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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

LEGISLATIVE structure development is an urgent necessity. We have been calling for this for a long time; taking into consideration the social, economic and political developments in Kuwait, the region and the whole world; as well as the need to consolidate the principle that Kuwait is a country of humanity.

The purpose of laws is to regulate societal life, solve its problems, and prevent the creation of further problems in the future.

Some laws are enacted for the benefit of certain individuals. This exacerbates the crises -- both private and public. It is essential to draft laws wisely and precisely in order to fill the loopholes on one hand; and to ensure that the laws take into account the financial, mental and social circumstances of the people on the other hand.

A current example is the issue of garnishing a debtor's salary. The Judicial Execution Department at the Ministry of Justice has clarified that the permissible garnishment rate ranges from 25 to 50 percent of the debtor's salary. In fact, this does not solve the problem; because the term 'salary' means securing the minimum needs of an employee.

It is well known that no one obtains a loan unless they are in need of money. This means their salary is insufficient, forcing them to resort to borrowing -- from a bank, a financial institution or even individuals.

When a debtor's entire or half salary is seized, it creates a new problem: borrowing again from a new source so that the debtor can make ends meet. This brings us to the dud check issue. The deterrent penalties in force in Kuwait are not present in most, if not all, other countries.

The three-year prison sentence for each dud check means the borrower who issues such a check for each installment will spend decades in prison. It is internationally recognized in the Civil Rights Law, as well as the Islamic Law and the Kuwaiti Constitution, that a citizen who enjoys freedom should not be imprisoned due to financial cases and civil misdemeanors; that is, as long as he does not compromise honor and integrity, does not harm the internal security of the State, and does not forge for the purpose of harming others.

Imprisoning a debtor incurs a huge cost for the public and the State. The cost of imprisonment may be

greater than the debt itself. The imprisonment of debtor destroys families; thereby, creating a social problem that the State must solve. For example, the government, represented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, provides assistance to thousands of needy in Kuwait.

On the other hand, certain bank loans are secured through the assets of debtors, which are often several times more than the value of the debt. Therefore, when the law imposes a tough penalty, instead of finding solutions to help the debtor settle the debt, the situation becomes like slow death. How can the

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Kuwait updates system

25-50 pct salary seizures
begin under law revamp

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Ministry of Justice announced that, following the issuance of Decree-Law No. 59/2025 for amending certain provisions of the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law, the General Department for Sentences Enforcement has begun updating its computer system to comply with the new amendment, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The amendment stipulates the seizure of a percentage ranging from 25 percent to 50 percent of the debtor's salary, in accordance with the law and based on the nature of the debt and the debtor's place of employment.

The ministry expects the system update to be completed within this week.

Anti-crime win

Money laundering ring
hit with KD 945mn fine

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Criminal Court, headed by Judge Al-Dhuwaih Al-Dhuwaih, sentenced 19 citizens and expatriates to prison terms ranging from three to 10 years on Thursday.

The court also fined them and the involved companies around KD 945 million -- double the amount obtained from the money laundering crime involving 29 individuals and nine companies. Their activities ranged from import and export to general trading, money exchange and food delivery.

The court stated in its ruling that the defendants formed an organized criminal group through which they committed money laundering, using proceeds from crimes that harmed national interests.

They committed forgery of bank and customs documents, fraud, customs evasion, violating provisions prohibiting the entry of goods into the country, deliberately violating due diligence measures, and possessing and selling prohibited imports.

The court ordered seven defendants to pay a joint fine of KD 510 million -- twice the value of the laundered funds. It also ordered three defendants to pay a joint fine of KD 80,000 -- equivalent to half the value of the laundered funds, and one defendant to pay a fine of KD 100,000 -- equivalent to half the value of the laundered funds.

The court also ordered the companies involved to pay a joint fine of KD 255 million (about \$832 million) -- equivalent to the total value of the funds involved in the crime.

It ordered the deportation of the convicted expatriates after serving their prison terms, as well as the confiscation of forged documents, proceeds of the crime, and other income and benefits resulting from crimes and the funds involved in the money laundering scheme.

According to the case documents, 21 defendants illegally collected cash in Kuwaiti dinars from others through an exchange company, whose administrative and financial affairs were overseen by one of the defendants.

Another defendant delivered the funds to four other defendants at the headquarters of two of the implicated companies.

