (Landscape Architecture), University of Miami-Coral Gables (Public Relations), Ohio University (Journalism within the Mass Communication field, and Media and Arts Studies within the Mass Communication field), California State University-Pomona (Agriculture and Food Industries Management within the Agriculture field, Human Resources Management within the Business Administration field and Technology and Operations Management within the Business Administration field), University of Southern California (Urban and Housing Design within the Advanced Architectural Studies field, and Performance and Technology within the Advanced Architectural Studies field).

Al-Jalal confirmed that the decision takes effect from the date of its issuance, urging students who intend to enroll in these majors to contact the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance to ensure they meet the requirements.

The decision is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to develop the quality of higher education, and provide students with the opportunity to acquire scientific and academic skills that are compatible with modern developments and national development requirements.

27% decline seen in Kuwaiti men taking foreign women as spouses

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Recent statistical data showed a decline of approximately 27 percent in marriages of Kuwaiti men to non-citizens during the first three months of 2025 compared to last year, reports Al-Rai daily.

The total number of marriages between Kuwaiti men and foreign women since January 2025 reached 239, compared to 326 within the same period in 2024.

The documentation of marriage contracts between Kuwaiti men and Gulf women topped the list in 2025 with 74 marriages -- a 60 percent decrease from last year. Marriages to women of unspecified nationality are in second place with 30, followed by

Iraqi women with 26, Syrian women with 26, Asian women with 23, Egyptian women with 14, Jordanian women with 12, Lebanese women with six, European women with five, African women with three, Yemeni women with two, American women with two and 16 women of other nationalities.

In the corresponding period of 2024, Kuwaitis married 122 Gulf women, 27 Iraqi women, 54 unspecified nationality, 17 Syrian women, 13 Jordanian women, 12 Egyptian women, nine European women, eight Lebanese women, eight Palestinian women, six Yemeni women, five African women, 30 Asian women, three American women and 12 other nationalities.

Health centers now total 71

450 doctors trained in 'HOPE' program to fight osteoporosis

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Chairperson of Kuwait Osteoporosis Association Dr. Nadia Al-Ali revealed that the number of osteoporosis clinics in primary healthcare centers throughout the country has increased to 71.

She confirmed that work is continuing to open more specialized osteoporosis clinics to cover all 116 primary healthcare centers in the country.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Ali disclosed that around 420 doctors have been trained in the HOPE program; which the association launched four years ago to train primary healthcare doctors on diagnosing and treating osteoporosis through a series of lectures, workshops and practical applications.

She said seven training courses have been offered to date -- two courses per year; indicating a new course will be offered in November, with the participation of a group of the most skilled doctors and specialists in this field.

She added that HOPE training courses will be offered in support of the program, relying on renowned doctors who have been trained to assist in training other doctors.

She affirmed that the program's success

in training doctors has contributed to the availability of osteoporosis treatments in clinics, as a result of the training and qualifications provided to doctors to diagnose and treat the disease.

Regarding the risk factors for osteoporosis, Al-Ali stated that "age is one of the most important risk factors, along with gender. Women are twice likely to develop osteoporosis than men. Extreme thinness also plays a major role in the development of osteoporosis, along with hip fractures, prolonged use of cortisone medications, smoking, alcohol consumption and type 1 and type 2 diabetes."

Al-Ali also explained that taking certain medications increases the risk of fractures and osteoporosis; such as chemotherapy drugs, gastric acid suppressants, and medications for gastrointestinal infections that patients take after bariatric surgery, among other medications.

Meanwhile, Vice President of the association Dr. Thamer Al-Essa pointed out that "women are more susceptible to osteoporosis, especially with age and menopause. The incidence of osteoporosis among women in Kuwait is approximately 20 percent, compared to 10 percent for men."

Al-Essa clarified there are no clear symptoms of the disease in the early stages of bone loss; adding that once the bones weaken as a result of osteoporosis, certain signs and symptoms appear like pain resulting from spinal fractures or erosion, short stature over time, a hunched body, and leg and hip fractures, which can lead to reduced mobility and wheelchair-bound patients.



Dr. Al-Ali



'Kuwaiti soil fertile enough to grow anything; needs reform'

"RECENT experiments have shown that farming in Kuwait is indeed viable, though many crops such as grapes, bananas etc. are unfamiliar to Kuwaiti agriculture, neither in the past nor in the present," Hassan Ali Karam wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Nevertheless, Kuwaiti farmers are trying to create a successful agricultural landscape, because the Kuwaiti environment is unlike any other region surrounding the country. They have succeeded in cultivating what was previously impossible, and agriculture has now become an additional source of national income.



Hassan Ali Karam

"In Kuwaiti markets, you see agricultural products imported from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. These products are not compatible with the Kuwaiti environment, but they are not far off.

"Farmers here today grow watermelons, melons and grapes; and there are experiments in growing mangoes and other fruits. Potatoes and vegetables are 'old-fashioned' in Kuwaiti farms, yet we get them from the UAE and similar products imported from Saudi Arabia. Anyone who blames the soil, water or weather for the problem knows well they are exaggerating. Modern science has overcome these obstacles through modern agricultural methods like vertical irrigation, drip irrigation and soilless agricultural greenhouses.

"The few agricultural attempts by some farmers and agricultural enthusiasts have exposed the lies and falsehoods of these excuses. They have revealed that the gangs controlling the vegetable market and their secret agents have persistently undermined agriculture in a country that imports everything -- from onions to the rarest agricultural fruits around the world. If you do not believe me, visit the fruit and vegetable branches of some cooperatives and parallel markets.

"The agricultural problem in Kuwait stems from the government, which has seen nothing from the Agricultural Authority except the distribution of holdings to loved ones, ostensibly for agricultural purposes; but in reality, they are mere rest stops, profiteering and 'sell-by-the-subtlety.' The government knows that transferring ownership of agricultural holdings and barns is illegal, but they have rendered the law mute.

"I reiterate that agriculture in Kuwait is viable, indeed successful, if the government so desires. It must absolve itself of responsibility for sale and transfer decisions, prevent the transfer of agricultural holdings from one owner to another, seize farms from manipulative and unscrupulous owners, impose heavy fines on those who manipulate, cut off the hands of middlemen and influential people, cleanse the Agricultural Authority of unscrupulous employees, and hold accountable those who are negligent and unscrupulous.

"I hope the government will remove its influence from the Agricultural Authority and transform it into a private sector entity, as food security is a tributary here in Kuwait through farms.

"Let us take milk and dairy production as an example of successful livestock production. We need a clean, patriotic, youthful and renewed mentality to manage State facilities efficiently especially agriculture, palm trees, animal products and poultry.

"Food security begins and ends with farms, before care and monitoring. When the hands of those who manipulate are cut off, we will see a green Kuwait and successful fruits."

Also:

"The State is in the throes of change, tightening and developing laws, amending them to guarantee justice for all, and tightening their implementation to restore the State's prestige on its new path; while strengthening the supremacy of the law, the authority of the State, and power of implementation to protect the rights of everyone." Major General Faisal Musaed Al-Jazzaf wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"As everyone knows, all State institutions have been infiltrated by corrupt individuals and those with influence and vested interests, leading to their decline. Communication and cooperation among these individuals put influence above the law.

"Meanwhile, the previous parliamentary system was a tool for breaking laws and circumventing justice, not for upholding the rule of law.

"However, thank Allah, because during the reign of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect him, he laid out a roadmap for preserving the State's integrity through a series of firm decisions and measures to eradicate corruption and prevent violation of administrative rules. He established the rule that everyone is subject to the law, so no one is above the law. People have started to feel that this brings peace of mind to society.

"This puts the State on the right path. Through monitoring and accountability, people are treated equally.

"This is how good governance works, and this is how the State operates."

"For more than 40 years, I have been writing critically about education, which refers to systematic school education. In short, the ambiguity of the meaning of pedagogy and the concept of didac-

tics among those we call 'educators', whoever they may be: university professors, educational academics in colleges of education and teacher training institutes, technical staff in curriculum departments, educational supervisors participating in curriculum development committees and field observers of the school educational process or textbook authors -- whom I may have mentioned -- is the ambiguity of these two concepts, and similar concepts, among all of these individuals or most of them. This is the most important point of reference for the lack of development in school education and the reasons for its failure in most Arab countries," Kuwaiti writer Dr. Hamoud Al-Hattab wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"As I mentioned earlier, the Kingdom of Morocco is an exemption. It deals competently with the understanding of these two terms, so it surpassed most Arab countries in its understanding of the meaning of education. This is evident in international conferences led by global educational forums; where experts, philosophers and educational thinkers from Europe and America deliver lectures.

"Once these concepts become clear to everyone, the scientific methodological step will begin to lay the foundation for school education. This must be based on psychological sciences, most importantly Educational Psychology, Sociology and Ethics. Their convergence in the mindsets of curriculum developers and teachers will lead to success in defining the essence of education, its curricula and philosophy, and in selecting its content and vocabulary with extreme precision.

"This includes teaching methods and methods for preparing teachers at various levels, with precise specialization for each educational level; taking into account the specificities of girls over boys, or the commonalities between them.

"Confusion will continue to surround all development processes that have been plagued by failure, and which have been rife with failure. This is due to a lack of understanding and a deeper understanding of educational terminology, encompassing the meaning of education and its applications... as well as the lack of a political decision to develop education. "I will stop here... and there is more to come, God willing."

"The Ministry of Justice currently lacks a dedicated department responsible for the operation, management, maintenance, and preservation of judicial facilities, which is essential for ensuring their longevity and modernity. Many other ministries and public institutions have assigned this responsibility to specialized agencies, and in some cases, have involved the private sector during transitional periods, until the relevant departments are fully established," columnist Hussein Al-Abdullah wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"Given that most judicial buildings are relatively new, with the state investing nearly KD 350 million in constructing facilities such as the Farwaniya Court building, the Jahra Court building, the Public Prosecution building in the Shuwaikh administrative area, the new Hawally Court building, and the new Justice Palace building, as well as the upcoming renovation of the old Justice Palace building, it is imperative to ensure the continuous maintenance of these properties. This can only be achieved by entrusting the management of judicial buildings to specialized entities that can preserve them while maintaining their entrances, hallways, and overall upkeep.

"Due to the lack of dedicated management and ongoing maintenance for judicial buildings, the Farwaniya Court Complex has suffered from neglect despite being less than eight years old. Inaugurated in 2017 at a cost of approximately KD 77 million, the building now shows huge signs of deterioration. Issues such as damaged doors, broken glass walls, and worn-out floors create an environment that feels more like a neglected structure than a modern judicial facility.

"Also, the entrances are disorganized, cluttered with many kiosks and unsightly banners.

"Furthermore, this building, along with other judicial facilities, suffers from issues such as non-compliance with smoking ban regulations and a lack of internal organization, with visitors often wandering aimlessly due to the absence of dedicated sections to guide them.

"Without a specialized judicial facilities management department or partnerships with specialized companies to handle maintenance and technical needs, the ministry risks further damage to these vital facilities. This neglect could lead to the waste of public funds that were invested in constructing these important structures.

"Lastly, establishing dedicated management departments is necessary for the preservation of these facilities. Relying on security, safety, or handling companies, as is currently done in many judicial buildings, is no longer sufficient for effective management. Many of these models have limited capabilities and lack the necessary experience to properly manage these facilities and engage with the public effectively."

— Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/
Simi K. Kutty



KUNA photo

Chief of the Military Education Directorate Brigadier General Jassim Al-Omani and his accompanying delegation visited Women's Police Institute of the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences.

Cooperation eyed to boost women role in army

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The General Staff of Kuwait Army announced that, as part of efforts to strengthen cooperation between military and security institutions, the Chief of the Military Education Directorate Brigadier General Jassim Al-Omani and his accompanying delegation

visited Women's Police Institute of the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The General Staff explained that the delegation was received by the Assistant Director General for Academic Affairs Brigadier General Salem Ash-

our, and Director of the Women's Police Institute Colonel Iman Boland.

During the visit, both parties discussed ways to enhance cooperation regarding women's participation in the military. The visit also included a tour of the facilities of the Women's Police Institute.

Court overrules PAHW regulations, grants ownership right to all heirs

PAAAFR seizes boats using banned fishing nets

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff & Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The Fifth Administrative Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Qasimi, issued a final ruling to obligate the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) to issue a government property ownership document in the names of all the heirs of a deceased citizen, without excluding any of them, including married couples who submitted housing applications.

The ruling contradicts PAHW's practice, according to its regulations and amendments from

2016 to the most recent amendment in 2024.

The government house was allocated equally to both the citizen and his wife, but the man passed away before the ownership document could be issued.

After his death, his heirs submitted a request to have the document issued in their names, including the married couples, based on the legal right of heirs to transfer the allocation to them following the passing of their father, in accordance with the latest amendments to the housing welfare regulations.

The legal counsel representing the heirs Lawyer Mubarak Al-Nuwaibit based his argument on the new amendments, which allow the transfer of the allocation to the legal heirs even if the document was not issued before their father's death.

The court upheld these amendments in its final ruling, requiring PAHW to issue a title deed for half of the house in the mother's name, with

the other half registered in the names of all heirs without exception.

Illegal fishing nets used: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) conducted inspection tours on the first and second days of Eid al-Fitr, during which it seized a number of boats that were using prohibited fishing nets in violation of Resolution No. 8/2004, which bans the use of specific types of fishing nets, including shrimp trawls, during the fishing ban period, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAAAFR explained that a warehouse in Bar Kazma was found to contain banned fishing nets and several boats. Necessary legal actions were taken, and citations were issued against the vessels in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and Kuwait Municipality.

Hunt launched for Kuwaiti in forging personal document

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: A citizen, born in 1995, was placed on the wanted list as he refused to appear before the Shamiya Investigations Department in connection with a case of forging a personal document, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, a citizen born in 1998 reported to Shamiya Police Station that his

friend (the defendant) asked him in 2022 to obtain a telephone line on his behalf, with the understanding that the friend would cover the cost of the line. In 2024, the complainant visited the telecom company by chance and discovered that he owed money for a smartphone and earphones. He discovered that the due date for payment coincided with the registration of

the phone line in his name.

The complainant pointed out that his agreement with his friend was limited to obtaining a phone line only, not phone and earphones. He stated that while he was present at the time, he did not know how the additional items were included.

The complainant said "I asked the company to show me the con-

tract I allegedly signed, which supposedly included a phone and a headset, but they were unable to provide it."

The complainant then provided the defendant's details, including his phone number and a copy of his civil ID. Detectives attempted to contact the defendant, but he did not answer and eventually turned off his mobile phone.



Police seize garbage truck flagged for impoundment.

Traffic police impound 'wanted' garbage truck

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: A cleaning vehicle has been sent for judicial impoundment following an inquiry by traffic patrols, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, highway patrol officers stopped a dump truck and discovered that it was flagged for impoundment. The vehicle was then taken to the Doha Garage for impoundment.

Kuwaiti loses hefty cash in joint investment deal

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: A citizen has accused an expatriate of defrauding him of KD 13,000, reports Al-Anba daily.

During questioning by detectives from Hawally Police Station, the expatriate denied the fraud charges but acknowledged receiving KD13,000 from the citizen. He explained that the situation arose from a failed investment partnership, during which he already paid the complainant KD 3,500 in profits.

According to the case details, a 1957-born citizen lodged a complaint at the above-mentioned police station, claiming he was defrauded by Ahmad Shaker, an Iranian. Shaker entered into an investment agreement with the citizen, who gave him three checks totaling KD 10,000 for an investment in the Kuwaiti market.

A security source confirmed that, following the complaint, the case was registered and referred to the detectives. Shaker voluntarily appeared for questioning. He confirmed the existence of an investment contract with the complainant. He stated that he had been making regular monthly payments as per the contract, sometimes paying in cash and other times through electronic transfers.

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KUNA photo
Dr. Meshal Al-Modhaf tenders to Maltese President Myriam Spiteri Debono his credentials as Kuwait Ambassador Plenipotentiary.

Kuwaiti Ambassador presents credentials to Malta President

VALETTA, April 3, (KUNA): Dr. Meshal Al-Modhaf tendered to Maltese President Myriam Spiteri Debono his credentials as Kuwait Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the friendly Republic of Malta on Wednesday.

During a ceremony at the Presidential Palace, he conveyed to the president, government and people of Malta the best wishes of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Dr. Al-Modhaf expressed wishes

for strengthening the friendly relations between both countries, according to a statement from Kuwait Embassy.

On her part, President Debono expressed best regards to His Highness the Amir and people of Kuwait.

Both sides discussed the bilateral relations and explored ways to cement cooperation in the political, economic, investment and educational fields.

More than 100 Kuwaiti students are enrolled at Malta university, the statement noted.

Hundreds of new graduates set to join Kuwait education sector

Appointment approved to fill teaching gaps

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Educational districts have approved procedures for appointing hundreds of graduates from the colleges of Education and Basic Education in various academic disciplines, in preparation for their entry into the educational field.

This will contribute to strengthening the educational process and address shortages in some academic disciplines.

The Public Education Coordination and Follow-up Department is regularly monitoring academic manpower needs, in coordination with the educational district administrations, to ensure the availability

of teaching staff at all levels.

Educational sources confirmed that the new graduates received medical examination papers to complete their appointment procedures, and then begin their work in the educational field.

"This will narrow the gap in some subjects that suffer from teacher shortages, particularly in Science and language subjects. The aforementioned procedures are intended to provide the necessary teaching staff for existing schools, as well as new schools that will open before the next academic year," sources said.

Sources also confirmed that the educational districts reviewed and approved the graduates' applications after they completed the administrative and technical procedures, including passing personal interviews and ensuring that academic and administrative requirements were met.

Sources indicated that the ministry urged the new teachers to strictly

comply with educational regulations and fully prepare to enter the educational field efficiently, while stressing the importance of their role in supporting the educational process.

Sources added the administrative affairs departments in the educational districts carry out the administrative procedures related to appointments, starting with medical examinations and determining the duty station in coordination with the Educational Affairs Department in the concerned district.

Sources said these departments also sent a copy of the appointment decision and a statement of the job and financial status to the Human Resources Department.

"Files are submitted directly to the Files Department, while copies of the appointment decisions and the statement of the job and financial status are submitted to the Job Budget Department and the Promotions and Allowances Department. The Job Budget Department is responsible for

linking the grade and then transferring the job and financial status data of the new teachers directly to the Finance Department (Salary Control) for salary disbursement procedures," sources disclosed.

Sources also asked about a mechanism to regulate the status of female graduates of colleges of education whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked as per Article Eight of the Nationality Law.

Sources said some educational districts direct them to the ministry to complete employment procedures and sign special employment contracts, guaranteeing their inclusion in the educational field in accordance with the applicable regulations.

Sources clarified that this measure aims to utilize qualified personnel while taking into account their legal status, achieving a balance between the need to fill shortages in certain specializations and maintaining administrative procedures governing employment.

KU introduces electric vehicles to support students with disabilities

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The Safety and Security Department of Kuwait University announced the provision of electric vehicles specially designed for people with disabilities to assist with their transportation from parking areas to university facilities, reports Al-

Seyassah daily.

The department affirmed its ongoing commitment to overcoming any challenges and difficulties faced by individuals with disabilities and ensuring a supportive and accessible educational environment.

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The government continues to prioritize the development of its digital infrastructure and bolster cybersecurity as part of its broader digital transformation efforts, reports Al-Rai daily.

This is achieved by supporting the concerned government agencies and equipping them with cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and data analytics; while collaborating with leading international companies and advanced nations in the field.

In line with these efforts, the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) is spearheading the 'Electronic Systems Crisis Response Center'

project, designed to ensure business continuity and protect government data from potential technical risks.

To support this project, CAIT has requested that government agencies should appoint specialized liaison officers to its team, who will be responsible for responding to crises resulting from electronic system failures.

CAIT also informed the government agencies about the completion of the Cloud migration project, part of an ongoing partnership between the Kuwaiti government and Google Cloud.

CAIT stressed the need for government agencies to classify their electronic data in accordance

with the guidelines set by the National Cybersecurity Center.

This will guarantee more protection for government data as per the international security standards. It is part of Kuwait's broader strategy to strengthen cybersecurity and improve governmental performance.

These efforts are a critical component of CAIT's dedication to guarantee the success of national digital transformation projects. The agency underscored the importance of collaboration between government agencies to achieve these objectives and build a more advanced and secure digital environment that supports Kuwait's vision in the digital age.

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Smart systems improve monitoring

Kuwait screens over 500K expats annually to protect public health

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Head of the Expatriate Labor Screening Unit in the Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health Dr. Ghazi Al-Mutairi says the unit serves as the first line of defense in protecting public health in Kuwait by conducting thorough medical tests on expatriates to detect infectious diseases and assess their health fitness before they integrate into society, reports Al-Anba daily.

