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Higher authorities dissatisfied with the Supreme Council's slow response to proposals

Opinion

The judiciary is under scrutiny

■ This stage requires a firm decision before June, and strict oversight will not allow any errors.

Kuwait has suffered from a pathological state for several years, and there are international crimes that have not been adjudicated.

Human rights protection laws are indisputable and have been put on the spot.

■ The slow pace of legislative reform could cause serious harm to Kuwait.

Kuwait is under the scrutiny of international institutions lurking over a number of laws.

■ The Minister of Justice is leading a massive reform project that requires, at a minimum, extending a helping hand to him.

■ The minister inherited a heavy legacy from his predecessors, who preferred to leave matters to the care of deceased.

Reform is urgently needed, no matter the cost, because time does not wait.

Hiring those who do not understand the structure of Kuwaiti society has led to misplaced consultations.

Kuwaitizing the judiciary is a successful step, as the political leadership seeks to localize important

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

ON March 16. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited the Supreme Judicial Council – a visit that gained "special and exceptional significance," as evident to anyone with insight and discernment.

While His Highness the Amir affirmed his belief that the judiciary is the cornerstone of achieving justice, and expressed his pride in the impartial Kuwaiti judiciary, distinguished by its professionalism and competence in preserving rights and upholding justice; his speech during the meeting did not lack what he described as "some matters and issues that affect justice and raise doubt and confusion regarding the system of some rulings."

His Highness clearly referred to "the issuance of conflicting and contradictory rulings. One judge issues a ruling, and another overturns it; even though the cases are all similar in facts and circumstances, without any addition or omission. This raises doubt and suspicion about the rulings."

He stressed that "the rush to issue judicial rulings to uphold falsehood, settle scores and achieve personal interests at the expense of supporting the oppressed perpetuates tribalism and pre-Islamic fanaticism, and threatens the interests of the country and its people."

Out of His Highness' commitment to maintain the integrity of the judiciary, he considered the last resort and refuge for all to protect rights and freedoms. He instructed members of the judiciary to "order, hope and consider." He explained that the order is "the rapid Kuwaitization of the judiciary and supporting positions. The hope is to quickly adjudicate and resolve disputes, as well as the avoidance of adjournment of sessions for the most trivial reasons. As for consideration, it is placing the interests of Kuwait, supporting the oppressed, achieving justice, and avoiding conflicting rulings with similar facts and circumstances above all other considerations."



Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait

the adjudication of cases and prevent their accumulation and delay.

Although nearly a month has passed since the meeting and the royal speech, and even despite the Supreme Judicial Council's prompt convening of a special session – less than 48 hours after the meeting, after which it announced its commitment to implement all orders and directives contained in the royal speech, "nothing has happened". Matters remain at a standstill, not beyond the framework of "promises and pledges."

According to reliable sources, circles within the Ministry of Justice are disturbed by what they described as "the Supreme Judicial Council's delay in responding to the ministry's letters regarding amending and updating laws to serve Kuwait globally.

They said "the Supreme Judicial Council has its status and importance, and it is undoubtedly appreciated and respected by everyone. However, the slow response to proposals is hampering the legal and legislative reform process, up to the point where it is feared that it will cause significant harm to Kuwait. If the delay continues longer, Kuwait will be under the scrutiny of numerous international institutions regarding a number of laws related to combating terrorism and money laundering, human rights, and some civil and criminal procedures; especially since some of these institutions are seeking to settle scores with Kuwait over its Arab and regional stances."

mendous efforts in this regard; as the next phase requires the issuance of a package of laws and similar legislative amendments before June, which will witness reviews in several international forums to close loopholes through which criminals can escape and to address internationally criticized aspects of the implementation of Kuwaiti laws.

These sources also confirmed that the minister's actions and his legal revolution are the scrutiny of higher authorities who are keen on expediting the requirements of this new era.

They stressed the need for "a real shakeup of legislation, some of which is based on the private interests of influential individuals or members of previous parliaments, or has been mislabeled and has tarnished Kuwait's image globally." They emphasized that the higher directive to expedite legislative reform are currently the Minister of Justice's primary concern."

Yes, Kuwait has suffered from a morbid condition in recent years, and even decades, which worsened when some constitutional institutions, which are currently inactive, encroached on the government's powers. In the eyes of the world, this has rendered it incapable of moving toward development. Therefore, higher authorities have ordered rapid reform, regardless of the cost, because time waits for nothing while the country stagnates.

In this context, money laundering laws, human rights laws, and everything that could tarnish the State's image have been put under intense scrutiny; with the goal of "being consistent with the demands of the times on one hand, and on the other hand, to restore the State's global image, especially with some money thieves fleeing abroad and the lack of faithful implementation of international agreements." Thus, the sources revealed that "strict oversight in this area is necessary and it should not allow any flaws." On the other hand, they believe that "some consultations were misplaced or incomplete, and although they were not binding, they were implemented; creating new obstacles to updating the laws, especially since some people do not understand the structure of Kuwaiti society and its social culture that played a major role in this.'

leadership seeks to localize the country's important facilities, and the judiciary is the backbone, indeed, the brain of any development."

They added "the failure to localize judicial institutions was a source of great discontent in the decision-making process. The opinions expressed were not in compliance with basic international standards on one hand; and on the other hand, they contained loopholes that could undermine any court rulings, as His Highness the Amir pointed out in his speech before the Supreme Judicial Council, particularly regarding conflicting rulings and similarity of grounds.

They cited the statements of His Highness the Amir during his visits to State institutions and sectors last Ramadan, "so that the workshop could begin with full seriousness, without any justification or hesitation."

They pointed out that Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait wanted to "break away from the norm, and not keep up with the seven ministers who served in the ministry in recent years and left things as they were. They neither initiated the necessary reforms nor exert any effort either out of fear of parliamentary accountability or out of self-interest, which kept the situation as it was.' They affirmed that the minister is leading a massive legislative reform project, which requires, at the very least, a helping hand to assist him in implementing the royal directives.

Sources said those who deal with the Minister of Justice noticed his despair over the legacy he has before him, and the time remaining until June, especially since many questions have been directed to Kuwait from international circles.

They added "it is true that the leg-

■ The list of laws to be amended is long, starting with combating corruption and theft of public funds.

Local laws are consistent with international laws regarding bounced checks and civil financial cases.

☐ Judicial and security institutions are not collectors of debts without guarantees ... and the fine is imposed on the negligent.

His Highness clearly ordered the enactment of legislation to develop judicial work and regulations to facilitate its procedures, to expedite

According to the same sources, judicial reform is being closely monitored and pursued by the highest authorities in the country. The Minister of Justice is exerting tre-

In context, sources said "the Kuwaitization of the judiciary was a successful step, because the political

islative amendment project is both large and complex, and some of it requires speed but without haste; this does not prevent the amendment of many criminal laws to combat corruption and plundering of public funds, as well as major crimes, particularly the extradition of criminals."

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Army Deputy Chief inspects site ahead of counter-terror exercise

By Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Kuwait Army Deputy Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has inspected the site for the Jabriva joint exercise scheduled for Thursday at Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base under the patronage of Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Sabah and the supervision of the Army, in cooperation with several government and military agencies.

The General Staff of the Army revealed that the

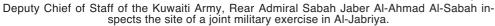
inspection visit included a thorough assessment of the readiness of the participating agencies in the exercise. During the visit, Rear Admiral Al-Sabah listened

to a detailed explanation of the scenarios that will be addressed, and the mechanisms for coordination and field interaction to implement the joint missions.

He expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the preparations for the exercise, stressing the need to fully benefit from it in order to gain experience and unify concepts among the participants.

Continued on Page 5

KUNA photo



Kuwait defers power cuts as demand falls

KD 25.8 mln green light for grid upgrade

By Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The weekend drop in temperatures reduced power consumption by 2,200 megawatts on Friday, with the load index recording 10,400 megawatts compared to the peak of 12,640 megawatts last Thursday.

Sources from the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy pointed out that most government buildings are closed during the weekend; indicating these buildings consume large amounts of energy to operate their air conditioners and facilities -- both central and on-site. Sources affirmed this, along with the lower temperatures, prompted the ministry to refrain from implementing the programmed power cuts in residential, industrial and agricultural areas; which happened in the previous week.

Sources also pointed out that the inclusion of units under maintenance to the power grid on a regular basis and the import of electricity from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) will mitigate the power crisis brought about by lack of productivity, as well as provide relief to the grid in the coming days.

Earlier, the ministry announced scheduled power outages in some parts of 21 residential areas for one week from Saturday, April 12 to Saturday, April 19. The outages, which will last for four hours, will begin daily at 8:00 am.

According to a statement issued by the ministry, the outages are

necessary to carry out maintenance work on a number of secondary transformer plants.

The affected areas include: Farwaniya Block 3; Yarmouk Block 3; Saad Al-Abdullah blocks 1, 2, 3, and 4; Fintas; Fahaheel; Mangaf; Adailiya Block 1; Salmiya blocks 2, 3, 9, 10, and 12; Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh blocks 1, 2, and 3; Khaitan Block 4; Hawally blocks 3, 7, and 9; Sabah Al-Salem blocks 1 and 9; Funaitees blocks 1, 2, 5, and 8; Al Qairawan blocks 2 and 3; Granada Blocks 2 and 3; Al Omariya Block 1; Bneid Al Qar blocks 1 and 2; Sabah Al Nasser blocks 3, 5, and 6; Andalus Block 13; Al Daiya Block 2; Jaber Al-Ahmad Block

The ministry has urged residents in the affected areas to take the necessary precautions

Furthermore, sources confirmed that the ministry obtained approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on Wednesday to directly contract with the GCCIA for the construction of two overhead power lines from the new Wafra station to the Sabah Al-Ahmad 3Z stations at a total cost of KD25.801 million.

Sources explained this contract is made possible through the coordinated efforts of the GCCIA and member states to modernize the electricity grid to ensure it operates efficiently to be fully capable of meeting the power needs of the nation.

Sources disclosed that the new overhead lines planned for construction will enable the transmission of electricity, especially during the summer months and to meet the increased demand for electricity from the new Wafra station.

Abdoly

Prayer Timings Fajr 04:04 15:23 Asr ... Sunrise .. 05:26 Maghrib .. 18:12 Zohr 11:49 Isha 19:32



Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot with light to moderate northerly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 12-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Weather By Night: Mild with light vari-

by Night: Wild with light van	- Abdaly	34	19
able wind to light to moderate		35	22
northeasterly wind, with speeds o 12-35 km/h and some scattered		32	22
clouds will appear.	Jal Aliyah	33	20
Station Max Exp Min Rec	Nuwaisib	33	23
Kuwait Airport 32 23	Wafra	33	22

Teachers sacked months ago to get back their jobs in MoE





2

19

Tunisian FM

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Several months after the termination of the services of 56 expatriate public school teachers for slow learners, those with learning difficulties and Down syndrome the Ministry of Education reversed its decision and asked for the approval of the **Civil Service Commission (CSC) to** reinstate these teachers.

According to an official letter from the ministry, the Coordination and Follow-up Department attached the list of these teachers, along with a request for replacements, to make the appropriate decision.

No compensation for absent period: CSC

The acting undersecretary of the ministry had earlier approved the decision to terminate these teachers in accordance with Article Four (bis).

Withdrawal

The CSC agreed on the withdrawal of the termination decision as per the request of the ministry, confirming it is possible to take such a step. It clarified that the teachers covered by the decision are not entitled to receive a salary for the period they were absent due to the decision. It added that a copy of decisions related to these teachers has been forwarded to the concerned entities for completion of reinstatement procedures.

Article Four (bis), which the ministry used as basis for approving the termination of these

teachers due to its unwillingness to continue its contract with them, is part of the general policy of the State on Kuwaitizing jobs in government agencies through the termination of expatriate staff.

This is in accordance with Article Three of Civil Service Council Resolution No. 11/2017, which stipulates the rules and regulations for Kuwaitizing government jobs. It mandates the CSC to conduct an annual study to identify the job groups covered by Kuwaitization and the percentage of Kuwaiti workforce.

Target

The target number of Kuwaiti employees out of the total workforce is determined in each government entity separately, and then the number of non-Kuwaiti employees whose services must be terminated is determined to reach the specified percentage



Georgia's FM





EU representative

KUNA photos UNWRA representative

Film-makers braved challenges in 'death zone'

'From Ground Zero': film sheds light on genocide in Gaza

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub confirmed that "From Ground Zero" is the most powerful and important movie ever filmed in Gaza Strip, three weeks after the start of the genocidal war waged by the occupying State against the Palestinian people, particularly those in the Gaza Strip indicating that Palestinian directors residing in Gaza produced the movie.

Tahboub made the statement on the sidelines of the screening of the movie as part of the Palestine Film Festival organized recently by the American University of Kuwait (AUK) in cooperation with the Palestinian Embassy. Several diplomats, citizens, expatriates and supporters of the Palestinian cause attended the event.

He stated that the producers of the movie are eyewitnesses to what has been happening in recent period, indicating the movie is a collection of 20 short films.



Rami Tahboub

He pointed out that the goal is to inform the entire world about what is happening in Gaza in this diffi-cult period. He said more than 100 people -- all filmmakers -- worked in the filming set. "They faced difficulties due to power and Internet outages, as well as the need to communicate with the core team, including Palestinian filmmaker Rashid Masharawi. They risked their lives from the North to the

South of the Gaza Strip to document these events," he disclosed.

He affirmed that the film has been shortlisted for an Oscar. "It has been screened at 100 international film festivals, and there are attempts to screen it at the Cannes Film Festival." he added.

He emphasized that the film's ultimate message is for the world to know the genocide taking place in the Gaza Strip against the Palestinian people and for viewers to experience the moment that Palestinians have experienced.

In addition, an Arabic evening event in Malmö, Sweden included the screening of "From Ground Zero: Untold Stories from Gaza". This project brings together 22 short films produced by talented directors from Gaza.

Launched by prominent Palestinian filmmaker Rashid Masharawi, the initiative emerged amidst the conflict and aims to provide a platform for young artists to express themselves through their craft. Each short film, ranging from three to seven minutes in length, offers a unique perspective on the current reality in Gaza.

The project captures the diverse experiences of life in the Palestinian enclave like the challenges, tragedies, and moments of resilience faced by its people. Blending genres such as fiction, documentary, animation and experimental film; the movie presents a rich web of stories that reflect the grief, joy and hope found in Gaza.

Despite the harsh recording conditions, Gaza's vibrant art scene shines through this collection, offering an intimate and powerful portrayal of the daily lives and perpetual mindset of its people.

Present at the event were Arab and European filmmakers in Malmö, including the director of the Malmö Arab Film Festival in Sweden, renowned artist and director Mohammad Kablawi, and the project's founding director Palestinian director Rashid Masharawi who responded to the queries of a large audience at Panora Cinema after the screening.

Student density high

545 teachers, admin chosen

Crown Prince Rep meets peers, EU officials at 'Antalya' seminar

ANTALYA, April 12, (KUNA): Represen-tative of His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met with his Egyptian peer Badr Abdelatty on Friday on the sidelines of the 4th Antalya Diplomatic Forum held in An-

talya, south Turkiye. During the meeting, the two sides discussed means of boosting bilateral cooperative relations between the two countries and joint action in different fields, in addition to the latest regional and international developments.

Venezuela

Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Eban Eduardo Gil Pinto Friday on sidelines of the 4th Antalya Diplomatic Forum in Turkiye

The two ministers engaged in a constructive dialogue concerning bilateral relations, regional developments, and areas of shared interest. Representative of Kuwait Crown Prince meets with EU Special Representative for Gulf region

EU Special Rep

Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met Friday with EU

IOFS Director-General

Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Friday with the Director-General of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) Berik Aryn.

The meeting was on the sidelines of the fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF 2025), which kicked off on Friday in Turkiye.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to support joint cooperation between Kuwait and IOFS to enhance sustainable food security, and support innovative initiatives from various programs provided by the organization.

Georgia

Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affair Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Friday with the Foreign Minister of Georgia Maka Botchorishvili.

The meeting was on the sidelines of the Fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF 2025), which kicked off on Friday in Turkiye.

During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations and discussed latest regional and international development and topics of common interest.

UNRWA Commissioner General



Deputy Foreign Minister receives UN Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support.

Ways to boost Kuwait, UN ties discussed

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received recently UN Under-secretary-General for Operational

Support Atul Khare to discuss ways to promote cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the United Na-tions. (KUNA)

Finance saves KD11mln by not renewing 'insurance' for staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Ministry of Finance saved approximately KD 11 million as a result of independent government agencies not renewing or offering new health insurance contracts for their employees, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

They explained that this move is part of the government's initiative to rationalize and streamline public spending. The savings were achieved through 11

government agencies that took necessary measures to suspend insurance for their employees, in line with a circular issued by the Ministry of Finance.

These agencies included the State Audit Bureau, the General Secretariat of the National Assembly, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Competition Protection Public Authority, the Capital Markets Authority, the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), the Public Institution for Social Security, the Kuwait Ports Authority, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Kuwait News Agency, and the Insurance Regulatory Unit.

The Ministry of Health previously stated that it was fully prepared to provide healthcare services to the employees whose health insurance benefits were suspended, in accordance with the relevant regulations and systems

However, the oil sector still believes it is legally not obligated to implement this circular, which contradicts the Ministry of Finance's point of view, as the Ministry of Finance insists that the circular is aimed at preserving public funds and rationalizing spending. It based this on a study that estimates the expected savings from the oil sector's non-renewal or issuance of new health insurance contracts for its employees at approximately KD 50 million. Furthermore, providing this benefit to the

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries is seen as a duplication of services, given the availability of Al-Ahmadi Hospital, which already provides healthcare services to employees of KPC and its subsidiaries.

The dispute between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Oil is ongoing in this regard.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Oil relies on the law related to establishment of KPC, stressing that it is a public institution with an economic nature and an independent budget, similar to commercial budgets. It also operates under its own administrative and financial systems and regulations, which are approved by the Supreme Petroleum Council. The sources noted that the matter is still under legal review by the Fatwa and Legislation Department.

as Jahra plans 7 new schools

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Human Resources Supervision-Recruitment Department in Jahra Educational District has completed the appointment of 545 teachers and administrators.

Sources told the newspaper that this is part of the district's preparations for the opening of seven new schools to provide them with the necessary teaching and administrative staff for 2025/2026 academic year.

Sources said these seven schools include one kindergarten, two elementary schools (for boys and girls), two intermediate schools (for boys and girls), and two secondary schools (for boys and girls).

In an official letter that the Education Ministry undersecretary sent to the assistant undersecretary for Public Education Affairs; the ministry clarified that the district is responsible for providing these schools with administrative and teaching staff, furniture, technical equipment and supplies in coordination with other concerned sectors in the ministry. Sources confirmed that the opening of these schools is

one of the steps toward overcoming major challenges that schools in Mutlaa City are currently facing, as the city has high student density; indicating some classrooms have 45 or more students.

Sources added reports from school administrations indicate that some Mutlaa schools have more than 1,000 students; while their interior design can only accommodate half of such number.

With the provision of teaching and administrative staff and furnishing the new schools, laboratories and gymnasiums; sources expect the smooth distribution of students according to their residential addresses in the next academic year.

Kuwaiti couple, border staff jailed 5 years in forgery case

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Criminal Court, headed by Counselor Khaled Al-Tahous, sentenced an employee at Nuwaiseeb border to five years in prison and ordered his dismissal for forging an official document, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The court also sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen and his wife -- both holders of dual nationalities -- to five years in prison and banned them from traveling in the same case.

The Public Prosecution charged the employee with forging an official document when he stated in the exit documents of the Kuwaiti and his wife processed, through the Interior Ministry's computer system at Nuwaiseeb border, that the couple left country

Since the employee manipulated the document, it was rendered valid as he is in charge of verifying information.

The prosecution pointed out that the employee used a tool he accessed through the Internet to forge the official document in the electronic entry and exit data processing system of the ministry.

He used his operator number to forge the departure information of the couple in the data processing system, stating they traveled on Sept 8 and 14, 2021 from Kuwait to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Special Representative for the Gulf region Luigi Di Maio.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 4th Antalya Diplomatic Forum which kicked off in Turkiye today

The discussions focused on the robust partnership between Kuwait and the European Union and opportunities to strengthen collaboration in key areas.

They also addressed regional and international developments of common interest.

Tunisia

Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Friday with the Tunisia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration, and Tunisians Abroad, Mohammad Ali Nafti.

The meeting was on the sidelines of the fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF 2025), which kicked off on Friday in Turkiye

During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations, and ways to enhance joint cooperation in various fields, in addition to discussing latest regional and international developments.

Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Friday with UN Under-Secretary General and UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini.

The meeting was on the sidelines the fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF 2025), which kicked off on Friday in Turkiye. During the meeting, they discussed lat-

est regional and international developments, stressing the importance of developing bilateral cooperation and intensifying constructive dialogue to address challenges and enhance the foundations of development and stability.

Benin

The representative of His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, met Friday with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Benin Olushegun Adjadi Bakari.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the Fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum, currently held in the Republic of Turkiye.

During the meeting, they reviewed the bilateral relations and regional and international developments as well as issues of mutual interest.

Court reviews scribe's appeal

Al-Saeed stays behind bars till July

By Jaber Al-Hamoud/Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Court of Appeals has ruled to extend the detention of media figure Fajer Al-Saeed at the Central Prison until her next trial session, which is scheduled for July 13.

Al-Saeed faces charges of spreading false news regarding Kuwait's alleged intention to normalize relations with Israel, which had reportedly sparked fear and concern among the public.

The Court of First Instance had previously sentenced her to three-year imprisonment with hard labor and immediate enforcement. That ruling was subsequently appealed and is now under review by the appellate court.

Arab held with drugs: Farwaniya patrol officers arrested an Arab for the possession of Shabu.

A security source revealed that while patrolling in Farwaniya Governorate, the officers got suspicious of the behavior of the Arab. When they approached him for routine inspection, they discovered he was in an abnormal condition and that he had an undisclosed quantity of narcotics in his possession.

A case was registered and the Arab was referred to the concerned authorities, along with the confiscated narcotics.

Smuggling bid foiled: The Central Prison inspectors referred a woman, in her 40s, to Sulaibiya Police Station for the possession of a mobile phone that she tried to smuggle for her husband who is currently serving prison time for criminal charges, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source disclosed that the woman went to the Visitation Section at the Central Prison where the inspectors conducted routine check, which led to the discovery of the mobile phone that the woman hid in her clothes.

When interrogated, she confessed to attempting to smuggle the phone to her husband who asked her to do

A case was registered and the woman was referred to the police station, as well as the confiscated mobile phone.

3

LOCAL

diwaniya 🕐 چيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Bitcoin speculation frenzy ... losses incurred ... gambling?

"EVERY now and then, gambling companies return to the scene, swindling people with the pseudo currency Bitcoin. Brothers, this is not a currency. It is not real money. It is just gambling. Fraudsters and scammers use and promote it, causing huge losses to those who deal with them, perhaps, even wiping out their money. What is the point if journalism does not benefit people by clarifying the facts?" Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"A phrase like 'Learn how to earn an additional income

of KD1,700 per week' might be published on websites, and a person might pay a fraudulent company in the hope of receiving a larger sum in return. In reality, it is gambling, causing losses for many citizens and expatriates.



Al-Dawas

In January 2021, Al-Rai daily published an article with the headline, 'Bitcoin speculation frenzy is hitting Kuwaitis.

"On April 7, Al-Seyassah daily published an article headlined, '\$200 billion evaporated from the crypto currency market in hours.' "Please stay away from it com-

pletely.