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Kuwait hits back at power-hungry
crypto miners with massive sweep

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing Affairs Abdulatif Al-Mishari, and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar oversaw a large-scale security campaign carried out by the Ministry of Interior's Criminal Security Sector on Saturday evening, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that the campaign targeted several houses that were being used for illegal cryptocurrency mining activities, and it resulted in the seizure of a number of violating properties and the confiscation of advanced equipment and devices used for cryptocurrency mining.

Government agencies, including the Kuwait

Municipality, Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), and the Ministry of Communications, participated in the campaign after obtaining the necessary legal permits.

The campaign was part of the state's ongoing efforts to combat the illegal use of electricity, address practices that negatively affect the electricity networks, and combat unlicensed activities.

On Thursday last week, the Criminal Security Sector, with the cooperation of the Public Authority for Industry and the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, had conducted a security campaign after obtaining the necessary legal permits.

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CITRA okays cyber gateway boost

By Mohammed Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: According to informed sources, the Board of Directors of the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) has approved a variation order to the contract for the development of the "Kuwait International Gateway Project," which includes a 23.6

percent increase, raising the total cost to KD 726,200.

The sources explained that the Accounting Department approved CITRA's request for the variation order after reviewing all related documents, correspondence, and inquiries exchanged between CITRA and the contracting company since early March 2025.

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Power outages to hit all
governorates for a week

Electricity maintenance to trigger blackouts

By Mohamed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced that maintenance work will be carried out on several substations across in all six governorates from Saturday, April 26 to May 3, which will result in scheduled power cuts in specific areas.

The ministry explained that the maintenance period may be extended or shortened depending on the nature and progress of the work.

Below is the schedule of affected areas and outage times:

Saturday, April 26 from 8:00 am for four hours:

Saad Al-Abdullah, Block 7; Jaber Al-Ahmad, Block 7; Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 5; Khaitan, Block 3; Nahda, Block 2; Fahaeel, Substation No. 24; Mangaf, Substation No. 62; Adailiya, Block 1; Qortuba, Block 4.

Sunday, April 27:

Sabah Al-Salem, Block 12; Fintas, Block 8; Saad Al-Abdullah, Blocks 1 and 2; Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Substation No. 79; Ardiya Residential, Block 11; Health Zone, Substation No. 40; Fahaeel, Substation No. 98; Mangaf, Substations 9A and 1A; Salwa, Block 12; Jabriya, Block 5.

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A world united in farewell to Pope Francis



The coffin of Pope Francis is carried in front of dignitaries, including US President Donald Trump, center, and French President Emmanuel Macron, left, during his funeral in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Saturday, April 26, 2025. (AP)

VATICAN CITY, April 26, (AP): World leaders and Catholic faithful bade farewell to Pope Francis in a funeral Saturday that highlighted his concern for people on the "most peripheral of the peripheries" and reflected his wishes to be remembered as a simple pastor. Though presidents and princes attended the Mass in St. Peter's Square, prisoners and migrants welcomed Francis' coffin at his final resting place in a basilica across town.

According to Vatican estimates, some 250,000 people flocked to the funeral Mass at the Vatican and 150,000 more lined the motorcade route through downtown Rome to witness the first funeral procession for a pope in a century. They clapped and cheered "Papa Francesco" as his simple wooden coffin travelled aboard a modified popemobile to St. Mary Major Basilica, some 6 kilometers (3.5-miles) away.

As bells tolled, the pallbearers brought the coffin past several dozen migrants, prisoners and homeless people holding white roses outside the basilica. Once inside, the pallbearers stopped in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary that the church is famous for and that Francis deeply revered. Four children deposited the roses at the foot of the altar before the burial ceremony began. Cardinals later performed the rite of burial.

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Faster verdicts, tougher penalties

Justice reloaded in legal overhaul

KUWAIT CITY, April 26, (KUNA): Kuwait is making steady strides toward reinforcing the rule of law and entrenching the principles of transparency and justice through a series of legislative amendments and decisions under a comprehensive strategic vision.

This aims to embed the values of integrity and provide a fair and transparent legal environment that meets the challenges of the times and fulfills citizens' aspirations.

The pieces of legislation recently adopted by the Cabinet to modernize the country's legal infrastructure mark a qualitative addition to the path of Kuwaiti justice, protecting public funds, combating corruption, keeping pace with rapid technological developments, and expanding the scope of digital judicial services.