He revealed that over half a million expatriates undergo medical tests annually.

Dr. Al-Mutairi affirmed that the ministry continues to develop screening centers and expand their capacity to accommodate the growing number of workers.

He said Kuwait is committed to adhering to the highest international health standards by coordinating with various government agencies and electronically linking test results with the Ministry of Interior. It also collaborates with Gulf countries to standardize medical screening procedures for expatriates, which contributes to a healthy and safe work environment for all.

Dr. Al-Mutairi explained that the Ministry of Health operates five main labor screening centers in various governorates in Kuwait - the main Shuwaikh Center, Fahaheel Center, Rumaithiya Center, Jahra Center, and Subhan Center. These centers operate from Sunday to Thursday, from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm.

Given the increasing number of expatriates, there are plans to establish additional centers in newer areas to ease the burden on existing centers and enhance overall capacity.

These centers conduct thorough medical tests to detect infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, and tuberculosis. They also provide necessary vaccinations, including the meningitis vaccine, and ensure that accompanying children have completed their vaccinations. The test results are recorded in the Ministry of Interior's electronic system to monitor the health status of expatriates and facilitate the completion of residency procedures. This contributes to promoting public health by enabling the early detection of infectious diseases, minimizing the spread of epidemics among the population, administering vaccination programs to reduce the risk of disease transmission, and monitoring and diagnosing cases of infectious tuberculosis to prevent its spread within the community.

The Expatriate Labor Screening Unit continuously coordinates with the Ministry of Interior to ensure that labor data is regularly updated and linked to the residency system. This electronic linkage allows for the direct recording of health results, streamlining residency procedures and ensuring the timely deportation of workers who are deemed unfit for health reasons.

Regarding the stages of the medical examination for expatriate workers, Dr. Al-Mutairi explained that expatriates are required to undergo medical examinations at accredited centers in their home countries prior to entering Kuwait to ensure accurate results. The results are sent electronically to Kuwait's Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to approve entry visas.

The examination process in Kuwait starts with the submission of necessary documents and registration in the electronic system. This is followed by laboratory tests, including blood sample analysis, and a chest X-ray to detect tuberculosis. Finally, the required vaccinations are administered based on the worker's health condition.

Additional screenings are required for workers coming from high-risk countries, along with confirmation that they have received the necessary vaccinations prior to entering the country.

When asked if there are any recent updates to the medical screening standards for expatriate workers, Dr. Al-Mutairi said the recent updates include making the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test mandatory to detect Hepatitis among expatriates. Also, new procedures have been implemented to regulate the management of Hepatitis C cases among both residents and new expatriates.

Regarding the most common diseases detected during the medical screenings and the process followed when cases of infectious diseases are detected, he said, "The most common diseases detected include pulmonary tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and C, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). If detected, the case is re-examined to confirm the diagnosis, and if the infection is confirmed, appropriate measures are taken according to the law. Cases that pose a risk to public health are deported, while treatable cases are referred to specialized medical centers."

MoJ posts vacant lands notice on Sahel

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The Ministry of Justice confirmed that the "Subject to the Vacant Lands Regulation Law" notice was posted on the Sahel app on Tuesday, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is in accordance with the annual procedure of sending the notice on April 1 of each year.

The ministry explained that the notice is sent to all those covered by Law No. 8/2008 and its amendments, regulating the use of vacant plots. It also notifies the concerned parties to visit the Real Estate Registration Department - Automated Information Monitoring, to complete the necessary procedures, or in the event of any change in the property description.

It added that the notice clarifies it is not permissible to transfer ownership or issue a power of attorney to dispose any plot subject to the provisions of the law, unless a written approval is obtained from the Ministry of Finance and after paying all fees due to the State.

Adams to skip Democratic primary and run for reelection as independent

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP): New York City Mayor Eric Adams on Thursday said he will pull out of the city's Democratic primary and instead run for reelection as an independent, arguing that his recently dismissed federal bribery case had made it impossible to mount a primary campaign.

In a video, Adams said he will not run in the Democratic primary in June because his criminal case "dragged on too long" while the "false accusations were held over me," preventing him from campaigning.

"I firmly believe that this city is better served by truly independent leadership, not leaders pulled at by the extremists at the far left or the far right, but instead those rooted in the common middle, the place where the vast majority of New Yorkers are firmly planted," Adams said.

The decision came after intense speculation over whether Adams would remain in the Democratic primary, which has attracted several serious opponents, including former New York Gov Andrew Cuomo.

A federal judge dismissed Adams' corruption case on Wednesday, ending a legal saga that left the mayor severely damaged and raised



New York Mayor Eric Adams speaks at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during a task force meeting addressing retail theft on April 2, in New York. (AP)

questions about his political independence.

The charges, brought last year during former President Joe Biden's administration, accused Adams of accepting illegal campaign contributions and travel discounts from a Turkish official and others, in exchange for helping Turkey open a diplomatic building without passing

fire inspections, among other things. The mayor pleaded not guilty and was set for a trial in April, but the case was upended after President Donald Trump's Justice Department moved to drop the charges so Adams could assist with the president's immigration agenda, while leaving open the possibility that the case could be revived.

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The mayor pleaded not guilty and was set for a trial in April, but the case was upended after President Donald Trump's Justice Department moved to drop the charges so Adams could assist with the president's immigration agenda, while leaving open the possibility that the case could be revived.

The case was upended after President Donald Trump's Justice Department moved to drop the charges so Adams could assist with the president's immigration agenda, while leaving open the possibility that the case could be revived.

Musk could be headed for Washington exit after turbulent times at Trump's DOGE

WASHINGTON, April 3, (AP): DOGE's days appear to be numbered.

Elon Musk recently suggested that he will be done with his work in the near future. President Donald Trump told reporters this week that "at some point, he's going to be going back" to running his companies. As far as the Department of Government Efficiency, Trump said "it will end."

All of that talk was before Musk faced a setback Tuesday in Wisconsin, where voters rejected his choice for a state Supreme Court candidate despite more than \$21 million in personal donations and his campaign appearance over the weekend. There are more problems for the billionaire entrepreneur at Tesla, his electric automaker, which saw a 13% drop in sales in the first three months of the year.

The White House has not disclosed any clear timeline for closing down DOGE, and the government cost-cutting organization was never supposed to become a permanent fixture in Washington. But it could be reaching a conclusion faster than anticipated. DOGE was originally intended to operate until July 4, 2026.

Now there are signs that it already is winding down. DOGE employees have been shifted to various federal agencies, which are supposed to take the lead on cutting costs. Government-wide layoffs are underway to accom-



Elon Musk presents a check for \$1 million during a town hall on March 30, in Green Bay, Wis. (AP)

plish some of the goals laid out by Musk and Trump.

"We think probably over the next two or three months, we'll be pretty much satisfied with the people that are working hard and want to be members of the administration," Trump said last week.

The potential end of DOGE does not mean Trump will stop shaking up Washington. But it appears the administration's efforts will be entering a new phase that is less focused on Musk, whose chain saw-wielding

work as a presidential adviser made him a political lightning rod.

DOGE was initially envisioned as an independent advisory panel, with Musk sharing leadership with Vivek Ramaswamy, a biotech entrepreneur. Ramaswamy dropped out and is running for Ohio governor, and DOGE became part of the government. It was stocked with Musk's allies, who were dispatched throughout the bureaucracy to cancel contracts, access sensitive data and push for cuts.

Elon Musk and Donald Trump on the ropes: Martin

Dems demoralized by Trump get boost from Wisconsin voters, Booker's speech

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP): For a day, at least, Democrats across the country have a sense that their comeback against President Donald Trump may have begun.

It wasn't just about the election results in Wisconsin, where Democratic-backed Judge Susan Crawford won a 10-point victory against Trump and Elon Musk's favored candidate for the state Supreme Court.

Some Democrats highlighted New Jersey Sen Cory Booker's marathon, record-setting 25-hour Senate speech as a rallying point for frustrated voters. Others pointed to congressional Democrats lining up with a handful of House Republican lawmakers to oppose a procedural rule that would have stopped a proposal for new parents in Congress to vote by proxy.

The series of victories gave Democratic leaders moments of relief and vindication of their strategy to focus on Trump's alliances with Musk and other billionaires. That's even as some party officials warned that it was far too early to draw sweeping conclusions from a series of lower-turnout off-year elections with polls still showing that the party's brand is deeply unpopular among key groups of voters.

"Elon Musk and Donald Trump are on the ropes," charged Ken Martin, the newly elected chair of the Democratic National Committee. "We're just getting started."

Democrats have had little to cheer about in the five months since Trump won a decisive victory in November's presidential election in which he peeled away a significant portion of working-class voters and people of color. And in more recent weeks, the party's activist base has become increasingly frustrated that Democratic leaders have not done more to stop Trump's unprecedented push to slash the federal government and the reshape the economy.

Democrats in Washington and in state capitals across the country privately conceded that a bad night, especially in Wisconsin, would have been devastating.

Brad Schimel, the conservative candidate for the Wisconsin Supreme Court, lost to liberal-backed Crawford in a relative blowout, five months after Trump carried Wisconsin by less than 1 point.

And in Florida, Republicans won special elections in two of the most pro-Trump House districts in the country, but both candidates significantly underperformed Trump's November margins.

"I went to bed last night feeling uplifted and relieved," Kansas Democratic Party Chair Jeanna Repass said Wednesday.

Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., predicted further political consequences for Republicans if they don't resist the



Wisconsin Supreme Court candidate Susan Crawford speaks during her election night party after winning the election on April 1, in Madison, Wis. (AP)

sweeping cuts to government services enacted by Musk and Trump.

"In swing districts, if I was a Republican, I would either decide how to stand up for your constituents or find out how to get a discount on adult depends, because one or the other is what you're going to be needing to do," Pocan said.

Rebecca Cooke, a Democratic candidate in Wisconsin's 3rd congressional district, said the election was a clear indication that voters are upset

with how Trump and Musk "are messing with their lives." But she stopped short of projecting confidence in future elections.

"We have work to do to build long term infrastructure in this party and to really build trust back with voters that I think have felt left behind by the Democratic Party," said Cooke, a 37-year-old waitress who is running against GOP Rep. Derrick Van Orden. "I think it takes time to build trust with voters, and it can't happen overnight, and it

can't happen in just one election."

In this week's successes, Democratic officials believe they have confirmed the effectiveness of their core message heading into the 2026 midterms that Trump and his billionaire allies are working for the rich at the expense of the working class.

Indeed, talking points distributed by the Democratic National Committee on Wednesday reinforced that notion while pointing to what the committee described as "an undeniable trend" after recent lower-profile Democratic victories in Virginia, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Louisiana and Minnesota.

"In 2025, Democrats continue to overperform in special elections as voters send a resounding message: They want Democrats to fight for them, and they want the Trump-Musk agenda out of their communities," the talking points read.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash., told the AP Wednesday that the election results showed that the public is "outraged" by chaos and dysfunction coming from the Trump administration. The chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee said Trump and Republicans in Congress are failing to fix high prices and seeking Medicaid cuts, in addition to supporting tariffs that could worsen inflation for families.

"What we saw yesterday in Florida and Wisconsin was Republicans run-

ning scared because the American people are angry and scared about the direction the Trump-Musk agenda is taking us," she said. "They're seeing prices go up. They're seeing more and more the focus is not on them, but on Trump and his wealthy donors."

On Saturday, hundreds of thousands of voters are expected to attend more than 1,000 so-called "Hands Off!" related protests nationwide focused on Trump and Musk. More than 150 political groups worked together to organize what will almost certainly represent the single biggest day of protest of the second Trump administration.

The Washington event, which will feature Reps. Maxwell Frost, D-Fla., and Jamie Raskin, D-Md., already has more than 12,000 RSVPs, according to organizers.

Meanwhile, Booker is planning to attend a series of unrelated public events, including a town hall in New Jersey this weekend.

His office reports receiving 28,000 voicemails since he finished his speech shortly after 8 p.m. on Tuesday. At its peak, the 25-hour address was being streamed by more than 300,000 people across Booker's social media channels. It earned more than 350 million likes on his newly formed TikTok account.

A spokesperson said that the Democratic senator spent much of Wednesday sleeping.



Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda, (center), US Ambassador to Lithuania Kara C. McDonald, (second left), and Speaker of Lithuanian Parliament Saulius Skvernelis, (third left), attend a solemn farewell ceremony at Cathedral Square in Vilnius, Lithuania on April 3, 2025, for the US soldiers who died during training exercise. (AP)

Lithuanians bid farewell to 4 US soldiers

Lithuania's political and religious leaders joined thousands of people on Thursday to bid farewell to four American soldiers who died during a training exercise in the Baltic nation.

President Gitanas Nausėda and other dignitaries were among those who stood in respect as hearses carried the bodies of the four young Americans to Vilnius airport before being flown to the United States for burial.

Many of the onlookers were in tears, and Nausėda said that the reaction of the population and the military to the disappearance of soldiers was rooted in Lithuania's own difficult history.

For us, it is more than a duty, it is an emotion. We have experienced trials in our history and therefore we understand well what loss is, what death is, what honourable duty is," Nausėda said in a speech to those gathered.

Schoolchildren accompanied by teachers waved Lithuanian and U.S. flags to honor the soldiers, who died in an accident along NATO's eastern flank, a region that is on edge due to Russia's aggression in nearby Ukraine. (AP)

The two accidents reportedly occurred several hours apart in the narrow stretch of the Aegean Sea between the Greek island of Lesbos and the Turkish coast, with both sides unaware of the other nation's rescue efforts.

Greece's coast guard said a dinghy carrying migrants began taking on water and 23 people were rescued and the bodies of three women, two boys, one girl and one man were recovered.

The survivors were taken to a migrant camp on the island. The search and rescue operation continued into Thursday afternoon as the exact number of people who had been on board the dinghy was unclear.

More than a dozen migrants die as boats sink off Greece and Turkey

ATHENS, Greece, April 3, (AP): A boat carrying migrants from Turkey to a nearby Greek island sank Thursday morning, leaving at least seven people dead, including three children, Greece's coast guard said. Turkish

authorities reported what appeared to be a separate sinking in the same area, with nine people dead.



Frontex, (foreground), and Greek coast guard vessels take part in a search and rescue operation, after the capsizing of a boat carrying migrants, off the coast on the northeastern Aegean Sea island of Lesbos, Greece on April 3. (AP)

authorities reported what appeared to be a separate sinking in the same area, with nine people dead.

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Rubio tries to reassure wary NATO allies of US commitment to alliance

BRUSSELS, April 3, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the Trump administration's new envoy to NATO are seeking to reassure wary NATO allies of the US commitment to the alliance.

Rubio on Thursday decried "hysteria and hyperbole" in the media about President Donald Trump's intentions despite persistent signals from Washington that NATO as it has existed for 75 years may no longer be relevant.

Rubio and newly confirmed US ambassador to NATO Matt Whitaker are in Brussels for a meeting of alliance foreign ministers at which many are hoping Rubio will shed light on U.S. security plans in Europe.

"The United States is as active in NATO as it has ever been," Rubio told reporters as he greeted NATO chief Mark Rutte before the meeting began. "And some of this hysteria and hyperbole that I see in the global media and some domestic media in the United States about NATO is unwarranted."

"President Trump's made clear he supports NATO," Rubio said. "We're going to remain in NATO."

"We want NATO to be stronger, we want NATO to be more visible and



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (left), and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte shake hands after their statements ahead of a NATO foreign ministers meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on April 3. (AP)

the only way NATO can get stronger, more visible is if our partners, the nation states that comprise this important alliance, have more capability," he said.

In a statement, Whitaker said that "under President Trump's leadership,

NATO will be stronger and more effective than ever before, and I believe that a robust NATO can continue to serve as a bedrock of peace and prosperity." But he added: "NATO's vitality rests on every ally doing their fair share."



Denmark's PM Mette Frederiksen walks with Greenland's acting PM, Múte B. Eggede, during a three-day visit in the streets of Nuuk, Greenland, on April 2. (AP)

Danish PM visits Greenland

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen is in Greenland for a three-day trip aimed at building trust and cooperation with Greenlandic officials at a time when the Trump administration is seeking control of the vast Arctic territory.

Frederiksen announced plans for her visit after US Vice President JD Vance visited a US air base in Greenland last week and accused Denmark of underinvesting in the territory. (AP)



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk speaks at the Sejm, the lower house of parliament, in Warsaw, Poland on March 7. (AP)

'Party targeted in cyberattack'

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Wednesday that his centrist political party was the target of a cyberattack, and suggested that it could have been interference from the east - meaning Russia or Belarus - ahead of Poland's presidential election next month.

Tusk announced on the X platform that his Civic Platform party's computer system was targeted. "Foreign interference in elections begins. Services point to eastern trace," Tusk said. (AP)

Bushfire triggers evacuation order in southeast Perth

Rainfall eases as recovery begins from major flooding in Australian outback

SYDNEY, April 3, (Xinhua): Rainfall is set to ease in an area of the Australian outback hit by record-breaking flooding that is expected to continue for weeks.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) on Thursday said rainfall that has caused widespread flooding in the southwest and central regions of Australia's state of Queensland is "over."

"Thankfully, rainfall-wise in southwest Queensland, we are done -- the rain is over," Dean Narramore from the BoM said.

"But even though the rain has stopped, the flooding will continue for many days, if not weeks, through southwest Queensland."

An area the size of the state of New South Wales has been affected by the flooding, with floodwaters in some places exceeding record-high levels set in 1974, and every river in southwest Queensland is at major flood levels.

Communities in the sparsely populated region, which is a major livestock farming area, have been evacuated, and hundreds of homes have been inundated by floodwater.

Touring the affected area on Wednesday, Queensland Premier David Crisafulli told reporters in the town of Longreach, about 1,000 km northwest of Brisbane, that over 150,000 livestock are either dead or missing in the floods.

"That's 70,000 cattle, 70,000 sheep and 10,000 goats and horses, and I stress this number will continue to rise," he said.

"I want Queenslanders to understand how big a deal this is. Agriculture underpins these communities and they're going to take a long way to get back on their feet. This recovery will take months and years."

He announced assistance grants worth up to 75,000 Australian dollars (46,881.5 U.S. dollars) for affected primary producers, and said he is working with the federal government to assist communities to repair damaged infrastructure.

Over 3,500 km of fencing is estimated to have been damaged, as well as 5,000 km of private roads. Enditem

Also:

SYDNEY: An out-of-control bushfire burning in the suburbs of Perth, the capital city of Australia's state of Western Australia (WA), has prompted an emergency evacuation warning.



A man walks past a water tank washed onto Sydney's Bondi Beach on April 2. (AP)

Residents of parts of the suburb of Ferndale, 10 km southeast of central Perth, were on Thursday morning advised to leave immediately due to the threat posed by a nearby fire.

"You are in danger and need to act immediately to survive. There is a threat to lives and homes," a warning issued by the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) shortly before 7 a.m. local time said.

"If the way is clear, leave now for a safer place. Do not wait and see, leaving at the last minute could put your life in danger."

It advised residents to leave the area in a westerly direction and to take emer-

gency kits with them.

The warning urged people who cannot leave to immediately take shelter in a room with running water and a clear exit.

"You must shelter before the fire arrives, as the extreme heat will kill you before the flames reach you," it said.

It said that the fire was moving slowly in a northwest direction along the nearby Canning River, but burning embers would likely be blown around residents' homes.

The DFES said that anyone who becomes stuck in a car should park away from bushes, cover themselves in a woolen blanket and get onto the floor of the vehicle.

The fire was first reported shortly after 4 a.m. local time in a conservation park along the river.



CANBERRA: The number of Australians who experienced credit or debit card fraud surpassed 2 million in 2023-24.

According to data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Wednesday, 9.9 percent of Australians aged 15 and over, 2.1 million people, were victims of card fraud in 2023-24.

The card fraud victimization rate has steadily increased from 6.9 percent in 2020-21.

The bureau said 11 percent of Australian females experienced card fraud in 2023-24 compared to 9.3 percent of males.

People aged 45-54 were the most likely to experience card fraud, with a victimization rate of 14.1 percent.

William Milne, head of crime statistics at the bureau, said that 72 percent of card fraud victims were fully reimbursed by their card issuer. After reimbursements were paid, victims of card fraud lost a total of 477 million Australian dollars (300.2 million US dollars).

The data revealed that 3.1 percent of Australians aged 15 and over, approximately 675,000 people, were victims of scams in 2023-24.