"So what is money and how did it appear? In ancient times, humans had primitive lives and money did not exist. People bartered. One person would give meat to another and the other would take fruit. However, this exchange was troublesome. Those who needed meat would ask the owner of the cow to slaughter it so they could give them part of it. Of course, the owner of the cow would not slaughter it, so what would they do with the rest of the meat? They did not have a refrigerator. The exchange was troublesome

"Over time, people agreed to use something that could be easily carried and accepted by everyone. People would exchange it for food or goods that could be stored at home, and that had value. For instance, they decided to use salt because of its importance. Someone would take out a handful of salt, say the size of their palm, to buy something. However, salt dissolves in water and can spoil, making it unsuitable as a medium of exchange. After that, human societies used oysters and snails: I give you so-and-so oysters, and you give me such-and-such.

"Then, humanity discovered that gold and silver are not affected by climate fluctuations or changes over time, and are easy to carry and can also be stored at home. They were used for thousands of years. One person would give another a piece of gold or silver to buy something, and the other would receive it and buy something else. "One hundred years ago, when World War I broke out or around that time to facilitate analysis, Europe did not possess sufficient quantities of gold and silver, and was fighting among itself. Since it was necessary to pay the soldiers, Europe considered issuing paper money ('notes' or 'nout' as we call them) to pay soldiers as pension. The State pledged to pay the holder of the note a certain amount of gold if he wanted to spend it in a bank. Gradually, people became accustomed to this currency and did not go to banks to receive gold in exchange, reassured and confident in the value of the paper money issued by the government. This is what we studied in the College of Economics. "This is money and how it came to be. It is issued by central banks and has a price that people accept for buying and selling. It is money represented by paper currency, checks or precious metals like gold. Indians, for example, occasionally buy gold to keep.The digital currency 'Bitcoin' that is being promoted online is not recommended by financial analysts due to the signifi-cant risks it entails. Bitcoin is a global craze; it is gambling, not an investment. Trading it is fraught with enormous risks that cause people to lose money. Indeed, some Kuwaitis have lost half their money trading Bitcoin. But, who reads?"

tors, have contributed to making the two areas more vibrant, and have provided additional income for the owners, helping them cover their costs.

"After people became accustomed to frequenting these cafés and restaurants, which adhered to health and food regulations, their owners were surprised by the decision to close them despite the significant costs they incurred in establishing, equipping and staffing them!

"The question here is: Was the closure decision the right one?

"In my opinion, better alternatives could have been adopted, such as issuing regulatory decisions allowing these small businesses to operate, subject to controls that ensure the safety of the services provided and meet the needs of visitors.

"Furthermore, regulating these projects and encouraging investment in them in a way that does not conflict with the purposes of the holdings would have supported commercial and economic activity in the border areas.

"Reorganizing these projects is preferable to closing them. Opening the way for small businesses in the fields of entertainment, services and production will contribute to diversifying the economies of Wafra and Abdally, while enhancing domestic tourism without compromising the objectives of the agricultural holdings."

"The United States is a global power that has undergone profound strategic transformations over decades. In this article, we discuss how the American mindset has shifted from adopting long-term visions such as 'Star Wars' under President Ronald Reagan to adopting short-term protectionist policies under the slogan 'America First' under President Donald Trump," sustainability expert and Kuwaiti writer Dr. Sami Mohammad Al-Adwani wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"In this comparison, we attempt to explore the impact of these transformations on the concept of American sustainability on the international stage.

"In the past, specifically in the 1980s, the United States was writing a new chapter in the narrative of global hegemony when President Ronald Reagan launched his ambitious strategic initiative known as 'Star Wars.'

'The initiative was not merely a space defense shield; it was a clear expression of a forward-looking mindset, seeking to secure American superiority for decades by harnessing technology, space and future sciences for a sustainable national security system. This later culminated in the hegemony of unipolarity.

"That moment, with its technological imagination and long-term strate



Director General of Kuwait's Coast Guard Commodore Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Sa-bah receives Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah.

Plan to enhance women role in Coast Guard under perusal

KUWAIT CITY, April 12, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah paid a visit on Friday to the General Directorate of Coast Guard to discuss coordinating and unifying efforts to empower Kuwait women in all domains.

Director General of Kuwait's Coast Guard Commodore Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Sabah received Sheikha Jawaher, who is the head of the national committee tasked with implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the Ministry of Interior's security media and public relations department said in a news statement.

Sheikha Jawaher was briefed on the directorate's achievements in empowering women, and their pivotal role and their effective contributions to different duties and specialties, it added.

The Assistant Foreign Minister visited several vital facilities like operations, logistic support departments and others, it stated.

The tour comes to stress the ministry's interest in empowering women and enhancing their key role in backing maritime security, and achieving strategic goals, it pointed out.

Rationalize power and water use in all facilities: minister

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Minister of Defense and the acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Sabah has issued a ministerial circular regarding the rationalization of electricity and water consumption in all sectors and facilities of the Ministry of Defense, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The circular included a number of measures aimed

at reducing energy usage both during and after official working hours. Accordingly, a special-ized team has been assigned to inspect the ministry's facilities and ensure compliance with the requirements set by the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, particularly concerning the rationalization of high-load electrical appliance usage, taking into account the operational nature of units with



Sheikh Abdullah specific functional needs.

The circular highlighted that the Ministry of Defense's energy conservation policy reflects its commitment to cooperation and integration with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy

This initiative is in line with the effort to promote partnership between public and private sectors with the aim of reducing consumption during the summer months and preserving the state's vital resources.

From 70 to 65 years: There is an ongoing effort to amend the retirement decree to reduce the mandatory retirement age for judges from 70 to 65 years. The Ministry of Justice has formally sought the opinion of the Supreme Judicial Council regarding this proposed amendment, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting informed

They explained that the new standard retirement age for judges would be 65, with the possibility of annual extensions until they reach the age of 70. These extensions would be subject to approval each year by both the Su-preme Judicial Council and the Minister of Justice.



Visibility hit zero when a freak dust storm struck Kuwait late Thursday night.

Mol cautions motorists against unstable climate

KUWAIT CITY, April 12, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior urged the public to be wary of driving amidst the dust storm that started to hit Kuwait on Thursday night. It is advisable for drivers to avoid approaching heaps of sand on roads, keep a safe distance between their vehicles, stop using mobile phones, and close the windows of vehicles, said a statement from the Ministry's General Directorate of Security Relations and Media.

The statement advised anybody who might need help to dial the emergency phone No. 112.

Meanwhile, a cold front, coupled with sandstorm, drove horizontal visibility to below one km, almost to nil in some areas, Kuwait Meteorological Department said on Thursday evening

orthwestern wind, with speed of 60 km/h.

Kuwaiti acquitted of links with ISIS

Sextagenarian absolved of slander

By Jaber Al-Hamoud Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued by a lower court, which acquitted a Kuwaiti citizen who was accused of belonging to ISIS and promoting its ideology on a social media platform.

The court also decided to adjourn to April 23 the case filed against two citizens who were accused of belonging to ISIS and financing it, as well as establishing a website to promote the group's ideas. The defendants include a military officer from the Ministry of Defense, who has been sentenced to five years in prison, and was refused bail. The other defendant, who is an asbroadcasting false news and endangering Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations.

The court upheld the ruling issued to impose a KD 2,000 fine on the defendant for insulting expatriate advisors and misusing telecommunication means via the X platform in a hashtag for discussing a contract with artist Bayoumi Fouad to present a program through the Ministry of Information.

15-year jail overturned: The Court of Cassation overturned a verdict issued by the Court of Appeals which sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to 15-year imprisonment for drug trafficking. The court instead ruled to acquit him of the charges.

The court based its decision on the finding that the investigations conducted by the officer from the Drug Control General Department did not provide sufficient evidence to support the charges. It affirmed that the investigations amounted to nothing more than personal opinion or information obtained from undisclosed and unidentified which could not se foundation for a conviction. The Public Prosecution had charged the defendant with possession of hashish (cannabis resin) with the intent for the purpose of trafficking, in violation of the law. He was also charged with possessing psychotropic substances, specifically methamphetamine and pregabalin, for trafficking purposes.

Also:

"Diversifying activities in Wafra and Abdally reflects the State's interest in expanding the scope of the agriculture and livestock sector and increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product," Kuwaiti lawyer and writer Dr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Taraji wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Agricultural holdings have respond-ed positively to this interest, through optimal use of holdings to enhance the productivity of this sector. The farms in Wafra and Abdally now provide a variety of products for the local market, in addition to their attractiveness for domestic tourism, as a large number of citizens visit them year-round.

"Given the high costs of agricultural production and the desire of the owners of holdings to stimulate domestic tourism and encourage citizens to visit the border areas in the North and South, a number of them have implemented small projects, such as cafés and restaurants, in limited parts of the holdings, without conflicting with their objectives.

"These projects have been a source of relaxation and recreation for visigic planning, was a sign of an imperial consciousness that viewed sustainability as the key to power: the sustainability of superiority, the sustainability of deterrence, and the sustainability of the American project globally.

"At that time, sustainability was not an environmental or economic slogan; rather, it was a spirit that dictated that policy should be planned for decades, not just for a single fiscal year.

When this broad horizon is compared to the transformations witnessed by the United States under President Donald Trump, the decline appears sharp, even catastrophic.

"From a war waged in space to one waged in cus-

toms. America has moved from a discourse of universality to a discourse of protectionism, from a race for hegemony to a race for tariffs, and from a grand dream to a zero-sum game!

"The 'tariff war' adopted by President Trump is not only an economic weapon, it reveals the erosion of the philosophy of strategic sustainability itself. The goal is no longer to preserve America's position for decades to come, but rather to gain quick points in the balance of trade. The country has transformed from an architect of the global order into an anxious merchant, turning over books of deficits and surpluses!

"This shift from a long-term imperial project to short-sighted reactions weakens the sustainability of the American role, undermines the confidence of allies, and opens the way for new powers with more established and sustainable strategies. This is a path to a transition from unipolarity to a multipolar world, even if it seems slower-moving.

"Between the 'Star Wars' that sought to sustain superiority and the 'tariff war' waged with the logic of immediate profit, one can discern the difference between a nation that thinks like a superpower and one that thinks like an anxious power. Between thinking about the future and thinking about the next election, the bridges of sustainability collapsed.

"Here, the question of sustainability becomes more than just a development slogan, as it is rather a measure of a nation's maturity and a compass for its cohesion in a turbulent world."

- Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/ Simi K.Kutty

waves of the sea as high as 6 feet, Acting Director of the Dept. Dhrar Al-Ali told KUNA. He forecasted that temperature will drop to 32-34 C degrees, saying that the weather will start improving by Friday morning.

News in Brief

30 arrests made as large haul of narcotics seized

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Field teams from the Public Security Sector of the Ministry of Interior carried out several security campaigns simultaneously in various areas which resulted in the arrest of 30 individuals of different nationalities. The arrested individuals included 14 Kuwaiti citizens, 5 Bedoun residents, 7 Bangladeshis, 2 Indians, 1 Saudi, and 1 Iranian, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaigns also resulted in the seizure of large quantities of narcotic and psychotropic substances, including:

- 9,823 kilograms of hashish7,966 kilograms of shabu

- 7,500 kilograms of marijuana
 2,950 kilograms of chemicals
 1,082 kilograms of heroin
- 5 grams of cocaine
- 10 grams of Lyrica powder
- 6,710 Lyrica capsules
- 974 psychotropic pills

In addition, authorities seized an imported bottle of 'Red Label' liquor, two firearms, live ammunition, 25 sensitive weighing scales, and a quantity of empty bags prepared for packaging and distributing drugs. The suspects and seized items have been referred to the

Drugs and Alcohol Prosecution for necessary legal action.

Asian dies in fall: An Asian man died after falling from an under construction building in South Saad Al-Abdullah, reports Al-Seyassah daily

According to a security source, the Operations Unit at the Interior Ministry received information about an Asian man who fell from a building in South Saad Al-Abdullah.

Upon the arrival of security personnel and ambulances at the scene, it was confirmed that the Asian already succumbed to his wounds. His body was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to establish the circumstance that led to the fatal fall.

Road signs, poles stolen: A number of individuals have been arrested for the theft of road signs and iron poles, which are considered state property, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, officers from the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Investigations Department and Adan Investigations Office arrested the suspects after conducting investigations on the confidential information they received about some individuals stealing and selling public property. They had obtained a warrant from the Public Prosecution to arrest the suspects and search their residence.

The stolen items were found inside the defendants' home, including eight road signs with iron poles and nine iron poles without signs. Investigations are ongoing with the defendants to determine whether parts of the stolen items were sold and to identify the locations where the thefts occurred.

sistant engineer, was acquitted.

Expat advisors insulted: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Nasr Salem Al-Haid and including judges Saud Al-Sanea and Tariq Metwally, upheld the acquittal of a 60-year-old Kuwaiti citizen, known as "a fake tweeter", on charges of





LOCAL

Over 10,800 judicial notices sent in one week as part of digital transformation initiative

Justice Ministry sees surge in e-notifications via Sahel app

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Ministry of Justice announced that, as part of its digital transformation efforts and with the aim of enhancing the efficiency of the judicial notification system, the first week of implementing Ministerial Resolution No. 26/2021, following its amendment, witnessed a significant increase in the use of electronic notification methods, particularly through the "Sahel" application, reports Al-Seyassah

daily.

The ministry reported that a total of 10,848 judicial notifications were issued via the "Sahel" application from April 2 to April

It explained that this steady

rise in the number of notifications over such a short period is considered a clear indication of the decision's success in meeting its main objectives. These include expediting litigation procedures, reducing the time required

for notifications, improving the reliability of legal notifications through secure and verifiable digital means, and cutting down operational costs associated with traditional paper-based notifications.

The ministry reiterated its commitment to continuously develop its legislative and technical systems in line with best practices for ensuring prompt justice and better service for citizens and residents.

Kuwait, Slovenia set to boost economic co-op

New investment opportunities explored

LJUBLJANA, April 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's non-resident ambassador to Slovenia, Talal Al-Fassam, affirmed that Kuwaiti-Slovenian relations are gaining momentum toward fruitful cooperation in many key sectors, in line with both countries' sustainable development priorities.

Ambassador Al-Fassam told KUNA after meeting with Mariana Marijec, Executive Director of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce in Ljubljana, that the meeting discussed ways to enhance economic ties and explore investment opportunities that serve mutual interests.

Al-Fassam emphasized Kuwait's strong commitment to building highquality international partnerships and providing an attractive investment environment, especially for Slovenian businesses.

He highlighted opportunities for Slovenian companies in areas aligned with Kuwait's development



Ambassador Talal Al-Fassam exchanges souvenirs with Mariana Marijec.

vision, such as technological innovation, advanced healthcare, and clean energy projects.

The ambassador noted Slovenia's clear interest in cooperating with Kuwait, pointing to Ms. Marijec's welcome of broader economic ties and the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce's readiness to support com-

panies looking to enter the Kuwaiti market.

He concluded by saying the meeting is part of Kuwait's broader effort to strengthen economic ties with European countries and foster dialogue between business sectors to support sustainable development and longterm strategic partnerships.

Schools, roads and EPA proposals put on hold MoJ land request gets green light

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff KUWAIT CITY, April 12: In its eighth meeting for the third legislative round chaired by Nasser Al-Jadaan on Thursday, the Hawally Governorate Committee in the Municipal Council approved only one out of 10 items on its agenda -- the request of the Ministry of Justice to allocate a site for the construction of the Experts Affairs Department building in the governorate (Block Seven, Mubarak Al-Abdullah) with an area of 6,000 square meters.

Meanwhile, the committee took

the following decisions: Refer the question on private schools in Salwa to the main session:

Refer two items to the executive branch -- sites of the National Center for Vessel Traffic Systems (VTC), Search and Rescue (SAR); and Navigational Indications (ATON) project tower on Owha Island -- for further study;

da -- request of the Environment Public Authority to add a commercial activity (coffee shop) in Salmiya Environmental Pollutants Building-Block One; request of the Interior Ministry to allocate an area for impounded vehicles near the Drug Controls General Department (DCGD)building Salmiya-Block 10 until the representatives of the ministry and DCGD attend the meeting; and the proposal to build a pedestrian bridge along Taawun Street between Salwa and Anjafa beach areas in order to discuss it with the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART).

MoE revokes supervisor's termination

MoE revokes supervisor's termination

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Based on the invalidity of the procedures, the Ministry of Education has cancelled its decision to terminate the service of the technical and administrative follow-up supervisor in the Supplies and Warehouses Department, which was originally set to end on September 1, 2024, due to her retirement.

the Ministry of Education Mansour Saud Al-Dhafiri,

was based on the Civil Service Law and Regulations of 1979, the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Civil Service Council, as well as the powers granted by Resolution No. 18193/1994.

The new decision annuls the previous one, which had terminated her service due to procedural errors and clarified that she was not entitled to any salary during the period in which she was not employed. The decision also instructed the relevant authorities, including the Civil Service Commission, the Finance Affairs Department, and the End-of-Service Department, to implement the reversal.





Photographer Aziz Al-Mutawa during a dialogue session.

Ecocriticism and the Lens

The decision, issued by the acting Undersecretary of

Further study of the request to amend the council's decision dated Oct 10, 2022 regarding the multistorey parking building for Symphony Mall on the Arabian Gulf Street side:

Retain three items on the agen-

Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)

Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	
NOW	NOW	
BHD 57.173	BHD 128.000 /-net	
Weekends (Thu	rsday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	
NOW	NOW	
BHD 65.000/-net	BHD 145.000/-net	
no period from 5 th April to 30 th April 2025		

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Photography as a sensory practice

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Depart-ment of Visual and Interior Design at the College of Architecture has organized a dialogue session titled, "Eco-criticism and the Lens: Photography as

a Sensory Practice." Photographer Aziz Al-Mutawa conducted the session, during which he showcased his photographic works and research focusing on the mudflats in Kuwait.

He reflected on how industrial, personal and environmental elements intertwine through his lens. He also discussed the latest methods for photographing environmental areas that de-emphasize the human element; as well as the most important tips, techniques and inspiration that photographers need in these places in order to capture images from interesting and expressive angles.

He explained the concept of 'embodied ecocriticism' as an introduction to understanding the relationship between the photographer and their photographic environment.

The dialogue session focused on a new horizon for understanding photography, viewing it not only as a process of image-making, but also as a practice that reshapes the way people interact with their surroundings.

CSC distributes bonuses to employees

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Excellent bonuses have been disbursed to employees and officials at the Civil Service Commission (CSC), based on certain job performance criteria and in accordance with approved policies and regulations, reports Al-Anba daily.

The bonuses were deposited into the personal accounts of the eligible personnel after confirming that all conditions were met and approved by the concerned authorities, while ensuring transparency and fairness throughout the process.

It was confirmed that the practice of granting excellent bonuses annually to eligible employees and officials will continue in line with established regulations, rules and budgetary provisions. These bonuses serve as an exceptional incentive for those with outstanding performance, following an objective evaluation conducted by the CSC in accordance with relevant regulations.

In a related development, and in accordance with the mandate of the Civil Service Council, the CSC is conducting a comprehensive study to identify new positions that Kuwaitis can fill in the private sector.

Sources told the daily that the study focuses on identifying job titles and new employment sectors for Kuwaitis within the private sector. The study also outlines targeted national workforce percentages for the private sector like private schools, cooperative societies, and tourism and hotel establishments. This is part of a broader vision to increase the proportion and number of Kuwaitis employed in the private sector in the next decade.

The goal is to encourage citizens to join the private sector by offering financial incentives, such as the National Labor Support Scheme, which provides monthly financial assistance to citizens employed by private companies. Additional benefits are also provided by the State to ensure the stability of workers in this sector and to reduce the disparity in benefits between the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, some private sector employers are offering training and qualification programs designed to enhance the skills of Kuwaitis, aligning them with the needs of the private labor market. These initiatives help facilitate the integration of Kuwaiti workers into the private sector, increasing job opportunities. Private companies are also incentivized to hire citizens through the provision of support to institutions that commit to employing a set percentage of Kuwaitis, which contributes to increased demand for the private sector and promotes labor market balance.

7th Ring Road and Fahaheel Expressway to close for ongoing maintenance work

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The General Traffic Department has announced the closure of the road parallel to the Seventh Ring Road, opposite Abdullah Al-Mubarak, along with the closure of the area's exit leading to the Seventh Ring Road. These closures are part of ongoing road development and maintenance work and will remain in effect until April 17, according to Al-Seyassah daily.

Additionally, starting April 13, two lanes on King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Road (Fahaheel Expressway) will be closed for traffic heading from Kuwait City toward Fahaheel, near Sabah Al-Salem. This closure, which is also part of road maintenance efforts, will last until April 23. The exit from Sabah Al-Salem to the Fahaheel Expressway will also be closed during this period.

LOCAL



KUNA photo Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Valletta, Dr. Meshal Al-Mudhaf, with Maltese Prime Minister, Dr. Robert Abela.

Kuwait envoy in Malta meets with Maltese Prime Minister

KUWAIT CITY, April 12, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to Malta, Dr. Meshal Al-Mudhaf met with Maltese Prime Minister Dr. Robert Abela to discuss enhancing bilateral relations.

The meeting, held at the ministry headquarters in Valletta, focused on cooperation in political, economic, and investment fields, according to a statement from the Kuwaiti Embassy there.

Graduates encouraged to register for Direct Aid Society Career Day

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has invited Kuwaiti male university graduates and experienced job seekers to attend the Direct Aid Society's Career Day at 9:00 am on Tuesday, April 15, at the PAM Theater located in Al-Raqqa, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAM encourages those interested in applying for jobs to register through its official website "Fakhrana"

Available vacancies at the Direct

Aid Society include the following positions: Administrative Specialist, Strategic Specialist, Marketing Specialist, Recruitment Specialist, Legal Affairs Specialist, Team Leader, Infrastructure Team Leader, Training Team Leader, Dynamics 365 Programmer, Data Entry, Legal Affairs Manager, Project Manager, Administrative Supervisor, Marketing Supervisor, Recruitment Supervisor, and Geological Engineer.

Kuwait and Mercedes-Benz shift gears toward future innovation

Deal exemplifies long-term global trust: KIA Chief

BERLIN, April 12, (KUNA): Kuwait Investment Authority's partnership with Mercedes-Benz AG "is not mere financial investment" but an example of how sovereign wealth funds build "quality partnership" with global companies to establish longterm relation based on "trust, sustainability and innovation," KIA chief has said.

KIA looked forward to building upon this "successful" partnership and expands cooperation to new and strategically-important sectors, which "serves priorities of the two countries and is in harmony with future visions for development and investment," Managing Director Sheikh Saud Salem Al-Sabah said.

He made his remarks during reception held by Mercedes-Benz AG, at its museum in Stuttgart last night, in honor of Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to mark the 50th anniversary of the partnership between the State of Kuwait and Mercedes-Benz AG group.



PM Diwan photo

Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah pose for a group photo during the reception held by Mercedes-Benz AG at its museum in Stuttgart.

"The success of this five-decade partnership affirms vision of Kuwait leadership and reflects Kuwait's position as an international responsible investor, which always seek balance between economic revenue and strategic income," he said.

Sheikh Saud welcomed all initiatives that would promote Mercedes-Benz presence in Kuwait, whether through the increase of its direct investment or contribution to development of Kuwaiti citizens, transfer of knowledge, support innovation, manufacturing and technology.

He thanked His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for their support of this partnership, which was the fruit of years of hard work.

German Finance Minister Jorg Kukies said said Berlin and Kuwait enjoyed solid relationship, and talked about of future of global economy and its impact on economic relations, investment opportunities and trade exchange between the two countries.

Ola Kallenius, Chairman and CEO of Mercedes-Benz Group, said he was happy with the partnership with the State of Kuwait.

He said the company achieved many objectives in the past years and has many ambitions to explore investment opportunities.

Crown Prince Rep joins forum

'Antalya Declaration' echoes two-state call in ME

ANTALYA, Turkiye, April 12, (KUNA): Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya took part on Friday in the 4th Antalya Diplomatic Forum being hosted by Turkiye.