In this context, the Cabinet approved last Tuesday a draft decree-law to amend certain provisions of the Penal Code (Law No. 16 of 1960), aimed at protecting public rights, enhancing deterrence, and addressing legal gaps exposed in practical implementation.

The amendments address the decline in caution among individuals leading to injuries and

fatalities by increasing financial penalties for manslaughter and accidental injury, and by adding two new articles introducing aggravated circumstances for both offenses when tied to their material elements.

A new provision was also introduced to protect the credit system in the country from debtors who misrepresent their financial position as insolvent. This includes criminal protection of the debtor's assets transferred to others aware of the debts, aimed at preventing evasion of repayment.

The draft decree-law amending the Code of Criminal Procedure also tackled issues affecting justice procedures, allowing (Article 188) to be modified to permit electronic notifications of verdicts alongside traditional methods, speeding up verdict announcements.

The decree enhances the guarantees for the convicted to be informed of rulings, helps reduce litigation delays, and limits the statute of limitations for in absentia judgments due to notification challenges.

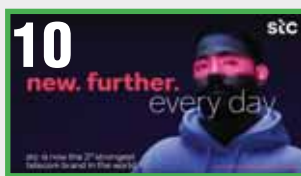
Additionally, the amendment of (Article 230) addresses the accumulation and difficulty in collecting criminal fines, allowing the Public Prosecution to directly collect them from the convicted or deduct up to a quarter of their salary, with installment plans of up to five years in consideration of humanitarian and financial conditions.

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8 Gulf Bank sponsors
and participates in
Ktech Career Fair

9 Kuwait's PIC inks
deal to acquire 25
stake in Chinese
Wanhua Chemical



stc ranked 3rd strongest
telco brand in
the world by Brand
Finance

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:47	Asr	15:21
Sunrise ..	05:11	Maghrib ..	18:21
Zohr	11:46	Isha	19:43

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Hot, partly cloudy to cloudy and relatively humid especially over coastal areas with light to moderate freshening at times easterly wind to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-40 km/h.

By Night: Rather hot to mild, partly cloudy to cloudy and relatively humid especially over coastal areas with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	41	26
Abdaly	42	24
Bubyan	43	24
Jahra	35	27
Failaka Island	43	28
Salmiyah	41	27



The Kuwaiti delegation to Leonardo, with Kuwait's Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft in the background.

Delegation eyes advanced military tech

Kuwait, Italy expand cyber, defense cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, April 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Defense Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah led a high-level military delegation on a visit to Italy from April 20 to 25.

The delegation, read a Ministry issued statement on Friday, also consisted of Kuwait Army Deputy Chief of Staff, Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Sabah, Chief of armament and equipment authority, the Commander of the Air Force, and the Commander of Salem Al-Sabah Military Base.

The delegation met with Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto, and conveyed the greetings of Kuwait Defense Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and his wishes of further progress and prosperity for the Italian republic.

Sheikh Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah also met with his Italian counterpart Matteo Perego di



KUNA photos
Kuwaiti Undersecretary of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah with Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto.

Cremona, and discussed boosting bilateral cooperation in cybersecurity, and advanced

defense capabilities, as well as exchanged perspectives on issues of common interest.

Undersecretary Al-Sabah also conveyed the condolences of Kuwait for the demise of Pope Francis.

He commended the sturdiness of long-lasting relations between the two nations, pointing to the decades of strategic partnership.

The delegation went on a field visit to factory of aerospace, defense and security company, Leonardo, in city of Torino, where they examined the Eurofighter's manufacturing process and the high-tech involved.

They also toured a number of other factories, and specialized Italian companies, to take a look at latest tech and state of the art equipment in the field.

Attending meetings were Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy, Nasser Al-Qahtani and military attache Khaled Al-Shallal.

Crown Prince, PM extend greetings

Amir congratulates Netherlands and Tanzania on National Days

KUWAIT CITY, April 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Saturday a cable to King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, congratulating him on his country's National Day. His Highness wished the King good health, and the Netherlands and its friendly people continued progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Amir also sent a cable to President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania, offering congratulations on her country's National Day. He wished her lasting good health and Tanzania and its people further advancement and

prosperity.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables to King Willem-Alexander and President Samia Suluhu Hassan, congratulating them on the National Day of their respective countries and wishing them good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also dispatched cables to King Willem-Alexander and President Samia Suluhu Hassan, extending congratulations on their countries' National Day celebrations.