The scam victimization rate was up from 2.5 percent in 2022-23 but remained lower than the 3.6 percent recorded in 2020-21.

Beijing urges Manila to refrain from playing with fire regarding Taiwan question

BEIJING, April 3, (Agencies): China urges certain people in the Philippines to refrain from making provocations and playing with fire on the Taiwan question, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Spokesperson Guo Jiakun made the remarks at a regular news briefing in response to a media query about the Philippine military chief's recent claim that the Philippines would inevitably be involved if there were a conflict over Taiwan, as well as his claim that China was actively infiltrating Philippine institutions, including the military.

"The Taiwan question is China's internal affair and is at the core of China's core interest," Guo said. "Resolving the Taiwan question is a matter for the Chi-

nese ourselves that no one can interfere."

"We urge certain people in the Philippines to refrain from making provocations and playing with fire on the Taiwan question, and those who play with fire will perish by it," Guo said, noting that China also opposes relevant personnel attempting deceptions and making groundless accusations.

Beijing sends warplanes and naval vessels toward the island on a daily basis, and it has stepped up the scope and scale of these exercises in recent years. Taiwanese officials have recently warned that China could launch a sneak attack under the guise of military exercises.

Chinese coast guard ships are also operating around Taiwanese-held island groups just off the East China coast,

where they are being shadowed by their Taiwanese counterparts at a rate of two or three to one Chinese ship. Taiwanese coast guard Deputy Director-General Hsieh Ching-Chin told reporters.

"Regarding this military drill, I think that China is adopting a threat and intimidation approach. They unilaterally altered the peace and stability," Hsieh said. "This not only violates international law, but also threatens the safety of ships cruising on the sea."

The Taiwan Strait is in international waters, but China monitors it heavily and objects strongly to the presence of U.S. and other foreign naval vessels in the area.

Any conflict could draw in the US, which maintains a series of alliances in the region, provides Taiwan with high-tech arms and is legally bound to respond to threats to the island.

Taiwan has set up a central response group to monitor the latest exercises, according to Taiwanese Defense Minister Wellington Koo.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The US State Department has approved the possible sale of F-16 fighter jets to the Philippines to bolster its defense, the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said Tuesday.

The sale involves 20 F-16 fighter jets and related equipment, with a total value of 5.58 billion U.S. dollars, it said in a statement.

Manila and Washington have deepened defense cooperation since Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office in 2022.



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



In this photo released by Thailand's Foreign Affairs Ministry, Myanmar's military leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, foreground left, arrives in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 3. (AP)

Head of Myanmar's military government visits Thailand

The head of Myanmar's military government arrived in Thailand on Thursday for a regional summit, making a rare international trip as his country recovers from a devastating earthquake that killed thousands.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been shunned by much of the West for overthrowing the demo-

cratically elected government of Aung Saan Suu Kyi and subsequent brutal repression. He has not been allowed to participate in meetings of another regional organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, since the army seized power in February 2021 and began violently suppressing opposition.

He is one of several regional

leaders visiting Bangkok for a three-day summit of nations in the Bay of Bengal region.

It was Min Aung Hlaing's first to a country other than his government's main supporters and backers - China, Russia and Russian ally Belarus - since he attended a regional meeting in Indonesia in 2021. (AP)

Journalists in Haiti defy bullets, censorship to cover unprecedented gang violence

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, April 3, (AP): Jean-Jacques Asperges once relished returning home after a long day working at a radio station in one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists.

He had a roof and four walls for protection, but gang violence forced him and his family to flee their home twice.

Now, Asperges, 58, his wife and their two children are forced to sleep on the floor of a soiled and overcrowded makeshift shelter with thousands of other Haitians also left homeless by gang violence.

"Bullets fall here all the time," he said.

Having lost all his work equipment, Asperges relies solely on his phone, but he remains undeterred like dozens of other journalists in Haiti who are under attack like never before. They are dodging bullets, defying censorship and setting personal struggles aside as they document the downfall of Haiti's capital and the surge in violence blamed on powerful gangs that control 85% of Port-au-Prince.

Heavily armed gangs attacked at least three TV and radio stations in March. Two of the buildings were already abandoned because of previous violence, but gunmen stole equipment that had been left behind.

"It's a message: You don't operate without our permission, and you don't operate at all in our turf," said David C. Adams, an expert on press freedom issues in Haiti.

Gangs sent an even deadlier mes-



Haitian journalists Johnny Ferdinand, (left), Guerrier Dieuseul, (center), and Ronald Desormes, (right), work on the morning news broadcast from the studio of Radio TV Caraïbe radio station in the Petion-ville neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 20. (AP)

sage on Christmas Eve, when they opened fire on journalists covering the failed reopening of Haiti's largest public hospital, saying they had not authorized its reopening.

Two journalists were killed and at least seven others were injured, including Asperges, who was shot in the stomach. It was the worst attack on reporters in Haiti in recent history.

"Everyone is threatened. Everyone is under pressure," said Max Chauvet, director of operations at Le Nouvelliste, Haiti's oldest independent newspaper.

Donning a bulletproof vest emblazoned with "PRESS" on it is now a dangerous move in Haiti. What used to serve as a symbolic and physical shield has become a target.

At least 10 journalists covering a major March protest were attacked, including Jephthe Bazil, a videographer who runs his own media company, Machann Zen Haiti.

He was threatening his way through a protest in the Canapé-Vert neighborhood of Port-au-Prince when three men dressed in black and with their faces covered called him over.

Costa Rica's former president Arias says US govt revoked visa

SAN JOSÉ, Costa Rica, April 3, (AP): Former Costa Rica President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias says the US government's unexplained cancellation of his visa won't stop his public criticism.

Arias, 84, told the AP Wednesday that he received an email from the US State Department on Tuesday, notifying him of the decision. The brief email said that the decision "is based on the fact that subsequent to visa issuance, information has come to light that you may be ineligible for your visa."

It said that if Arias wanted to travel to the US he would have to re-apply. The US State Department did not explain the decision.

He spoke shortly after US President Donald Trump announced a wave of tariffs against dozens of its trading partners around the world, including a 10% duty on imports from Costa Rica.

It made no sense coming from the country that pushed free trade around the world and signed dozens of free-trade treaties, Arias said.

"History proves it. You can empirically analyze that those countries with more open economies and more free trade are the ones that have grown more and have been able to improve in little time," he said. Arias was the biggest promoter of the free trade agreement that the U.S. signed with Central America.

Arias says he doesn't know why his visa was revoked, but acknowledged that Washington may not have liked his comments on the war in Ukraine, the US commercial conflict with China or the situation in Gaza.

"Another of the big issues has been disarmament, spending less on weapons and soldiers to free up resources," he said. "To give them to education, healthcare and protecting the environment and so many other priorities there are in the world to benefit humankind."

The decision to dismantle the US Agency for International Development, which addressed basic human needs around the world, confounds Arias.



Arias

Subcontinent

India jet crash kills 1: One pilot was killed and another critically injured after a Jaguar fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed during a night mission in India's western state of Gujarat, officials said Thursday.

The fighter aircraft caught fire following the crash Wednesday night in an open field at Suvarda village of Jamnagar district, about 334 km west of Gandhinagar, the capital city of Gujarat.

Unfortunately, one pilot succumbed to his injuries, while the other was receiving medical treatment at a hospital in Jamnagar, the IAF said in a statement.

The IAF has ordered an inquiry into the crash. (Xinhua)

10 dead in vehicle collision: A head-on collision between a bus and a microbus killed 10 people in southeastern Bangladesh on Wednesday, a local police official said.

Arifur Rahman, a senior police official in Bangladesh's Chattogram district, told journalists that the deadly crash happened at around 7:15 a.m. in Chattogram district, some 242 km away from the capital Dhaka, when a bus collided with a microbus bound for Cox's Bazar.

According to the official, two other people were injured in the accident. (Xinhua)

Argentina prez draws pushback over Falklands War speech

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, April 3, (AP): Argentina's libertarian President Javier Milei on Wednesday marked the anniversary of his nation's failed 1982 attempt to forcibly wrest the Falkland Islands from Britain by expressing hope that the island's residents may one day choose to be Argentine rather than British.

Milei's speech came as a surprise to many in Argentina, which still claims sovereignty over the British-controlled archipelago that it calls Las Malvinas despite the British victory. His comments were criticized as overly conciliatory by political rivals who argue that the island's residents have no right to self-determination because they are not an Indigenous people.

"We hope for the Malvinenses (Falkland Islanders) to one day decide to vote for us with their feet," Milei said at a ceremony commemorating Argentina's 74-day war over the South Atlantic territory that killed 649 Argentine service members and 255 British soldiers.

"That's why we seek to be a power, to the point that (the islanders) prefer to be Argentine."



Argentine President Javier Milei, (left), and his sister, the General Secretary of the Presidency Karina Milei, arrive at a war memorial in Buenos Aires, Argentina on April 2, 2025, for a ceremony commemorating the 43rd anniversary of the conflict between Argentina and Great Britain over the Falkland Islands, known as the Malvinas Islands. (AP)

South Africa's unity government risks collapse

JOHANNESBURG, April 3, (AP): South Africa's fragile unity government was shaken again Wednesday as the country's second-largest political party broke with partners and voted against a national budget.

The Democratic Alliance, which joined the government after the long-ruling African National Congress lost its parliamentary majority last year, said it could not support a tax increase that would further burden the poor majority of the country's population.

It said it would challenge the budget's adoption in court.

The leftist rival party Economic Freedom Fighters celebrated the friction. "We are happy that we managed to break this so-called GNU (government of national unity). What is uniting you if you can't agree on something a national budget?" EFF leader



In this photo provided by the South African Government Communications and Information Services (GCIS), Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana speaks before the vote for national budget for 2025 in the National Assembly, in Cape Town, South Africa on April 2. (AP)

Julius Malema said.

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana raised doubts about the DA's ability to remain in the government.

"I don't think you can vote against a budget, and tomorrow you want to grow and be part of its implementation. It can't be," Godongwana said.

The disputed budget would raise the Value Added Tax by half a percentage point starting next month, with another half a percentage point introduced next year.

VAT is payable on goods and services including food and electricity. Opposition parties and civil society have criticized the proposed budget as anti-poor.

According to the latest budget, more than 20 million people in South Africa rely on welfare grants, with the unemployment rate at over 32%.

Kuwait oil price up 15 cents to \$78.58 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 3, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by 15 cents to USD 78.58 per barrel on Wednesday as opposed to USD 78.43 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

At the global markets, the prices of the Brent crude and West Texas Intermediate went up each by 46 and 51 cents to settle respectively at USD 74.95 per barrel and USD 71.71 pb.

Business

Propane inventories rise

US crude refinery inputs drop to 15.6 million bpd

HOUSTON, April 3, (Xinhua): U.S. crude oil refinery inputs averaged 15.6 million barrels per day (bd) during the week ending March 28, 192,000 bd less than the previous week's average, according to a weekly report issued by the U.S. Energy Information Administration on Wednesday.

Refineries operated at 86.0 percent of their operable capacity last week, said the Weekly Petroleum Data report.

During the same period, both the gasoline and distillate fuel production went up, averaging 9.3 million bd and 4.7 million bd respectively.

U.S. commercial crude oil inventories, excluding those in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, surged by 6.2 million barrels from the previous week to 439.8 million barrels, about 4 percent below the five-year average for this time of year. Total motor gasoline inventories declined by 1.6 million barrels last week, and were 2 percent above the five-year average for this time of year.

Finished gasoline inventories

went up while blending components inventories went down last week.

Distillate fuel inventories surged by 0.3 million barrels last week, and were around 6 percent below the five-year average for this time of year.

Propane propylene inventories rose by 1.0 million barrels, and were 8 percent below the five-year average for this time of year.

Total commercial petroleum inventories increased by 5.4 million barrels last week.

Total products supplied over the last four-week period averaged 20.1 million bd, down by 1.2 percent from the same period last year.

Over the past four weeks, motor gasoline product supplied averaged 8.8 million bd, down by 1.9 percent from the same period last year.

Distillate fuel product supplied averaged 3.8 million bd over the past four weeks, up by 3.7 percent from the same period last year.

Jet fuel product supplied was up 4.2 percent compared with the same four-week period last year.

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: In line with World Autism Day, Gulf Capital Investment Company, "InvestGB", the investment arm of Gulf Bank, organized an awareness seminar for its employees in collaboration with "Friends of Autism", led by Mr. Abdullah AIOqab, Founder of Friends of Autism. This collaboration highlights InvestGB's commitment to social inclusion and raising awareness about autism to its employees and to train them on how to deal with individuals with autism. Moreover, the company seeks to promote awareness and understanding of the special needs of autistic individuals. This initiative underscores InvestGB's dedication to supporting various causes, aiming to enhance its role as a catalyst for positive change in society.

Friends of Autism was established to equip businesses with the knowledge and tools to effectively communicate with autistic individuals. Mr. AIOqab said, "Friends of Autism was established from a personal experience and a journey which started from our own experience with autism facing daily challenges in communication and social interactions, and witnessing firsthand the struggles autistic individuals and their families encounter due to lack of understanding and support from society." He added, "We are proud to have given InvestGB employees this important awareness session in order to bridge the this gap and to



Nazem AlGhabra

answer any questions they might have regarding autism".

Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Nazem AlGhabra, Director of Marketing and Corporate Communications at InvestGB, emphasized the company's commitment to social inclusion. He stated: "We were delighted to have Mr. AIOqab give such an insightful session as we are committed to creating inclusive, understanding, and accommodating spaces where we empower every individual in society to play their developmental role, regardless of any physical or intellectual barriers".

AlGhabra further highlighted that InvestGB remains dedicated to supporting and developing the community through various initiatives, including youth em-



Abdullah AIOqab

powerment, workplace enhancement, and environmental awareness. Through training and development programs, the company provides students and graduates with practical opportunities to acquire the skills needed for the job market, reinforcing its commitment to

investing in human capital as a cornerstone of sustainable growth.

Additionally, InvestGB seeks to foster an innovative and supportive work environment that promotes responsible practices, further strengthening its role in driving sustainable development.

As part of its efforts to promote the principles of social sustainability

'InvestGB' organizes an awareness seminar for its employees on occasion of World Autism Day

Limited tender for IT specialists

KPC awards consultancy for business ethics governance

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has confirmed the completion of the awarding of a consultancy study to audit business ethics governance for a private company.

The contract is valued at KD26,500 with a four-month duration.

KPC also announced, at the request of Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC), a limited tender for the provision of

rental services and technical support for desktop and laptop computers and their accessories. The preliminary meeting for this tender will be held on April 8 and the closing date is April 29.

Furthermore, in response to the request of Kuwait Integrated Petrochemical Industries Company (KIPIC); the Higher Procurement Committee for Tenders of KPC and its Subsidiaries released the list of 22 companies invited to participate in the limited tender for the provision of information technology specialists.

UN gas experts back plans

Arab states plan 8 mln tons of low-carbon hydrogen by 2030

KUWAIT CITY, April 3, (KUNA): Secretary General of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO) Jamal Al-Loughani said on Thursday that nine Arab states worked out ambitious plans to produce low-carbon hydrogen projected at eight million tons per year by 2030.

The aspired output will soar to 27.5 million tons per annum by 2040, provided the market reaches "the maturity stage," said Al-Loughani in a statement to KUNA.

The Geneva-headquartered, UN-affiliated Group of Experts on Gas has welcomed a joint initiative by the AEO and Russia regarding plans to store and transport liquid and solid hydrogen, said Al-Loughani, the chief of the organization (formerly the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, (OPEC).

The initiative was included in the 2026 commission's task program, he said, adding that outcomes would be revised at its meeting due in March the same year, Al-Loughani said.

He explained that the topic was included in the plan during the 12th session of the UN gas experts, held in Geneva between March 25 and 28 -- attended by representatives of the member states of the European Economic Commission, the European Commission and international agencies.

The AEO representative at the said meeting presented an outlook on hydrogen industry in the Arab states that are increasingly showing interest in investment in this sector to meet



Secretary-General of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO) Jamal Al-Loughani.

growing demand in the major markets namely Asia and Europe.

Al-Loughani added that it was noted during the meeting that the number of hydrogen projects in the Arab states, between 2021 and 2024, grew four times reaching 127 ventures compared to 34 in 2021.

These projects feature production and exporting low-carbon hydrogen and transporting the product via pipelines stretching from North Africa to Europe, in addition to using it for land and marine transports and fueling ships.

Six Arab states have finalized strategies, he said, noting that the organization during the mentioned meeting shed light on the mega projects.

The AEO, a member in the UN group of experts since 2015, regularly partakes in its meetings.

Kuwait bank settlements decrease by KD 4.67 billion in January 2025

Banks' net foreign assets rise by 1.8%

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The value of financial settlements among local banks decreased by KD 4.67 billion, or 18.3 percent, on a monthly basis in January 2025, reaching KD 20.75 billion, compared to KD 25.42 billion in December 2024.

On an annual basis, financial settlements dropped by KD 3.34 billion, or 13.8 percent, from KD 24.09 billion in January 2024.

The number of checks issued by banks, including the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Credit Bank, saw a monthly decline of 21.9 percent in January 2025, amounting to KD 1.38 billion, down from KD 1.77 billion in December 2024.

On an annual basis, the number of checks declined by 6.1 percent, or KD 91 million, from KD 1.47 billion in January 2024.

The number of check settlements in January 2025 decreased by approximately 31,500 transactions, marking a 14.5 percent decline from 216,500 trans-

actions at the end of December 2024 to 185,000 transactions at the end of January 2025. The number of transactions dropped by around 23,300 year-on-year, reflecting an 11.1 percent decrease compared to 208,300 transactions in January 2024.

The average value of check settlements fell by 8.6 percent month-on-month in January 2024, amounting to KD 714 million, down from KD 8,216 billion at the end of December 2024, reaching KD 7.5 billion by the end of January.

Overall, settlements among consolidated banks declined by 4.8 percent in 2023, decreasing by KD 869 million, from KD 18.02 billion in 2022 to KD 17.15 billion in 2023. Settlement and clearing operations among consolidated local banks declined by 10 percent in 2023, by approximately KD 27.7 billion, from KD 287.6 billion in 2022 to KD 259.9 billion in 2023. The decline amounted to about KD 252.3 billion.

Checks are exchanged among local banks in Kuwait through the Central Bank of Kuwait via the Kuwait Electronic Check Clearance System (KECCS), which facilitates the electronic clearing of checks issued in Kuwaiti dinars among participating entities (local banks).

The Central Bank of Kuwait manages the KECCS and is responsible for its operation and oversight.

The Central Bank of Kuwait is a participating entity as the government's bank. It is responsible for collecting checks on behalf of government entities' accounts held at the Central Bank.

The regulatory framework for KECCS was established as part of its governing rules, which are binding on all participating entities to regulate their relationships.

Data released by the Central Bank of Kuwait revealed that private sector foreign currency deposits decreased by 2 percent, reaching KD 1.8 billion (approximately \$5.9 billion).

Also, the total balance of local banks' claims on the Central Bank in Kuwaiti dinars, represented by its bonds, declined by approximately 2.8 percent to KD 1.3 billion (around \$4.3 billion).

In addition, the total assets of local banks decreased by 0.1 percent in January 2025, reaching KD 91.5 billion (approximately \$301.9 billion).

Net foreign assets of local banks rose by 1.8 percent to KD 15.4 billion (approximately \$50.8 billion).

Also, the time deposits at the Central Bank decreased by 5.4 percent to KD 700 million (approximately \$2.3 billion) in January 2025. Cash credit facilities (loans) increased by 0.2 percent to KD 57.2 billion (approximately \$188.7 billion).

Central Bank publishes quarterly report on economic trends

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The Central Bank of Kuwait stated that GDP has been the standard measure for assessing the size of economic activity in any country since 1937.

It is widely relied upon to evaluate economic performance, growth rates, guide economic policies, and analyze key economic indicators. GDP also plays a major role in tracking economic progress and is essential for decision-making in the business environment, particularly in investment and financial planning, reports Al-Anba daily.

This was highlighted in the latest publication by the Central Bank of Kuwait, titled "The Concept of GDP: Economic Importance and Limitations," which delves into the definition of GDP, its significance as an economic performance metric, the methodology behind its calculation, and the inherent limitations.

This publication is part of the bank's ongoing series of quarterly reports that have been released since November 2022.

The Central Bank explained that GDP is the

total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country's borders during a specific period. It serves as a big indicator of a country's economic performance, typically measured on an annual or quarterly basis.

The economic significance of GDP lies in its vital role in shaping economic and fiscal policies. It assists decision-makers in governments and central banks in formulating fiscal and monetary policies, such as determining tax rates, public spending, and interest rates.