The event, held under the patronage of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, featured about 4,000 participants, including more than 20 state's heads and premiers, 50 foreign ministers, in addition to other ministers. diplomats, dignitaries and 60 highlevel representatives of international and regional organizations.

The forum discussed issues that concern different geographical parts in the Middle East, the Pacific Ocean, Africa and the Latin America.

The conferees also dealt with the

most prominent topics on the global agenda like climate change, combating terror, humanitarian aid, digital transformation, food security and AI.

Meanwhile, the Arab League's ministerial committee on



Al-Yahva

representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other countries on the sidelines of the fourth Antalya Diplomatic Forum (ADF 2025).

the Gaza met in Antalya city, south Turkiye, on Friday with

Participants in the meeting agreed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has entered its worst stage which risks undermining the rules of the international law and the principles of the UN Charter, according to a post-event Antalya Declaration.

The humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories has reached unprecedented levels due to the longstanding political stalemate, the declaration said.

The participants reaffirmed rejection of the attempts to evict the Palestinian people from their land, urging respect for the rules of the international humanitarian law end resumption of aid deliveries in Gaza.

They stressed the need of immediate ceasefire in Gaza and release of hostages under the deal reached by the Palestinian movement Hamas and the Israeli occupation authorities on January 19.

They called for holding international meetings in Cairo and New York this June to discuss the prospects of the USconceived two-state solution to the Palestine cause, the declaration noted

Kuwaiti earns 'Ambassador of Happiness, **Positivity and Quality of Life' recognition**

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: In a remarkable achievement; Faisal Jassim Abdullah obtained the distinction of being the first Kuwaiti to be awarded with the title 'Ambassador of Happiness, Positivity and Quality of Life,' after passing the rigorous requirements and standards of the global program accredited by the HDTC Center in Dubai, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) of the Dubai Government and the German Board reports Al-Anba daily.

The program, in which Abdullah participated, included specialized workshops, practical training and innovative initiatives aimed at enhancing feelings of happiness and positivity individually and collectively. It also focused on building work environments and family and community relationships based on happiness and optimism, in addition to adopting happiness as a sustainable lifestyle.

The participants were also trained

on designing and implementing happy initiatives that improve the quality of life and contribute to developing the global happiness index

eties.



tends to utilize this acquired knowledge and skills in projects and initiatives that contribute to creating stimulating and inspiring work and living environments.

He added that he aims to be an effective factor in improving the lives of individuals and groups by spreading happiness and positivity.

He also aspires to support institutions in developing pivotal environments that foster innovation and optimism.

It is worth mentioning that Abdullah has diverse practical and training experience in the fields of leadership, management and personal development. He has earned prestigious professional certifications in the fields of happiness and positivity. Aside from obtaining the Life Coach certification, he has completed a number of training courses like Problem Management and Overcoming Difficulties, Psychological Leadership, Leadership Self-Management: The Secrets and Laws of Influence, The Speaking Leader, The Leader and Human Values, Leadership and Body Language, Leadership Be-tween Art and Skill, and Operational Planning; as well as a wide range of courses aimed at developing personal, psychological and social leadership skills.

in line with the global vision to create happy soci-

> Abdullah asserted that the title is an important step in his journey toward promoting happiness and positivity in Kuwaiti and Arab societies. He in-

Abdullah

Kuwait airport scores high in global aviation security audit

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced that Kuwait International Airport passed the security audit with results exceeding the international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

In a press statement, DGCA Director General Sheikh Humoud Al-Sabah stressed "this achievement reflects the interest, support and commitment of the country's wise leadership to strengthen aviation security and safety; while continuing to toe the path of development and innovation in this vital field. It is the result of the concerted

efforts of various entities operating at the airport, and the DGCA staff keen on achieving the goal and to reach the highest rating in light of the current security challenges.

He disclosed that the audit team of the organization conducted a comprehensive review of airport facilities, ensuring that the necessary procedures were in place to guarantee the country's compliance with international standards.

He said the team focused on assessing security systems, as well as confirming the availability of the latest equipment and tools for securing airport.

He stressed the need to invest in advanced systems and technologies to implement the highest security standards for the airport to be among the most successful in the world

He also emphasized the need to implement strategic plans, and achieve objectives for excellence in passenger services and the highest rating at the global level.

In addition, sources informed the newspaper that the State Audit Bureau (SAB) has approved the extension of the contract for the implementation and maintenance of agriculture at the airport. Sources said the extension started on March 20 at a cost of KD557.000.

Sources said SAB called for expediting the issuance and awarding of the new tender to prevent delays in completing the remaining work stipulated in contract to avoid another extension.



Directorate General of Civil Aviation officials and the ICAO Audit Team pose for a group photo.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait defers

Sources stated that the Wafra station will increase the electricity production of GCCIA by 2,500 megawatts; enabling Kuwait to benefit from this production to bridge the gap and shortage in electricity supply during summer, as the case this summer when the Kuwaiti grid imports large quantities of energy over a six-month period -- from March to September.

In addition, sources said the ministry also obtained the approval of SAB to sign a contract for the maintenance of street lighting equipment in Farwaniya Governorate at a total cost of KD1.2 billion for a period of 36 months.

During this period, the Electrical Installations Department in the minis-

try will refurbish the lighting equipment and replace the worn-out ones to improve their ability to withstand climatic conditions

Sources affirmed the ministry is currently taking steps to float a similar tender through the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) for the maintenance of lighting equipment in Ahmadi Governorate and is awaiting the bureau's completion of the procedures

Sources added the tender will be referred to SAB for approval and then a contract will be signed with the winning contractor.

Army Deputy

He also emphasized that the main goal of the exercise is to improve

work under one banner by consolidating the concept of teamwork, unifying efforts and promoting the spirit of one team among various State institutions.

The Jabriya exercise is the first of its kind, through which the scenarios of a civilian aircraft hijacking and hostage rescue operations will be simulated.

Participants include the Air Force and Commando Brigade units at Kuwait Army, Special Forces and Helicopter Aviation at the Interior Ministry, Kuwait Fire Force, Health Ministry, Directorate General of Civil Aviation and Kuwait Airways Corporation.

This will be carried out within the framework of strengthening joint cooperation and raising the level of readiness in facing crises.









KFF photos

Kuwait Fire Force carries out an inspection campaign in Sharq.

KFF shuts down multiple facilities in Sharq

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) carried out an inspection campaign in Sharq on Friday evening, in coordination with several government agencies

According to a press statement issued by KFF, the cam-

Kuwait Municipality steps up sanitation, road inspections

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Public Relations Department at the Kuwait Municipality confirmed that field teams from the Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Departments continue to intensify their efforts to uncover violations of public sanitation and road occupancy regulations in the governorates; as well as to activate the oversight role of regulatory bodies in the enforcement of municipal laws, reports Al-Anba daily

The Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Department at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Municipality branch conducted extensive inspection tours in residential areas to ensure cleanliness and remove road obstructions and anything that distorts the overall appearance.

These inspections are also aimed at preventing the dumping of waste outside the designated areas; and to clean beaches, main streets and internal roads. The recent inspection campaigns resulted in the impoundment of nine abandoned vehicles, removal of scrap materials, demolition of mobile grocery stores, issuance of 11 citations for public sanitation and road occupancy violations; in addition to the issuance of 22 removal notices for abandoned vehicles, commercial containers and mobile grocery stores , and replacement of 31 old containers

The Public Relations Department warned that the inspection teams will not be lenient in taking legal measures against those proven to have committed violations.

paign led to administrative closure orders for several facilities that failed to meet KFF safety requirements, and issuance of citations for violations of the regulations of other government entities.



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INTERNATIONAL

Picture of Trump after assassination attempt displaces Obama portrait at WH

Trump proclaims self 'in good shape', results of physical aren't immediately released

WASHINGTON, April 12, (AP): Don-ald Trump is undergoing his annual physical on Friday, potentially giving the public its first details in years about the health of a man who in January became the oldest in U.S. history to be sworn in as president.

"I have never felt better, but nevertheless, these things must be done!" Trump, 78, posted on his social media site.

Despite long questioning predecessor Joe Biden's physical and mental capacity, Trump has routinely kept basic facts about his own health shrouded in secrecy - shying away from traditional presidential transparency on medical issues.

If history is any indication, his latest physical is likely to produce a flattering report that's scarce on details. It will be conducted at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and will be the first public information on Trump's health since an assassination attempt against him in Butler, Pennsylvania, in July.

Rather than release medical records at that time, Texas Rep. Ronny Jackson - a staunch supporter who served as his White House physician and once joked in the White House briefing room that Trump could live to be 200 if he had a healthier diet - wrote a memo describing a gunshot wound to Trump's right ear.

In a subsequent interview with CBS last August, Trump said he'd "very

gladly" release his medical records but never did.

Trump is three years younger than Biden. But on Inauguration Day of his second term in January, Trump was five months older than Biden was during his 2021 inauguration - making Trump the nation's oldest president to be sworn into office.

Before Jackson's memo, Americans hadn't seen key details about Trump's health since November 2023, when Dr. Bruce A. Aronwald released a letter to coincide with Biden's 81st birthday, saying Trump was in "excellent" physical and mental health.

The letter, posted on Trump's social media platform, contained no details · such as the Republican's weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, or the results of any test. Instead, Aronwlad wrote that he'd examined Trump that fall and found his "physical exams were well within the normal range and his cognitive exams were exceptional," while also noting that Trump had "reduced his weight."

Trump was treated at Walter Reed for his serious bout with the coronavirus in 2020. During that, Trump's physician offered a rosy prognosis on his condi-tion, though White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said some of Trump's vital signs were "very concerning."

After Trump recovered, more details emerged that he had been sicker



US Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump is surrounded by US Secret Service agents at a campaign rally, July 13, 2024, in Butler, Pa. (AP)

than he'd let on.

But Trump largely refused to say more about his health at the time, instead submitting to a pretaped, remote medical "evaluation" and interview on Fox News Channel. That was conducted by Dr. Marc Siegel, a Fox News contributor who had questioned Hillary Clinton's physical ability to serve as president in 2016 and later urged the Biden White House to test the then-president's cognitive acuity. In November 2019, meanwhile, Trump's trip to Walter Reed for a physical was omitted from his public schedule, breaking the White House protocol of giving advance public notice of them. The visit was revealed three days lat-

er, with Trump disclosing that he'd had a "very routine physical." The White

House released a subsequent statement from the president's then-personal phy-sician, U.S. Navy Cmdr. Sean Conley, saying it had been a "planned interim checkup" kept "off the record" due to scheduling uncertainties.

Arguably, Trump's most famous past comments about his own health came during a television interview in July 2020, when he listed off "Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV" while attempting to demonstrate his cognitive abilities.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The White House on Friday hung a painting of President Donald Trump depicting a moment after an assassination attempt against him last summer - bumping the official portrait of one of his predecessors, Barack Obama.

Hanging a new presidential likeness without advance notice is unusual, and Trump putting himself in that space could be seen as him breaking with norms yet again. By tradition, portraits of the two most recent former presidents go on display in the foyer - and Trump is in the unique position of also being a former president.

Obama's portrait went on display in the foyer of the State Floor, near the staircase to the president's residence, after it was unveiled in 2022. The White House said it is still in the foyer, but has been moved to the opposite wall, where a portrait of former President **George W. Bush** used to hang.

Plans are to move Bush's portrait nearer to his father's, former President George H.W. Bush, which is on the staircase to the residence.

The White House announced the unexpected change in a post on its official account on X with a photo of the new painting that said, "Some new artwork at the White House" and a pair of emoji eyes. The painting captures the aftermath of an attempt on Trump's life during a July rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump was wounded in the ear and thrust his fist skyward as he said, "fight, fight, fight!"

Those words became a key rallying cry of his successful reelection campaign.

The original painting on canvas was done by artist Marc Lipp and was donated to the White House by Andrew Pollock via the Blue Gallery in Delray Beach, Florida, the White House said. Lipp's online biography as part of the Blue Gallery website describes him as "a Modern Pop Art who translates

his love for art through paintings and sculptures." Pollack is an author and school safety advocate whose daughter Meadow was among the students killed in the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.



Emergency personnel respond to the area where a small plane crashed on the railroad tracks beneath the overpass near Interstate 95 in Boca Raton, Fla, on April 11. (AP)

South Florida plane crash kills 3

Three people were killed and one was injured when a small plane crashed Friday morning in South Florida near a major interstate highway and pushed a car onto railroad tracks, officials said.

Boca Raton Fire Rescue assistant chief Michael LaSalle said the plane crash that killed all three people on board emitted a fireball when it hit the ground, injuring a person in a nearby car. LaSalle said several roads near the Boca Raton Airport will remain closed near Interstate 95.

The Federal Aviation Administration identified the plane as a Cessna 310 with three people on board. It went down about 10:20 a.m. after departing from Boca Raton Airport

bound for Tallahassee, the FAA said in an email.

Fire officials told the South Florida Sun Sentinel that the aircraft appeared to have pushed a car onto the railroad tracks, leading to the tracks' closure.

Josh Orsino, 31, said he was stopped at a red light at a nearby overpass when he heard a loud explosion and saw a huge fireball come toward him.

"We're just sitting there, and see the palm trees start catching on fire," Orsino said. "I thought it was an oil rig or a car crash type thing."

Orsino said everyone was honking and trying to get off the over-pass, not sure if it was going to collapse. (AP)

US Attorney Habba probes NY gov over immigration enforcement policy Iowa's Republican Gov Reynolds won't seek reelection in 2026

DES MOINES, Iowa, April 12, (AP): In a surprise announcement Friday, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said she will not seek a third term in office.

Reynolds, a Republican, has held the position since 2017, when former Gov. Terry Branstad was appointed US ambassador to China. She was elected to full terms in 2018 and again in 2022.

'This wasn't an easy decision, because I love this state and I love serving you," Reynolds said in a video posted on social media. "But, when my term ends, I will have had the privilege of serving as your governor for almost 10 years."

Her decision sets up next year's election for governor in Iowa as the first without an incumbent in nearly two decades.

Reynolds said she is leaving office after years of her family supporting her, saying now "it's time for me to be there for them." Her husband, Kevin Reynolds, was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2023. In January, she said his cancer remained in remission.

Reynolds, who got her start in politics as treasurer in largely rural Clarke County in southern Iowa, population less than 10,000, was the state's first female governor. She was elected to the Iowa Senate in 2008 before serving as Branstad's running mate, when she was elected lieutenant governor in 2010.

Iowa's politics have shifted drastically since Reynolds first got to the state capitol in Des Moines. The state launched former President Barack Obama's presidential bid and supported him in both the 2008 and 2012



Iowa Gov Kim Reynolds speaks during a news conference at the State-house in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan 31, 2024. (AP)

general elections then clearly backed President Donald Trump in all three of his presidential runs.

Republicans have been steadily increasing their majorities in the Iowa House and Senate under Reynolds' leadership, giving her ample opportunity to advance her priorities.

Reynolds also has not shied away from the national attention, delivering a GOP response to President Joe Biden's address to Congress and serving as the chair of Republican Governors Association.

She's enjoyed the spotlight that omes with hosting the presidential caucuses, making a splash in 2023 by breaking a longstanding tradition of Iowa governors staying neutral in the race – and breaking with Trump – by endorsing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. And as Trump has moved on his second-term agenda at the federal level, Reynolds has regularly highlighted the conservative policies Iowa has already adopted.

Reynolds has celebrated her work to get school choice in Iowa across the finish line, signing into law in 2023 the creation of publicly funded educational savings accounts for students' private school tuition or other approved

In the current school year, more than 27,000 students used the program, which becomes available to any student in the coming year. Reynolds' proposed budget line for the accounts next year reached \$314 million.

Also:

NEWARK, NJ: The top federal prosecutor in New Jersey says she has launched an investigation into Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy and state Attorney General Matt Platkin over the state's directive to local law enforcement not to cooperate with federal agent conducting immigration enforcement.

Alina Habba, appointed last month by President Donald Trump as the interim U.S. attorney for the state, announced the investigation on Thursday evening on Fox News.

"I want it to be a warning for everybody that I have instructed my office today to open an investigation into Governor Murphy, to open an investigation into Attorney General Platkin," she said.

At an unrelated news conference on Friday, Platkin touted state and federal law enforcement cooperation on criminal investigations and pointed to federal courts upholding the state's directive.

"I'm going to keep doing my job. I know the brave men, men and women of law enforcement in our state who do extraordinary work every day, will keep doing their jobs." Platkin said

European countries vow billions in military support for Ukraine

BRUSSELS, April 12, (AP): Britain on Friday announced a "surge" of military support to Ukraine, as the war-ravaged country's Western backers gathered at NATO headquarters to drum up more weapons and ammunition to help Kyiv fight off Russia's invasion.

Britain said that in a joint effort with Norway just over \$580 million would be spent to provide hundreds of thousands of military drones, radar systems and anti-tank mines, as well as repair and maintenance contracts to keep Ukrainian armored vehicles on the battlefield

On the eve of the meeting in Brussels, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said a key issue was strengthening his country's air defenses. "Ukraine needs a sufficient number of modern systems like Patriot" missile systems, he said in a post on social media.

"A political decision is needed to supply these systems to protect our cities, towns, and the lives of our people - especially from the threat of Russian ballistic weapons. Our partners have such available systems," Umerov said. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has

renewed his appeals for more Patriot



Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey, (left), Ukraine's Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, (second from left), and Germany's Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, (right), arrive for a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group at NATO headquarters in Brussels on April 11. (AP)

systems since 20 people were killed a week ago, including nine children, when a Russian missile tore through apartment buildings and blasted a playground in his home town.

"Ukraine needs at the very least 10

systems that are sufficiently effective specifically against Russian ballistic missiles, and this is where Patriots are second to none," he said on his Telegram channel ahead of the meeting. "We are counting on decisions."



People attend an anti-corruption protest in the southwestern town of Novi Pazar, Serbia on April 12. (AP)

Serbian capital braces for mega pro-president rally

Chanting patriotic songs, thou-sands of supporters of Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic gathered in downtown Belgrade on Friday, a day ahead of what authorities expect to be a huge rally in his support.

Belgrade was on edge, with authorities preparing for large crowds and potential counter-demonstrations in different parts of Serbia, including an anti-government rally in a southern Muslim-populated part of the country.

The rally in the Serbian capital is expected to be a significant moment in Serbia's ongoing political crisis after more than five months of student-led anti-corruption protests triggered by a rail station canopy collapse that killed 16 people in the north of the country on Nov. 1.

In Belgrade on Friday, Vucic unveiled a Serbian red blue and white flag which the state-run media said is the largest in the history of the Balkan state. In the central parts of the capital in front of the parliament building dozens of tents were erected to house Vucic's supporters arriving from different parts of the country, as well as Serbs from neighboring Kosovo and Bosnia. (AP)

Bomb strikes near Athens offices of Greek railway company, no injuries reported

ATHENS, Greece, April 12, (AP): A bomb planted near the offices of Hellenic Train, Greece's main railway company, exploded Friday night in a busy district of central Athens, authorities said. There were no reports of injuries.

The explosion comes amid widespread public anger over a 2023 railway disaster, Greece's worst, in which 57 people were killed and dozens more injured when a freight train and a passenger train heading in opposite directions were accidentally put on the same track.

Local media said a newspaper and a news website had received an anonymous call shortly before Friday's blast, with the caller warning that a bomb had been planted outside the railway company offices and would explode within about 40 minutes.

In a statement, Hellenic Train said the explosion had occurred "very close



Policemen close the road after a suspected bomb explosion outside of the Hellenic Train offices the company that runs Greece's railway, (the second building on the right), in Athens, Greece on April 11. (AP)

to its central offices" and said the blast had caused limited damage and no injuries to any employees or passers-by. It said authorities had acted immedi-

ately upon receiving information about the warning call, and that the company was cooperating fully with authorities and ensuring the safety of its staff.

Italy sends rejected migrants to Albania detention centers

SHENGJIN, Albania, April 12, (AP): Italian authorities on Friday transferred 40 migrants with no permission to remain in the country to Italianrun migration detention centers in Albania.

It was the first time a European Union country sent rejected migrants to a nation outside the EU that is neither their own nor a country they had transited on their journey, migration experts said.

A military ship with the migrants departed the Italian port of Brindisi and arrived hours later in the Albanian port of Shengjin, about 65 kilometers (40 miles) northeast of the capital, Tirana. The migrants were seen being transferred in buses and minivans under heavy security to an Italianrun center in Shengjin, where they will be processed before being transferred to a second center in Gjader, also run by Italian authorities.

The Italian government has not released their nationalities or further details.

Both facilities in Shengjin and in Gjader were originally built to process asylum requests of people intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea by Italy.



A migrant escorted by police officers disembarks the Italian navy ship Libra as Italian authorities transfer 40 migrants with no permission to remain in the country to Italian-run migration detention centers in Albania, in Shengjin, northwestern Albania on April 11. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

China, N.Korea and Russia army cooperation raises threats in Pacific, US official warns

WASHINGTON, April 12, (AP): The top US commander in the Pacific warned senators that the military support China and North Korea are giving Russia in its war on Ukraine is creating a security risk in his region as Moscow provides critical military assistance to both in return.

Adm Samuel Paparo, head of US Indo-Pacific Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that China has provided 70% of the machine tools and 90% of the legacy chips to Russia to help Moscow "rebuild its war machine."

In exchange, he said, China is potentially getting help in technologies to make its submarines move more quietly, along with other assistance.

Senators pressed Paparo and Gen. Xavier Brunson, commander of US Forces Korea, on China's advances in the region, including threats to Taiwan. And they also questioned both on the U.S. military presence in South Korea, and whether it should be shielded from personnel cuts ..

Both said the current US force there and across the Indo-Pacific is critical for both diplomacy in the region and America's national security, as ties between Russia and China grow. The U.S. has 28,500 forces in South Korea.

Paparo said North Korea is sending "thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of artillery shells" and hundreds of short-range missiles to Russia. The expectation, he said, is that Pyongyang



US Indo-Pacific Command Commander, Admiral Samuel Paparo, gestures during a press conference at the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio, northern Philippines on Aug 29, 2024. (AP)

will get air defense and surface-to-air missile support.

"It's a transactional symbiosis where each state fulfills the other state's weakness to mutual benefit of each state," Paparo said.

In his opening comments, Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the Republican committee chairman, said the greater alignment of Russia, China and North Korea "should be of great concern to all in the West. This concern should then lead to action. If we are to maintain global peace and stability, we must continue taking steps now to rebuild our military and reestablish deterrence."

Brunson said North Korea has shown the ability to send munitions and troops to Russia while advancing development of its own military capabilities, including hypersonics. Pyongrang, he said, "boasts a Russian-equipped, augmented, modernized military force of over 1.3 million personnel.'



Tourists dressed as emperors react to strong winds outside the Forbidden City in Beijing, China on April 12. (AP)

High winds, sandstorms prompt Beijing to cancel hundreds of flights

High winds and the threat of sandstorms Saturday prompted Beijing to cancel hundreds of flights and close public parks, as massive gales felled hundreds of trees, crushing cars and damaging older homes across China's capital

Beijing's two massive international airports, Beijing Capital and Daxing, canceled 693 flights by 2:00 p.m. with warnings of more violent weather on its way, especially

More flights and trains were canceled in other parts of China. Some parts of the country recorded their most powerful winds in more than 75 years, registering at up to

148 kph (92 mph). In Beijing, the Universal Studios theme park was closed at least through Sunday and historic sites such as Beijing's Forbidden City, Summer Palace and Temple of Heaven were closed. Football

High winds and sandstorms are generated in China's dry north, where the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts sit surrounded by grass-lands and, mountains and forests. China has fought a decades-long battle to lessen the impact of sandstorms, especially in Beijing, which sits on the edge of an arid region and where such storms can reduce visibility to practically zero, send sand into buildings and clothing,

nort to the

Xi tells Spanish PM that partnership needed, no mention of talks with US

MADRID, April 12, (AP): Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is visiting China on Friday, his third trip to the country in two years as his government seeks to boost investment from the Asian giant amid global economic uncertainty caused by a chaotic US tariff policy. Sánchez met with Chinese Presi-

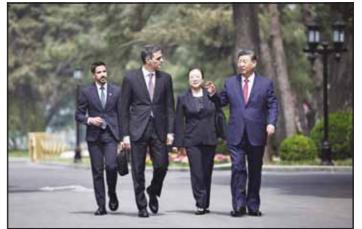
dent Xi Jinping and was expected to meet as well as business leaders from several Chinese companies, many of which produce electric batteries or renewable energy technologies.