Kuwaiti envoy presents credentials to

Antigua, Barbuda Governor-General

KUWAIT CITY, April 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Cuba and non-resident ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda Adel Al-Adgham, presented his credentials to Governor-General Sir Rodney Williams.

During the ceremony, Al-Adgham conveyed greetings and well-wishes from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and his keenness to support and develop their bilateral relations, according to a statement received on Friday by KUNA.

Sir Rodney Williams also extended his greetings to the Amir and the Kuwaiti people, noting that both sides discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation, especially in political and economic fields, and



KUNA photo
The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Republic of Cuba and assigned to Antigua and Barbuda presents his credentials to the Governor General.

supporting each other in international forums.

Kuwait, France forge new public works partnerships

Al-Mashaan, Barrot push for strategic projects

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan presided over an official meeting with French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot at Bayan Palace last Thursday.

Present at the meeting were Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari and Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem.

The meeting focused on the need to align governmental initiatives in order to bolster collaborative ventures, contributing to the development of bilateral relations between Kuwait and France.

They discussed ways to strengthen strategic partnerships between the Ministry of Public Works, Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) and French corporations, in accordance with the objectives of Kuwait towards infrastructural development and utilization of French expertise.



KUNA photo
Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Housing Abdullatif Al-Mishari, and Minister of Electricity Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem with the French Foreign Minister.

They also deliberated on the proposed agreements for the execution of projects that are vital for Kuwait's development strategy. Al-Mashaan affirmed the robust and productive foundation of Kuwaiti-French relations at the meeting.

The discussions touched on the evolution of infrastructure with eight French companies; including projects related to waste recycling,

energy and residential development. Opportunities for collaboration in the operation of Kuwait International Airport, waste recycling, housing development and electrical system modernization were explored with the specialized French entities.

This meeting reflects the commitment of Kuwait to strengthen cooperation in the realization of common objectives.



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq
Several ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions in the country, along with the faithful, gathered at 9:15 am on Friday in the Holy Family Cathedral in Kuwait City for the memorial Mass for Pope Francis. Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent presided over the solemn Mass to mourn the passing of Pope Francis.

GCC Joint Production Institution joins platform 51 for program distribution

KUWAIT CITY, April 26, (KUNA): The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Joint Program Production Institution, in collaboration with Kuwait's Ministry of Information and Ooredoo Kuwait (owner of FASTtelco), announced the launch of its programs on the digital platform 51.

At a ceremony held at the Institution's headquarters, Director General Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stated that this partnership marks the first phase of a strategy to distribute Gulf productions across regional and global digital platforms.

He emphasized the Institution's commitment to promoting Gulf identity and values while engaging younger generations in their own language.

Sheikh Mubarak confirmed that the Institution is producing new content that reflects Gulf heritage and modern achievements, thanking the Ministry of Information and Ooredoo for their support.

Meanwhile, Saad Al-Azmi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry and Head of platform 51's coordinating committee, commended the partnership as a model for national collaboration in building a modern, digital Kuwaiti media landscape aligned with the Ministry's 2021-26 strategy.



KUNA photo
Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Director General of the Joint Program Production Institution of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Other Voices

Son of Debya and son of Alma El Chaeb

By Ahmad alsarraf

Emile Bustani is regarded as one of the most prominent Lebanese businessmen of the 20th century. He embodied the pioneering, bold, and generous spirit of the Lebanese people decades before the rise of the late Rafik Hariri. Had he lived longer, he could have become a distinguished President of the Republic of Lebanon, as he possessed all the qualities required for such a role.

Born in 1907 in the town of Debya in Lebanon's Chouf district, Bustani displayed academic excellence from an early age. His outstanding performance earned him a scholarship to pursue higher education at the prestigious American University of Beirut, followed by further studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), after completing his engineering degree at the American University of Beirut.

At the age of thirty, in 1937, Bustani co-founded a contracting and trading company with his partners Abdallah Khoury and Shukri Shammas. The company, known as C.A.T., quickly rose to prominence and was recognized by its distinctive black cat logo.

The company began its operations in Lebanon as a local contractor. However, Bustani's ambitions extended far beyond the borders of his relatively small homeland. He made the strategic decision to shift the bulk of his business to the Gulf region, a move that proved wise, as it coincided with the surge in contracting activity in the Gulf fueled by the oil boom.