The Central Bank highlighted several uses of GDP, including:

- Measuring the economic performance of countries, as it reflects economic growth or contraction.

- Comparing the economies of different countries, as it is used by international organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

- Formulating economic policies, as it helps guide the fiscal decisions of governments and central banks.

- Forecasting economic trends, enabling economists to make predictions about future economic conditions.

The Central Bank also mentioned the two main types of GDP:

- Nominal GDP, which is calculated using current prices without adjusting for inflation.
- Real GDP, which is adjusted for inflation and provides a more accurate measure of economic growth.

Despite its importance, GDP has several limitations, including:

- It does not reflect the distribution of income and wealth.

- It does not measure the quality of life or overall well-being.

- It excludes non-market activities, such as household labor and volunteer work.

- It does not account for the informal economy, such as unregistered trade.

- It fails to assess environmental sustainability or the impact of production on natural resources.

Exceptional banking customer experience

KFH provides unique digital banking and financial solutions

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various digital tools. Most of the banking services are available on several channels around the clock, whether through KFHonline, or through the KFH Express self-banking stations that are spread in many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels.

The KFH Express self-banking station is considered a smart electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, allowing customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services. It includes more than 80% of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense.

KFH Express self-banking stations include the XTM device that allows direct video calls with service personnel, as well as ATMs and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, customers can perform a variety of interactive banking services through KFH Express branches located in various places in Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport. These services include: establishing Murabaha financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque and card printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The electronic banking services at KFH are also characterized by their high efficiency in addition to ease and safety. This was evident in the number of electronic banking operations that KFH customers carried out via KFHonline, on the website or through mobile applications.

The e-banking transactions includes: opening an ad-

ditional bank account online for citizens and residents without having to visit the branch, local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, opening gold account, selling and purchasing gold, requesting financing, requesting Al-Khair Card, and checking the PINs of the credit and debit cards, activating new cards, reporting a lost credit/debit cards, checking the financing obligations and the number of installments, reviewing investment plans, receiving account balances and deposits summary, along with other wide range of digital services.

The Bank also launched the Live FX Pricing, and instant cross-border payments service at KFH-Turkey using Ripple's technology in addition to the instant card printing service within two minutes. Additionally, KFH offers digital Wallet service through smart mobiles and watches, providing advanced and smart digital payment methods according to highly developed security standards in cooperation with Samsung, Fitbit and Garmin.



KFH online banking services.

'There's no script for how reciprocal tariffs get priced ...'

Counting the potential toll of Trump's tariffs on major Asian economies

BANGKOK, April 3, (AP): The trade war that U.S. President Donald Trump has escalated in his second term is a challenge for all Asian economies, large and small, in an era when the most populous region of the world is expected to drive global economic growth.

Export manufacturing and free trade helped transform China and other Asian countries into economic powerhouses over the past decades. Trump's barrages of tariffs, aimed at compelling companies to keep or set up their factories in the United States, are rupturing trade agreements often made at great political cost to trading partners.

The White House says the criteria for raising tariffs will include not just U.S. trade deficits but also various taxes, exchange rates, government subsidies and various non-tariff trade barriers. Apart from the tariffs to be announced on Wednesday's "Liberation Day," as Trump calls it, 25% tariffs on imports of autos and auto parts are due to take effect on Thursday.

Trump has also ordered levies against China, Canada and Mexico; expanded tariffs on steel and aluminum, and imposed tariffs on countries that import oil from Venezuela. He plans more import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

Higher costs already have led many manufacturers to shift away from China to other economies in South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America. But for now the prevailing uncertainty over what Trump will do with what he calls "reciprocal" tariffs may lead most to sit tight and see what comes next.

"There's no script for how reciprocal tariffs get priced, and uncertainty is the only constant," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said.

Here's a look at how higher U.S. tariffs might affect some major Asian economies.

Despite some decrease in trade since Trump launched a trade war with China during his first term in office, the U.S. trade deficit has continued to climb, hitting \$295.4 billion last year.

China, the world's No. 2 economy, has leaned heavily on exports to make up for weak demand at home. The ruling Communist Party has made exports of autos, especially electric vehicles, and batteries a priority, but 27.5% tariffs on auto exports and 102.5% duties on EVs have in effect closed the U.S. market for its automakers. China is the second largest supplier of auto parts to the U.S. behind Mexico.

During Trump's first term, higher tariffs led leader Xi Jinping to champion a shift to high-tech production. That will likely continue as U.S. pressure intensifies, causing job losses due to changes in manufacturing rather than direct damage from



A man walks into a merchandise store displaying Chinese and United States' national flags, in Beijing, Thursday, April 3, 2025. (AP)

the tariffs themselves, Raymond Yeung of ANZ Research said in a report.

As Trump has rolled out rounds of tariff hikes that have piled on an extra 20%, China has raised its own import duties, targeting U.S. farm goods. It also expanded export controls, especially on strategically important minerals used in high-tech electronics.

U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to China have fallen since the beginning of the year, and are expected to fall further after Beijing imposed a 15% tariff on U.S. LNG imports.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Tuesday that his government was making last ditch efforts to get the United States to exclude his country from auto tariffs. The U.S. absorbs about one-fifth of Japan's exports, or about 1.5 million passenger cars a year.

Even though major Japanese automakers like Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor

Co. and Nissan Motor Co. have factories in the U.S. and increasingly, in Mexico, it's an important industry back home. Nearly 5.6 million people are employed in auto-related jobs, according to the Japan Automobile Manufacturing Association.

Japan's exports of electronics, machinery, chemicals and steel are also potential targets. A central bank survey released Monday found business sentiment among large manufacturers worsened in the past quarter, for the first time in a year. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 share benchmark has fallen more than 10% in the past three months, while shares in Toyota Motor Corp. have tumbled 27%.

More than 60% of the self-governed island's economy comes from exports, and it ran a trade surplus with the U.S. of nearly \$74 billion last year. Computer chips are one of Taiwan's biggest exports to the United States, along with computers and other office machines and consumer products.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. is expanding its U.S. factories in Arizona, enticed by U.S. incentives and its own strategic needs. In early March, its CEO C.C. Wei pledged \$100 billion in new U.S. investments.

South Korea ran a \$66 billion trade surplus with the U.S. last year, and autos, electronics and computer chips were a large share. The country could boost investments in making autos, steel, and semiconductors in the U.S. and also consider revising the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to promote more balanced trade, Patrick Cronin of the Hudson Institute said in a recent report.

South Korea is among several big importers of LNG that may try to buy more of the gas from the US to help balance trade, researchers at RaboBank said in a recent report. Like most of its Southeast Asian neighbors, Vietnam has emulated Japan, China and other major exporting nations in relying on trade and foreign investment to develop their economies.

It had the third-largest trade surplus with the United States last year, after Mexico and China, at \$123.5 billion. Its biggest exports are machinery, textiles and footwear.

A 14% increase in exports helped Vietnam's economy expand at a sizzling 7.1% annual rate last year. The government recently said it would slash tariffs on LNG, autos, ethanol and some other farm products, moves meant to placate Trump and reduce its trade surplus. Vietnam also has agreed to allow a five-year trial launch of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service.

The world's most populous country ran a trade surplus of nearly \$46 billion with the U.S. in 2024, according to the U.S. Trade Representative's office. The main exports are medicines and chemicals to make them, pearls, diamonds and other gems.

CAC 40 in Paris lost 1.8%

Trump's tariff hikes pull Asian shares, US futures sharply lower



An electronic stock board shows the day's early loss of Japan's Nikkei 225 index at a securities firm Thursday, April 3, 2025 in Tokyo. (AP)

BANGKOK, April 3, (AP): Shares tumbled in Europe and Asia and U.S. futures tumbled Thursday following U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of big increases in tariffs on imports of goods from around the world.

The double-digit tariff hikes sent shivers across world markets, as economists warned it raises the risk of recession.

The future for the S&P 500 dropped 3.1% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 2.6%, auguring potential losses when U.S. markets reopen on Thursday.

Germany's DAX fell 1.7% to 21,998.48, while the CAC 40 in Paris lost 1.8% to 7,716.66. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 1.2% to 8,506.44.

In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index dipped 4% briefly, with automakers and banks taking big hits. It closed down 2.8% at 34,735.93.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group's shares plunged 7.2% as the potential impact of the 24% tariffs on the export-dependent Japanese economy dashed expectations that the central bank will keep raising interest rates. Mizuho Financial Group skidded 8%.

Sony Corp.'s stocks sank 4.8% and Toyota Motor Corp. gave up 5.2%. Japan's yen gained, with the U.S. dollar falling to 147.42 Japanese yen from 149.28 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0952 from \$1.0855.

In South Korea, which was hit with a 25% tariff, the benchmark Kospi fell 1.1% to 2,486.70.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1.7% to 22,813.22, while the Shanghai Composite index edged 0.2% lower to 3,342.01.

The announcement came as a "major shock," Yeap Junrong of IG said in a commentary. "China, in particular, was hit with an additional 34% tariff, bringing its total tariff burden to 64% when accounting for previous measures."

However, losses were partly blunted by expectations of further economic stimulus from Beijing to offset the impact of the higher tariffs.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 fell 0.9% to 7,859.70.

Bangkok's SET shed 1.1% after Thailand was assigned at 36% tariff on its exports to the U.S. That could cause Thai exports to fall by \$7 billion to \$8 billion, or about 2.3% of the total, Kasem Prunratnamala of CGS International said in a report.

On Wednesday, U.S. stocks whipped through another dizzying day before Trump's unveiling of his "Liberation Day" tariffs.

The S&P 500 rose 0.7% to 5,670.97 after careening from an earlier loss of 1.1% and a later gain of 1.1%. It's had a pattern this week of opening with sharp drops only to finish the day higher.

The Dow industrials added 0.6% to 42,225.32, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 0.9% to 17,601.05.

Financial markets around the world have broadly been shaky lately because of uncertainty about Trump's trade war. He has said he wants tariffs to make the global system more fair and to bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States from other countries. But tariffs also threaten to grind down growth for the U.S. and other economies, while worsening inflation when it may be stuck above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

After the U.S. market closed, Trump declared a 10% baseline tax on imports from all countries and higher tariff rates on dozens of nations that run trade surpluses with the United States. The president held up a chart while speaking at the White House, showing the United States would charge a 34% tax on imports from China, a 20% tax on imports from the European Union, and 32% on Taiwan.

Trump earlier announced 25% tariffs on auto imports; levies against China, Canada and Mexico; and expanded tariffs on steel and aluminum. Trump has also put tariffs against countries that import oil from Venezuela and plans separate import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

Treasury yields swung in the bond market, echoing the indecision seen in the stock market.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell as low as 4.11% in the morning from 4.17% late Tuesday and from roughly 4.80% early this year. But it later rose to 4.18%. Higher yields can indicate higher expectations for the economy or for inflation.

In other dealings early Thursday, U.S. benchmark crude shed \$2.63 to \$69.08 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gave up \$2.62 to \$72.33 per barrel.

Trump announces sweeping new tariffs to promote US manufacturing

Announcement risks inflation and trade wars

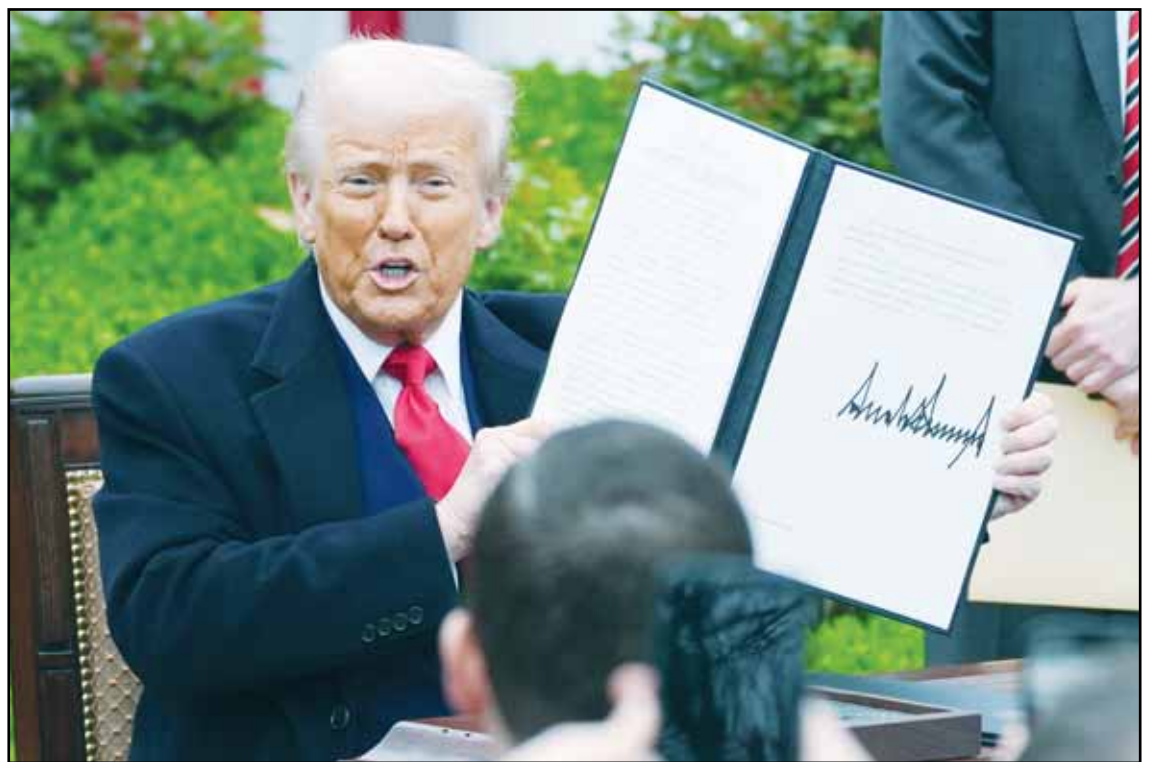
WASHINGTON, April 3, (AP): President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced far-reaching new tariffs on nearly all U.S. trading partners - a 34% tax on imports from China and 20% on the European Union, among others - that threaten to dismantle much of the architecture of the global economy and trigger broader trade wars.

Trump, in a Rose Garden announcement, said he was placing elevated tariff rates on dozens of nations that run meaningful trade surpluses with the United States, while imposing a 10% baseline tax on imports from all countries in response to what he called an economic emergency.

The president, who said the tariffs were designed to boost domestic manufacturing, used aggressive rhetoric to describe a global trade system that the United States helped to build after World War II, saying "our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered" by other nations.

The action amounts to a historic tax hike that could push the global order to a breaking point. It kickstarts what could be a painful transition for many Americans as middle-class essentials such as housing, autos and clothing are expected to become more costly, while disrupting the alliances built to ensure peace and economic stability.

Trump said he was acting to bring in hundreds of billions in new revenue to the U.S. government and restore fairness to global trade.



US President Donald Trump holds a signed executive order during an event to announce new tariffs in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington. (AP)

"Taxpayers have been ripped off for more than 50 years," he said. "But it is not going to happen anymore."

Trump declared a national economic emergency to levy the tariffs. He has promised that factory jobs will return to the United States as a result of the taxes, but his policies risk a sudden economic slowdown as consumers and businesses could face sharp price hikes.

Trump was fulfilling a key campaign promise as he imposed what he called "reciprocal" tariffs on trade partners, acting without Congress under the 1977

International Emergency Powers Act. But his action Wednesday could jeopardize Trump's voter mandate in last year's election to combat inflation. Several Republican senators, particularly from farm and border states, have questioned the wisdom of the tariffs. U.S. stock market futures sold off sharply overnight in anticipation of the economy weakening, after having already dropped since the start of this year.

"With today's announcement, U.S. tariffs will approach levels not seen since the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act

of 1930, which incited a global trade war and deepened the Great Depression," said Scott Lincome and Colin Grabow of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

The president's higher rates would hit foreign entities that sell more goods to the United States than they buy, meaning the tariffs could stay in place for some time as the administration expects other nations to lower their tariffs and other barriers to trade that it says led to a \$1.2 trillion trade imbalance last year.

No appetite for an outright trade war

US 'reciprocal' tariffs against dozens of nations draw dismay, calls for negotiations

FRANKFURT, Germany, April 3, (AP): Sweeping new tariffs announced Wednesday by U.S. President Donald Trump provoked dismay, threats of countermeasures and urgent calls for further negotiations to make trade rules fairer.

But responses were measured, highlighting a lack of appetite among key trading partners for an outright trade war with the world's biggest economy.

Trump said the import taxes, ranging from 10% to 49%, would do to U.S. trading partners what they have long done to the U.S. He maintains they will draw factories and jobs back to the United States.

"Taxpayers have been ripped off for more than 50 years," he said. "But it is not going to happen anymore."

Trump's announcement of a new 20% tariff on the European Union drew a sharp rebuke from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who said it was a "major blow to the world economy."

"The consequences will be dire for millions of

people around the globe," von der Leyen said. Groceries, transport and medicines will cost more, she said while visiting Uzbekistan. "And this is hurting, in particular, the most vulnerable citizens."

Von der Leyen held off, however, from announcing new retaliatory measures and underlined that the EU was ready to negotiate with the U.S.

Analysts say there's little to be gained from an all-out trade war, for the United States or other countries.

"If Trump really imposes high tariffs, Europe will have to respond, but the paradox is that the EU would be better off doing nothing," said Matteo Villa, a senior analyst at Italy's Institute for International Political Studies.

"On the other hand, Trump seems to understand only the language of force, and this indicates the need for a strong and immediate response," Villa said. "Probably the hope, in Brussels, is that the response will be strong enough to induce Trump to negotiate

and, soon, to backtrack."

Europe's strategy so far has been to limit retaliation to early tariff rounds to just a few politically sensitive goods such as bourbon and motorcycles in an attempt to push the U.S. to the negotiating table, rather than escalate an all-out trade war that could cripple its export-dependent economy.

Economists say the next target could be U.S. tech companies. They fall into the services category, where the U.S. exports more than it imports to Europe and thus would be more exposed to retaliation.

The EU response, likely to be ready by the end of April, includes the option of a tax on U.S. digital giants, said French government spokesperson Sophie Primas. "We're going to target the services, for example, digital services which are not being taxed for now and could be, the GAFAM for example," she said on French radio RTL. That's a colloquial acronym for Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft.

Tesla sales tumble 13% as Musk backlash, competition and aging lineup turn off buyers

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP): Tesla sales fell 13% in the first three months of the year, another sign that Elon Musk's once high-flying car company is struggling to attract buyers.

The leading electric vehicle maker has faced a growing backlash from Musk's embrace of right-wing politics and his role in the Trump administration. Opponents have staged protests at Tesla showrooms in the U.S. and in Europe, where the sales declines have been steeper.

Tesla's line-up is aging, and some consumers may have held off from buying its bestselling Model Y while waiting for an updated version. The Austin, Texas, company also faces fierce competition from other EV makers offering vastly improved models, including those of China's BYD.

Tesla reported deliveries of 336,681 globally in the January to March quarter. The figure was down from sales of 387,000 in the same period a year ago. The decline came despite deep discounts, zero financing and other incentives and could be a warning that the company's first-quarter earnings report later this month could disappoint investors.

Dan Ives of Wedbush said Wall Street financial analysts knew the first quarter was likely bad, but turned out even worse than expected. He called the sales results a "disaster on every metric."

"The brand crisis issues are clearly having a negative impact on Tesla...there is no debate," he said.

Musk has been President Donald Trump's point man in his effort to cut government spending. As criticism of Musk

mounted and Tesla's sales and stock price slumped, Trump last month held an extraordinary press conference outside the White House in which he praised Tesla, blasted boycotts against the company and bought a Tesla himself while TV cameras rolled.

Tesla investors have complained Musk's work at the Department of Government Efficiency has diverted his focus from running Tesla. On Tuesday, New York City's comptroller overseeing pension funds holding Tesla stock called for a lawsuit accusing a distracted Musk of "driving Tesla off a financial cliff."

After falling as much as 6% in early Wednesday, Tesla stock shot up more than 5% on indications that Musk may soon return his attention to Tesla. Politico, citing any-

number sources, reported Trump has told Cabinet members that Musk will step back from his role at DOGE in coming weeks.

Tesla's stock has plunged by roughly half since hitting a mid-December record as expectations of a lighter regulatory touch and big profits with Donald Trump as president were replaced by fear that the boycott of Musk's cars and other problems could hit the company hard. Analysts are still not sure exactly how much the fall in sales is due to the protests or other factors.