The visit comes at a complex moment for Europe and China. The tariffs announced last week - and then paused - by US President Donald Trump could mean that the European Union pursues more trade with China - the world's third-largest consumer market after the United States and the EU. There is also growing concern in the EU about China flooding the bloc with discounted goods as a result of US tariffs, which would hurt European producers.

Sánchez's government has said that EU-member Spain wants to expand its economic ties with China.

"A trade war favors no one. We all will lose." Sánchez said after meeting with Vietnamese lead-ers in Hanoi on Thursday, where he signed commercial agreements ahead of his visit to Beijing.

Spain's government spokes-woman Pilar Alegría said earlier this week that Sánchez's trip "has special importance" and is an op-



Chinese President Xi Jinping, (right) and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, (second left), speak as they walk along the gardens of Di-aoyutai Guest House after a meeting in Beijing, China on April 11. (AP)

portunity to "diversify markets" -Spain could see as much as 80% of its exports to the U.S. impacted by Trump's tariffs.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent called out Spain for its move toward China, saying on Tuesday that Spain - or any country that tries to get closer to China would be "cutting their own throat" because Chinese manufacturers will be looking to dump goods that they can't sell in the US.

"Expanding the trade relations that we have with other countries, including a partner as important as China, does not go against anyone,"

Spain's Agriculture Minister Luis Planas, who is accompany Sánchez, said in Vietnam on Wednesday. "Everyone has to defend their

own interests," Planas said.

Spain - the eurozone's fourthlargest economy and a leader in growth - has in recent years been less adversarial toward China than other EU countries. After initially supporting EU tariffs placed last year on Chinese-made electric vehicles, which European leaders have said enjoy unfair advantages compared to European car makers, Spain abstained from voting on the customs duty.

Yoon embraces supporters after leaving presidential residence

S.Korea establishes diplomatic relations with Syria

SEOUL, South Korea, April 12, (AP): South Korea has established diplomatic relations with Syria's new Islamist government, Seoul's foreign ministry said Friday, months after a rebel coalition ousted President Bashar Assad, who had maintained close ties with North Korea. South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul traveled to Damascus on Thursday to sign a joint communique with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani establishing formal diplomatic relations - a move the South Korean ministry said opens new opportunities for bilateral cooperation previously hindered by Syria's "close ties with North Korea." Cho during the talks conveyed Seoul's willingness to support Syria's

reconstruction efforts following the 13-year civil war, a process that he said could eventually involve South Korean businesses, and to expand humanitarian aid.

Al-Shaibani welcomed the prospect of South Korean contributions to Syria's reconstruction and expressed hope for Seoul's support in easing international sanctions on Damascus, the South Korean ministry said.

Also: SEOUL: Former South Korean presi-



In this photo provided by South Korea Foreign Ministry, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, left, shakes hands with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani after signing a joint statement on the establishment of diplomatic ties between the countries in Damascus, Syria on April 10. (AP)

searching for another believed to be trapped inside.

Im Gwang-sik, an official with Gwangmyeong city's fire department, said the survivor was trapped about 30 meters (98 feet) underground in the rubble for approximately 13 hours, and was conscious when found and taken to a nearby hospital.

Gwangmyeong city authorities had earlier withdrawn workers from the construction site and halted traffic in the area after receiving reports that a ventilation shaft was at risk of collapsing.

in the country's north and along coastal areas.

matches and other outdoor have also been suspended

and cause severe dis eyes, nose and ears. (AP)

Australian opp'n leader Dutton says home target of an alleged bomb plot

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 12, (AP): Australian opposition leader Peter Dutton confirmed on Friday that his family home had been the target of an alleged bomb plot, but said concerns for his personal safety did not restrict his election campaigning.

Dutton is campaigning to replace Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at elections on May 3. Both leaders are accompanied in public by Australian Federal Police security teams as they crisscross the country for weeks.

"I'm incredibly grateful to the AFP that my family are kept safe. I've never felt unsafe one day in this job, particularly with the protection from the AFP. It hasn't stopped me from doing anything, and it won't on this campaign,' Dutton told reporters in Perth.

"This job is about a test of character: Do you have the strength of character regardless of what's thrown at you to deal with the issues and to act in our country's best interests?" Dutton added.

Dutton's security came into focus after a 16-year-old boy was ordered on Thursday to stand trial in the Queensland state Supreme Court in Brisbane charged with planning a terrorist act.

The boy was arrested in August last year and cannot be named because of his age. He faces a potential life sentence if convicted.

Dutton's home, where he lives with his wife and three children on Brisbane's outskirts, had been the target of the alleged plot involving explosives and a drone, unnamed sources told The Australian newspaper on Friday.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese

their grip on power.



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, (left), gestures as Opposition Leader Peter Dutton watches during their TV debate in Sydney, Australia on April 8. (AP)

said he had reached out to Dutton over the news. Albanese said he had also been the target of a "pretty serious incident," but declined to elaborate.

"It is a fact that the number of threats that have been made to parliamentarians has increased in recent times," Albanese told reporters in Darwin.

"There's no place whatsoever in politics for any of this and I have ensured that any time any member of parliament, regardless of who they are, have asked for support, that that have received it," Albanese added.

Albanese's Sydney office is one of several lawmakers' offices that have

Gabon votes in 1st presidential election since '23 coup

been vandalized by pro-Palestinian activists since the Israel-Hamas war began in 2023.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw told a senate committee last month that police responded to 1,009 threats against lawmakers in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

That total was on track to be surpassed in the current fiscal year, which began in July 2024, with 712 threats reported by March, he said. Dutton's conservative Liberal Party campaign spokesperson James Paterson said the opposition leader's family "require around-the-clock personal police protection."

dent Yoon Suk Yeol left the presidential residence in Seoul on Friday for his private home, a week after the Constitutional Court removed him from office over his ill-fated imposition of martial law in December.

Lat/Am

Bolsonaro hospitalized: Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was hospitalized Friday morning with abdominal pain while traveling in northeastern Brazil, his political party said.

The pain was related to long-term effects of a stabbing to the abdomen he suffered in September 2018, the press office of his Liberal Party said.

Bolsonaro has been in and out of hospitals since the incident at a campaign event before Brazil's 2018 presidential election. The conservative leader underwent several surgeries during his presidency from 2019-2022.

He was admitted Friday to a hospital in Santa Cruz, a small city in the

northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte. Sen. Flavio Bolsonaro, one of his sons, said he would be transferred to a hospital in the state's capital, Natal.

Bolsonaro

On Friday afternoon, the medical team assisting Bolsonaro at Rio Grande Hospital said that his condition was stable and there was no indication for surgery. The former president would undergo additional imaging exams, they added

Bolsonaro was set to start a trip across the northeastern region to promote his party's right-wing agenda, eye-

nis arrest

SEOUL: South Korean rescue workers on Saturday pulled a man from a collapsed subway construction site near the capital of Seoul and continued

In recent days, moving trucks were seen driving in and out of the walled

presidential compound in the Han-

nam-dong district, the site of a mas-

sive law enforcement operation in

January that led to Yoon's detainment.

Yoon, who is facing a criminal trial on

rebellion charges, was released from

custody in March after a Seoul court

ing next year's presidential election, though he himself is barred from running. The region traditionally has been a political bastion of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

In March, a panel of Brazil Supreme Court justices accepted charges against Bolsonaro over an alleged attempt to stay in office after his 2022 election defeat, and ordered him to stand trial. (AP)

DomRep buries roof collapse victims: A merengue icon, a baseball star and others killed when a cement roof collapsed at a popular nightclub in the Dominican Republic were buried Thursday, as authorities called off the search for bodies with the death toll at 221.

Mourners clad in black and white streamed into Santo Domingo's National Theater, where the body of singer Rubby Pérez lay inside a closed coffin. Pérez had been performing on stage at the packed Jet Set club early Tuesday when dust began falling from the ceiling and, seconds later, the roof caved.

President Luis Abinader and first lady Raquel Arbaje arrived at the theater and stood beside Pérez's coffin for several minutes. Some mourners doubled over in tears as a recording of Pérez singing the national anthem played. Renowned Dominican musician Juan Luis Guerra was among those gathered to pay their respects.

Pérez, 69, had turned to music after a car accident left him unable to pursue his dream of becoming a professional baseball player. He was known for hits including "Volveré," which he sang with Wilfrido Vargas's orchestra, and "Buscando tus besos" as a solo artist. (AP)

Congo, M23 hold high-stakes talks in Qatar in renewed push for peace

KINSHASA, Congo, April 12, (AP): Congo's government and Rwandabacked rebels are meeting in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar for much-anticipated talks in a renewed push for peace in the conflict-battered eastern Congo, where the insurgents have seized vast territory, officials said Thursday.

The decades-long conflict escalated in January, when the M23 rebels advanced and seized the strategic eastern Congolese city of Goma, followed by the town of Bukavu in February. The fighting has killed some 3,000 people and raised the fears of a wider regional

According to officials from both sides, the delegations from Congo's government and the M23 rebel group also met on Wednesday in Doha, Qatar's capital. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the negotiations

The talks follow a recent Qatar-facilitated meeting between Congolese



Former members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and police officers who allegedly surrendered to M23 rebels arrive in Goma, Congo, on Feb 23. (AP)

and Rwandan presidents in Doha and failed efforts by neighboring countries to get both parties to return to dialogue

and recommit themselves to a peace deal they each accuse the other of violating.

LIBREVILLE, Gabon, April 12, (AP): Voters in the oil-rich Gabon headed to polling stations on Saturday in a presidential election that the country's military rulers hoped would legitimize It's the first election since a 2023 military coup ended a political dynasty that lasted over 50 years. Analysts have predicted an overwhelming victory for

the interim president who led the coup. Some 920,000 voters, including over 28,000 overseas, are registered to participate across more than 3,000 polling stations. A third of the country's 2.3 million people live in poverty



50, toppled President Ali Bongo Ondimba nearly two years ago. He hopes to consolidate his grip Nguema on power for a

interim

seven-year term in office Bongo was placed under house ar-

rest after the coup but freed a week

later due to health concerns. His wife and son were detained and charged with corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Bongo himself was not charged.

Following the coup, Oligui Nguema promised to "return power to civilians" through "credible elections". He has touted himself as a leader who wants to unify the Gabonese and give them hope, running his presidential campaign under the slogan: "We Build Together." In January, the parliament adopted a new contentious electoral code allowing military personnel to run in elec-

Kuwait crude drops 46 cents to \$67.36 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 12, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil dropped 46 cents during Friday's trading sessions to reach 67.36 per barrel compared with USD 67.82 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) said Saturday. Brent futures rose USD 1.43 to USD 64.76 pb and West Texas Intermediate futures gained USD 1.43 to USD 61.50 pb.



Based on Service Hero's Customer Satisfaction Index

NBK named 'Best Retail Bank in Customer Service in Kuwait' for 2024

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has once again reaffirmed its leadership in customer service excellence, earning the title of "Best Retail Bank in Customer Service in Kuwait" for 2024 by Service Hero, the region's only consumer-powered customer satisfaction index. This marks the 14th consecutive year NBK has received this prestigious recognition.

The announcement was made during Service Hero's annual awards ceremony, where Mr. Hisham Al-Nusif, Head of Consumer Banking Group at NBK, participated in a panel discussion to share insights on the Bank's customercentric strategy and how it continues to set the benchmark for retail banking in Kuwait.

Customer service quality remains a cornerstone of NBK's



Best Retail Bank in Customer Service in Kuwait

strategy. The Bank is committed to maintaining the highest levels of satisfaction by continuously launching new services, products, and initiatives tailored to meet evolving customer expectations year-round.

As part of its unwavering com-



NBK team receives the award.

mitment to keeping customers at the heart of its operations, NBK places customer satisfaction at the

and analysis, led by a specialized team dedicated to capturing customer feedback, evaluating service quality, and driving continuous improvements aimed at exceeding customer expectations.

The studies conducted by the Bank both before and after the launch of any new product or service play a pivotal role in ensuring the delivery of top-tier service that aligns with customers' needs and aspirations.

Service Hero's Customer Satisfaction Index is regarded as one of the region's most credible indicators of service excellence, owing to its affiliation with the American Customer Satisfaction Index and compliance with the standards of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR). The results are independently verified and overseen by an advisory board comprising prominent academics and business professionals, ensuring objectivity, transparency, and credibility.

The "Best Retail Bank in Customer Service in Kuwait" award is 100% based on survey responses that assess key metrics such as meeting customer expectations, satisfaction levels, how well brands handle complaints and loyalty as well as open ended comments give brands the insight to manage their service offering better.

The index uses statistically validated data gathered independently from consumers through market research sampling.Its aim is to enable consumers to make their voices heard while simultaneously enabling brands to learn from their feedback.

Kuwait to reinstate paper-based preliminary real estate contract

Al-Ajeel meets brokers to address contract concerns

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: According to informed sources from the real-estate sector, a ministerial decision is expected to be issued in the coming days to reinstate the paper-based preliminary contract book as a first step toward implementing the electronic real estate broker book, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The sources explained that the anticipated decision aims to protect the rights of the three contracting parties: the seller, the buyer, and the broker.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel yesterday met a number of real estate traders to discuss their concerns regarding Ministerial Resolution No. 234 on the suspension of the paper-based real estate broker book.

The resolution was signed by approximately 130 bro-

real estate brokers' demands, assuring that he would work to combine both the paper-based preliminary contract and the electronic broker book in real estate transactions.

ize the agreement between the three parties: the seller, the buyer, and the broker. The broker will then issue a description certificate and enter the electronic data into the system to complete the sale.

In addition, the law allows the complainant to file a lawsuit against the other party if there is no response after two months.

The sources said the grievance has been pending for over three months without a response, meaning a lawsuit could be filed in the coming days, before the legal deadline for litigation expires on April 19, 2025

Retail and private banking teams recognized for excellence Burgan Bank wins 2024 Visa award for premium card growth in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Following years of fruitful collaboration and strate gic partnership, Burgan Bank announced winning the 2024 Visa award for "Bestin-Class Premium Active Cards Growth in Kuwait", recognizing its continued efforts to promote innovation and deliver an exceptional banking experience for distinguished customers. This prestigious award is a testament to the outstanding collaboration between Burgan's Retail Banking and Private Banking departments, where their combined expertise has been instrumental in elevating the Bank's offerings. It also reflects Burgan's unwavering commitment to delivering card-based payment solutions that push the boundaries of convenience and added-value, underscoring its ability to achieve notable growth in the premium cards sector and further cementing Burgan's position as one of the leading financial institutions in Kuwait. "We are honored to receive this pres-

tigious award from our valued partners

at Visa and to be recognized for the first time as the best in Kuwait for growth in active premium cards, which em-

phasizes Burgan's committed forwardlooking vision for developing a com-

prehensive suite of advanced and smart

payment solutions that are in tune with

our customers' modern lifestyles and

evolving aspirations," commented Mr.

core of its strategic vision. Every

new product or service launched

is preceded by in-depth research



Manaf Al-Menaifi, Acting General Manager - Retail Banking at Burgan Bank



Meshari Abduljalil Shehab, General Manager - Private Banking and Wealth Management at Burgan Bank



To discuss developments and challenges in Islamic banking

KFH sponsors 23rd AAOIFI Shari'ah Boards Conf

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group is participating as the main sponsor in the 23rd AOIFI Annual Shari'ah Boards ference, an event organized by the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) in cooperation with the Central Bank of Bahrain, and scheduled to be held in Bahrain on April 20-21. KFH's participation stems from its keenness to develop the Islamic banking industry and to continue supporting the advancement of financial products and services in accordance with Shari'ah, as the conference is one of the most prominent gatherings of Shari'ah scholars and decision-makers to discuss various topics and developments in the Islamic financial industry worldwide. The conference gathered scholars, leaders, and experts in the Islamic financial industry as well as senior officials of central banks and supervisory authorities. Through 5 panel discussions, the conference will dis-





kers and real estate traders on January 19, 2025.

Minister Al-Ajeel expressed his understanding of the

Brokers will draft the preliminary contract to formal-

cuss the Shari'ah aspects related to the Islamic financial industry within the framework of Shari'ah governance for its institutions. It will also feature several live and virtual dialogue sessions over two days, in which a group leaders of the Islamic financial industry will present their visions for the development of Islamic banking, navigating challenges to uphold Shari'ah principles in transactions, while addressing the issues at hand. This will be followed by four workshops related to the governance and financial accounting standards issued by AAOIFI.

KFH Group's participation in the conference represents an opportunity to exchange ideas, visions, and concepts with leaders' specialists in

AAOIFI logo

the Islamic banking industry, and to review the most important issues and topics in Islamic banking that require practical solutions and applications, especially that the Islamic banking sector needs continuous research and development efforts to address various issues facing its development.

Established in 1991 in the Kingdom of Bahrain, AAOIFI is one of the leading international non-profit organizations supporting Islamic financial institutions, with significant professional achievements, mainly the issuance of 100 standards to date in the fields of accounting, auditing, business ethics and governance.

Manaf Al-Menaifi, Acting General Manager - Retail Banking at Burgan Bank."This achievement wouldn't have been possible without the synchronized and harmonious efforts exerted by the Retail Banking and Private Banking teams including consistently researching the market and gathering timely insights, keeping abreast of the latest in fintech trends, fortifying our banking experience with robust security measures, and of course continuing to lead with innovation.'

Al-Menaifi added that the continuous expansion of Burgan's competitive portfolio of debit, credit, and prepaid cards and their prominence as a top-of-wallet market choice stems from the broad spectrum of payment solutions that the cards facilitate, whether through the physical use of the cards or their integration with mobile payment solutions, fast remittance and transfer applications, as well as online banking. In addition, the Bank continues to center the development of its 2 that to the

'Best-in-Class Premium Active Cards Growth in Kuwait' 2024 Visa award.

card on segment-specific needs, guaranteeing that each card offers its target audience a holistically bespoke and premium experience

On his part, Mr. Meshari Abduljalil Shehab, General Manager – Private Banking and Wealth Management at Burgan Bank, said: "On top of the given convenience and banking excellence that Burgan Bank delivers to all of its customers, our Private Banking experience further incorporates uncompromising status and luxury into its DNA. In an effort to provide our esteemed customers with a card that reflects their fine taste and elevated choice, we are proud to develop a dedicated suite of banking cards for our Elite and Premium segments, featuring

a wide range of benefits and promotions in partnership with leading and premium service providers.'

It serves to note that, over the course of their partnership, Burgan Bank and Visa have collaborated on launching a wide range of innovative bank cards that meet customers' ever-changing needs and offer countless benefits, specifically designed to meet the different segments' varying aspirations. The loyalty programs offered to BurganVisa cardholders include a spectrum of benefits ranging from exclusive discounts and offers to redeemable reward points for airline miles, allowing customers to enjoy a world of luxury and comfort, outstanding experiences, and world-class services.

Al tools boost conversions, cut acquisition costs for telcos

Strategy& Middle East: GCC telcos urged to embrace AI-driven marketing for growth

DUBAI, April 12: As brands fight for customer attention, marketing and customer value management has become increasingly complex. A single misstep can erode years of brand value - an especially critical challenge for GCC telecom operators. Operators have a unique opportunity to deliver higher value to their customers and in turn generate breakthrough business growth through AI-powered marketing.

According to a new report by Strategy& Middle East, part of the PwC network, telecom operators could generate up to USD \$5.90 in EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) for every USD \$1.00 invested inan AI-powered, data-fueled marketing personalization engine, over five years. Such an engine would produce deeper customer insights, drive more informed decisions, and create precision targeting strategies to enhance returns.

The report emphasizes that personalization is no longer just an advantage, but is critical to maintaining relevance, as well as driving differentiation and revenue growth.

GCC telecoms operators must act now

Despite having access to vast and valuable data sets -including real-time location data, usage patterns, and customer interactions-telecom operators typically use only 30 to 50 percent of their data, according to the report, limiting their ability to drive customer engagement and revenue growth.

"Facing multiple challenges to growth, GCC telecom operators must harness AI to unlock the full potential of their data. Consumers expect real-time and personalized engagement, yet most operators under perform on delivering this due to underutilized data sets, gaps in precision marketing capabilities and operating models that hinder collaboration. An AI-powered customer value management engine can transform telco data into a competitive advantage, delivering personalized experiences and real business impact," said Mahmoud Makki, Partner and leader of the firm's Telecommunications, Media, Technology, and Digital practice in the Middle East at Strategy& Middle East.

Exemplars from within and outside the industry are demonstrating results

According to the report, one regional telecom operator developed an AIpowered prospecting and dynamic pricing tool and integrated it into their sales app, which increased conversion rates by up to 15% and lowered acquisition costs. Another operator used AI to deliver proactive and personalized resolution offers after a network outage, reinforcing customer trust and reducing expected churn due to the event by 40 to 60 percent. Other exemplars have



Mahmoud Makki

Ankit Kushwaha

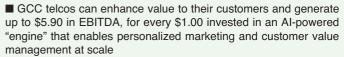
moved campaign cohort sizes to 100's or smaller vs. millions usually targeted for campaigns by telcos and improved campaign conversion rates by 2-3x while maintaining high Net Promoter Scores.

A four-layer framework

"GCC telecom operators are well positioned to meet the personalization imperative, but success depends on their ability to harness and align their full range of capabilities," said GP Singh, Partner at Strategy& Middle East. "To fully capitalize on AI-powered marketing, operators must establish an integrated capabilities engine-one that integrates their data, analytics, technology, marketing, and customer experience into a cohesive framework and operating model. Only then can they deliver personalized engagement at scale and unlock meaningful value growth.'

The report outlines four key layers of this AI-powered engine:

Data Foundation: A unified, broad and high-quality data pool that provides a 360-degree view of the customer must be established.



■ Telecom operators have a rich data reservoir, but typically only utilize 30 to 50 percent of their available data; unlocking this holds the key to growth.

■ Cognitive Marketing Core: AI and analytics must be leveraged to generate real-time, actionable insights and predict customer behavior, from the complete customer view.

■ Value Pools: Use cases and AI-powered campaigns that focus on precision marketing, hyper-targeted sales, customer-centric up/cross-selling, cognitive care, and personalized retention strategies along the customer life cycle must be developed.

Activation: Seamless customer engagement across digital and physical touch points, ensuring that the right message reaches the right customer at the right time, must be delivered.

The path forward: AI as an imperative

For GCC telcos, adopting AI-driven marketing is no longer optional;but a strategic necessity to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving industry. The report recommends that operators integrate their marketing technology stacks, invest in AI capabilities, and adopt an agile operating model to accelerate the transition toward data-driven decision-making.

"For GCC telcos, adopting AI-driven marketing is no longer optional - it's a strategic imperative to remain relevant, competitive, and connected to what customers truly want. Operators are already shifting toward hyper-personalized engagement - targeting micro-cohorts or even a segment-of-one - and unlocking value lifts once thought unattainable. But this is just the beginning. Those who move boldly and at scale will redefine how value is created. Operators that fail to act risk ceding value to digital disruptors and becoming commoditized providers of basic connectivity," concluded Ankit Kushwaha, Principal at Strategy& Middle East.

ARAB TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2025

BUSINESS

Ranked first in Service Hero's 'Mobile Operators' and 'ISPs' categories for 2024

Zain clinches top customer satisfaction honors for 13th time



Waleed Al-Khashti receiving Zain's award from Faten Abu-Ghazaleh.