Still, even bullish financial analysts who earlier downplayed the backlash to Musk's polarizing political stances are saying it is hurting the company, something that Musk also recently acknowledged.



Retailers consider assembly at home to reduce shipping costs

Consumer products adapt to tariffs with cost-cutting measures



Steve Rad, CEO of toy maker Abacus Brands Inc., which designs science kits and other educational toys for older children, shows a newly designed matte box, left, compared with the old more expensive glossy box, right, that will help offset the costs of future tariffs in El Segundo, Calif., on Monday, March 31, 2025. (AP)

‘The compromises we’re making are things that do not matter to the consumer’

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP): Gadgets sold without batteries. Toys sold in slimmed-down boxes or no packaging at all. More household goods that shoppers need to assemble themselves.

These are some of the ways consumer product companies are retrofitting their wares to reduce costs and avoid raising prices as President Donald Trump levies new import taxes on key trading partners as well as some materials used by American manufacturers.

The economic environment in which the president has imposed, threatened and occasionally postponed repeated rounds of tariffs is more precarious than during his first term. U.S. consumers are feeling tapped out after several years of inflation. Businesses say tariffs add to their expenses and eat into their profits, but they are wary of losing sales if they try to pass all of the increase on to customers.

Instead, some companies are exploring cost-cutting options, both ones that consumers likely would notice in time - remember “shrinkflation?” - and ones that exist too far down the supply chain for them to see. The changes may help minimize price increases yet won’t be enough in every case to offset them completely.

These are some of the strategies

retailers and brands have in mind:

After putting an extra 20% tariff on all goods from China, as well as a 25% tariff on imported steel, aluminum and automobiles, Trump said he would announce on Wednesday the targets of “reciprocal tariffs” that mirror the taxes all other nations apply to certain U.S. exports.

He argues the tariffs will spur domestic manufacturing, among other goals.

Also on the horizon: twice-delayed tariffs on most goods from Canada and Mexico, and duties on copper, lumber and pharmaceutical drugs.

Kimberly Kirkendall, president of supply-chain consulting firm International Resource Development, has told clients - U.S. makers of shelving, home goods and food products - that given all the uncertainty, this is not the time for long-term moves like seeking factories outside of China.

She encouraged them to focus on the short term, particularly the need to scrutinize product lines from every angle for possible savings.

“You’ve got to collaborate and work together with your suppliers in this situation to be able to bring costs down,” Kirkendall said. Sourcing concerns are not only

a worry for big companies that rely on Chinese manufacturers. Sasha Iglehart, founder of a small online clothing company called Shirt Story, has a collection of upcycled men’s shirts that sell for around \$235. She said she typically gets her vintage buttons from an Austrian supplier and knows Trump has talked about taxing goods from the European Union.

“I will continue to look for local vendors and collectors here in the States as back up,” said Iglehart, whose company is based in Connecticut.

For many companies, evaluating which components or details they can remove from their products or replace with less expensive ones is the go-to move for absorbing the potential financial hit from tariffs.

Los Angeles-based toy company Abacus Brands Inc., which designs science kits and other educational toys, has most of its products made in China. By using slightly thinner paper in an 80-page project book that comes with two of its kits, the company expects to avert a \$10 retail price increase, President Steve Rad said.

“Three or 4 cents here,” Rad said. “Seven or 6 cents there. Two more pennies over there. All of a sudden, you’ve made up the difference.”

Aurora World Inc., known for its plush pets and toy vehicles, is looking at using fewer paint colors as a way to counteract tariff costs, according to Gabe Higa, managing director of the California company’s toy division. All of Aurora World’s toys come from factories in China.

“This is something that makes it a little bit simpler so that there’s less manual labor involved or less material cost,” Higa said. “(It) doesn’t have a lot of incremental value so it’s easy to take away.”

The company still may have to raise prices as long as the new tariffs are in effect, he said.

Tweaking or reducing product packaging is another area where importers may cut back and carries the advantage of possibly appealing to eco-conscious customers.

Basic Fun CEO Jay Foreman, whose company markets classic toys like Tonka trucks, Lincoln Logs and Care Bears, said he is presenting retailers with three different packaging options and asking them to decide which ones they prefer for the trucks and some other products that will be in stores next spring.

The first is the current packaging, which consists of a box with a big open window that lets customers see what’s inside. The second

option: no box, just a tray attached to the bottom of toys to hold them in place on shelves. The third: unwrapped but affixed with a simple paper price tag that features brand information.

The second-tier packaging would reduce the toy company’s cost per item by \$1.25, and the package-free version would yield savings of \$1.75, Foreman said. Both would diminish the appeal of the products and would not come close to canceling out the tariff on goods made in China, Foreman said.

He said he would make pricing decisions later this week after Trump provides details about his planned reciprocal tariffs.

To further reduce its production costs, Abacus Brands is thinking of switching from plastic to cardboard for the package inserts that keep toy parts in place. Cardboard trays cost 7 cents per unit compared to 30 cents for the plastic version, according to Rad.

The change requires finding a new factory to make the inserts, a move that did not make financial sense before now, he said. The various tariff-related modifications should be effective for fall and holiday deliveries to stores, Rad said.

“The compromises we’re making are things that do not matter to the consumer,” he said.

Shoppers will likely have to assemble more of their products at home as companies look to reduce shipping costs, according to Kirkendall of International Resource Development.

One of her clients manufactures self-watering planters that are made in China. The product is undergoing a redesign so it can be shipped as separate nesting components instead of fully assembled.

Companies also are reevaluating the pieces of their products that are essential or extra. Chris Bajda, managing partner at online wedding gift retailer Groomsday, said accessories like batteries and decorative gift boxes may end up in the latter category.

“We now carefully assess what’s truly necessary and avoid including items that don’t serve a functional purpose for the customer,” Bajda said.

Reducing the size or weight of products without lowering prices proliferated as a business practice from 2021 through 2024 as companies grappled with rising costs for ingredients, packaging, labor and transportation.

Edgar Dworsky, a consumer advocate and former assistant attorney general in Massachusetts, suspects the makers of consumer goods will embrace shrinkflation again to hide costs given the blast of new tariffs. The additional import tax on Canadian soft lumber, for example, might show up in smaller toilet paper rolls, he said.

“Shrinkflation has been a little quiet” in the last few months, Dworsky said. “But I would expect to see both price increases and product shrinkage.”

Congress holds power over tariff decisions

Economists question impact of new tariffs on US economy

WASHINGTON, April 3, (AP): After weeks of anticipation and speculation, President Donald Trump followed through on his reciprocal tariff threats by declaring on Wednesday a 10% baseline tax on imports from all countries and higher tariff rates on dozens of nations that run trade surpluses with the United States.

In announcing the reciprocal tariffs, Trump was fulfilling a key campaign promise by raising U.S. taxes on foreign goods to narrow the gap with the tariffs the White House says other countries unfairly impose on U.S. products.

“Reciprocal means ‘they do it to us and we do it to them,’” the president said from the White House Rose Garden on Wednesday.

Trump’s higher rates would hit foreign entities that sell more goods to the United States than they buy. But economists don’t share Trump’s enthusiasm for tariffs since they’re a tax on importers that usually get passed on to consumers. It’s possible, however, that the reciprocal tariffs could bring other countries to the table and get them to lower their own import taxes.

The Associated Press asked for your questions about reciprocal tariffs. Here are a few of them, along with our answers:

Tariffs are taxes on imports,

collected when foreign goods cross the U.S. border by the Customs and Border Protection agency. The money - about \$80 billion last year - goes to the U.S. Treasury to help pay the federal government’s expenses. Congress has authority to say how the money will be spent.

Trump - largely supported by Republican lawmakers who control the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives - wants to use increased tariff revenue to finance tax cuts that analysts say would disproportionately benefit the wealthy. Specifically, they want to extend tax cuts passed in Trump’s first term and largely set to expire at the end of 2025. The Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, has found that extending Trump’s tax cuts would reduce federal revenue by \$4.5 trillion from 2025 to 2034.

Trump wants higher tariffs to help offset the lower tax collections. Another think tank, the Tax Policy Center, has said that extending the 2017 tax cuts would deliver continued tax relief to Americans at all income levels, “but higher-income households would receive a larger benefit.”

It depends on how businesses both in the United States and overseas respond, but consumers could

see overall prices rising within a month or two of tariffs being imposed. For some products, such as produce from Mexico, prices could rise much more quickly after the tariffs take effect.

Some U.S. retailers and other importers may eat part of the cost of the tariff, and overseas exporters may reduce their prices to offset the extra duties. But for many businesses, the tariffs Trump announced Wednesday - such as 20% on imports from Europe - will be too large to swallow on their own.

Companies may also use the tariffs as an excuse to raise prices. When Trump slapped duties on washing machines in 2018, studies later showed that retailers raised prices on both washers and dryers, even though there were no new duties on dryers.

A key question in the coming months is whether something similar will happen again. Economists worry that consumers, having just lived through the biggest inflationary spike in four decades, are more accustomed to rising prices than they were before the pandemic.

Yet there are also signs that Americans, put off by the rise in the cost of living, are less willing to accept price increases and will simply cut back on their purchases. That could discourage businesses from raising prices by much.

The U.S. Constitution grants the power to set tariffs to Congress. But over the years, Congress has delegated those powers to the president through several different laws. Those laws specify the circumstances under which the White House can impose tariffs, which are typically limited to cases where imports threaten national security or are severely harming a specific industry.

In the past, presidents generally imposed tariffs only after carrying out public hearings to determine if certain imports met those criteria. Trump followed those steps when imposing tariffs in his first term.

In his second term, however, Trump has sought to use emergency powers set out in a 1977 law to impose tariffs in a more ad hoc fashion. Trump has said, for example, that fentanyl flowing in from Canada and Mexico constitute a national emergency and has used that pretext to impose 25% duties on goods from both countries.

Congress can seek to cancel an emergency that a president declares, and Sen. Tim Kaine, a Democrat from Virginia, has proposed to do just that regarding Canada. That legislation could pass the Senate but would likely die in the House. Other bills in Congress that would also limit the president’s authority to set

tariffs face tough odds for passage as well.

U.S. tariffs are generally lower than those charged by other countries. The average U.S. tariff, weighted to reflect goods that are actually traded, is just 2.2% for the United States, versus the European Union’s 2.7%, China’s 3% and India’s 12%, according to the World Trade Organization.

Other countries also tend to do more than the United States to protect their farmers with high tariffs. The U.S. trade-weighted tariff on farm goods, for example, is 4%, compared to the EU’s 8.4%, Japan’s 12.6%, China’s 13.1% and India’s 65%. (The WTO numbers don’t count Trump’s recent flurry of import taxes or tariffs between countries that have entered into their own free trade agreements, such as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement that allows many goods to cross North American borders duty free.)

Previous U.S. administrations agreed to the tariffs that Trump now calls unjust. They were the result of a long negotiation between 1986 to 1994 - the so-called Uruguay Round - that ended in a trade pact signed by 123 countries and has formed the basis of the global trading system for nearly four decades.

‘Reciprocal means ‘they do it to us and we do it to them’

'Wicked' takes a victory lap at convention

Grande, Erivo tease 'Wicked: For Good' at CinemaCon

LAS VEGAS, April 3, (AP) — When Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo and director Jon M. Chu took the stage in Las Vegas last April to tease "Wicked" months before its theatrical release, there was a cautious optimism that the long-anticipated film would be a hit.

But when the pair hit the same stage at the annual CinemaCon convention Wednesday to promote "Wicked: For Good," it felt like a kind of victory lap following the first movie's critical acclaim and box office success.

"This is the third year that 'Wicked' has closed Universal's CinemaCon presentation," Chu said. "Thank God it worked out."

"Wicked: For Good" hits theaters in November and completes the adaptation of the long-running Broadway musical inspired by "The Wizard of Oz." It stars Erivo as the green-skinned Elphaba Thropp, who became the Wicked Witch of the West, and

Grande as Galinda, the future Good Witch of the South.

"We already have our tissues packed," Grande teased, referring to the pair's sentimental viral press tour that often resulted in one or both of its stars in tears.

"I promise less waterworks this time," Erivo added, before they debuted a short montage of footage from the film.

The "Wicked" crew closed out an impressive - and aptly theatrical - presentation of the upcoming slate from Universal Pictures.

Hollywood's Oscar season brings an annual chance for actors and filmmakers to swap kudos for their artistry. After it each year comes the CinemaCon convention and trade show, where studios and movie theaters take their turn to give pep talks and pats on the back.

Universal demonstrated that any pep talk is made better with music - par-

ticularly anthemic or nostalgic songs from films old and new, like "Psycho," "Jurassic Park" and, of course, "Wicked." The studio took advantage of these and other familiar themes with a live orchestra as it made its pitch about their docket of films on the main stage at Caesars Palace.

They pulled out the stops for "Jurassic World: Rebirth," one of Universal's other biggest films of the year hitting theaters in July, with help from its stars, Mahershala Ali and Scarlett Johansson, along with director Gareth Edwards, who walked out as the orchestra played its iconic theme.

"It has been a lifelong dream to be in a 'Jurassic' movie. For the last 15 years, each time I heard that they were making a movie, I reached out and would say, 'I'm available,'" Johansson said.

The presentation followed a pre-view screening of "How to Train Your

Dragon," a live-action adaptation of the animated franchise, earlier in the day. The film, which stars Gerard Butler and Mason Thames, will be released in June.

The orchestra was helmed by Emmy-winning composer Rickey Minor, the former bandleader on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno."

But the stunts didn't stop at live music. When teasing his myriad horror films on the horizon, producer Jason Blum walked out dressed as antagonist Freddy Fazbear to tease "Five Nights at Freddy's 2," which will be released theatrically in December.

To top off the Blumhouse Productions slate, 30 actors dressed as M3GAN, the artificially intelligent and sometimes hyper-violent subject of the film of the same name, danced to a rendition of "Oops!...I Did It Again." "M3GAN 2.0" hits theaters in June.



Cynthia Erivo, (left), and Ariana Grande, cast members of the upcoming film 'Wicked: For Good,' appear onstage during the Universal Pictures and Focus Features presentation at CinemaCon on Wednesday, April 2, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Actor **Ralph Fiennes** will make his opera directing debut in Paris next season with Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin."

The Paris Opera said Wednesday the production will run from Jan. 26 to Feb. 27 at the Palais Garnier and will star Boris Pinkhasovich in the title role, Ruzan Mantashyan as Tatiana, Bogdan Volkov as Lensky and Susan Graham as Madame Larina.

Fiennes, 62, has been nominated for three Academy Awards - most recently, this year, for "Conclave" - and one Emmy Award.

The British actor won a Tony Award in 1995 for Shakespeare's "Hamlet." Fiennes starred in the title role of the 1999 movie "Oncle Ben," based on the same Alexander Pushkin novel as the opera. The film was directed by his sister Martha Fiennes.

Semyon Bychkov will conduct most of the performances. Michael Levine designs the sets and Annemarie Woods the costumes.

The Paris Opera 2025-26 season will have new productions of Verdi's "Aida," Wagner's "Die Walküre" and "Siegfried" and Antonia Bozzelli's "Ercole amante."

Reverals include Claus Guth's staging of Puccini's "La Bohème," moved to a spaceship and planet surface and John Adams' "Nixon in China" with Renée Fleming and Thomas Hampson. (AP)

MEXICO CITY: The US State Department revoked the visas of members of a Mexican band after they projected the face of a drug cartel boss onto a large screen during a performance in the western state of Jalisco over the weekend.

US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, who was US ambassador to Mexico during the first Trump administration, said late Tuesday on X that the work and tourism visas of members of Los Alegres del Barranco were revoked.

The visa revocations follow widespread outrage in Mexico over the concert as prosecutors in two states have launched investigations into the projected images, and a larger national reckoning over how to address the rise of a popular musical genre criticized for romanticizing drug cartels.

"I'm a firm believer in freedom of expression, but that doesn't mean that expression should be free of consequences," Landau wrote on X. "The last thing we need is a welcome mat for people who extol criminals and terrorists."

The controversy broke out over the weekend when the face of Nemesio Rubén "El Mencho" Oseguera layered over flames was projected behind the band, originally hailing from Sinaloa, during the concert. Finger pointing ensued among the band, concert producers and the venue. (AP)

Film



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows, (from left), Jack Black, Jason Momoa and Sebastian Hansen in a scene from 'A Minecraft Movie.' (AP)

Jason Momoa shines in action-packed adventure

'Minecraft Movie' brings bizarre fun for all ages

LOS ANGELES, April 3, (AP) — The latest IP to be mined into a Hollywood blockbuster is appropriately a video game that celebrates digging: "A Minecraft Movie."

Like "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" and "Jumanji" before it, "A Minecraft Movie" centers on four misfits who enter a mysterious portal that pulls them into a strange land, this time cubic, like Lego only on shrooms.

The Jared Hess-directed action-adventure artfully straddles the line between delighting preteen gamers and keeping their parents awake. It's an often-bananas adaptation, with bizarre digressions into turquoise blouses and tater tot pizzas. It has Jennifer Coolidge being very Jennifer Coolidge. Need we say more?

If you've never heard of "Minecraft" - or its denizens like Creepers, Piglins, Villagers and Endermen - you are in big trouble. Consult with the closest 10-year-old immediately. (I have one and he noticed a sweet nod to the late YouTuber Technoblade, an Easter egg of sorts.)

The movie is faithful to the world of the game, while adding some things - orbs and crystals - to aid the plot. But if you come in cold and spot pandas and folks punching through earth, you'll likely side with one human character who says: "This place makes no sense."

Our travelers - a sweet brother and sister (Emma Myers and

Sebastian Eugene Hansen), their nutty real estate agent (Danielle Brooks) and a deeply dumb, washed-up pro video game player (Jason Momoa) - are guided by Jack Black, playing an expert crafter named Steve stranded in the world.

If it does anything, "A Minecraft Movie" marks the comedic coming of age of Momoa, who has shown glimpses of his chops in the "Aquaman" and "Fast X" movies. But when he's not on screen in this one, it leaves the movie slack, which is saying a lot when you have Black being his full-force, over-the-top Black.

"There's no 'i' in 'team' but there are two 'i's in 'winning,'" Momoa says as Garrett "The Garbage Man" Garrison, who is fond of fingerless gloves and a Barbie-pink leather jacket with a fringe. In another scene, he notes: "Paper doesn't grow on trees."

The screenplay written by Chris Bowman, Hubbel Palmer, Neil Widener, Gavin James and Chris Galletta is as loosey-goosey as you'd expect from five different voices, with a traditional Marvel-style battle at the end fueled by plenty of "Let's do this!" declarations but with a surprisingly goofball first half.

Like countless films before it, "A Minecraft Movie" is all about the quest to go home, which in this case means navigating zombies, skeletons shooting fire-tipped arrows and a place called The Nether, a perpetually dark hell where horrible crea-

tures mine for gold. For some reason, the ruler there, a piglike witch, has glowing eyes and a British accent.

The writers make some "America's Got Talent" jokes, Black has a few songs - including a bizarre "Steve's Lava Chicken" - and we spend an inordinate amount of time focused on Momoa's butt, but it all ends in a dance party. The movie has a "Dark Crystal"-meets-"Transformers" vibe, a too-subtle message about financial failure and something about friendship.

The filmmakers do have characters throw eggs - at these prices, is that smart? - but they don't lean enough into the celebration of creativity this movie seemed to promise when it started.

Hollywood's embrace of gaming has been yielding hits such as HBO's "The Last of Us" and Amazon Prime Video's series adaptation of the Microsoft-owned "Fallout." More adaptations are on the horizon this year: "Until Dawn," "Mortal Kombat 2" and "Five Nights at Freddy's 2."

As for "A Minecraft Movie," the advice is this: Come for the Piglins, stay for Momoa, whom you will see spectacularly failing at being bilingual and jujutsu-ing opponents dressed like a member of Skid Row. It's everything you ever needed.

"A Minecraft Movie," a Warner Bros. Pictures release that's in theaters Friday, is rated PG for "violence/action, language, suggestive/rude humor and some scary images." Running time: 101 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Duo's album combines rock, positivity, and harmonies

John, Carlile's bond deepens on 'Who Believes In Angels?'

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP) — It started with a movie. Country star Brandi Carlile, so moved after watching a rough cut of the 2024 music documentary "Elton John: Never Too Late," began writing a song inspired by John's incredible career. Titled "Never Too Late," it became the title track for the film and a collaboration with John, producer Andrew Watt and John's longtime lyricist Bernie Taupin. "This song was about my life," John told The Associated Press earlier this year. "I've been through hell ... and I still come out fighting (on) the other side. So, you know, it's very true to what I am."

"Never Too Late" was shortlisted for the 2025 Oscars. It didn't win, but that's no matter. Now it is featured on a new, full album's worth of collaborations between John and Carlile, called "Who Believes In

Angels?" The introductory anthem, "The Rose of Laura Nyro," suggests this might be a Carlile-does-John record, largely ornamented with call-and-response harmonies from the man himself, instead of something approximating a true partnership. That concern is quickly shed by the swinging rock 'n' roll of track two, "Little Richard's Bible," lead by John. A pattern is established: The duo takes turns with the reigns. Still, Carlile's voice often emerges the loudest.

Power ballads, shockingly, are kept to a minimum. The best example is likely the title track, written by Carlile about her lifelong admiration-turned-long term friendship with John.

Positivity is in no short supply. "A Little Light" was written by Carlile the day

that Israel invaded Gaza; it serves as a rallying cry to bring the world together. The midtempo "Someone to Belong To" mirrors "Never Too Late," in some ways, as the pair harmonize its optimistic message: "Hang in there, darling, won't you?/The best is yet to come," they duet. "I thank my lucky stars/ That I've got someone/Someone to belong to."

Closer "When This Old World is Done with Me" is a peak-John piano ballad, a timeless offering that begs the question: Will the world ever see a new solo record from the pop hero again?

Much like "Never Too Late," Taupin and Carlile both contributed lyrics, and Watt produced "Who Believes In Angels?" It was recorded in Los Angeles' Sunset Sound Studios in October 2023, written and recorded

in just 20 days, backed by all-star musicians: Red Hot Chili Peppers' drummer Chad Smith, bassist Pino Palladino (who performs with Nine Inch Nails), and keyboardist Josh Klinghoffer (Pearl Jam, Beck).

Despite its expedition, the album is a full collection. It directly reflects a deepening collaborative relationship between John and Carlile, perhaps not unlike the one the country singer established with Joni Mitchell recently, getting the folk icon back on stage. (What other musical heroes should get back in the studio? Give Carlile a call!)

It is only natural for fans to leave wanting to hear more John. But in whole, "Who Believes In Angels?" is full of life - and it is a joy to hear an energetic John just a few years after he embarked on his farewell tour.



This album cover image released by Interscope Records shows 'Who Believes In Angels?' by Elton John and Brandi Carlile. (AP)

Nintendo's new console offers bigger screen, GameChat

Switch 2 arrives in June with new Mario Kart World game

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP) - Nintendo has announced a June 5 launch date and \$449.99 price tag for its latest gaming console, the Switch 2, which will introduce interactive chat and screenshare functions to connect gamers.

In its 60-minute Nintendo Direct presentation on Wednesday, the company revealed a more vibrant display on the Switch 2, a larger screen and several games that will launch with the console.

Central to its updated system is a new "C" button on its Joy-Con controller, which will launch a "GameChat" feature that requires a subscription to Nintendo's Switch online service. It allows players to "communicate with friends and family while playing a game," and lets them share their game screen with others. A built-in microphone will also allow chatting with other gamers.

"When you think about some of the biggest titles on (the Nintendo Switch), it's like Mario Kart, Super Mario Jambooree, even though that's quite a new title, has cracked the top 10 of most played games on the console. So, it does make a lot of sense that the sort



A man walks by a Nintendo Switch display at an electronics retail chain store in Tokyo, on Oct. 13, 2021. (AP)

of headline feature is geared primarily towards that sort of use," said Hannah Cowton-Barnes, a London-based video game industry expert for Tech Advisor.

Perhaps the most contemporary function yet for the Switch 2 is the ability to use the Joy-Con controllers like a computer mouse. The developer displayed multiple ways to use the new

function, such as angling a club in a golf game.

The new portable console features a 7.9 inch LCD screen that displays in 1080p. Nintendo also revealed in the live stream that, when docked, the system will be able to support 4K resolution for compatible games.

The presentation started with an extended look at Mario Kart World - the console's launch bundle game - which adds a bit of flair to the series with a knockout game mode and the ability to grind on rails skateboard-style while racing.

The developer also unveiled a new James Bond game, dubbed Project 007, again revisiting the classic Nintendo 64 console hit revered by many first-person shooter fans.

Nintendo also announced two more Switch 2 exclusives featuring its marquee characters. Donkey Kong Banana, a 3D adventure with the big ape punching his way through a huge underground world, arrives July 17. Kirby Air Riders, a racing game from the director of the Super Smash Bros. series, is due later in the year.

Third-party exclusives likely to cre-

ate some buzz include Koei-Tecmo's Hyrule Warriors: Age of Imprisonment, a hack-and-slash prequel to The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom, coming this winter. From Software's The Duskblooms, a baroque multiplayer title from the creators of Elden Ring, is scheduled for 2026.

Miss the GameCube? Nintendo said Switch Online subscribers will be able to access a limited selection of GameCube titles such as The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker and F-Zero GX.

The new console will be backwards compatible - able to play physical and digital Switch games - but users will need to purchase a microSD express memory card for the Switch 2. The presentation revealed that normal microSD cards will not be compatible with the system. However, data from the original Switch can be transferred to the new console.

The Switch 2's launch price is significantly higher than the original Switch's \$299 price tag. A separate bundle that includes the new Mario Kart game will also be available for \$499.99.

The Trump administration's tariffs have hit the video game console indus-

try at a fragile moment, said Joost van Dreunen, author of "One Up: Creativity, Competition, and the Global Business of Video Games."

"At the beginning of a new hardware cycle, all of a sudden we're looking at this price hike," said van Dreunen, a games industry researcher. "I had originally predicted that the Switch 2 would be \$400. Now it's announced that it's \$450. That \$50 difference is a Trump tax."

The tariffs, he said, impact games hardware because console devices are manufactured and shipped from China and that region at large.

The early stages of a hardware life cycle are already very low margin, or usually a loss for hardware manufacturers, van Dreunen said. Those manufacturers typically eat the margin in order to get the devices out to stores.

"But with an increased tariff, that means that margin is probably even worse than it historically is. But their hands are kind of tied. They can't not progress. They can't not launch a new hardware generation. So for the consumer base, people are just going to pay more."

Park



An employee plants tulips at the Keukenhof flower garden in Lisse, Netherlands, Tuesday, April 1. (AP)

Flower lovers and influencers flock to the tulip vistas at Dutch park

Nestled among tulip fields not far from Amsterdam, the world-famous Keukenhof garden has opened for the spring, welcoming camera-wielding visitors to its increasingly selfie-friendly grounds.

On a sunny day, the paths, park benches and cafes are crowded with tourists taking photos and selfies with one of the Netherlands' most iconic products - the tulip. Those kinds of pics, posted on social media, are what drew Austrian lawyer Daniel Magnus.

"Whenever you see the kind of pictures which were taken from an influencer, they make something with you. You get a new impression of new locations, traditions, people and so on You want also to be there," Magnus told The Associated Press.

Magnus had just finished taking his own photos on a small boat, staged in one of the park's canals for visitors to take their own Instagrammable images.

Staff plant and nurture a staggering 7 million

flower bulbs to ensure visitors who flock to the Keukenhof from around the world all get to see a vibrant spectacle during the just eight weeks the garden is open.

In recent years, the garden has increasingly catered to the public's thirst for social media content and created spaces where guests are encouraged to pose.

Selfie spots include flower archways, pink velvet couches and another Dutch classic - oversized wooden clogs. (AP)

'Cosi fan tutte' transforms women into automatons

Mozart meets AI at Detroit Opera House

DETROIT, April 3, (AP) - Audiences at the Detroit Opera House expecting their performance of "Cosi fan tutte" to begin with the overture may be surprised to hear instead a product launch from a tech company CEO.

It's Mozart meets Artificial Intelligence, in the latest mind-bending production by Yuval Sharon, the company's adventurous artistic director.

The opera, first performed in 1790, was the last of three collaborations between Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, and despite its sublime music it has proved the least popular.

That's due in part to the work's uneasy mix of light-hearted farce and the cynical worldview it seems to endorse. Even the title, which translates as "Women are Like That," suggests a misogyny that is openly expressed by one of its main characters, Don Alfonso.

But Sharon rejects the idea that the opera itself is meant to demean women. "It's going too far to call Mozart a feminist," he said. "But when I listen to the music, it seems to me he doesn't want us to agree with Don Alfonso. He and Da Ponte can't possibly want us to take half the population of humanity and constantly denigrate it."

Instead, Sharon believes, the collaborators are "representing a character and perspective that might actually not be the perspective we're meant to sympathize with."

In the opera, Don Alfonso, a jaded philosopher, bets two young friends that, given the opportunity, their girlfriends, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, will prove unfaithful. The men switch identities, adopt disguises, and each pursues his friend's sweetheart. Eventually both women succumb to their new suitors.

Sharon's production turns Alfonso into the head of an AI company called

SoulSync. Under his guidance the younger men have created two female automatons (Alfonso doesn't like the term robots) designed to be "perfect companions."

This concept of Alfonso as a soulless tech guru may sound far-fetched, but Sharon insists it's not so far from the truth.

"He's actually a replica of what we see in the tech industry," Sharon said. "There's a messianic belief that we must transcend our own humanity and that AI is making up for all the terrible ways we behave. People really do believe that the future of humanity is robotic."

Thomas Lehman, a baritone who is singing the role of one of the lovers, Guglielmo, in his fourth production of the work, thinks Sharon is "taking the story and turning it upside down in the

right ways.

"The original libretto leans heavily toward the men," he said. "Yuval has found a way to give the women the strength they deserve, to make it a level playing field."

Mezzo-soprano Emily Fons, who is portraying Dorabella for the third time, sees the updating as part of a broader movement of "trying to figure out how to take pieces that are old and do something new."

The automatons may be programmed to act a certain way, but "we're all programmed to some extent," she said. "What speaks to me is how they learn to feel things and take those feelings to have a say in what happens next."

Sharon said that's exactly what he's aiming for. The women "start out incredibly mechanical and become much

more human in a way," he said. "As if we're really watching their consciousness and their emotional life develop before our eyes." The men, on the other hand, increasingly reveal their limitations and become less interesting as the opera progresses.

The notion of humans as machines is actually embedded in the opera as Mozart and Da Ponte wrote it - something Sharon said he first realized while attending a performance years ago.

"I was watching a traditional production, very crinoline, hoop skirts, big dresses, lots of buffoonery. I was quite bored," he recalled. "And then we get to the Act I finale and suddenly there's this magnet. And I thought, what's up with that?"

What was up was a medical treatment advanced by Franz Mesmer, an 18th century German physician who was a friend of Mozart and whose name has given rise to the term "mesmerism."

He believed that the human body contained metals that could be realigned by moving a magnet over the skin. In the opera, a character named Despina poses as a physician and uses a magnet to "cure" the two suitors who have pretended to swallow poison.

Though the production, which opens April 5 for three performances, raises serious questions about the use of AI, Sharon has made sure to keep the tone light. And he's built in some twists and turns of his own devising to take the audience by surprise.

That's why the plot summary in the written program ends abruptly after Act 1. In place of the remainder of the story there's just this note:

"The director has intentionally withheld a synopsis for Act II to avoid spoilers. Enjoy the drama as it unfolds."



Baritone Edward Parks, (center), portrays Don Alfonso, the CEO of a tech company that is creating AI companions, in a scene from Yuval Sharon's production of Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte," at the Detroit Opera House. (AP)

People

Microsoft at 50

Gates reflects on 50-yr-old code that 'reshaped tech'

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP) - Even as he grows older, Microsoft founder Bill Gates still fondly remembers the catalytic computer code he wrote 50 years ago that opened up a new frontier in technology.

Although the code that Gates printed out on a teletype machine may look crude compared to what's powering today's artificial intelligence platforms, it played a critical role in creating Microsoft in April 1975 - a golden anniversary that the Redmond, Washington, company will celebrate on Friday.

Gates, 69, set the stage for that jubilee with a blog post reminiscing on how he and his old high school friend - the late Paul Allen - scrambled to create the world's first "software factory" after reading an article in the January 1975 issue of Popular Electronics magazine about the Altair 8800, a mini-computer that would be powered by a tiny chip made by the then-obscure technology company, Intel.

The article inspired Gates, who was just a freshman at Harvard University, and Allen to call Altair's maker, Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems, and promise the company's CEO Ed Roberts they had developed software that would enable consumers to control the hardware. There was just one hitch: Gates and Allen hadn't yet come up with the code they promised Roberts.

Gates and Allen tackled the challenge by latching onto the BASIC computer language that had been developed in 1964 at Dartmouth College, but they still had to figure out a way to make the technology compatible with the forthcoming Altair computer, even though they didn't even have a prototype of the machine.

After spending two months working on the program with little sleep, Gates finished the code that became the basis for the Altair's first operating system. "That code remains the coolest I've ever written," Gates wrote in his blog post, which includes an option to download the original program.

The code would go on to provide the foundation for a business that would make personal computers a household staple, with a suite of software that include the Word,



This 1975 photo provided by Gates Ventures shows Microsoft founder Bill Gates holding a printout of the computer code that launched the software maker. (AP)

Excel and PowerPoint programs, as well as the Windows operating system that still powers most PCs today.

"That was the revolution," Gates said of the code in a video accompanying his post. "That was the thing that ushered in personal computing."

Gates' recollection of the code is part of a nostalgic kick that he has been on this year as he prepares to turn 70 in October.

The trip down memory lane included the February release of a memoir exploring his early years as an often-misunderstood child with few friends, and a hailing of the 25th anniversary of the philanthropic foundation he created after stepping down as Microsoft's CEO in 2000. The tech giant initially stumbled after Gates' departure but has been thriving under CEO Satya Nadella, and has amassed a market value of about \$2.8 trillion.

In his memoir, Gates also reflected on his tempestuous relationship with fellow PC pioneer, the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, whose company will be celebrating its golden anniversary next year.

"Fifty years is a long time," said Gates, whose personal fortune is estimated at \$108 billion. "It's crazy that the dream came true."

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Richard Chamberlain, the handsome hero of the 1960s television series "Dr. Kildare" who found a second career as an award-winning "king of the miniseries," has died. He was 90.



Chamberlain

of complications following a stroke, according to his publicist, Harlan Boll.

"Our beloved Richard is with the angels now. He is free and soaring to those loved ones before us," Martin Rabbett, his lifelong partner, said in a statement. "How blessed were we to have known such an amazing and loving soul. Love never dies. And our love is under his wings lifting him to his next great adventure."

Tall, with classic good looks and romantic style, Chamberlain became an instant favorite with teenage girls as the compassionate physician on the TV series that aired from 1961 to 1966. Photoplay magazine named him most popular male star for three years in a row, from 1963-65.

Not until 2003 did he acknowledge publicly what Hollywood insiders had long known, that he was gay. He made

the revelation in his autobiography, "Shattered Love." (AP)

BEIJING: China's blockbuster animated sequel "Ne Zha 2" has garnered an astonishing 15.5 billion yuan (about 2.16 billion US dollars) globally, including presales, as of Thursday, per ticketing platform Maoyan's data.

Hitting theaters on Jan. 29 during the Chinese New Year, the Enlight Pictures production is currently the fifth highest-grossing film of all time globally, just behind James Cameron's 1997 epic "Titanic" at nearly 2.27 billion dollars. (Xinhua)

LOS ANGELES: Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, announced that the first collection of eight signature products is available for purchase. Developed in partnership with Netflix's CGP division, this collection offers a glimpse into Meghan's approach to elevated, everyday living and is inspired by her long-lasting love of cooking, entertaining, and hosting with ease.

Following the debut of Netflix's "With Love, Meghan". As ever brings to life the staples Meghan turns to time and again in her own kitchen and daily life. Designed to infuse warmth, beauty, and intention into daily rituals, this collection marks the beginning of a brand that will continue to evolve with new seasonal offerings inspired by Meghan's personal essence. As ever will release new product collections seasonally. (AP)

WHO confirms childhood vaccines do not increase autism risk

UN chief calls for a more inclusive world for autistic people

NEW YORK, April 3, (KUNA): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for renewed commitment to create a more equal and inclusive world for autistic people.

In a message marking World Autism Awareness Day on Tuesday, he said, This year's theme - Advancing Neurodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - highlights the intersection between neurodiversity and global sustainability efforts.

The goal is to showcase how inclusive policies and practices can drive positive change for autistic individuals worldwide and contribute to making the SDGs a reality.

"People with autism often experience isolation, stigma and inequality. They have been denied healthcare and education - especially during crises - and their legal capacity has been unrecognized and over-ridden," the



This photo taken with a mobile phone shows autistic children attending an outdoor activity at the Little Turtle children's services center in Shenyang, northeast China's Liaoning Province, April 18, 2024. (Xinhua)

Secretary-General said.

"Such discrimination contravenes the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to leave no one behind. It must change," he noted.

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, constitutes a diverse group of conditions related to development of the brain, according to a fact sheet by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Characteristics may be detected in early childhood, involving some degree of difficulty with social interaction and communication, however diagnosis often does not occur until much later.

It is estimated that about 1 in 100 children worldwide has autism. Available scientific evidence suggests that there are probably many factors that make a child more likely to have au-

tom, including environmental and genetic factors, WHO said.

The UN agency noted that extensive research over many years has demonstrated that the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine does not cause autism.

"Studies that were interpreted as indicating any such link were flawed, and some of the authors had undeclared biases that influenced what they reported about their research," the fact sheet said.

Furthermore, evidence also shows that other childhood vaccines do not increase risk.

The abilities and needs of autistic people vary and can evolve over time, WHO explained. While some can live independently, others have severe disabilities and require life-long care and support.

Autism also often has an impact on education and employment opportuni-

ties, while families can face significant demands in providing care and support.

The Secretary-General stressed that governments must adopt legislation and policies that guarantee equality and promote the full participation of people with autism in society.

"We need inclusive health and education systems, work environments, and urban design - to ensure people with autism have equal opportunities to thrive," he said.

"On World Autism Awareness Day, let us recommit to create a world where no person with autism is left behind," his message concluded.

Throughout its history, the UN has celebrated diversity and promoted the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities, including learning differences and developmental disabilities.

Make kids self-sufficient and healthy

Cooking with children promotes healthy eating and builds life skills

NEW YORK, April 3, (AP): To raise adventurous, self-sufficient and health-conscious eaters, get kids in the kitchen.

It may sound too simple, but those are just a few of the benefits when kids learn to cook. Cooking builds life skills, promotes healthy eating, boosts confidence and strengthens family bonds - all while making meal-time fun.

"It helps to think of it as less of a chore and more of an opportunity to be together as a family," said Jessica Battilana, staff editor at King Arthur Baking Company, which offers adult and children's cooking classes.

The food doesn't need to be fancy, and it doesn't all have to be homemade.

"The investment parents make early on to encourage their kids to participate in mealtime will pay dividends later, when they're able to handle kitchen tasks independently," Battilana said.

Whether your child loves to cook or has never held a knife, it's not too late to start building these skills.

Some of the rewards: If the COVID pandemic taught us anything, it was the importance of knowing how to cook.

During the lockdown, Becca Cooper Leebove, a mom of two in the Denver area, began teaching her children how to do simple tasks in the kitchen. Just 3 and 8 at the time, they began by dumping ingredients into a stand mixer, rolling out dough, or icing a cake.

Five years later, their skills continue to grow.

"My ultimate goal has always been family time - something to do together that's engaging, but also important to get them off their phones or iPads," Leebove said.

"They also love to brag when it's done and we all eat their masterpiece together," Leebove said.



Danielle McWilliams' daughters Reese, 7, (right), and Remi, 4, cook at their New Jersey home on Oct. 27, 2021. (AP)

They clean up after cooking and know how to set the table. Now that Leebove's son is 13, he helps chop veggies and sauté meat.

"It can feel special to kids to be included in an adult activity," said Cristi Donoso, 38, from Alexandria, Virginia. Donoso is a speech therapist and encourages her clients to cook with their kids in age-appropriate ways. She's also the mother to a 5-year-old, who has been baking with her since toddlerhood.

"There's a lot of real-world learning involved," Donoso said: math concepts, language skills and self-control. Kids learn by reading and following a step-by-step recipe. It takes concentration and other executive functioning skills. They also learn how to be safe in a kitchen, requiring self-control.

Exposure and sensory experience with food help kids become well-rounded eaters, she said.

"Your food experience isn't just

about sitting down to eat. It's about making a list, going to the store, and feeling the fruit," she said.

Eric Brown, along with his wife, Elizabeth Brown, opened Third Space Kitchen in August 2023. At their two Massachusetts locations, they offer cooking classes for kids, often through day camps, birthday parties or as a school-break activity.