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: In an achievement that reflects its continued leadership in the technology sector in the Kuwaiti market, Zain has once again claimed the top position at the Service Hero Customer Satisfaction Index Awards for the 13th time. The company was awarded first place in both the Mobile Operators and Internet Service Providers categories for the year 2024.

The announcement was made during the awards ceremony honoring the top-ranked organizations held at the Four Seasons Hotel, attended by

Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, alongside Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, President of Service Hero, and a number of executives and leaders from the winning companies.

For the 13th time in its history, Zain has led the telecom and ICT sector in Kuwait across both categories, having secured the highest number of consumer votes in the Kuwaiti market.

Zain takes pride in consistently topping these two categories year after year, which reflects its leading position in the technology, tel-



Zain honored with its second award.

ecom, and digital services sectors in Kuwait. It also highlights the company's excellence in exceeding customer expectations, fulfilling their ambitions and aspirations, and its ongoing efforts to enhance its suite of innovative services, solutions, and competitive offers to serve its customer base—the largest in Kuwait.

Zain secured first place in two distinct telecom categories for its success in achieving the highest customer satisfaction levels for the quality and efficiency of its products and services, outperforming competitors in the same categories. The company views this recognition as a testament to its unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional service to its customers.

Winning this award, which is based solely on customer and consumer votes, demonstrates Zain's dedication to strengthening its leadership in the Kuwaiti market. The evaluation was conducted based on the quality of services offered, customer service excellence, and the trust of its customers in the company's service quality.

Service Hero celebrated the top-



The company secured the highest number of consumer votes in both cat-

performing service providers in the country for the year 2024, based on the Customer Satisfaction Index for the 15th consecutive year. The index was based on 28,837 validated consumer ratings, covering participants of both genders and from a wide spectrum of industries, nationalities, and educational backgrounds.

Headquartered in Kuwait, Service Hero is the only consumer-led customer satisfaction index in the Middle East. The company is a member of ESOMAR and adheres to the global organization's principles for self-regulation and ethical market practices. Service Hero is overseen by an independent advisory council to ensure neutral and objective results that accurately reflect consumer preferences, making its insights a trusted benchmark that provides transparent and relevant guidance to businesses.

The advisory council consists of academics and business experts representing leading educational and commercial institutions in Kuwait and the UAE, including the American University of Kuwait and the Australian College of Kuwait. Since its establishment in 2010, Service Hero has measured 280,000 validated consumer ratings, covering over 850 private sector companies.

Model 3, Model Y, and Cybertruck now available

Tesla officially launches in Saudi Arabia amid complex history with the Kingdom

RIYADH, April 12, (AP): Tesla officially launched in Saudi Arabia on Thursday, marking a new chapter in the company's global expansion after Elon Musk 's troubled relationship with the kingdom - but the Middle East country's extreme heat could pose a challenge for its electric vehicle performance and battery efficiency.

Musk and Saudi Arabia have had a complicated history. Back in 2018, the Tesla CEO claimed he had secured funding from the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund to take the company private. That deal never happened, leading to lingering tensions.

With the launch of its first showroom and service center in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, Tesla makes its long-anticipated entry into the Saudi market. The facility will offer models, including Model 3, Model Y and the Cycountry is clearly moving toward electric vehicles.

"Tesla is one of the most important EV companies in the world, so it's a big deal to have them pre-

sent in our market," he added. However, the kingdom still faces significant challenges in infrastructure, with a limited number of public EV charging stations available. The government has announced plans to expand charging networks as part of its sustainability goals.

Musk has a large fan base in the kingdom, praised by many for his creativity and innovation, and seen as a visionary of the future.

"He's always looking ahead," said Mohammed Osama, a teenager who describes himself as enthusiastic about everything Tesla. "Maybe a few things don't make sense right now, but in the future, it'll all come together - he's building something bigger."

Many attendees expected Musk to make an appearance, at least via video, but he didn't show. Though Tesla has faced criticism and even vandalism in parts of the United States and elsewhere, after Musk took a prominent role in President Donald Trump's administration. People have protested Musk's Department of Government Efficiency,

or DOGE, which has been moving to slash the size of the federal government through large-scale layoffs, contract cancellations and other moves.

Still, many in Saudi Arabia believe that won't impact Tesla's performance in the kingdom.

"Political events outside of Saudi Arabia don't concern us," said Khalid. "So I don't think this thing has any effect."

Lucid Motors, another luxury electric vehicle manufacturer, headquartered in California, has had a deepening relationship with Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom's Public Investment Fund is one of Lucid's largest backers, owning a majority stake in the company. In 2022, Lucid announced plans to build its first international manufacturing plant in the city of Jeddah, a major step in the kingdom's push to become a hub for advanced au-

InvestGB launches the third edition of **Internship Program for Kuwaiti youth**

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: As part of its continued com-mitment to Kuwaiti youth and employee empowerment, Gulf Capital Investment Company, "InvestGB", has launched the third edition of its Internship Program. The program provides participants with real-world exposure, hands-on training, and opportunities to build personal and professional skills essential for the evolving workforce.

Since the start of 2025, the program recruited 13 interns, with a demographic breakdown of 46% female and 54% male, between the ages of 17 to 25.

InvestGB's commitment to diversity and local talent development is evident in its workforce composition, with women comprising 46% of employees and Kuwaiti nationals representing 71% of the team, particularly in key investment roles.

The Company has successfully concluded the first and second editions of the program, benefitting 40 ambitious high school and university students, with 10% of participants joining InvestGB after completing the program. The initiative has proven to be a powerful pipeline for talent and further solidifies its position as a private sector leader in supporting youth education and sustainable development in Kuwait.

In parallel, InvestGB continues to build an innovative and inclusive work culture that prioritizes employee development and well-being, recognizing its people as the foundation of long-term success. This dual focus on empowering future talent and supporting current employees reflects InvestGB's broader strategy for sustainable growth Ms. Sara AlMuzaini, Senior Vice-President of Human Resources at InvestGB said, "Investing in young minds today builds a stronger and more resilient Kuwait tomorrow." We are proud to provide opportunities that empower the next generation and connect them to meaningful career opportunities.'



Sara AlMuzaini



and improved performance metrics across departments.

AlMuzaini added, "At InvestGB, we are cultivating more than a workplace; we are building a community. Our culture is rooted in well-being, continuous development, and shared purpose, which directly contributes to

46% female & 54% male interns join program

bertruck, and pop-up stores are also opening in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam.

The Riyadh event drew a large and diverse crowd - from content creators and car enthusiasts to visitors excited about Tesla's launch.

"It's a beautiful step we've been waiting for - to finally see Tesla open in Saudi Arabia," said Bader Khalid, a local businessman. "The

tomotive technology.

The growing interest in electric vehicles aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 - an ambitious plan to diversify the economy and reduce its dependence on oil. EVs are a key part of the strategy, with the government aiming for 30% of all vehicles in Riyadh to be electric by 2030.

Beyond these youth initiatives, InvestGB's innovative workplace culture has resulted in notable achievements, including increased employment retention rates our organizational excellence."

AlMuzaini further highlighted that InvestGB remains dedicated to supporting and developing the community through various initiatives, including youth empowerment and workplace enhancement. Through training and development programs, the company provides students and graduates with practical opportunities to acquire the skills needed for the job market, and it reinforces its commitment to investing in human capital for sustainable growth.

Tariffs add complexity, cost, and uncertainty to global trade

Sweeping US trade tariffs will spark broad negative impact on credit

By Moody's Ratings

On 2 April, US President Donald Trump announced a swath of trade actions, revisiting trade relations with the nation's trading partners. The announcement followed the 2025 "National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers" under the America First Trade Policy. The sweeping new tariffs are the largest increase since the 1930s and will likely upend global trade dynamics: China has already retaliated with new 34% tariffs on all US imports.

The additional protectionist tools increase the complexity and cost of global trade and weaken growth prospects, especially for tradereliant economies, as well as many industries. Uncertainty is already weighing on business confidence and delaying investment. Financial market volatility is sharply higher, with steep declines in equity markets and a capital flight to treasuries. Tariff hikes will increase prices for US consumers and businesses. Weaker growth dynamics will further moderate inflationary pressures in other regions. Until now, strong growth has given the Federal Reserve the option to keep the federal funds rate on hold. However, a weaker growth outlook will likely bring forward interest rate cuts.

We expect the US tariffs, ranging between 10% and 50% on top of most levies already in place, to prompt negotiations, concessions and revamped trade deals. The tariffs' credit effects will depend upon their scope, duration and retaliatory responses. We also expect more investment restrictions that could affect strategic sectors. Shifting trade policies and trade reconfiguration could also present opportunities, particularly for emerging markets that manage to deftly navigate geopolitical and geoeconomic crosscurrents as trade flows reroute in response to differential treatment. Similar effects have been seen in past instances such as sanctions on direct trade with Russia. As the global economy adjusts, there will also be opportunities from production shifts in the longer term.

The additional tariffs on goods imported into the US are calibrated in a simple way, charging a rate determined by the size of a country's trade surplus with the US in 2024, relative to its total exports to the country. Countries that have the largest surplus proportionate to their exports attract the highest tariff rates. Asia-Pacific (APAC) economies will be among the hardest hit, especially China given additional tariffs of 34% on top of previous 20% tariffs, but also "connector countries" like Cambodia and Vietnam (see exhibit) that have benefitted from trade reconfiguration because of existing US-China trade tensions. Even countries with which the US has a trade surplus will suffer because a minimum universal rate of 10% will be applied. Canada and Mexico are unaffected by the latest announcement since the existing fentanyl and migration orders remain in place. Therefore, United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)-compliant goods will continue to have a 0% tariff, while non-USMCA compliant goods will be subject to a 25% tariff. Non-USMCA-compliant energy and potash face a 10% tariff.

Assuming the tariffs are implemented in the manner that the President presented, there will be a significant negative impact on global growth and a materially higher risk of US recession this year. Our most recent global macro forecast was for G-20 GDP growth to slow to 2.5% in 2025, and highlighted the downside risks of lower growth and higher inflation if widespread tariffs were introduced. The newly announced tariffs go beyond this downside scenario, with the full impact depending on many factors such as the persistence of this new tariff regime across countries, pricing decisions by importing and exporting firms, and-critically-the response from other countries. Reciprocal tariffs are only one aspect of the latter; many countries may also take steps to support specific sectors or stimulate domestic economic growth more broadly.

Sectoral specialization

On the sector level, industries with sectoral specialization, complex supply chains and high integration in global value chains such as the technology and auto industries, particularly in Europe, Japan and Korea, are most exposed. The new tariffs' broader scope will also increase the cost of consumer goods and affect US retailers and consumer-facing companies. How negative the credit effect is depends on a company's pricing power and strategy, how long tariffs apply and what retaliatory tariffs are imposed, all of which remain largely in flux. Tariffs are credit positive for US domestic producers in some protected industries such as steel and aluminum producers, but others like automakers and other closely integrated sectors will be pressured by higher input costs and likely retaliatory actions.

The minimum baseline tariff of 10% takes effect 5 April, while the higher tariff rates commence 9 April. There are carveouts for sectors where tariffs already apply, such as auto, steel and aluminum, or sectors currently undergoing trade investigations such as pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, lumber articles, certain critical minerals, copper and energy and energy products, which potentially face additional duties.

APAC economies will be subject to particularly high additional tariff rates, notably Cambodia (49%), Laos (48%), Vietnam (46%), Sri Lanka (44%), Bangladesh (37%), Thailand (36%), China (34%) and Taiwan, China (32%). Moody's-rated APAC sovereigns account for around 40% of US goods imports and form the backbone of global supply chains. The magnitude of these tariffs is likely to weigh on global trade activity, reduce demand for regional exports, and undermine business confidence, leading to reduced investment in APAC.

Total additional tariffs on Chinese goods are now at 54%, but any supply chain diversification away from China will be inhibited by China's market dominance, limiting the pace at which companies are able to shift. The duty-free de minimis treatment for China and Hong Kong SAR, China will end on 2 May, negatively affecting e-commerce platforms and logistic companies with high exposure to the US market. China has responded to the latest additional US tariffs by imposing 34% levy on all US imports. Most exposed to these retaliatory tariffs are US agriculture, manufacturing and liquefied natural gas sectors.

Effective 3 April, passenger vehicles and light trucks that are not USMCA-compliant became subject to a supplemental 25% tariff, which will also apply to key automobile parts no later than 3 May. Japan and Korea have high exposures to US vehicle tariffs, although their increasing use of US production facilities helps mitigate the impact. However, any further shifts in production to the US will take too long to offset the immediate competitive threat for automakers that make their products elsewhere. The major shift in US trade policy is sharply negative for APAC but could be lessened if governments in the region succeed in negotiating better conditions.

For the EU, the new 20% tariffs, including previously announced tariffs on autos, and steel and aluminum, in total affect around \Box billion of EU goods comprising 2% of GDP. The European countries most affected are Ireland, Slovakia, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Austria. At the EU sector level, machinery, alcoholic beverages, retail and apparel are most exposed. Additionally, the main credit effect for some of these manufacturing sectors will be from increased competition related to diverted exports from countries most affected by the tariffs especially in Asia, including China and Vietnam, although import quotas and anti-dumping and countervailing duties might mitigate some of the impact for certain sectors. This will lower profit margins for companies operating in sectors that compete directly with imported products. European autos are also affected by the passenger vehicles tariffs. Nevertheless, the negative effect of higher tariffs may be lessened by bringing production closer to consumers and a reduction in Chinese input costs for some European companies. The EU's policy response will determine the full effects on economies and sectors. The EU has said it will attempt to negotiate over the coming weeks but will also be prepared to retaliate against US services imports, including digital services.

10

BUSINESS



Medium-sized cognitive bank team at the exhibition.



Great turnout at the bank's pavilion.

Marafi: We continue to invest in educational and youth initiatives as part of our strategy to develop the future leaders of Kuwait

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait participates in Derasti exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its participation in the Derasti exhibition, a platform that brings together students, experts, and educational service providers, with the aim of enhancing educational and professional opportunities.

Held from 7 to 10April 2025, the Derasti exhibition brought together a select group of universities, educational institutions, and financial organizations under one roof to guide and support high school students in exploring their future university paths and financial planning needs. It also helped them make informed decisions regarding their academic and financial futures.

ABK participated in the event by showcasing its banking solutions specifically designed for youth, providing services that meet their needs and support them on various levels.

On this occasion, Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, stated, "We continue to invest in educational and youth initiatives as part of our comprehensive strategy to



Ms. Johair Marafi – General Man-ager of Retail Banking at ABK

support the community and contribute to the development of future leaders in Kuwait."

She noted that education and students hold significant importance for ABK, which is keen to offer numerous banking products and services, discounts, and exclusive offers in collaboration with partners across various sectors within Kuwait.

Marafi explained that ABK offers students the A+ Student account, which provides many exclusive benefits, including a 30% discount through the Talabat app during weekends, a prepaid card free for one year, along with various special offers and discounts in collaboration with numerous stores in Kuwait.

Marafi emphasized at the end of her statement ABK's pride in the great trust it enjoys among students, and the close relationship it has with many universities in Kuwait. She highlighted the importance of joint cooperation among all parties to achieve desired goals, advance the educational sector in Kuwait, and meet stakeholders'needs of all.



Responding to students' inquiries.

China hits back at US, will raise tariffs on American goods from 84% to 125%

BEIJING, April 12, (AP): China announced Friday that it will raise tariffs on U.S. goods from 84% to 125% - the latest salvo in an escalating trade war between the world's two largest economies that has rattled markets and raised fears of a global slowdown.

While U.S. President Donald Trump paused import taxes this Tit for tat tax hikes see no end



Upending global trade:

By Hassan F. Beidas

Last Wednesday witnessed an exceptional situation with the Trump administration announcing the imposition of tariffs affecting most countries around the world. This announcement calls into question all trade agreements signed since the Second World War.

How did the markets react? U.S. stock futures fell sharply on Thursday following Presi-



- 46% on Vietnam - 24% on Japan

- 25% on South Korea

Winners:

- The United Kingdom, which only faced a 10% tariff.

Goods complying with the USMCA agreement from Mexico and Canada remain exempt from the new tariffs

- Products related to fentanylbased medications are exempt as well.

However, tariffs linked to migration and fentanyl will continue to apply to Mexico and Canada as long as the relevant conditions persist.

The Trump administration also announced a 25% tariff on cars, affecting nearly \$600 billion worth of auto parts. These measures will extend to all computer imports, including laptops and desktops, which were valued at \$138.5 billion in 2024.

Furthermore, the Trump admin-

istration will sign an executive or-

der to close the "de minimis" loop-

hole, which exempts low-value

shipments from customs duties.

Over 90% of incoming parcels to

the U.S. enter through this exemp-

tion, around 60% of which origi-

Key Questions Arising on the

1. How will different countries

respond? (China has promised

retaliation; the EU had leaned

toward a response in recent days;

some countries like the UK may

choose not to respond in order to

benefit from relatively preferen-

change his stance or delay im-

plementation? (This already

happened in March when the

three major U.S. automakers re-

ceived a one-month exemption

3. What will be the economic

impact on U.S. and global mar-

kets if these tariffs are fully im-

tries' reactions impact their own

economies and the global trade?

4. How will affected coun-

plemented as announced?

2. Could President Trump

major Global trade changes from

these increased Tariffs:

nate from China.

tial treatment.)

for auto parts.)?

eek for other countries, he raised tariffs on China and they now total 145%. China has denounced the policy as "economic bullying" and promised countermeasures. The new tariffs begin Saturday.

Washington's repeated raising of tariffs "will become a joke in the history of the world economy," a Chinese Finance Ministry spokesman said in a statement announcing the new tariffs. "However, if the U.S. insists on continuing to substantially infringe on China's interests, China will resolutely counter and fight to the end." China's Commerce Ministry said it would file another lawsuit with the World Trade Organization against the U.S. tariffs.

"There are no winners in a tariff war," Chinese leader Xi Jinping said during a meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, according to a readout from state broadcaster CCTV. "For more than 70 years, China has always relied on itself ... and hard work for development, never relying on favors from anyone, and not fearing any unreasonable suppression.'

Trump's on-again, off-again measures have caused alarm in stock and bond markets and led some to warn that the U.S. could be headed for a recession. There was some relief when Trump paused the tariffs for most countries - but concerns remain since the U.S. and China are the world's No. 1 and No. 2 economies, respectively. "The risk that this escalating trade war

tips the world into a recession is rising as the two largest and most powerful countries in the world continue to punch back with higher and higher tariffs," Jennifer



An aerial view of new cars waiting for shipment at a pier for ro-ro ships in Yantai city in eastern China's Shandong province, Sunday, March 30, 2025. (AP)

Lee, a senior economist at BMO Capital markets, wrote Friday. "No one truly knows when this will end.'

Chinese tariffs will affect goods like soybeans, aircrafts and their parts and drugs - all among the country's major imports from the U.S. Beijing, meanwhile, suspended sorghum, poultry and bonemeal imports from some American companies last week, and put more export controls on rare earth minerals, critical for various technologies.

The United States' top imports from China, meanwhile, include electronics, like computers and cell phones, industrial equipment and toys - and consumers and businesses are likely to see prices rise on those products, with tariffs now at 145%.

Trump announced on Wednesday that China would face 125% tariffs, but he did not include a 20% tariff on China tied to its role in fentanyl production.

Trump's tariffs have launched global trade wars. Here's a timeline of how we got here

NEW YORK, April 12, (AP): Long-threatened tariffs from U.S. President Donald Trump have plunged the country into trade wars abroad - all while onagain, off-again new levies continue to escalate uncertainty.

Trump is no stranger to tariffs. He launched a trade war during his first term, taking particular aim at China by putting taxes on most of its goods. Beijing responded with its own retaliatory tariffs on U.S. products ranging from fruit to automotive imports. Meanwhile, Trump also used the threat of more tariffs to force Canada and Mexico to renegotiate a North American trade pact, called the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, in 2020.

When President Joe Biden took office, he preserved most of the tariffs Trump previously enacted against China, in addition to imposing some new restrictions - but his administration claimed to take a more targeted approach.

Fast-forward to today, and economists stress there

could be greater consequences on businesses and economies worldwide under Trump's more sweeping tariffs this time around - and that higher prices will likely leave consumers footing the bill. There's also been a sense of whiplash from Trump's back-andforth tariff threats and responding retaliation seen over the last few months.

Here's a timeline of how we got here:

Trump is sworn into office. In his inaugural address, he again promises to "tariff and tax foreign countries to enrich our citizens." And he reiterates plans to create an agency called the External Revenue Service, which has yet to be established.

On his first day in office, Trump also says he expects to put 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico starting on Feb. 1, while declining to immediately flesh out plans for taxing Chinese imports.

Trump threatens 25% tariffs on all Colombia imports and other retaliatory measures after President Gustavo Petro's rejects two U.S. military aircraft carrying migrants to the country, accusing Trump of not treating immigrants with dignity during deportation. In response, Petro also announces a retaliatory 25% increase in Colombian tariffs on U.S. goods. But

Colombia later reversed its decision and accepted the flights carrying migrants. The two countries soon signaled a halt in the trade dispute.

Trump signs an executive order to impose tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada and China - 10% on all imports from China and 25% on imports from Mexico and Canada starting Feb. 4. Trump invoked this power by declaring a national emergency - ostensibly over undocumented immigration and drug trafficking.

The action prompts swift outrage from all three countries, with promises of retaliatory measures.

Trump agrees to a 30-day pause on his tariff threats against Mexico and Canada, as both trading partners take steps to appease Trump's concerns about border security and drug trafficking.

Hassan F. Beidas war that could cast a heavy shadow over the U.S. economy.

The Dow Jones and S&P 500 dropped by more than 2% and 3%, respectively, while Nasdaq 100 futures plunged by over 4%. Companies with global supply chains and heavy reliance on imports were the hardest hit. Apple alone lost \$250 billion in market value. Yields on 10-year U.S. Treasury bonds fell by 15 basis points to 4.0455%.

According to available data, this marked the largest one-day drop since August 2 and the lowest level since October.

It is worth noting that president Trump announced a base tariff of 10% on all imports, with higher rates on key trading partners-34% on China and 20% on the European Union.

Several countries are considered losers, while others are winners, in light of Trump's tariff announcement: Losers:

Specific tariffs were imposed on several countries, including:

- 20% on the European Union - 54% total on China

- 26% on India

- 32% on Taiwan

Keeping reciprocal tariffs at 10 pct 'represents a blow to global economy'

BRUSSELS, April 12, (KUNA): The European Commissioner for Economy, Valdis Dombrovskis, said on Friday that keeping U.S. President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs at 10 percent represents a blow to the global economy, emphasizing that "the United States itself will be the first and most affected by these tariffs.'

Dombrovskis explained at a press conference following a meeting of European economy ministers held in Warsaw, that economic forecasts have become "more uncertain" due to the impact of President Trump's administration's decision to impose comprehensive tariffs on most countries around the world.

The Commissioner welcomed the 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs over 10 percent, saying it "opens the door for negotiations." However, he stressed that the 10% tariffs remain in effect and are harmful to the global economy, noting that the U.S. has not suspended its 25 percent tariffs on steel, aluminum, or auto parts.

He noted that the rapid nature of these developments makes it difficult to assess their impact on the EU's economic outlook.

European ministers agreed that "the U.S. itself will be the first and most affected by these tariffs."

African nations that faced steep Trump tariffs get some relief but mostly more uncertainty

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, April 12, (AP): African nations that faced some of the steepest reciprocal tariffs from the Trump administration were given a moment of relief Thursday by the suspension of the duties, only for new uncertainties to hang over key businesses sending clothing and textiles, vanilla and fruit to the United States.

Lesotho, Madagascar and South Africa were threatened with some of the highest tariff rates under U.S. President Donald Trump's plan.