"One thing I see a lot is that they're willing to experiment," Brown said, and knowing what's in the food helps kids get over any squeamishness. Or perhaps the common aversion to veggies.

Younger kids might start by making pizza dough from scratch or decorating cupcakes. Older kids have participated in full-cake icing competitions.

"As the programs progress, I hear less of 'Eww, I won't touch that' and more of 'What is that? I'll try it,'" said Brown, who has four kids of his own.

Jennifer Schittino, a Maryland-based working mom of two young children, wants to help them shape healthier habits for the future.

"It's both healthier and cheaper to cook from scratch," she said. She also wants her children to "understand the fundamentals so they can make healthy and nutritious meals on a limited budget."

Her kids know how to use knives and rolling pins, as well as hand-crank pasta, separate an egg, cut an avocado and toss pizza.

Even if you're not a skilled home cook, don't be intimidated teaching kids to be one.

Start simple. Make a list of 10 things that kids can learn to master, Battilana suggested. It might include scrambled eggs, a quesadilla with guacamole, or pasta with steamed veggies.

"Practice making those 10 things often so you get good at them, can shop for them easily, and make them without a recipe," she said.

'Virus is a risk for dementia'

New study finds shingles vaccine may lower dementia risk by 20%

WASHINGTON, April 3, (AP): A vaccine to fight dementia? It turns out there may already be one - shots that prevent painful shingles also appear to protect aging brains.

A new study found shingles vaccination cut older adults' risk of developing dementia over the next seven years by 20%.

The research, published Wednesday in the journal Nature, is part of growing understanding about how many factors influence brain health as we age - and what we can do about it.

"It's a very robust finding," said lead researcher Dr. Pascal Geldsetzer of Stanford University. And "women seem to benefit more," important as they're at higher risk of dementia.

The study tracked people in Wales who were around 80 when receiving the world's first-generation shingles vaccine over a decade ago. Now, Americans 50 and older are urged to get a newer vaccine that's proven more effective against shingles than its predecessor.

The new findings add another reason for people to consider rolling up their sleeves, said Dr. Maria Nagel of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, who studies viruses that infiltrate the nervous system.

The virus "is a risk for dementia and now we have an intervention that can decrease the risk," Nagel said.

With Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia on the rise in an aging population, "the implications of the study are profound," Dr. Anupam Jena, a Harvard physician and health economist, wrote in a Nature commentary.

Anyone who's had ever had chickenpox - nearly everybody born before 1980 - harbors that virus for the rest of their life. It hides in nerves and can break out when the immune system weakens from illness or age, causing painful, blister-like sores typically on



A doctor looks at PET brain scans at Banner Alzheimers Institute in Phoenix on Aug 14, 2018. (AP)

one side of the body that last for weeks - what's called shingles.

About 1 in 3 Americans will get shingles, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While most recover, it sometimes causes severe complications. If it infects an eye it can cause vision loss. Up to 20% of shingles patients suffer excruciating nerve pain months or even years after the rash itself is gone.

It's not clear exactly how Alzheimer's and other types of dementia form. But certain viruses that sneak inside the nervous system - especially members of the herpes family including the chickenpox virus -- have long been suspected of adding to genetic and other factors that make people more vulnerable.

Last summer, doctors at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital reported that an episode of shingles could raise someone's risk of dementia by about 20%.

Partly, it's because that virus can

cause inflammation, bad for organs including the brain. It also can directly infect blood vessels in the brain, causing clots and impeding blood flow, said Colorado's Nagel, a risk both for strokes and for dementia.

More intriguing, her lab also discovered shingles can spur formation of a sticky protein called amyloid that's one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's.

Adults who get recommended vaccines tend to have other brain-healthy habits including exercising and a good diet, which made it hard to prove an extra benefit.

Stanford's Geldsetzer took advantage of "a natural experiment" in Wales, which opened shingles vaccinations with an age limit: anyone 80 or older on Sept. 1, 2013, was ineligible but those still 79 could squeeze in. Comparing seniors who just met or just missed that cutoff would mimic a research study that randomly assigned otherwise similar people to be vaccinated or not.

Smartphones may aid in early detection of depression, researchers say

LANZHOU, April 3, (Xinhua): Smartphones have the potential to aid depression detection through digital phenotyping and feature extraction by utilizing the massive data they collect, according to Chinese scientists at Lanzhou University.

This has particular significance and potential for modern people suffering from high stress as smartphones can timely sense people's mental and physical conditions, according to their study newly published in the journal Proceedings of the IEEE.

The large amount of data generated by smartphones can continuously track users' mental state, with multiple advantages such as universality and objectivity, according to Yang Minqiang, associate professor of the School of Information Science and Engineering of Lanzhou University.

"Smartphones can help realize the timely identification of psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety," added Yang.

Smartphones contain a wealth of sensors, such as GPS, gyroscope, microphone, ambient light sensor and more.

These sensors can help record people's movement, social interactions, sleep, rhythm and other behavioral states, and can be used to identify and track psychological disorders.

Notably, smartphones have been widely used as portable data collectors for wearable and healthcare sensors that can passively collect data streams related to the environment, health status and behavior.

Recent research shows that the collected data can be used to monitor not only the physical states but also the mental

health of individuals. However, extracting the features of digital phenotypes that characterize major depressive disorder (MDD) is technically challenging and may raise significant privacy concerns.

This study carried out a comprehensive analysis of several key issues related to ubiquitous sensing for use in detecting MDD, according to Yang.

Researchers specifically analyzed existing methodologies and feature extraction algorithms used to detect MDD through digital phenotyping from smartphone data.

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Footage widely shared on social media

Mou appears to grab nose of rival coach after Turkish Cup defeat

ISTANBUL, April 3, (AP) — Jose Mourinho appeared to pinch the nose of Galatasaray coach Okan Buruk after his Fenerbahce team was knocked out of the Turkish Cup in a fiery match.

In footage widely shared on social media, Mourinho appears to reach out from behind his opponent and make contact with his nose. Buruk then falls to the ground holding his face before Mourinho is escorted away.

Three players were sent off in the Istanbul derby at Fenerbahce's stadium. Galatasaray won 2-1.

"He squeezed my nose from behind while I was going on. There was a slight scratch. Of course, it's not a very nice and stylish thing," Buruk said after the quarterfinal match. "I won't exaggerate about it, but it's not a very stylish thing."

Galatasaray vice president Metin Ozturk was not so restrained in his response to a fresh controversy involving the outspoken Mourinho.

"The latest incident is not only an attack on Galatasaray's coach but also on Turkish football. This is Mourinho, I don't know where he gets this courage," he said. "Where in the world can he do this? Where does he think Turkey is?"

Mourinho was accused by Galatasaray in February of making racist comments after another match involving the Istanbul rivals. Galatasaray said the former Real Madrid, Manchester United and Chelsea manager had used "unequivocally inhumane rhetoric" after he referred to the opposition bench "jumping around like monkeys."

Fenerbahce rejected the accusation and then said it had filed a lawsuit against Galatasaray for an "attack on the personal rights" of Mourinho.

Galatasaray reveled in its victory on Wednesday and posted a picture on its official X account of a smiling Buruk looking in Mourinho's direction.



Galatasaray's coach Okan Buruk, bottom, lies on the ground after Fenerbahce's manager Jose Mourinho, center, grabbed his nose at the end of the Turkish Cup quarterfinals soccer match between Fenerbahce and Galatasaray at the Ulker stadium, in Istanbul. (AP)



Gujarat Titans' Jos Buttler bats during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, India. (AP)

Gujarat outclasses Bengaluru, Siraj & Buttler steal the show

Titans earn second win of season

BENGALURU, India, April 3, (AP): Fast bowler Mohammed Siraj grabbed 3-19 against his former team. Jos Buttler made amends for poor glove work with a 31-ball half-century as the Gujarat Titans notched an eight-wicket win over the Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the Indian Premier League.

Siraj, who was not retained by Bengaluru, bowled to tight lengths in Bengaluru's first home game of the season before Liam Livingstone's 40-ball knock of 54 lifted the total to 169-8.

Buttler dropped one of the three catches and missed out stumping of Livingstone but smashed an unbeaten 73 off 39 balls as Gujarat cruised to 170-2 in 17.5 overs, denying Bengaluru a third straight victory.

Opening batter Sai Sudhansan (49) missed out on his third straight half-century, but his 75-run partnership with Buttler led Gujarat to its second win of the season.

Buttler had a few tough months coming into the IPL as he stepped down as England captain after

an early exit from the Champions Trophy. But he shrugged off the disappointment for his new IPL franchise, even if he was a bit scratchy behind the wickets.

Captain Shubman Gill scored run-a-ball 14 before he sliced a catch to Livingstone at third man just one ball after hitting Bhuvneshwar Kumar for a six inside the power play.

But with dew settling in, Buttler and Sudhansan batted with a lot of aggression before a dried ball brought success for Bengaluru. Sudhansan tried to play a lap-shot against Josh Hazlewood (1-43) for the second time but offered a simple catch to wicket-keeper Jitesh Sharma.

Buttler raised his second half-century of the season with a six over long-on against Livingstone as Bengaluru had little answer to the Englishman's aggression. Impact player Sherfane Rutherford also hit three sixes in his quickfire unbeaten 30 off 18 balls as he finished the game with a pulled six off Hazlewood.

"Really enjoyed it (batting)," Buttler said. "The bowlers did a fantastic job. If we fielded better, myself included, we would have chased less."

Siraj and pace bowler Arshad Khan bowled at a good pace and proved captain Gill's decision to bowl first right as Bengaluru slipped to 42-4 inside the first seven overs.

Virat Kohli (7) started with a cover-driven bound-

ary in Siraj's first over before pulling Khan's back-of-the-length delivery straight into the hands of Prasidh Krishna at backward square leg in the next over as he walked off to the disappointment of home team fans.

Buttler missed out on a straightforward edge of Phil Salt (14), but Siraj uprooted the off stump of the Englishman and also clean bowled Devdutt Padikkal (4). Ishant Sharma then pinned captain Rajat Patidar plumb leg before wicket for 12 as Bengaluru lost four top-order batters.

"It was emotional because I played for seven years here," Siraj said of his long association with Bengaluru. "There was some nervousness and some emotion ... (but) I have belief that I can do well, irrespective of wherever I am playing, and that is my mindset."

Livingstone and Jitesh Sharma (33) shared a vital 52-run stand off just 38 balls before left-arm spinner Sai Kishore (2-22) dismissed Sharma and Krunal Pandya in his two successive overs.

But Livingstone took on ace leg-spinner Rashid Khan (0-54) and struck three sixes in his one over after twice getting dropped and after Buttler missing out on a stumping chance.

Livingstone cashed in on the chances as Bengaluru scored 64 off the final five overs, with Tim David hitting two sixes and three boundaries in his little cameo of 32 off 18 balls.

Low loses on debut

Stuttgart sinks Leipzig to reach German Cup final

STUTTGART, Germany, April 3, (AP) — Zsolt Low lost his first game as Leipzig coach as Stuttgart held on for a 3-1 win in the semifinals of the German Cup. Stuttgart will play third-division Arminia Bielefeld in the final in Berlin next month

following Bielefeld's upset of last season's cup winner Bayer Leverkusen.

Leipzig dominated in Low's debut - he replaced Marco Rose on Sunday - but Stuttgart scored when it mattered and goalkeeper Alexander Nübel

had a standout game to help send the team to its first cup final in 12 years.

Angelo Stiller gave Stuttgart the lead in the sixth minute with a volley from outside the penalty area. Nick Woltemade made it 2-0 when he finished off a passing move in the 57th but Leipzig hit back almost immediately with a goal for Benjamin Sesko.

Jamie Leweling bundled the ball over the line at a corner to seal it in the 73rd.

Nübel earlier kept Stuttgart in the lead with save after save, keeping out three shots by Lois Openda in the first half alone and leaping to catch a Xavi Simons shot that took a deceptive deflection.

Jürgen Klopp, who oversees Leipzig in his role as head of Red Bull's global soccer, was in attendance to see Leipzig's first game under Low, a former assistant to Thomas Tuchel at Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich.

Low picked a young team, including a first start for 19-year-old defender Kosta Nedeljkovic - on loan from Aston Villa - but had to watch his new team miss out on what would have been its fourth cup final in five years. Leipzig next plays Hoffenheim in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Leipzig and Stuttgart were both aiming to end lackluster seasons on a high. Both failed to reach the knockout stages of the Champions League and both are on track to miss out on that competition next season. Leipzig is sixth in the Bundesliga and Stuttgart is 11th.



Stuttgart's Angelo Stiller, second from left, celebrates after scoring a goal during the German Cup, DFB Pokal, semi-final soccer match between VfB Stuttgart and RB Leipzig in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

Paris club needs just a draw

PSG eyes record-extending 13th French league title

PARIS, April 3, (AP) — The one-sided Ligue 1 title race could end on Saturday, with Paris Saint-Germain needing only a draw at home against Angers to clinch a record-extending 13th crown.

PSG's massive 21-point lead means it would have to lose the next seven games and Monaco win them all to overtake the Parisians, who are unbeaten in 27 league games.

PSG could finish the league campaign unbeaten, although coach Luis Enrique's side still has to play Nice and has a tricky match away to Strasbourg, with both opponents locked in a tight battle to qualify for next season's Champions League.

This season's Champions League, too, is in Luis Enrique's thoughts.

With a quarterfinal first-leg match against Aston Villa coming up in Paris on Wednesday, PSG can afford to rest several key players against Angers. Coach Alexandre Dujeux's side is 14th and has lost four straight league games without scoring a goal, conceding 11.

However, Enrique is not fond of squad rotation so may field close to a full-strength team at Parc des Princes.

It is hard to see how, given that PSG has not dropped any points since a 1-1 draw at home to Reims on Jan. 25, winning eight straight games.

A glimmer of hope for PSG's remaining opponents is that the team starts slowly and is prone to conceding early goals.

PSG fell behind early against Saint-Etienne last weekend, and it trailed 2-0 within 27 minutes to second-tier Dunkerque in the French Cup semifinal on Tuesday. PSG ended up winning both matches and scoring 10 goals in the process, but there is still a significant weakness against set-pieces and crosses.

One of the biggest success stories

this season has been Strasbourg's remarkable rise to sixth place under English coach Liam Rosenior.

Even more so considering it is his first season, and that he had only two weeks of preseason preparation with his new players.

Led by striker Emanuel Emegha (12 goals), the Alsace-based side has lost only once in the past 14 league games to join the chase for a Champions League spot.

Rosenior's team is on a four-game winning run heading into Sunday's trip to play relegation-threatened Reims. It is one point behind fourth-place Nice and three behind third-place Marseille, with the top four qualifying.

"I will never stop my players dreaming," Rosenior said about making the Champions League. "Of course it's possible."

He'll find out soon enough. Strasbourg has back-to-back games against Nice and Monaco this month and, with the race so tight, may need to beat PSG on May 4.

Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi was fuming with his players after last Saturday's 3-1 loss at struggling Reims.

So was midfielder Adrien Rabiot, who questioned the attitude of his teammates.

With good reason, as Marseille's third straight defeat allowed Monaco to move into second place.

But De Zerbi may want to look a bit deeper. Perhaps he should not have allowed his players to get so carried away when, after beating Lyon 3-2 in February, they embarked on a lap of honor and posed for a giant team photo as if they'd won a trophy.

Marseille has lost four out of seven games since. Fans will be looking for a home win against Toulouse on Sunday.

Sequeira fires Huracan past Corinthians

Universidad stuns Botafogo in Copa Libertadores opener

RIO DE JANEIRO, April 3, (Xinhua) — A second-half goal from Argentine forward Lucas Di Yorio gave Universidad de Chile a 1-0 home victory over defending champion Botafogo in their opening Copa Libertadores group stage match on Wednesday.

Di Yorio broke the deadlock just before the hour when he received Nicolas Guerra's pass on the counterattack and took a steady touch before rifling a low finish past goalkeeper John.

The Brazilian outfit was reduced to 10 men in the 96th minute after striker Igor Jesus was shown a second yellow card for a bad foul on Matias Zaldivia.

Meanwhile, two goals in the final 15 minutes gave Argentina's Velez Sarsfield a 2-1 home win over Uruguayan side Penarol.

Leonardo Fernandez handed Penarol the lead with a low finish just after half-time and the visitor looked to be cruising, before Maher Carrizo and Alvaro Montoro struck in quick succession to snatch victory for the Buenos Aires side.

Elsewhere, Chilean defender Paulo Diaz was on target as River Plate edged to a 1-0 away victory over Peru's Universitario.

Diaz put his side ahead with a close-range effort in the 17th minute following Facundo Colidio's corner.

In other fixtures on Wednesday, San Antonio won 3-2 at home to Olimpia, and Sao Paulo prevailed 1-0 at Talleres Cordoba.

Leonardo Sequeira scored twice as Argentina's Huracan secured a 2-1 away win over Brazilian side Corinthians in their Copa Sudamericana group stage opener.

The visitor took the lead when Sequeira latched onto Leonardo Gil's set piece with a header into the bottom-left corner.

Midfielder Raniele put the host on level terms by nodding home following Andre Carrillo's corner.

Sequeira restored Huracan's advantage with a low left-footed shot that left goalkeeper Matheus Donelli with no chance. Corinthians controlled 71 percent of possession and completed more than twice as many passes as the Buenos Aires outfit but lacked incisiveness in the final third.

Meanwhile, Peru's Melgar recovered from a two-goal deficit to salvage a 3-3 home draw against Brazilian side



Enzo Perez of Argentina's River Plate jumps over Jairo Velez of Peru's Universitario de Deportes during a Copa Libertadores Group B soccer match in Lima, Peru. (AP)



Martin Braithwaite of Brazil's Gremio dribbles past Lautaro Comas of Paraguay's Luqueno during a Copa Sudamericana Group D soccer match at Defensores del Chaco stadium in Asuncion, Paraguay. (AP)

Vasco da Gama.

Former Liverpool and Barcelona playmaker Philippe Coutinho opened the scoring for Vasco with a long-range effort, but Gregorio Rodriguez equalized with a 39th-minute header.

Cavaliers rally past Knicks for 61st win, OKC on track for homecourt advantage



Miami Heat guard Pelle Larsson (9) drives to the basket against Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum (0) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Boston. (AP)

Miami overcomes Celtics

CLEVELAND, April 3, (AP): Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers matched the second-most wins in franchise history, defeating the New York Knicks 124-105 on Wednesday night.

Jarrett Allen added 21 points for the Cavaliers, who have 61 wins, equaling the 2009-10 squad. That was the final season in LeBron James' first stint with the team. The franchise record is 66 wins during the 2008-09 season.

With Cleveland's win and Boston's loss to Miami, the Cavaliers have a five-game lead for the top seed in the Eastern Conference with six games remaining.

Thunder 119, Pistons 103

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points, and Oklahoma City beat short-handed Detroit for their 11th straight win.

Jalen Williams scored 23 points and Chet Holmgren added 22 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks for the Thunder.

Oklahoma City has a three-game lead over the Cleveland Cavaliers with six games remaining in the race for the league's best record and homecourt advantage throughout the playoffs.

Heat 124, Celtics 103

In Boston, Tyler Herro had 25 points and nine assists and Miami extended their season-best winning

streak to six games with a victory over Boston.

Bam Adebayo had 21 points for Miami, which had seven players finish in double figures to cap a 3-0 road trip.

The Heat's run of wins come after a stretch last month during which they lost 10 consecutive games. They played without Andrew Wiggins (hamstring), Duncan Robinson (back) and Kevin Love (personal reasons).

Jaylen Brown had 24 points and nine rebounds for the Celtics, who had their season-best nine-game win streak snapped. Jayson Tatum and Derrick White both added 16 points apiece.



Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jalen Williams, left, blocks a shot by Detroit Pistons forward Tobias Harris, right, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

Rockets 143, Jazz 105

In Houston, Jalen Green scored 22 points, Dillon Brooks added 21 and Houston beat Utah for their 50th win of the season.

Jabari Smith Jr. finished with 15 points and 14 rebounds off the bench, Tari Eason had 15 points and nine rebounds and Alperen Sengun had 15 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists for Houston, which shot 54% and was 19 of 45 on 3-pointers.

Isaiah Collier had 22 points and 10 assists, Collin Sexton finished with 18 points and Keyonte George had 14 points, for the Jazz, who lost their seventh straight game. Walker Kessler added 11 points and 12 rebounds. Utah shot 43% and was 10 of 40 on 3-pointers.

Spurs 113, Nuggets 106

In Denver, Harrison Barnes scored 20 points to lead six San Antonio players in double figures and the Spurs beat short-handed Denver.