Lesotho, a tiny mountain kingdom, was stunned by the 50% duties that were due to come into effect Wednesday before Trump announced a 90-day pause on the levies. It was the second highest tariff rate after China.

"This will give us the opportunity to negotiate the reduction of tariffs so that the playing field is levelled," Lesotho Trade and Industry Minister Mokhethi Shelile said in response to the suspension. "It's a serious issue for us, but we are tackling it head-on.'

Many like Lesotho had already sent trade delegations to Washington or were willing to negotiate, with some of their most important industries and tens of thousands of jobs hinging on the outcome.

Nearly half of Lesotho's 30,000 clothing and textile workers depend on jobs making apparel for American brands like Levi's, Nike, Reebok and others, which are exported to the U.S. Clothing and textiles is the biggest private employer in the country of just 2.3 million people.

Features

Singer looks to inspire future generations with all-female spaceflight

Perry channels her 'feminine divine' ahead of space mission

ONTARIO, Calif., April 12, (AP): After a long day of re-hearsing for her upcoming world tour, Katy Perry decid-ed to peruse a few books to help her unwind before bed.

"I was listening to 'Cosmos' by Carl Sagan and read-ing a book on string theory," she recalled. "I've always been interested in astrophysics and interested in astrono-my and astrology and the stars. We are all made of stardust and we all come from the stars."

But the pop superstar was motivated by more than just curiosity. On Monday, she will join Jeff Bezos' fiancee Lauren Sanchez, journalist Gayle King and three other women on an all-female Blue Origin spaceflight. Perry spoke with The Associated Press at her Southern California rehearsal space on Wednesday, days before she was set to leave for training in Texas.

"I am talking to myself every day and going, 'You're brave, you're bold, you are doing this for the next generation to inspire so many different people but especially young girls to go, "I'll go to space in the future." No limitations," she said.

Perry said she has been "psychologically" preparing for the spaceflight by reading work from the late Sagan

and other

"I'm really excited about the engineering of it all. I'm excited to learn more about STEM and just the math about what it takes to accomplish this type of thing," she said.

An all-female spaceflight seems an apt endeavor for the 40-year-old Perry, whose collection of hits include songs about extraterrestrials ("E.T.") and fireworks shooting across the sky ("Firework"), as well as feminist anthems like her 2013 hit, "Roar," and "Woman's World," off her most recent album.

Perry said that whenever she is doing something new or daunting, she looks inward for strength and confidence.

"Using that feminine divine that I was born with and definitely unlocked when I had my daughter even more. It leveled up for sure. Being a mother just makes you level up with that type of power," she said. Her daughter, Daisy, 4, joined Perry before her rehearsal.

Bezos' rocket company Blue Origin announced the crew in February. Sanchez, a helicopter pilot and former TV journalist, picked the women who will join her on a 10-minute spaceflight from West Texas aboard a New



Katy Perry arrives at the 11th Breakthrough Prize Ceremony on Saturday, April 5, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Shepard rocket. Perry, Sanchez and King will be joined by Aisha Bowe, a former NASA rocket scientist who now heads an engineering firm, research scientist Amanda Nguyen and movie producer Kerianne Flynn.

"I am feeling so grateful and grounded and honored to be invited and included with this incredible group of women," Perry said. Whenever she gets nervous about the trip, she reminds herself how important it is.

ARAB C TIMES

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2025

Blue Origin has flown tourists on short hops to space since 2021, after Bezos climbed aboard with his brother for the inaugural trip; the upcoming trip will be the company's 11th human spaceflight. Some passengers have received free rides, while others have paid a hefty sum to experience weightlessness.

The company declined to comment on who is footing the bill for Monday's flight.

The news of the upcoming trip has not been without critiques, most recently from actor Olivia Munn, who bemoaned the mission's cost and publicity. But Perry believes an all-women crew - the first since Valentina Tereshkova's solo spaceflight in 1963 - has historic ramifications. Only 14% of people who have gone to space so far have been women.

"It's an important moment for the future of commercial space travel and for humanity in general and for women all around," she said. "I just feel like, 'Put us in coach."

UK 'SNL' live

Oscars to add new stunt design award

LOS ANGELES, April 12, (AP): After many years of impassioned calls for an Oscar recognizing the art of the stunt, the film academy has decided to give it an official award.

An achievement in stunt design prize will be added starting with the 100th Academy Awards, which will recognize films released in 2027, the film academy said Thursday.

"Since the early days of cinema, stunt design has been an integral part of filmmaking," Academy CEO Bill Kramer and Academy President Janet Yang said in a joint statement. "We are proud to honor the innovative work of these technical and creative artists, and we congratulate them for their commitment and dedication in reaching this momentous occasion."

The film academy's production and technology branch has more than 100 stunt performers among its ranks.

David Leitch, who directed "The Fall Guy," which was itself an ode to stunt performers, helped lead the charge for the new prize. Leitch began his career as a stuntman for stars like Brad Pitt before transitioning to making stunt-heavy films like "John Wick." He and stunt coordinator and designer Chris O'Hara of Stunts Unlimited made presentations to the academy advocating for the addition of a new award.

"Stunts are essential to every genre of film and rooted deep in our industry's history - from the groundbreaking work of early pioneers like Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Charlie Chaplin, to the inspiring artistry of today's stunt designers, coor-dinators, performers, and choreographers," Leitch said in a statement Thursday. "Chris O'Hara and I have speat ware working to bring this memorat to have spent years working to bring this moment to life, standing on the shoulders of the stunt professionals who've fought tirelessly for recognition over the decades. We are incredibly grateful.

Stunt designer is a relatively new designation. For his work on "The Fall Guy" O'Hara was the first person to be credited as such.

"To be seen by the film community as stunt designers hopefully brings more light to what we really do,





O'Hara told The Associated Press in 2024. "Back in the day, stunt guys were the cowboys. Now we are creative. We create amazing things, just like a production designer does or a costume designer does.

The Oscars paid tribute to the stunt community with a video montage at the 2024 ceremony, looking back at over 100 years of Hollywood stunts from Chaplin and Keaton all the way to "Mission: Impossible" and "The Matrix."

Other awards shows were ahead of the curve in celebrating stunts: The Emmys honors stunt coordination and stunt performance, while the Screen Actors Guild Awards recognize stunt ensembles in television and film.

The Oscars also recently added a prize for achievement in casting, starting with films released in 2025. As with the casting award, it remains unclear whether it will be added to the live Oscars broadcast.

Chad Stahelski, who co-directed "John Wick" and did stunts for Keanu Reeves, told the AP Thursday that there's still work to be done.

'The idea of giving an Academy Award for stunt design is awesome - don't get me wrong," he said. "Now I would like to know who's going to decide who gets it, and who actually gets the award? It's not like it was 100 years ago when there was one person designing it. It's a collaborative effort."

Live from London, it's Saturday night!

Wait, London? You heard that correctly. "Saturday Night Live" announced Thursday that it plans to launch a British version of the US sketch comedy show that is celebrating its 50th anniversary across the pond.

The UK version, produced with Sky Studios, will have a British cast of comedians - to be announced later - and follow the same format with famous guest hosts and star musical acts.

"SNL" creator Lorne Michaels will be the executive producer of "Saturday Night Live UK," while staying in the same role with the show on NBC in New York.

"For over 50 years 'Saturday Night Live' has held a unique position in TV and in our collective culture, reflecting and creating the global conversation, all under the masterful comedic guidance of Lorne Michaels," said Cecile Frot-Coutaz, chief executive of Sky Studios. "We are thrilled to be partnering with Lorne and the 'SNL' team to bring an all-British version of the show to UK audiences next year - all live from London on Saturday night.'

The long-established show regularly roasts the powerful. U.S. President Donald Trump and tech titan Elon Musk have been skewered lately, and both have previously hosted the 90-minute show.

"SNL" airs live at 11:30 p.m. Eastern time from a studio at Rockefeller Plaza and typically opens with a sketch that wraps as the actors turn to the camera, break character and announce, "Live from New York, it's Saturday night!"

Its mix of political satire, off-beat skits, fake commercials, comic music videos and its regular "Weekend Update" spoof on the news has launched the careers of many comedians and actors.

Its roster of famous cast members include the late John Belushi, Bill Murray, Eddie Murphy, Mike Myers, Tina Fey, Will Ferrell, Kristen Wiig, Kenan Thompson and Kate McKinnon.

Efforts to launch "SNL" in other countries, such as France, Japan and Italy, have typically been short-lived, though a version of the show remains on the air in South Korea.

This image released by 20th Century Studios shows Rami Malek in a scene from 'The Amateur.' (AP)

A starry, globetrotting action thriller

Malek seeks vengeance in 'The Amateur'

LOS ANGELES, April 12, (AP): Before Jack Ryan was introduced into the culture, Robert Littell imagined Charlie Heller, a quiet, CIA cryptographer who goes rogue on a quest for vengeance after his love is killed by terrorists.

As star of "The Amateur," in theaters Friday, Rami Malek gets to be both skittish nerd and coolly competent angel of death. He's the homebody and perpetual rulefollower who in grief-stricken madness decides to blackmail his bosses and go on an international killing spree to get the people responsible for her death.

The story is based on a book published in 1981 - a product of its Cold War context that was even made into a movie starring John Savage. But even with the Iron Curtain and the Holocaust in its DNA, it also has the kind of foundation that's essentially evergreen in Hollywood. There's tragedy, drama, cinematic globetrotting and a fish-out-of-water story that's a little more relatable than watching some preternaturally talented superspy (at least in theory).

In this newest take, credited to screenwriters Ken Nolan and Gary Spinelli and directed by James Hawes, the story has been updated for the modern age, with decidedly murky international politics and sophisticated facial and voice recognition software that can identify masked terrorists and their networks and find rogue agents in an instant.

The locations are many: London, Paris, Marseille, Istanbul included. The cast is stacked: Laurence Fishburne is a veteran assassin who agrees to train Charlie, Rachel Brosnahan is the dead wife, Julianne Nicholson is the CIA director, Holt McCallany is Charlie's shady boss. Jon Bernthal, Caitriona Balfe and Michael Stuhlbarg also play pivotal roles. And anyone who has seen the trailer has already gotten a preview of the most impressive set piece, involving a glass infinity pool.

"The Amateur" has a lot going for it -- but it takes also takes a while to get going. Once it does, it can't quite maintain a level of energy and suspense needed to justify its runtime. This might be because the film is attempting to be something that's equal parts action-packed and meditative, but for us that means listening to several conversations about the nature of killing that start to sound quite repetitive.

Throughline

There's this throughline that Charlie is not a born killer. While a court of law might disagree, everyone in this film seems to think that there's something different between shooting someone point blank and, say, setting up an elaborate trap that you know will result in a death. Still, it seems like that is a debate that could end after he does intentionally kill someone and goes looking for more.

It's interesting what a film like this chooses to focus on and what it disregards. At the beginning, Charlie declines his wife's invitation to accompany her to London, where she will of course die. He regrets this deeply, but we're also told that he always declines: He doesn't travel internationally almost as a rule. Why? Unclear, but you'd think perhaps this might factor into the plot somehow as he begins his globetrotting.

port the verdict. It is unfortunate that

Instead, it's not an issue at all: He capably navigates all manner of transport across Europe, from cargo flights to busses full of migrants. There are other underdeveloped curiosities, like Jon Bernthal as a cool guy superspy with basically two scenes that don't seem to advance the story at all. And don't get me started on poor Brosnahan as the dead wife who we're constantly being told "mattered" but who we know so little about. Sarah is often seen in flashback in flowy floral dresses doting on her quirky husband in their idyllic Virginia farmhouse. To the film's credit, they don't show her laughing under white sheets.

But perhaps this is asking too much of a big screen spy spectacle in which Malek is compelling as an unlikely vigilante - even if we might not totally understand why he's decided this is the only way. He doesn't exactly sell it the way Harrison Ford was able to in "Patriot Games," though that's an unfair bar.

With James Bond in a reset mode and Ethan Hunt promising final reckonings, most of the good globetrotting spy thrillers seem to have migrated to the small screen lately. Something about the episodic nature of it suits the genre, whether it's "Slow Horses,

"Black Doves" or even "Jack Ryan." But, as with "Black Bag" from earlier this year, it's always welcome when we get an offering on the big screen: They just look better there.

The Amateur," a 20th Century Studios released in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "some strong violence and language." Running time: 123 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Variety

SANTA MONICA, Calif .: A jury on Thursday found that rapper Soulja Boy was liable for sexually assaulting and physically and emotionally abusing a former assistant, awarding the woman more than \$4 million in damages.

The decision from the Los Angeles County jurors came after a three-week trial in Santa Monica, California.

The 34-year-old Soulja Boy, whose legal name is De-Andre Cortez Way, was found liable for assault, sexual battery and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Jurors did not find him liable for false imprisonment and other allegations. They found the woman should get about \$4 million in compensatory damages and another \$250,000 in punitive damages.

"Today's verdict is just the beginning of justice for Soulja Boy's victims, and other victims in the music industry," plaintiff's attorney Neama Rahmani said in a statement

Lead defense attorney Rickey Ivie said in his own statement: "We maintain that the evidence does not sup-



say they have been sexually abused. She said she began working for Soulja Boy Soulja Boy in 2018, and he agreed to pay her \$500 a week for cleaning his house, cooking for him and doing other personal tasks. But she says she

was never paid. The two began a romantic relationship, and soon after he began abusing her, raping her, kicking her, punching her and threatening her with violence and death, her lawsuit alleges. (AP)

NEW YORK: Poet Yusef Komunyakaa is to receive an

Anisfeld-Wolf Award for lifetime achievement. Komunyakaa, 77, is known for such collections as "Neon Vernacular" and for exploring race, music and his Vietnam War experiences

Announced Thursday, the Anisfeld-Wolf prizes are presented by the Cleveland Foundation and honor literature that "confronts racism and celebrates diversity."

"Komunyakaa has shaped contemporary poetry with a voice that is both unflinching and deeply evocative," reads a statement from the foundation.

Danzy Senna's "Colored Television," a satire about an author attempting to turn a failed novel into a TV series, won for fiction. The nonfiction prize went to John Swanson Jacobs' "The United States Governed By Six Hundred Thousand Despots: A True Story of Slavery; A Rediscovered Narrative, with a Full Biography," and the poetry award was given to Janie Harrington's "Yard Show." Tessa Hulls' "Feeding Ghosts" won for best memoir.

The winners will be formally honored at a ceremony in September.

The awards were established in 1935 by poet and philanthropist Edith Anisfeld Wolf. (AP)

aspersions and misperceptions of a culture were allowed to influence the trial. Mr. Way fully intends to pursue his post-trial remedies and to fight for a just result in this case." The woman was not identified by name in the lawsuit she filed in 2021, and The Associated Press does not typically name people who

NEWS/FEATURES

12

To maintain Versace's authenticity and creativity

Prada to acquire Versace in major fashion deal

ROME, April 12, (AP): The Prada Group announced a deal Thursday to buy crosstown Milan fashion rival Versace from the US luxury group Capri Holdings under terms that values one of the most recognizable names in Italian fashion at 1.25 billion euros (\$1.4 billion).

The deal will put Versace, known for sexy silhouettes and bold Greco and Medusa motifs, under the same roof as Prada's "ugly chic" aesthetic and the youth-driven Miu Miu whose stunning growth in recent years has far outpaced the market. Prada said the 47-year-old Versace brand offered "significant untapped growth potential."

"This is exactly the strength for our group. There are no overlaps in terms of creativity, in terms of customer," said Lorenzo Bertelli, Prada's chief marketing officer, who is being groomed to one day take over the business that his parents - Miuccia Prada, the group's creative force and largest shareholder, and Patrizio Bertelli, its chairman and executive director - have turned into a global fashion juggernaut.

"We are buying a brand with huge potential, with a very recognizable aesthetic," Lorenzo Bertelli said, underlining

that the Versace brand name recognition, putting it among the top 10 in the world, far outweighs its business performance.

The final value of the deal will be adjusted at closing, which is expected in the second half of the year, the Prada Group said. It will be funded by 1.5 billion euros in new debt and has been approved by the Prada and Capri Holdings board of directors.

Identity

Prada Chief Executive Andrea Guerra said the deal was aimed at building a "sustainable revenue growth" and boosting the brand's identity, and was not about squeezing synergies. Prada's statement underlined that Versace will "maintain its creative DNA and cultural authenticity, " while benefitting from its "industrial capabilities, retail

execution and operations expertise." There are no plans to change the CEO and Miuccia Prada will not be involved in the creative side of Versace, the executives said. Guerra added that the recent creative shakeup at Versace, with Miu Miu head of design Dario Vitale replacing Donatella Versace as creative director effective April 1, had nothing to do with the deal. He called it "an independent, very personal" decision by Vitale.

Lorenzo Bertelli said the experience of Miu Miu's growth had shown that small changes can make all the difference. "We don't need to change the brand, revolutionize it. We need to just evolve it, make the right things happen, and all together they are hopefully going to bring a huge spark and bring back Versace to be a huge success," he said.

cess," he said. Capri Holdings, which owns Michael Kors and Jimmy Choo, paid \$2 billion for Versace in 2018, but had been struggling to position Versace's bold profile in the recent era of "quiet luxury."

Versace represented 20% of Capri Holdings 2024 revenue of 5.2 billion euros. An analyst presentation for the Prada deal said that Versace would represent 13% of the Prada Group's pro-forma revenues, with Miu Miu coming in at 22% and Prada at 64%. The Prada Group, which also includes Church's footwear, reported a 17% boost in revenues to 5.4 billion euros last year.



Smaranda Luna, (left), and Gabriel Luna pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the second season of 'The Last of Us' on Thursday, April 10, in London. (AP)

Season 2 goes deeper, darker, and deadlier





A flyer of the event.

Rich and diverse program

Belgian pianist Olivier kicks off Francophonie Month in Kuwait

By Mohammad Alfarhan

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: In a unique cultural evening, the French Embassy in Kuwait and the Council for the Promotion of Francophonie will launch the 2025 Francophonie Month with an exceptional concert by renowned Belgian pianist Olivier de Spiegeleir on Sunday, April 13th at 7:00 PM, at Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah – Yarmouk Cultural Centre. Admission is free. This concert marks the beginning of a rich and di-

This concert marks the beginning of a rich and diverse program running from April 13th to 30th, celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Francophone world through music, theatre, film, and thought-provoking discussions. Highlights include roundtables, theatrical perfor-

Highlights include roundtables, theatrical performances inspired by Arab heritage, literary evenings, and interactive workshops for all ages. These events reflect the vitality of Francophonie in Kuwait and the strong cultural ties between French-speaking nations and the Arab world.

Culinary diplomacy

White House marks 150 years of 'state dinners'

WASHINGTON, April 12, (AP): The art of culinary diplomacy, practiced by presidents at White House state dinners for more than 150 years, is the theme of this year's official White House Christmas ornament.

Unveiled on Thursday by the White House Historical Association, the ornament's design features the red china plate of Ronald Reagan's administration on one side and the gold-rimmed china plate of Bill Clinton's on the other.

First issued in 1981, the annual ornament typically features the presidents in their order of service. Last year's was a tribute to Jimmy Carter in the shape of an anchor to recognize his service in the Navy. But the ornament sometimes is used to highlight impor-

But the ornament sometimes is used to highlight important White House anniversaries or occasions, said association president Stewart McLaurin. For example, the ornament in 2000 highlighted the 200th anniversary of the White

Television

Ramsey, Pascal push limits in 'Last of Us'

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif., April 12, (AP): Five years after the end of the first season's events, "The Last of Us" picks up in Wyoming, where Joel and Ellie — played by Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey — are settled into everyday life alongside an ensemble of returning characters and new faces protecting their fortress from the infected.

Ellie is at the center of Season 2, premiering Sunday on HBO, as she sets out on a quest for vengeance (to tell you more would be a spoiler). But Season 2's new cast members also include some of young Hollywood's rising stars: Isabela Merced ("Alien: Romulus"), Young Mazino ("Beef"), Danny Ramirez ("Top Gun: Maverick") and Kaitlyn Dever ("Apple Cider Vinegar") as the long-awaited Abby, a character introduced in "The Last of Us: Part II" video game who is set on avenging her father's death.

Dever, who played the game with her own father, was originally in talks with series co-creators Neil Druckmann and Craig Mazin to portray Ellie in the first season. But Abby, she now says, was the role she was meant to play.

"It sort of just felt like everything fell into place the way it was supposed to," Dever says. Ramsey and Pascal spoke with The Associated Press

Ramsey and Pascal spoke with The Associated Press about the show's hiatus, Ramsey's increased stunt work and lessons Pascal took away from this season. This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

AP: Bella, you're stepping into more stunts, more action than we saw this past season. What was that like for you in regard to training and prep and then just mentally getting into that zone with Ellie?

Ramsey: What I was most excited about, about going into Season 2, was getting to train and be strong. It's nice to have a reason to exercise that isn't just for your own personal health. I got so battered and bruised. The stunt team did everything they could to protect me, but I still somehow managed to get bruises every time. I think I commit a bit too much. It was a great time. I was absolutely exhausted the whole time but had a lot of fun doing it.

AP: Was there ever a moment or a scene where you were like, "Wow, I didn't think I could physically do that, and I'm pretty proud of myself."

Ramsey: Those moments happened quite frequently, not necessarily because of the actual stunt, but because you'd pile up months of exhaustion. And then there were days where I would wake up and be like, "I don't know how I'm gonna do today."

Pascal: (laughs) You couldn't get out of bed.

Ramsey: Yeah, there's times — I've never had this experience before — where I thought my body was just going to, like, cave in. It's this feeling of like an instability in your body. I'm like, "I don't know what's going to happen." So, I think there was so many times during shooting where I would feel proud at the end of the day, especially when it was a stunt day, with all of this exhaustion. In some of the later episodes, there's quite a lot of physical work, and I just had no idea how I'd do it. And then you just do, like you kind of just do it and then pay the price.

Pascal: Pay the price for the rest of your life.

AP: Given that this season is all about evolution and growth, I'm curious for each of you, individually, as creatives. How do you feel from Season 1 to Season 2 that you grew in your craft, and how did that change the way that you approached Ellie and Joel?

Pascal: It's interesting that you say it's all about growth, because I think it's all about growth for some of the characters. I think other characters are quite stuck, and I think that to step into a very — what's the word — stubborn paralysis, let's call it, for Joel that is fueled ultimately by the desperate fear of losing Ellie. ... You have to step into complete vulnerability to, I guess, tell that story. And so, that definitely felt like very scary territory for me, more than I had ever experienced in a previous job. I felt that how I felt at the time was very applicable to the playing of the scene. I was sort of injured and exhausted and kind of in a low place and thank God Joel was there to help me work that s--- out. And also, my incredible scene partner Bella and the family of "The Last of Us."

Ramsey: Yeah, that happens more often than you'd think. That was also the case for me. There was a lot of stuff personally that reflected stuff in the show. And it was, yeah, it's crazy how that happens. And yeah, I mean,

there was this five-year gap in the show between Season 1 (and) Season 2 that was like three years or so in real life.

Pascal: It was big gap for us though, too, we ended in what? June 2022, and we started in the beginning of 2024. It's like two years.

Ramsey: In that time, I didn't work very much. So main growth, I think, between Season 1, Season 2 was learning how not to work, because I'd been on production since I was 11 and then worked basically nonstop up until the end of Season 1. And then there was this lull, and I didn't do very much. So, I had to learn how to, yeah, how to be a young person and not be working, which was a challenge.

AP: Given the trajectory of Joel this season and everything that he goes through, what is one lesson or one thing that you think you will take away from this character this season?

Pascal: I feel like Joel in Season 2 is an extreme example of what can happen if you don't face the truth. And I think that in these teasers and in the trailer, Catherine O'Hara, who's so incredible in the first episode that you got to see is saying, "Just, just say it. Just say the thing, face it, face your fears." And I know as I get older, I am shocked into recognizing how hard that is to do, and how dangerous it is not to do it.