In his second career start, Jaylen Pickett recorded his first triple-double with 17 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

Russell Westbrook scored 30 points, but didn't have any in the fourth quarter, when he missed a running reverse layup that would have tied the game with 4 1/2 minutes remaining.

Pacers 119, Hornets 105

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton had 22 points and 10 assists, Aaron Nesmith scored 16 points and Pascal Siakam added 15 on his 31st birthday, leading Indiana to a victory over the Charlotte.

The playoff-bound Pacers have won three of four and eight of 10. They clinched their second straight

playoff spot Tuesday when Atlanta lost to Portland. Myles Turner also had 15 points and nine rebounds.

Miles Bridges scored 18 points to lead Charlotte, which has lost six of seven. Seth Curry and Mark Williams each scored 16 points and Williams had 12 rebounds.

Wizards 116, Kings 111

In Washington, Jordan Poole scored 23 points and Washington beat Sacramento to split the season series between the teams.

Bub Carrington and AJ Johnson each added 19 points for the Wizards, who entered Wednesday tied with Utah for the fewest wins in the NBA with 16. Tristan Vukcevic had 17 and Anthony Gill added 10.

DeMar DeRozan scored 20 of his 29 points in the fourth quarter trying to rally the Kings from a 14-point deficit after three quarters.

Mavericks 120, Hawks 118

In Dallas, Anthony Davis' driving floater with 3.4 seconds left capped his 34-point night, his highest scoring game with Dallas, in the Mavericks' victory over Atlanta.

Davis also had 15 rebounds and five blocks despite missing most of the second period with an eye injury as Dallas overcame an 11-point third-quarter deficit.

Clippers 114, Pelicans 98

In Inglewood, Kawhi Leonard scored 28 points and James Harden had 21 points and 10 assists to lead Los Angeles to a victory over New Orleans.

Ivica Zubac added 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers, who won for the fourth time in five games and 12th in 15 games. Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 16 points.

Kuwait Club too strong for Al-Arabi

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Kuwait Club triumphed over Al-Arabi with a dominant 104-61 victory in a at the Basketball Association Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. This win lifted the Whites to 27 points, securing the top spot in the standings, while Al-Arabi remained at 18 points. In another match, Al-Qadisiya defeated Al-Nasr 120-79. As per the tournament rules, the top four teams will advance to the semi-finals, where they will compete for the championship title. The first-place team will face the fourth-place team in a best-of-three playoff, while the second and third-place teams will battle it out in a similar format.



Al-Arabi player tackles Kuwait Club player during the league game.

Ayesh attends ISF meetings in Serbia as Kuwait backs Bahrain's candidate

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Walid Ayesh, Vice President of the Arab School Federation and member of the International School Sports Federation (ISF), departed for Serbia yesterday to attend the ISF meetings.

During the meetings, the agenda for the federation's social activities will be discussed, along with the upcoming elections for the presidency of the International School Sports Federation. Kuwait is backing Dr. Sheikh Saqr Al Khalifa, the candidate from Bahrain and Asia, for the presidency.

Ayesh highlighted the significance of these meetings, which will help shape the future activities of the ISF. He also expressed his full support for Sheikh Saqr Al Khalifa, who represents the Gulf States and Asia in the presidential race, wishing him the best of luck in the elections.



Walid Ayesh

Al-Hilal & Al-Nasr face off in a key Saudi League clash

RIYADH, April 3: Riyadh will be the stage for a thrilling Saudi derby between Al-Hilal and Al-Nasr in the 26th round of the Saudi Professional League. The highly anticipated match will take place at Al-Za'ab Stadium, the home ground of Al-Hilal.

Currently in second place with 57 points, Al-Hilal is six points behind third-placed Al-Nasr, with Al-Ittihad leading the standings at 61 points. This clash is crucial for Al-Hilal to keep its title hopes alive, as it aims to stay within reach of Al-Ittihad, while Al-Nasr is determined to close the gap on the league leaders.

Historically, April has been a challenging month for Al-Nasr when facing Al-Hilal, ever since the professional league system was introduced in the

2008-2009 season. Al-Nasr has failed to secure a win in this fixture during this month, with Al-Hilal recording five victories and two draws across seven encounters.

Their most recent meeting in April 2024 saw Al-Hilal emerge victorious with a 2-1 win in the Saudi Super Cup. Over the years, Al-Hilal has netted 13 goals in April matches against Al-Nasr, while the latter has managed only five goals, failing to secure a win in any of the last 17 years.

In another exciting encounter, Al-Ittihad and Al-Ahli will face off in the Jeddah derby. Al-Ahli will be eager to avenge their 1-0 defeat to Al-Ittihad earlier in the season, making this match one to watch for all football fans in Saudi Arabia.

Best of the Rest

City rivals draw 1-1: Inter Milan's chances of a treble remain alive, as do AC Milan's hopes of sneaking into Europe after the city rivals drew 1-1 in the first leg of their Italian Cup semifinal.

Hakan Calhanoglu thumped in the equalizer against his former club in the 67th minute after Milan forward Tammy Abraham had netted the opener less than two minutes into the second half.

Bologna beat Empoli 3-0 on Tuesday in the other semifinal. The return legs are scheduled for April 23-24.

Inter is on the hunt to repeat a treble haul of trophies it achieved in 2010 under Jose Mourinho. It has a three-point advantage over second-placed Napoli in Serie A - where it is the defending champion - and visits Bayern Munich on Tuesday in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal.

Milan has struggled of late and just two wins in its past six league matches has seen it slip to ninth in Serie A. Winning the Italian Cup guarantees a Europa League spot.

However, the Rossoneri took the lead right at the start of the second half. Inter midfielder Davide Frattesi tried to challenge Youssouf Fofana on the edge of the area but the ball came through to Abraham, who lived up to his reputation as a big game goalscorer with an angled strike into the bottom left corner.

But Calhanoglu levelled 20 minutes later with a powerful 20-yard effort that squirmed under Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Pumas salvages 1-1 draw against Whitecaps

LAFC blanks Messi and Miami in Champs Cup 1st leg

LOS ANGELES, April 3, (AP): Nathan Ordaz scored in the 57th minute, and Los Angeles FC kept Lionel Messi off the scoresheet in a 1-0 victory over Inter Miami in the first leg of their CONCACAF Champions Cup quarterfinal matchup.

Messi had produced a goal (5) or an assist (2) in each of his first six Champions Cup appearances since joining Miami two years ago, including three goals in the early rounds of this year's tournament.

After returning from injury only last weekend, Messi played the entire match in Los Angeles. He put two of his five shots on target, but Hugo Lloris stopped both chances.

The loss was the first of 2025 for Miami, which had won seven straight matches across all competitions while starting 8-0-1 under new coach Javier Mascherano.

"It was a game that we expected," Mascherano said after his first defeat with Miami. "We know L.A. They have good players, and they have players in front that can (make) the difference. But I think we controlled them almost all the game in a good way. Obviously, we didn't have the best night tonight, but in the end, it's the first leg. We have the next game next week, and we will see. I believe that we can do the right things to (get) through."

The clubs meet again in Fort Lauderdale on Wednesday, April 9, for the second leg of the quarterfinal.

The aggregate winner advances

to the semifinals to face MLS' Vancouver Whitecaps or Liga MX's Pumas, who played to a 1-1 draw in their first leg.

LAFC, which finished as the runner-up in this tournament in 2020 and 2023, ended its 0-4-1 skid over the previous 3 1/2 weeks with a strong performance on both ends against powerhouse Miami, which leads the MLS standings at 4-0-1.

The 37-year-old Messi has been slowed in recent weeks by an adductor injury, forcing him to miss duties with the Argentine national team last month. But he returned to MLS play last Saturday with

a goal as a substitute in Miami's win over Philadelphia, and he was in the Herons' starting lineup in Los Angeles.

Messi took two free kicks in dangerous areas in the first half, but he sailed his first over the bar and sent the second directly to Lloris.

He had a good chance in the 80th minute, but his quick turnaround shot above the penalty area was also too high. He fired another low shot at Lloris in the 86th minute, and the French keeper smothered it after a bobble.

Messi earned one last free kick off a foul on a dribble in second-half

injury time, but also sailed it high.

The 21-year-old Ordaz put LAFC ahead when he eluded Busquets and hammered a swift shot into the bottom corner of the Herons' net from well outside the penalty area. The promising homegrown player and Los Angeles native also scored against Columbus in a Champions Cup match last month.

Ordaz had narrowly avoided a red card in the first half when he became entangled with Maxi Falcone. The Uruguayan defender went down from what Miami felt was a punch by Ordaz, who was given only a yellow upon video review.

"There's contact, (and) there's contact prior to that from the opposing player," Cherundolo said. "I applaud the decision not to send guys off the field, and I would say the same thing if it was the reverse, if it was a Miami player in question."

The packed crowd included NBA stars Stephen Curry and Jimmy Butler, whose Golden State Warriors play the Lakers on Thursday night.

Adalberto Carrasquilla scored a late equalizer Wednesday to help Mexico City's Pumas salvage a 1-1 draw with the Vancouver Whitecaps in the first leg of their CONCACAF Champions Cup quarterfinal series.

Brian White put the home team ahead in the 72nd minute, taking advantage of a mistake from goalkeeper Alex Padilla to score his fourth goal in five matches in the tournament.



Los Angeles FC midfielder Ryan Hollingshead, left, and Inter Miami midfielder Fafa Picault try to head the ball during the first half of an MLS soccer match in Los Angeles. (AP)

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AC Milan's Tijani Reijnders, left, and Inter Milan's Nicolo Barella fight for the ball during an Italian Cup semifinal first leg soccer match between AC Milan and Inter Milan at the San Siro stadium, in Milan, Italy. The match ended 1-1. (AP)
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Sports

Barcelona, Real renew rivalry in Copa final

Torres sinks Atletico

MADRID, April 3, (Xinhua): FC Barcelona won 1-0 away to Atletico Madrid to secure a Copa del Rey final appearance against Real Madrid.

Ferran Torres' first-half goal sealed Barcelona's spot in the Cup final in a game where Barcelona dominated the first 45 minutes before Atletico took control after the break.

Barca coach Hansi Flick surprised many with his starting lineup, fielding Torres ahead of top scorer Robert Lewandowski, while Fermin Lopez started instead of Gavi, who replaced the injured Dani Olmo.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone made no surprises, with Juan Musso starting in goal, as he has throughout the Cup season.

Following a first leg that produced eight goals, a high-octane start to the game was expected, and Lamine Yamal almost set up Torres in the opening minute.

Atletico defender Cesar Azpilicueta survived a VAR check after eight minutes following a late studs-up challenge on Raphinha. When Rodrigo De Paul was also booked for a late tackle on the Brazilian, tensions threatened to boil over.

Yamal curled a shot just wide for Barcelona as the visitors began to dominate possession in Atletico's half. It came as no surprise when Torres opened the scoring in the 27th minute. Yamal delivered a perfect through ball, and Torres' first-time finish guided the ball past Musso.

Yamal and Raphinha nearly added a second during a scramble in the penalty area, while Atletico's only significant chance was a Robin Le Normand header from a free kick that went over the bar.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone made a triple substitution at halftime, bringing on Javi Galan, Alexander Sorloth, and Clement Lenglet. These changes injected energy into his side.

Sorloth fired into the side netting when he should have hit the target, and Lenglet headed over from a corner.

Barcelona appeared disjointed and struggled to string passes together as Atletico disrupted its passing game. The momentum shifted, and it was Atletico's turn to apply pressure to the visiting team's goal.

However, despite Atletico's efforts, the Barcelona defense, well-organized by Inigo Martinez and Ronald Araujo, prevented goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny from being forced into a difficult save.



Atletico Madrid's Jose Gimenez blocks Barcelona's Raphinha during the Spanish Copa del Rey semifinal second leg soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Barcelona in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Total of 65 athletes, both male and female to represent Kuwait

Kuwait's athletes gear up for 3rd Gulf Beach Games in Oman

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: The Kuwait Olympic Committee has announced its participation in the 3rd Gulf Beach Games "Muscat 2025," which will take place in the Sultanate of Oman from tomorrow. A total of 65 athletes, both male and female, will represent Kuwait across six of the eight sports scheduled for the tournament, which runs until April 11.

Mohammed Al-Khalifan, the head of Kuwait's delegation and director of the committee, confirmed that Kuwait will compete in beach soccer, beach volleyball, sailing, air sports (paragliding), athletics, and equestrian peg-tie competitions. The tournament will also feature beach handball and long-distance swimming.

Al-Khalifan emphasized that Kuwait's participation underscores the committee's commitment to fostering collaboration among Gulf Cooperation Council countries. He highlighted the importance of sports activities in promoting unity and sports integration among Gulf youth, noting that the tournament would feature elite athletes from across the region.

He also expressed optimism about the event's significance for Kuwaiti players, who aim to achieve top results and bring pride to their country. He thanked the government for its continued support of Kuwait's sports sector and praised the Oman Olympic Committee for its excellent preparations in hosting the event. Al-Khalifan expects fierce competition among the Gulf athletes in what promises to be an exciting tournament.

The Kuwait Olympic Committee



Paragliding delegation participating in the Gulf Beach Games.

has also confirmed the administrative delegation for the event, which includes Major General (Ret.) Mohammed Saeed Al-Khalifan as the head of the delegation, Dr. Hussein Al-Saeed as Mission Director, Mohammed Al-Saadi as Director of the Technical Department, Mohammed Al-Shabrawi as Financial Director, Ayman Al-Waili as Media Attaché, Ibrahim Rizq as Administrator, and Mustafa Al-Yasiri as Photographer.

The air sports team consists of Ahmed Al-Mas, Naif Al-Humaidi, Talal Al-Mutawa, Mohammed Al-Dosari, Ibrahim Al-Rashoud, Nader

Al-Mutairi (coach), and Ahmed Al-Shalhi (team manager). The sailing team includes Hamad Al-Masoud, Ali Anki, Abdulaziz Al-Mansour, Badr Bu Hamad, Amina Shah, Salem Qali, Saud Al-Masoud, Manaf Al-Wahib, Ihab Al-Shanabi (coach), and Ibrahim Al-Farhi (team manager). The beach volleyball team consists of Taha Sadiq, Jassim Al-Sabbagh, Nawaf Al-Rashidi, Abdulwahab Talib, Khaled Al-Mutairi (coach), and Abdulaziz Al-Holi (referee). The athletics team includes Khaled Al-Masoud, Mohammed Al-Enezi, Mohammed Ashkanani, Badr Mohammed, Hashem Al-Ali, Khaled Al-Shammari, Ali Badr, Faleh Al-Ajmi

(team manager), Hamou Al-Bukili, and Umrit Tan (coaches). The beach soccer team features Omar Al-Ruqi, Mishal Al-Shafei, Abdulaziz Al-Salem, Mohammed Al-Kandari, Jassim Al-Sabaa, Omar Al-Fulaikawi, Abdulaziz Al-Sidra, Badr Al-Tarmoum, Jassim Al-Harban, Ahmed Al-Mashmoum, Wael Al-Shammari, Shamlan Al-Kandari, Mohammed Al-Shaer, Mohammed Hajjiya, Abdullah Fouad Ashour (team manager), Tariq Al-Khalidi, and Hussein Khaled (coaches). The peg picking team consists of Abdullah Al-Daihani, Abdullah Al-Hindi, Hussein Al-Ajmi, Ghanem Al-Ajmi, Ibrahim Al-Enezi, Naif Al-Usaimi (team manager), Rashid Al-Marri, and Ali Bin Ali (coaches).

The tournament's competitions will be held in various locations in Muscat and Bousher, with football matches taking place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex from April 7 to 11, and volleyball on the beaches of Muscat. Beach handball will also be played at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex from April 5 to 11, while long-distance swimming will occur on the beaches of Muscat from April 9 to 11. Sailing competitions will take place on the beaches of Muscat from April 6 to 10, and tent pegging will be held at Al Rahba Farm from April 8 to 10. Athletics and paragliding events are scheduled for the beaches of Muscat and Al Hail Beach, respectively, from April 5 to 10.

Kuwait's athletes are eager to compete, aiming for success and to make their mark at this prestigious regional event.

Expected to return next week

'Pizzi departs Kuwait without formal leave'



Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef greets Al-Jazeera players.

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Kuwait Football Association (KFA) President Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef revealed that Argentine coach Juan Pizzi sought permission from the national team manager before leaving the country but did not follow the official procedure for obtaining special leave.

Pizzi departed last week following the Blues' match against Oman on March 25 in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers. Al-Yousef confirmed that the coach is expected to return next week.

Previously, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef had assured that the current technical staff would remain in charge until the end of Kuwait's qualifying campaign in June. Pizzi and his assistants' contracts are set to expire in July.

In his efforts to advance Kuwaiti football, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef has enlisted Spanish legend Carles Puyol as an advisor. Speculation suggests that Puyol may collaborate with his football company to implement a long-term strategy for the sport's development in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef expressed his ambition to expand the Federation's competitions by adding six to eight new clubs next season.

Speaking after the match between Al-Jahra and Al-Jazeera—a newcomer to the Federation's competitions—Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef emphasized his commitment to integrating Al-Jazeera into the league as a model for private sector involvement. He also noted that the Federation has received numerous applications from new clubs, with financial stability being a key selection criterion.

Al-Qadsiya seeks momentum

Al-Arabi aims to bounce back

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 3: Al-Arabi and Al-Qadsiya are set for two crucial matchups in the Zain Premier League championship group, with both teams facing tough challenges. Al-Qadsiya will take on Al-Salmiya at 6:35 pm today at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, while Al-Arabi will meet Al-Fahaheel at the same time on Saturday, at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium.

These matches carry significant weight for both teams, as they prepare for key continental clashes. Al-Qadsiya is gearing up to face Iraq's Duhok next Tuesday at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium in the first leg of the Gulf Champions League final, while Al-Arabi will host Turkmenistan's Arkadag next Wednesday in the AFC Challenge League semi-final.

For Al-Arabi, the clash with Al-Fahaheel presents a tough test, especially as it battles on multiple fronts. The team is chasing the domestic league title while also aiming for its first-

ever Asian championship. Securing a victory is crucial, not only to regain momentum after its 1-1 draw with Al-Salmiya in the previous round but also to reclaim the top spot from Kuwait-Club, who currently lead the table with 47 points—two ahead of Al-Arabi's 45. A win would also provide a much-needed morale boost ahead of their continental showdown with Arkadag.

Al-Arabi enters the match after a challenging 2-1 victory over Al-Sahel in the preliminary round of the Crown Prince Cup, where it struggled to deliver its best performance.

Meanwhile, fifth-placed Al-Fahaheel (28 points) is eager to improve its league standing and build momentum ahead of its participation in the Amir's Cup and Crown Prince's Cup.

In the second match, Al-Qadsiya (35 points) is determined to hold onto third place and secure another victory before facing Duhok. The team is coming off a hard-fought win over Al-Nasr in the preliminary round of the Crown Prince Cup, with veteran star Bader Al-Mutawa netting the decisive goal in the 83rd minute to seal a quarterfinal spot.

Villa boosts Europe hopes

Liverpool edges Everton to restore 12-point lead



Everton's Jake O'Brien, left, and Liverpool's Luis Diaz battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Everton at Anfield in Liverpool. (AP)

LONDON, April 3, (Xinhua): Diogo Jota scored a 57th-minute goal to see Liverpool win the Merseyside derby 1-0 against Everton and retain a 12-point lead in the Premier League.

Jota's goal after Luis Diaz's back-heel was enough to beat a well-organized defense and leave Arne Slot's side needing just 13 points from eight games to assure the title. Jack Grealish needed just two minutes to open the scoring for Manchester City at home to struggling Leicester City, taking advantage of an assist from Savinho.

Omar Marmoush doubled the lead before the half hour, showing there is life without the injured Erling Haaland.

Alexander Isak and Sandro Tonali scored in Newcastle's 2-1 win at home to Brentford that ended the visiting side's run of five consecutive away wins.

Second-half goals from Marcus Rashford and Marco Asensio strengthened Aston Villa's hopes of returning to Europe next season with a 3-0 win away to Brighton, with Donyell Malen scoring deep into injury time to end a miserable few days for Brighton after its FA Cup exit at the weekend.

Ipswich Town stunned Bournemouth with goals from Nathan Broadhead in the 34th minute and Liam Delap on the hour, before Evanilson pulled a goal back seven minutes later. Southampton's hopes of a third win this season after Paul Onuachu's 20th-minute goal were ruined in injury time by Matheus Franca's equalizer for Crystal Palace.