AP: Bella, in the first season, you faced a lot of unwarranted, misogynistic comments from fans. Kaitlyn (Dever) is kind of going through the same thing this season. I'm curious if you guys got a chance to chat about that, or give her any advice on how to deal with it?

Ramsey: We've not chatted about it particularly directly. It's more just this mutual understanding of it and knowing very much that we have each other's backs and that I definitely feel she doesn't need my protection or my advice, but I feel almost protective of all of the new cast coming in and being like, "None of that matters."

Pascal: Or give it any airtime at all. It's all just noise and bulls---.

Ramsey: It's just noisy. And they're still happening. But I feel it just gets less important. It's not important to me anymore.

Variety

MIAMI: A South Florida art dealer and another man face charges involving the sale of fake Andy Warhol artworks, authorities said.

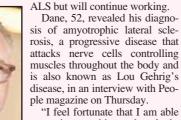
Leslie Roberts, 62, of Miami, and Carlos Miguel Rodriguez Melendez, 37, of Sunny Isles, were arrested Wednesday and made their initial appearances in Miami federal court, according to court records.

If convicted, Roberts faces up to 30 years in prison and Rodriguez Melendez faces 20.

Defense attorney Nayib Hassan, who represents Rodriguez Melendez, said his client maintains his innocence and looks forward to presenting the full facts in a court of law. Roberts' defense attorney and Miami Fine Art Gallery didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment about the charges.

According to the indictment, Roberts, the owner of Miami Fine Art Gallery in Coconut Grove, fraudulently represented art as original pieces created by renowned artist Andy Warhol. Prosecutors said Roberts falsely claimed to victims that he acquired the artwork directly from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and provided fake and fraudulent invoices to the victims. Roberts also transferred at least \$240,000 in wire fraud proceeds from his Miami Fine Art Gallery bank account to a personal bank account, the indictment said.(AP)

LOS ANGELES: "Euphoria" actor and former "Grey's Anatomy" veteran Eric Dane has announced that he has



to continue working and am looking forward to returning to set of Euphoria next week," he said. "I kindly ask that you give my family

and I privacy during this time."

The 52-year-old actor is married to actor Rebecca Gayheart and the couple share two children, Billie Beatrice, 15, and Georgia Geraldine, 13. Gayheart filed for divorce in 2018, but filed to dismiss the petition earlier this year, news outlets reported.

"Euphoria" is set to resume shooting this month. Dane's publicist did not immediately return a message from The Associated Press. (AP)

LONDON: Prince Harry met with war victims on Thursday during an unannounced visit to Ukraine as part of his ongoing work with wounded veterans, a spokesperson said.

Harry visited the Superhumans Center, an orthopedic clinic in Lviv that treats and rehabilitates wounded military personnel and civilians, to see top-notch services provided in a country in the midst of war. The center provides prosthetics, reconstructive surgery and psychological help free of charge. The trip into western Ukraine, a region frequently targeted by Russian missiles, was only announced after he had left the country. Harry, who served 10 years in the British Army, has

Harry, who served 10 years in the British Army, has made helping injured soldiers one of his most prominent causes. He founded the Invictus Games in 2014 to offer wounded veterans the challenge of competing in sports events similar to the Paralympics.

Invictus is more than just about competition, the spokesperson said. It's a year-round movement about life after an injury, which is why Harry visits rehabilitation centers like the one in Lviv. (AP)

House. Next year's will mark America's 250th birthday.

"Presidents will resume, or pick up, or continue at some point, but when we have a moment to highlight significant anniversaries or occasions at the White House itself, we don't want to miss that opportunity, also," McLaurin said.

President Ulysses Grant hosted the first White House state dinner for King David Kalakaua, one of the last monarchs of the Hawaiian Kingdom, in December 1874. Nearly 400 have been held since then, McLaurin said.

President Donald Trump held two state dinners in his first term, for France and Australia. A third one, for Spain, in 2020 was canceled due to the spread of COVID-19. There's been no word yet on how soon Trump might hold another one now that he's back in office.

State dinners have grown in stature and size since the first one held by Grant.

"State dinners are an important part of the American diplomatic process," McLaurin said in an interview. "It's an opportunity for our presidents to establish friendships with heads of state through the extension of hospitality. They're not just fancy parties."

They are the highest diplomatic honor the United States has to recognize close allies and dazzle their leaders with an evening of first-rate food, decor and entertainment in the company of hundreds of invited guests. The glitzy affairs close a state visit that begins with an elaborate arrival ceremony for the visiting leader on the White House lawn.



White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin poses with the 2025 White House Christmas ornament, (seen both front and back), in front of a display of White House china, Thursday, April 10, at the association in Washington. (AP)



Gold china commissioned under the President Bill Clinton administration to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the White House, is seen with place settings for President George W. Bush, (left), and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, (right), before official dinner in the State Dining Room of the White House, June 29, 2006, in Washington. (AP)



HEALTH/SCIENCE

Hope for new treatment

Cancer hijacks brain and steals motivation: study

By Adam Kepecs

Washington University in St. Louis

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

A cruel consequence of advanced cancer is the profound apathy many patients experience as they lose interest in once-cherished activities. This symptom is part of a syndrome called cachexia, which affects about 80% of late-stage cancer patients, leading to severe muscle wasting and weight loss that leave patients bone thin despite adequate nutrition.

This loss of motivation doesn't just deepen patients' suffering, it isolates them from family and friends. Because patients struggle to engage with demanding therapies that require effort and persistence, it also strains families and complicates treatment.

Doctors typically assume that when late-stage cancer patients withdraw from life, it is an inevitable psychological response to physical deterioration. But what if apathy isn't just a byproduct of physical decline but an integral part of the disease itself?

In our newly published research, my colleagues and I have discovered something remarkable: Cancer doesn't simply waste the body - it hijacks a specific brain circuit that controls motivation. Our findings, published in the journal Science, challenge decades of assumptions and suggest it might be possible to restore what many cancer patients describe as most devastating to lose - their will to engage with life.

To unravel the puzzle of apathy in cancer cachexia, we needed to trace the exact path inflammation takes in the body and peer inside a living brain while the disease is progressing - something impossible in people. However, neuroscientists have advanced technologies that make this possible in mice.

Arsenal

Modern neuroscience equips us with a powerful arsenal of tools to probe how disease changes brain activity in mice. Scientists can map entire brains at the cellular level, track neural activity during behavior, and precisely switch neurons on or off. We used these neuroscience tools in a mouse model of cancer cachexia to study the effects of the disease on the brain and motivation.

We identified a small brain region called the area postrema that acts as the brain's inflammation detector. As a tumor grows, it releases cytokines – molecules that trigger inflammation - into the bloodstream. The area postrema lacks the typical blood-brain barrier that keeps out toxins, patho-gens and other molecules from the body, allowing it to directly sample circulating inflammatory signals. When the area postrema detects a rise in inflammatory molecules, it triggers a neural cascade across multiple brain regions, ultimately suppressing dopamine release in the brain's motivation center - the nucleus accumbens. While commonly misconstrued as a "pleasure chemical," dopamine is actu-ally associated with drive, or the willingness to put in effort to gain rewards: It tips the internal costbenefit scale toward action.

using two quantitative tests designed with behavioral economics principles to measure effort. In the first, mice repeatedly poked their noses into a food port, with progressively more pokes required to earn each food pellet. In the second task, mice repeatedly crossed a bridge between two water ports, each gradually depleting with use and forcing the mice to switch sides to replenish the supply, similar to picking berries until a bush is empty.

As cancer progressed, mice still pursued easy rewards but quickly abandoned tasks requiring greater effort. Meanwhile, we watched dopamine levels fall in real time, precisely mirroring the mice's decreasing willingness to work for rewards.

Motivation

Our findings suggest that cancer isn't just generally "wearing out" the brain – it sends targeted inflammatory signals that the brain detects. The brain then responds by rapidly reducing dopamine levels to dial down motivation. This matches what patients describe: "Everything feels too hard."

Perhaps most exciting, we found several ways to restore motivation in mice suffering from cancer cachexia – even when the cancer itself continued progressing.

First, by genetically switching off the inflammation-sensing neurons in the area postrema, or by directly stimulating neurons to release dopamine, we were able to restore normal motivation in mice. Second, we found that giving mice a drug that blocks a particu-

lar cytokine – working similarly to existing FDA-approved arthritis treatments – also proved effective. While the drug did not reverse physical wasting, it restored the mice's willingness to work for rewards.

While these results are based on mouse models, they suggest a treatment possibility for people: Targeting this specific inflammation-dopamine circuit could improve quality of life for cancer patients, even when the disease remains incurable.

The boundary between physical and psychological symptoms is an artificially drawn line. Cancer ignores this division, using inflammation to commandeer the very circuits that drive a patient's will to act. But our findings suggest these messages can be intercepted and the circuits restored.

Our discovery has implications far beyond cancer. The inflammatory molecule driving loss of motivation in cancer is also involved in numerous other conditions – from autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis to chronic infections and depression. This same brain circuit might explain the

Blockade threatens life-saving care for thousands

75 pct of UN missions within Gaza blocked: WHO

GENEVA, April 12, (KUNA): The World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday issued a stark warning about the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, stating that 75 percent of UN missions within the enclave over the past week have been either denied or impeded by the Israeli blockade occupation since March 2.

Speaking in a press conference in Geneva, WHO Director General Tedros Ghebreyesus emphasized that the situation in Gaza is deteriorating rapidly. "In Gaza families are hungry, malnourished, without clean water, shelter and adequate healthcare," he added. "The risk of disease and death is increasing."

He explained that WHO had taken advantage

of a recent ceasefire to resupply the health system and restock warehouses, but those critical supplies are now dangerously low. "After six weeks of blockade, those supplies will run out in two to four weeks unless the siege is lifted," he warned.

He noted that among the most urgent concerns is the fate of 180.000 doses of routine childhood vaccines enough to protect 60,000 children under the age of two. "These vaccines have not been allowed to enter Gaza, leaving newborns and young children at risk."

Ghebreyesus reported that since the breakdown of the most recent ceasefire, nearly 400,000 people have been displaced again with no safe place to go. Almost 1,500 people have been killed, including 500 children.

He said the health system in Gaza is only functioning partially and remains overwhelmed by the sheer scale of need.

"Since the conflict began in October 2023, more than 400 humanitarian workers have been killed. On March 23, an Israeli attack targeted a medical and emergency convoy, killing 15 health and humanitarian workers."

Ghebreyesus confirmed that WHO and its partners evacuated 18 patients and 29 companions on Wednesday. However, more than 10,000 other patients remain in urgent need of evacuation.

Outbreak spreads to 6 states

US measles cases surpass 700

NEW YORK, April 12, (AP): US measles cases topped 700 as of Friday, capping a week in which Indiana joined five others states with active outbreaks, Texas grew by another 60 cases and a third measles-related death was made public.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. claimed in a televised Cabinet meeting Thursday that measles cases were plateauing nationally, but the virus continues to spread mostly in people who are unvaccinated and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention redeployed a team this week to the epicenter of West Texas' monthslong outbreak.

The US has more than double the number of measles cases it saw in all of 2024, and Texas is reporting the majority of them with 541.

Texas' cases include two unvaccinated elementary school-aged children who died from measles-related illnesses near the epicenter of the outbreak in rural West Texas, which led Kennedy Jr. to visit the community Sunday. The third person who died was an adult in New Mexico who was not vaccinated.

Other states with active outbreaks defined as three or more cases - include New Mexico, Indiana, Kansas, Ohio and Oklahoma.

The multi-state outbreak confirms health experts' fears that the virus will take hold in other US communities with low vaccination rates and that the spread could stretch on for a year. The World Health Organization has said cases in Mexico are linked to the Texas outbreak.

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus that's airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines, and has been considered eliminated from the US since 2000.

Here's what else you need to know about measles in the US.

Texas' outbreak began in late January. State health officials said Friday there were 36 new cases of measles since Tuesday, bringing the total to 541



A sign is seen outside a clinic with the South Plains Public Health District, Feb. 23, 2025, in Brownfield, Texas. (AP)

West Texas. A total of 57 people have been hospitalized throughout the outbreak.

of the confirmed cases, state health officials estimated Friday that about

5% are actively infectious. Sixty-five percent of Texas' cases are in Gaines County, population 22,892, where the virus stated spreading in a close-knit, undervaccinated Mennonite community. The county now has logged 355 cases since late January - just over 1% of the county's residents.

Last week's death in Texas was an 8-year-old child, according to Kennedy. Health officials in Texas said the child did not have underlying health conditions and died of "what the child's doctor described as measles pulmonary failure." A child died of measles in Texas in late February -Kennedy said age 6.

New Mexico announced two new cases Friday, bringing the state's total to 58. State health officials say the cases are linked to Texas' outbreak based on genetic testing. Most are in Lea County, where two people have been hospitalized, two are in Eddy County New Mexico reported its first measles-related death in an adult on March

Kansas has 32 cases in eight counties in the southwest part of the state, health officials announced Wednesday. Two of the counties, Finney and Ford, are new on the list and are major population centers in that part of the state. Haskell has the most with eight cases, Stevens County has seven, Kiowa County has six, and the rest have five or fewer.

The state's first reported case, identified in Stevens County on March 13, is linked to the Texas and New Mexico outbreaks based on genetic testing, a state health department spokesperson said. But health officials have not determined how the person was exposed.

Cases in Oklahoma increased by two Friday to 12 total: nine confirmed and three probable cases. The first two probable cases were "associated" with the West Texas and New Mexico outbreaks, the state health department said. A state health department spokesperson said measles exposures were confirmed in Tulsa and Rogers counties, but wouldn't say which

First-ever tax

Shipping faces 'emission' fee

NEW YORK, April 12, (AP): Many of the world's largest shipping nations decided on Friday to impose a minimum fee of \$100 for every ton of greenhouse gases emitted by ships above certain thresholds, in what is effectively the first global tax on greenhouse gas emissions.

The revenue, estimated at around \$10 billion annually, will go into the International Maritime Organization's net zero fund to invest in fuels and technologies needed to transition to green shipping. The thresholds set through the agreement will get stricter over time to try to reach the IMO's goal of net zero across the industry by about 2050.

The agreement, reached with the United States notably absent, takes effect in 2027. The IMO, which regulates international shipping, also set a marine fuel standard to phase in cleaner fuels.

Emissions

Shipping emissions have grown over the last decade to about 3% of the global total as vessels have gotten bigger, delivering more cargo per trip and using immense amounts of fuel. IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said the group forged a meaningful consensus in the face of complex challenges to combat climate change and modernize shipping.

Some environmentalists at the meeting called the agreement a "historic decision" that doesn't go far enough. The fee doesn't drive enough emission reductions and it won't raise enough revenue to help developing countries transition to greener shipping, said Emma Fenton, senior director for climate diplomacy at a U.K.based climate change nonprofit,

We directly observed this shift

debilitating apathy that millions of people suffering from various chronic diseases experience.

Apathy triggered by inflammation may have originally evolved as a protective mechanism. When early humans faced acute infections, dialing down motivation made sense – it conserved energy and directed resources toward recovery. But what once helped people survive short-term illnesses turns harmful when inflammation persists chronically, as it does in cancer and other diseases. Rather than aiding survival, prolonged apathy deepens suffering, worsening health outcomes and quality of life. (AP)

across 22 counties - most of them in and one is in Chaves County.

counties had cases.

Deadly outbreak has killed at least 150

Nigeria struggles to control meningitis

Foreign Body removal

ABUJA, Nigeria, April 12, (AP): Nigerian health authorities are struggling to contain a rapidly spreading meningitis outbreak that has so far killed 151 people across the west African nation, mostly in remote parts of the northern region with children affected the most.

While cases first recorded in October have spread to 23 of Nigeria's 36 states, nearly half of the deaths, 74, were reported this year, the Nigeria Center for Disease Control said this week, with local partners describing the recent rise in fatalities as "alarming."

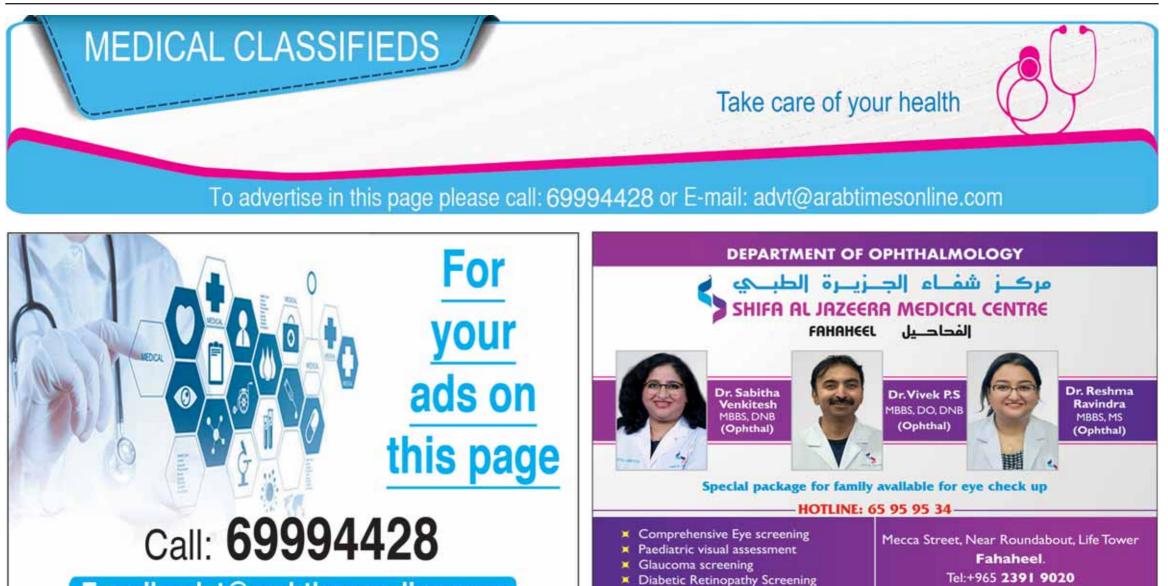
Most deaths from the disease have been mainly due to infected people not going to health facilities or arriving there late with severe complications, NCDC spokesperson Sani Datti told The Associated Press, a common problem in past outbreaks in the country. The current outbreak has hit Africa's most populous country as its health sector reels from U.S. aid cuts ordered by the Trump administration in February that have affected multiple countries. Nigeria relied heavily on such aid over the years to help fight similar outbreaks and support its underfunded healthcare systems. Opportunity Green.

Fenton said the measure actually opens the door for a scenario where ships can pay to pollute instead of decarbonize, because it could be cheaper to simply absorb the fee than to make changes to reduce emissions, like switching fuels.

"The IMO has made an historic decision, yet ultimately one that fails climate-vulnerable countries and falls short of both the ambition the climate crisis demands and that member states committed to just two years ago," they said.

Other groups welcomed the agreement as a step in the right direction.

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14

SPORTS

Knight Riders deepen Super Kings woes

Narine stars with ball and bat

CHENNAI, India, April 12, (AP):The Chennai Super Kings' lowest total at home in Indian Premier League history led to their fifth consecutive loss.

Sunil Narine's brilliance with ball and bat led the Kolkata Knight Riders to an eight-wicket win with nearly 10 overs to spare.

Chennai avoided its lowest ever total – 79 – but 103-9 at Chepauk was hardly less embarrassing a day after Mahendra Singh Dhoni was handed the captaincy in the absence of the injured Ruturaj Gaikwad.



Kolkata Knight Riders' Moeen Ali, right, bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders at M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, India. (AP)

Kolkata's spin trio of Narine, Varun Chakravarthy, and Moeen Ali strangled the home team with combined bowling figures of 12-1-55-6.

After taking 3-13, Narine bludgeoned 44 off just 18 balls with five sixes and two fours and motored Kolkata to 107-2 in 10.1 overs.

Kolkata's rampant chase lifted it to third on the table, six points behind the Gujarat Titans and unbeaten Delhi Capitals. Following an unprecedented third-straight home loss, Chennai remained just above the bottom-placed Sunrisers Hyderabad.

After his starring role with the ball, Narine was in a hurry to lead Kolkata's electrifying chase, with Quinton de Kock also smashing three sixes in a 23-run knock.

Both left-handers whacked pace bowler Khaleel Ahmed (0-40) and didn't spare spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who conceded 30 off his three overs.

De Kock and Narine were cleanbowled, and captain Ajinkya Rahane and Rinku Singh finished off Chennai's biggest defeat in terms of balls remaining.

Dhoni wanted to bat first after he lost the toss, and Kolkata obliged him, along with lining up ideal matchups with its spinners.

Ali was specifically drafted for the left-handed opening pair of Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra. The off-spinner bowled a maiden over in the power play and got the wicket of Conway, lbw to an over-ambitious reverse sweep.

Ravindra struggled and gave a leading edge to Harshit Rana. Vijay Shankar escaped two



Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders at M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, India. (AP)

dropped catches in his team-high 2,9 and his luck finally ran out in the 10th over when he holed out to backward square leg against Chakravar-thy.

Rahul Tripathi, playing in place of Gaikwad, couldn't read Narine, and Ravichandran Ashwin's promotion lasted seven balls for one run.

Impact player Deepak Hooda

couldn't turn the fortunes for Chennai as he chipped a catch to midwicket for a four-ball duck, and then Dhoni was lbw for 1 to Narine. At 75-8, Chennai was in danger of its

lowest-ever IPL total.

But Shivam Dube, 31 not out, spared Chennai that indignity. The home team scored just three boundaries after the eighth over.

Last-gasp Burgan tops Kazma

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Burgan Club's handball star, Hamoud Al-Adwani, scored a last-second goal in his team's thrilling 33-32 victory over Kazma in the top match of the third round of the Premier Handball League's first division. Al-Adwani's decisive goal not only secured Burgan's second victory over Kazma, after their earlier win in the preliminary round, but also lifted Burgan to 27 points, breaking its tie with Kazma, which now stands at 25 points and drops to third place.

The match, held at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, also saw Kuwait Club dominate Al-Arabi 37-29 to maintain top spot with 32 points. Al-Arabi remains in fourth place with 18 points. In another close encounter, Al-Salmiya edged out Al-Sulaibikhat 36-35, raising its points tally to 18 and securing fifth place. Al-Sulaibikhat remains in sixth with 16 points. The upcoming fourth round of the Premier Handball League will take place tomorrow at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex in Sabah Al-Salem, with Kuwait Club



Burgan hero Hamoud Al-Adwani

facing Kazma, Burgan playing Al-Sulaibikhat, and Al-Salmiya taking on Al-Arabi

Sulaibikhat, and Al-Salmiya taking on Al-Arabi. In the first division handball

Salah signs 2-yr deal at Liverpool

Egyptian continued presence boosts Reds appeal

and sets sights on more trophies

LONDON, April 12, (AP): Mohamed Salah's trophy-laden spell with Liverpool is set to extend to a decade after the prolific Egypt forward signed a new contract with the Premier League leader, ending months of uncertainty over his future.

The 32-year-old Salah was one of three key senior players - with Trent Alexander-Arnold and Virgil van Dijk - due to be out of contract at the end of this season

He is the first to extend his stay, having already established himself as



350,000 pounds (\$460,000) a week was never on the agenda in discussions.

"Mo Salah is such a great player that as a free agent he can go probably to every club in the world, wherever he wants to," Slot said. "But he stayed at our club."

For Slot, Salah's continued presence boosts Liverpool's appeal in the transfer market.

"It gives a positive vibe to the club - maybe a positive vibe we might not need but it's always good to have posi-

league, Al-Fahaheel triumphed over Al-Sahel 29-26, while Al-Qurain defeated Khaitan 30-27 in the fourth round. The standings in the first division are as follows: Al-Nasr (18 points), Al-Qadisiyah (18 points), Al-Qurain (16 points), Al-Fahaheel (12 points), Khaitan (8 points), Al-Tadamon (3 points), Al-Yarmouk (2 points), and Al-Sahel (0 points).

Al-Arabi faces key absences ahead of Challenge Cup semifinal second leg

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Al-Arabi will be without key player Khalid Al-Murshid for its upcoming match against Turkmenistan's Arkadag next Wednesday in the second leg of the AFC Challenge Cup semifinal.

Al-Murshid picked up an injury during recent training and will not be part of coach Nasser Al-Shatti's plans for the match. Additionally, Badr Tariq will also miss the game due to injury.

The Al-Arabi delegation arrived in Turkmenistan last evening, led by board member Ismail Al-Habib, and will hold its first training session this evening.

Complicating travel plans, the Turkmenistan Civil Aviation Authority denied permission for the delegation to travel via a direct flight or private plane. As a result, Al-Arabi announced on its official "X" platform account that the team will travel to Turkmenistan via a connecting flight through Dubai, UAE, after the original plan was blocked.

The club also mentioned that it would explore the possibility of returning the team on a private plane for itsr return journey.

It's important to note that the Al-Arabi delegation was initially scheduled to depart Kuwait today on a private flight.

In the first leg of the semi-final at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium, Al-Arabi secured a 2-0 victory over Arkadag, with Nigerian forward Christopher John scoring the opening goal in the 71st minute, followed by Salman Al-Awadhi's strike in the third minute of stoppage time.



Al-Murshid controls the ball.

a club great with 243 goals in 394 appearances, placing him third in the list of Liverpool's all-time top scorers.

Liverpool didn't disclose the length of Salah's new deal in an announcement but manager Arne Slot did, saying in a news conference it was a twoyear contract.

"Of course I'm very excited," said Salah, who joined from Roma in 2017 for 42 million euros (\$50 million). "We have a great team now. Before also we had a great team. But I signed because I think we have a chance to win other trophies and enjoy my football.

"It's great, I had my best years here. I played eight years, hopefully it's going to be 10. Enjoying my life here, enjoying my football. I had the best years in my career."

Salah has been either tied or alone as the Premier League's top scorer in three seasons, been voted as the league's player of the year twice, and has lifted seven major trophies including the Premier League in 2020 and the Champions League in 2019. Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Arsenal at Anfield Stadium, Liverpool, England. (AP)

Helped by Salah's league-leading 27 goals this campaign, Liverpool holds an 11-point lead in the Premier League in its bid for a record-tying 20th English top-flight title.

"I would like to say to (the fans), I am very, very happy to be here," Salah said. "I signed here because I believe we can win a lot of big trophies together. Keep supporting us and we'll give it our best, and hopefully in the future we're going to win more trophies."

Salah's future at Liverpool appeared in the balance for much of this season. He had been linked with a move to the Saudi league - Liverpool rejected an offer worth a reported \$188 million in 2023 - and, in an apparent show of brinksmanship, gave a number of interviews stating he was playing his last year at the club because he was no closer to agreeing to a new deal.

Slot, however, said he knew for some time that Salah was likely to stay at Liverpool. And he praised sporting director Richard Hughes and the Fenway Sports Group ownership for securing the forward's future, which meant deviating from the club's policy of not handing players over 30 years of age lucrative new contracts.

British media reported Friday that a cut in Salah's reported wages of tive vibes instead of negative vibes," the Dutch coach added.

"If you want to sign new players or players who want to extend here, it is always a positive to see one of our star players over the last seven or eight years has made the choice to extend his contract. It also shows maybe how ambitious this club is: not only Mo, but the owners."

Attention now turns to whether Van Dijk and Alexander-Arnold will follow Salah in committing their future to Liverpool.

Van Dijk, the commanding Netherlands center back who has been at Anfield since 2018, said in comments reported Monday that he was getting closer to signing a new contract.

"There is progress, yeah," said the Liverpool captain, who turns 34 in July. "Listen, these are internal discussions and we'll see."

Alexander-Arnold, however, is the most likely to leave Liverpool having been linked heavily with a move to Real Madrid.

3-time America's Cup-winner Burling to leave Team NZ

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, April 12, (AP): Helmsman Peter Burling is leaving Team New Zealand after nearly a decade in which he steered New Zealand boats to three consecutive wins in sailing's America's Cup.

His departure was confirmed Friday in separate statements from Burling and Team New Zealand.

The former Olympic sailing gold medalist and nine-time world champion became Team New Zealand helmsman in 2017. He became the youngest helmsman to win the America's Cup, world sport's oldest trophy, at 26 when he steered Team New Zealand to a 7-1 victory over Oracle Team USA in Bermuda.

Burling was skipper and helmsman when Team New Zealand successfully defended the America's Cup in 2021 in Auckland, New Zealand and 2024 in Barcelona.

"Pete has been a central figure who has grown incredibly within Emirates Team New Zealand since he joined 10 years ago," Team New Zealand general manager Grant Dalton said. "We can all look back with great pride on what has been achieved, having enjoyed unprecedented success as a team with Pete at the helm.

"Winning the America's Cup three times in a row was uncharted territory but what has enabled winning in the past does not always equate to winning in the future, especially in much tighter America's Cup cycles which require a dedicated and new approach for continued success."

Burling has been in negotiation with Team New Zealand management about his future role since the 2024 regatta ended. An agreement could not be reached.

The America's Cup is likely to be contested in more regular cycles which increases demands on crew members.

"As the balance between design, simulation, boat build, testing and racing windows become more compressed, the integration of key sailors with the design team becomes more critical than ever," Team New Zealand said in the statement.

Team New Zealand is already working on confirming the protocol for the next America's Cup and deciding on the venue. The team said it is "working hard to secure a powerful combination of existing experience and new talent across all departments to ensure every chance of winning the America's Cup for the sixth time against what will be another formidable line up of very strong challengers."

Both Burling and Team New Zealand said they were parting without animosity.

"While I won't be continuing with Team New Zealand for the 38th America's Cup, I want to take a moment to reflect on an amazing journey," Burling said. "Over the past decade, I've had the privilege of being part of something truly special, from intense battles to unforgettable victories and friendships that extend well beyond sailing. "I'm immensely proud of everything we've

"I'm immensely proud of everything we've achieved together and grateful to everyone who has been part of this chapter."

US will play in San Jose, California, Austin, Arlington and Texas, in CONCACAF Gold Cup

MIAMI, April 12, (AP): The United States will open the CONCACAF Gold Cup against Trinidad and Tobago on June 15 at San Jose, California, play Saudi Arabia four days later at Austin, Texas, and close first-round play in Group D against Haiti on June 22 at Arlington, Texas.

CONCACAF announced the match schedule on Friday, a day after the draw. The U.S. has won its group in 16 of 17 Gold Cups, along with a second-place finish to Panama in 2011. Its group stage record is 40 wins, one loss and five draws. These will be the last competitive matches for U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino's team before its World Cup opener on June 12, 2026.

Sending a second-string team for the second straight Gold Cup, the U.S. lost a 2023 semifinal to Panama on penalty kicks.

Defending Gold Cup champion Mexico will play the opener of the biennial championship of North and Central America and Caribbean against the Dominican Republic on June 14 at Inglewood, California, meet Suriname four days later at Arlington and close its Group A play against Costa Rica on June 22 at Las Vegas.

SPORTS



Stars of the Second Forum.

Special Olympics hosts 2nd Unified **Champions Schools Sports Forum**

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Special Olympics recently organized the second Unified Champions Schools Sports Forum, held at the Kazma Sports Club Hall with active participation from players from the National School. The event featured two exciting matches in football and basketball, with students from both the National School and Al-Huda School competing.

The event was attended by key figures, including Hana Al-Zawawi, President of Special

Olympics Kuwait; Mohammed Odeh, Director of the National School; Fahad Al-Sahli, Board Member of Al-Tamooh Club; and Huda Al-Khalidi, Director of Al-Tamooh Club. The National School Scout team contributed to the festive atmosphere, adding to the event's lively spirit. Students from Al-Huda School for Special Needs also took part in the forum, showcasing their skills and teamwork.

During her opening speech, Hana Al-Zawawi extended her heartfelt thanks and gratitude

to the National School community, the key strategic partner in bringing the Unified Champions Schools program to life. She highlighted the program's role in promoting educational integration through sports, fostering an inclusive environment for all students. Al-Zawawi emphasized that such initiatives are crucial in building school communities that encourage acceptance and mutual understanding, providing young people with opportunities to grow in an inclusive setting.

3 Kuwaitis advance to semis Kuwait eyes hosting Beach Games KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Kuwaiti after successful Muscat 2025 event junior squash team has achieved another milestone, with three players advancing to

MUSCAT, April 12: Mohammed Al-Khalfan, Director General of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, emphasized that sports tournaments and events play a crucial role in supporting Gulf integration, particularly in the realm of sports, offering mutual benefits for all participating nations.

Al-Khalfan made these remarks during his leadership of the Kuwaiti delegation at the 3rd Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Beach Games (Muscat 2025)

He highlighted the significant importance of such sporting events in strengthening social cohesion and promoting unity and brotherhood among the people of the GCC countries. These gatherings, he said, are vital in fostering collaboration and mutual understanding across the region.

Al-Khalfan also underscored the Kuwait Olympic Committee's commitment to participating in this major event, which not only unites the GCC nations through sport but also strengthens the ties of solidarity among the Gulf peoples.

He further noted that the directors of the Gulf delegations attending the Beach Games recently discussed the possibility of Kuwait hosting the next edition, following the success of this year's games. This discussion follows a 10-year gap since the last Beach Games, which were held in Doha in 2015.



Mohammed Al-Khalfan, Director General of the Kuwait Olympic Com-

the semifinals of the 29th Arab Junior and Youth Squash Championship at the Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah Center in South Surra.

Abdullah Mayouf delivered an impressive performance, defeating the fourthseeded Jordanian, Khalil Al-Tayeh, in the quarterfinals. Saleh Al-Kandari also triumphed, beating Jordan's Bishr Mohammed in straight sets. Meanwhile, second-seeded Issa Al-Najadah secured his place in the semifinals after overcoming his fellow Kuwaiti player, Hamoud Al-Sawagh. Alongside the Kuwaiti trio, Jordan's Hazem Tariq also advanced to the semifinals.

In the under-19 category, Jassim Al-Gharib made his way to the final by defeating his compatriot Abdullah Hani 3-1. On the other side, top-seeded Saudi Mohammed Al-Nusfan also secured a



Abdullah Mayouf and Issa Al-Najadah

3-1 victory, beating Jordanian Osama Al-Batayneh. Al-Gharib will now face Al-Nusfan for the Arab Youth Singles title. The three-day team championship begins today, Sunday.

City fights back from 2-goal deficit to beat Crystal Palace



Gulf Tennis Champ'ship begins in Kuwait with full GCC participation

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The Gulf Tennis Championship for Under-12, Under-16, and general age teams which began two days ago at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex, with participation from all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Kuwait Tennis Federation President, Abdulredha Al-Gharib, stated that the tournament, which runs until April 16, will feature three age groups. The competition format follows a single-group league structure for all age groups, with the team accumulating the highest points securing first place.

Al-Gharib also highlighted the strong preparation of the Kuwaiti national team for the tournament, emphasizing col-laboration with the Rafa Nadal Academy,



One of the stars of the Kuwaiti team.

which trains all national tennis players across various categories. He further noted that international competition has played a key role in enhancing the players' skills.

Waratahs win Super Rugby title

15

Crystal Palace's Jean-Philippe Mateta, left, challenges Manchester City's Mateo Kovacic during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Crystal Palace at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

Leeds and Burnley move into strong position to secure EPL return

LONDON, April 12, (AP): Kevin De Bruyne sparked Manchester City's remarkable fightback from two goals down in a 5-2 win over Crystal Palace in the Premier League on Saturday that re-ignited his team's **Champions League qualification hopes.**

The 33-year-old De Bruyne curled a free kick in off the post to begin the comeback in the 33rd minute and had a hand in goals by Omar Marmoush and Mateo Kovacic in the first half. James McAtee added a fourth - off a pass from goalkeeper Ederson, who later came off injured - before fellow academy product Nico O'Reilly wrapped up the win.

It was a display showing the enduring quality of De Bruyne, who announced last week he would be leaving City at the end of the season after 10 years at the club.

Injuries have affected the Belgium playmaker's impact in recent seasons but his class can still shine through, with his assist for Kovacic the 119th of his Premier League career.

"I would say basically I have been pain-free for the last six weeks and that's a massive difference," De Bruyne said. "It was hard but now I feel free, and able to do a lot of training sessions. I don't know what's going to happen but I want to play on. We will see where I can end up.'

Eberechi Eze and Chris Richards scored in the first 21 minutes for

Palace to shock City into action.

The victory lifted City into fourth place above Chelsea and Newcastle, who have games in hand in the race to secure England's five Champions League spots.

Leeds and Burnley have become big favorites to secure automatic Championship promotion spots in the race to get back in the Premier League.

After Burnley won 2-1 at home to Norwich on Friday, Leeds secured a 2-1 victory over Preston on Saturday.

First-place Leeds stayed ahead of Burnley on goal difference and they are both five points clear of third-place Sheffield United, which conceded two late goals to lose 2-1 at last-place Plymouth on Saturday - four days after losing at home to Millwall.

There are only four rounds of games remaining.

"We've given up another massive opportunity to get in touch and close the gap to Leeds and Burnley," said Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder, who clashed with some celebrating Plymouth players as the teams came off the field after the final whistle. "So we're not in a great position because of a week full of poor results. We have to own that and reset Monday.'

Leeds is in its second season back in the second tier after relegation from the Premier League, while Burnley is seeking an immediate return to the top flight

UDINE, Italy, April 12, (AP): Two goals right before halftime put visiting AC Milan on its way to a comfortable 4-0 win over Udinese in Serie A and extended the home side's losing streak to four matches.

Udinese is on its worst run since the end of the 2022-23 season, when it also lost four in a row. It remains in 11th place.

The win left Milan in ninth, one point behind Fiorentina, but it will worry about an injury to goalkeeper Mike Maignan, who was taken off on a stretcher after colliding with teammate Alex Jiménez.

Rafael Leao's superb strike from 18 meters was quickly followed by Strahinja Pavlovic's glancing

header from a corner on the stroke of halftime. Udinese was forced to chase the game in the second half and Milan took advantage of gaps that

opened up Theo Hernández added a third in the 74th minute when he started a sweeping move in his

own half and finished it off with an unstoppable shot Substitute Tammy Abraham's superb cross led

to a fourth from Tijjani Reijnders 10 minutes from time.

A goal in each half from Keito Nakamura gave Reims an historic 2-0 win at Lens in Ligue 1.

It was Reims' first league win against Lens since 1977 and a personal triumph for the Japanese winger.

Nakamura got the first after 33 minutes when he side-footed home from close range.

Nhoa Sangui did the hard work for the clincher, three minutes from time, taking the ball the length of the field before laying it off to Nakamura to curl the ball in from an angle.

Lens was unfortunate to leave empty handed in a match where it had most of the possession and chances and where Reims goalkeeper Yehvann Diouf was elected man of the match.

The result lifted Reims out of the relegation playoff spot and into 14th. Lens was ninth.

SYDNEY, April 12, (AP): The New South Wales Waratahs beat the Queensland Red 43-31 on Saturday to win their sixth Super Rugby Women's title in eight grand final appearances.

The Waratahs have now beaten Queensland in all 13 of their matches, including the championship match Saturday at North Sydney Oval.

Queensland trailed 12-0 early and scored the first try of the second half to pull to within five points of the Waratahs, but it was all New South Wales after that. Flyhalf Arabella McKenzie had 13 points for the winners from a penalty goal and five conversions.

"It feels absolutely unreal," Waratahs winger Desiree Miller said. "This is my second (grand final win) and it almost feels even better than the first.'

Queensland fullback Charlotte Caslick, who signed with the Reds after

making the switch from her dominant seven-a-side game to the 15-player format, missed out on adding to her career accomplishments.

Caslick was looking to add a Super Women's premiership to her trophy cabinet, which already includes an Olympic gold medal, Women's World Cup gold and multiple World Series titles.

In the semifinals, the Waratahs beat the Perth-based Western Force 54-17 when Georgina Friedrich scored three tries, and she also had two tries in the final on Saturday. Queensland was an attacking force in its 54-40 semifinal victory against the Fijiana Drua, but the Reds allowed 35 unanswered points in the second half.

The Waratahs will now travel to New Zealand to face the winner of Super Rugby Aupiki in the inaugural Women's Super Rugby Champions final next Thursdav.





Pauline Ferrand Prevot, of France, lifts the cobblestone trophy after winning the Paris-Roubaix cycling race in Roubaix, France. (AP)





The victorious Kuwait Club players with officials.

Kuwait Club defeats Al-Arabi for seventh Volleyball Super Cup

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: Kuwait Club secured its seventh Volleyball Super Cup title by defeating Al-Arabi 3-0 in the final, with set scores of 25-18, 25-21, and 25-18 at the Volleyball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. The team was crowned by Federation President Dr. Jaber Al-Marri, Assistant Secretary General Nayef Al-Khamili, Chairman of the

Competitions Committee Dr. Jaber Al-Sharif, Kuwait Club President Khaled Al-Ghanim, and club board member Balsam Al-Ayoub.

Al-Qadsiya Club has won the Super Cup once, while Kazma Club has claimed it twice.

In related news, the Volleyball Association's Competitions Committee has revised the schedules for the Premier League, Golden Square, and First Division League. This adjustment was made following a request from the national team coach, Argentinian Julian Alvarez, who sought sufficient time for the Blues to prepare for the upcoming West Asian Championship in Bahrain, set to begin on July 1.

The Premier League, which was initially divided into two divisions before the Golden Square, will now be a single division. It starts today with matches between Kuwait and Burqan, and Al-Shabab and Al-Qadisiyah, and will conclude on May 29. The Golden Square will begin with the Premier League final on May 2 and conclude on May 13.

Meanwhile, the First Division League will begin tomorrow, Monday, and will be split into two divisions, with the season concluding on May 10.

Qualifying rounds for the men's and women's skeet events begin

Egypt, Oman delegations hail Kuwait's world-class organization of Amir Championship

KUWAIT CITY, April 12: The annual Grand Prix of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Shooting Championship officially begins today, Sunday, with the qualifying rounds for the men's and women's skeet (75-shooter) events.

The official training sessions for both the men's and women's skeet competitions took place yesterday, followed by the opening ceremony at 6:30 pm.

The technical committee for the championship convened at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Ranges. Chaired by Engineer Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi, President of the Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations, member of the International Shooting Federation, and Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee of the Championship, the meeting covered the regulations for the competition and addressed queries from the participating teams.



Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Grand Championship. He highlighted the championship's esteemed position both within Arab and foreign nations and the invaluable support and patronage it receives from His Highness the Amir.

Hosni remarked, "Kuwait offers crucial success factors for such events, including the presence of top shooters, which ensures fierce competition. The Kuwait Shooting Club is equipped with Olympic-standard ranges, providing an ideal environment for both training and competition."

He added that Egypt's shooting team is participating in the championship not only for the experience but also to pursue additional medals. going support from Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah, President of the Asian Shooting Federation, for all Asian shooting federations.

The head of the Omani delegation also expressed his congratulations to Engineer Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi on the launch of the championship, which carries a name held dear by everyone. He emphasized that the organization of the event was exceptional, a hallmark of Kuwait's long-standing excellence in hosting world-class championships.

Subhi praised the Kuwait Shooting Federation for setting exemplary standards in organizing major events and creating an environment that supports competitive fairness. He added, "The Oman Shooting Federation always looks forward to participating in tournaments in Kuwait, with the His Highness the Amir's Championship being among the most significant. We aim to achieve honorable results in this highly competitive and fair competition."

Officials of the Amir International Shooting Championship

Major General Hazem Hosni, President of the Egyptian and

Hosni, African Shooting Federations, a and expressed the Arab Republic of Egypt's strong commitment to participating in the His Highness the Hosni also commended the efforts of the Kuwait Shooting Federation, led by Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi, and its board members, for their dedication to ensuring the championship's success. He acknowledged the on-

Kuwait youth women's team secures fourth place in Jordan



Kuwaiti players leave the pitch after their match.

AMMAN, April 12: The Kuwaiti youth women's national team secured fourth place in the fifth West Asia Championship, held in Aqaba, Jordan, after suffering a 7-1 defeat to Syria in the third-place play-off. Maysa Behbehani scored the sole goal for Kuwait in the match.

Earlier in the tournament, Kuwait faced tough competition, losing their first-round matches to Jordan 1-0, Syria 6-0, and Palestine 9-0.

Leverkusen drops more points

BERLIN, April 12, (AP): Bayer Leverkusen star Florian Wirtz returned after five weeks out but could not inspire his team to pick up anything more than a 0-0 draw against Union Berlin in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Wirtz couldn't return soon enough for Leverkusen, which was knocked out of the Champions League - by Bayern - and the German Cup - by third-division Arminia Bielefeld - while the 21-year-old player recovered from an ankle injury. Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso sent him on in the 57th minute and he made an immediate impact, setting up a chance for Exequiel Palacios.

Union forward David Preu was booked on his Bundesliga debut for a bad challenge on Wirtz's ankle in the 83rd. Wirtz carried on and remained central to all of the home team's attacking play.

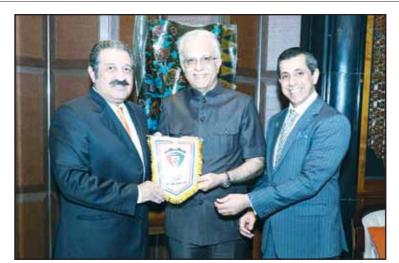
Kuwait bid to host Asian Cup gains momentum with AFC President visit

Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa praises Kuwait for joining six other countries

KUALA LUMPUR, April 12, (KUNA): Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yusuf Al-Sabah, President of the Kuwait Football Association, has extended an invitation to Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), to visit Kuwait in connection with ongoing discussions about Kuwait's bid to host the AFC Asian Cup 2031.

In a statement released by the Kuwait Football Association following a meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Sheikh Ahmad revealed that Sheikh Salman has accepted the invitation and is expected to visit Kuwait soon, coinciding with the arrival of AFC representatives to assess the country's readiness for hosting.

Sheikh Ahmad expressed his pleasure at Sheikh Salman's acknowledgment of Kuwait's strong commitment to the bid, highlighting that the meeting was productive and conducted in a positive atmosphere.



Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousuf with Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim during the Asian General Assembly meeting.

The meeting was attended by several key figures, including Kuwait's Ambassador to Malaysia, Rashid Mohammed Al-Saleh, Deputy Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association for Technical Affairs, Osama Hussein, and board member Dr. Ahmad Ajab. Also present was Engineer Sarah Al-Fulaith, Acting Deputy Director of the Public Authority for Sport for Facilities and Maintenance, who provided a detailed presentation on Kuwait's sports infrastructure and future development plans.

The AFC previously announced that it had received seven official bids to host the AFC Asian Cup 2031, including Kuwait's bid. This demonstrates the tournament's growing stature and the confidence of national associations in their ability to host the event to international standards.

Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa, President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), praised Kuwait for joining six other countries in competing to host the AFC Asian Cup 2031, highlighting the growing significance of the continental championship.

During his remarks at the AFC Executive Committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur, held ahead of the AFC Congress, Sheikh Salman acknowledged the "letters of interest" received by the AFC secretariat by the March 31, 2025 deadline. These letters were submitted by Kuwait, Australia, India, Indonesia, South Korea, the UAE, and a joint bid from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Sheikh Salman noted that this record number of bids underscores the increasing importance of the AFC Asian Cup, drawing a comparison to the Qatar-hosted tournament, which attracted record-breaking fan attendance.

He also confirmed that Saudi Arabia will host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, with the host country for the 2031 edition to be announced at the AFC Congress in 2026, following a thorough assessment of all bids.



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