C.A.T. quickly specialized in large-scale oil-related projects, including the construction of pipelines, hospitals, infrastructure, and roads. Today, eighty-eight years later, the company continues to operate in much the same way, though with significantly greater reach and expansion. In record time, it became one of the largest and most respected contracting companies in the Middle East.

Bustani was widely known for his patriotism and his commitment to developing Lebanon's infrastructure and supporting its economy. He was also one of the first Lebanese businessmen to own a private plane. Tragically, it was aboard that very plane that



alsarraf

he met his untimely end.

In 1963, during a business trip, Bustani died in a plane crash over the Mediterranean. The circumstances surrounding the accident sparked widespread suspicion, with many questioning the true cause of the accident.

His death came as a huge shock to Lebanon and the entire region, marking the loss of one of the main figures in development and the economy. Despite this, his legacy and positive influence continue to last. Bustani's life and career remain an inspiration to many. Even after all these years, C.A.T. is still a thriving company by all standards, with the same founding partners: Bustani, Shammas, and Khoury.

Among C.A.T.'s notable projects in Kuwait was the construction of Al-Sabah Hospital, which was the largest hospital in the Gulf at the time.

The company successfully executed a number of oil and road projects before eventually deciding to exit the Kuwaiti market due to the challenges of operating there.

However, another major local contracting company convinced C.A.T.'s management to maintain part of its operations in Kuwait but under a different name. This strategic move allowed them to leverage the company's extensive experience and excellent track record with government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Public Works. C.A.T. remains one of the most reliable and high-quality road construction companies in the region.

The Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society, which has been honoring individuals from various segments of the expatriate community who have lived in Kuwait for fifty years or more, extended an invitation to C.A.T.'s director in Kuwait to honor him on the occasion of his 60th anniversary with the company. The invitation also included his colleague, Karim Sherbini, and our dear brother, Fahad Abu Shaar, the General Manager of the St. Regis Hotel Group.

The circumstances were not favorable, and the C.A.T. director apologized for personal reasons. As a result, I am writing this article to pay tribute to him for his efforts and dedication. He is an exemplary administrator and a man of integrity who deliberately avoided media attention. Instead, he preferred to continue his work quietly, away from the spotlight.

Email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

The battle of the century is on ... and Kuwait must choose wisely

“THE conflict between the United States and China is widely regarded as the most prominent political confrontation of the 21st century”. **Dr. Hamad Al-Judai** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

“What began as a trade war during Donald Trump’s first presidential term has since evolved into a complex, multi-dimensional struggle, spanning technology, supply chains, military power, and geopolitical alliances. It has now, unmistakably, reached the point of no return.

“Although China has felt the economic impact of U.S. sanctions and technological restrictions, it has responded by diversifying its markets and strengthening its national industries, particularly in semiconductors and local manufacturing.



Dr. Al-Judai

“Meanwhile, the United States has endured losses, notably in agriculture and industries tied to China, but has gained from reshoring strategic industries and attracting high-tech investments.

“The most dangerous aspect of this escalation lies in the Taiwan issue. China views Taiwan as an integral part of its territory, while Washington continues to support it militarily and technologically. Though the likelihood of direct war remains low, a single miscalculation could ignite a major regional conflict with devastating consequences.

“This growing rivalry between the two global powers has accelerated the shift toward a multipolar world and spurred the emergence of new blocs seeking to balance U.S. and Chinese influence.

“At the center of this conflict are the Gulf states, Kuwait in particular, facing a challenging yet pivotal choice. On the security front, the United States remains Kuwait’s main ally, while economically, China stands as its largest trading partner and a major source of investment.

“Within this context, Kuwait is hosting strategic Chinese-led projects such as Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and Silk City, placing it on a delicate tightrope between both powers. Sustaining this strategic balance demands avoiding the trap of forced alignment and minimizing reliance on Chinese debt. Instead, Kuwait must focus on building a diverse, resilient economy that is capable of seizing global opportunities without falling under the sway of either side.

“In conclusion, the U.S.-China conflict is far from temporary... It is the battle of the century, and it has now crossed the point of no return. Its outcome will not be determined by military force alone, but by supremacy in technology, control of supply chains, and the projection of soft power.

“For smaller nations, the path forward lies on their ability to craft independent strategies, invest in knowledge, and maintain a careful balance between major powers. Kuwait has the potential to navigate this complex situation as a smart and agile player.”

□ □ □

“The Muslim Brotherhood was banned in Jordan after the discovery of a conspiracy cell in Lebanon, composed of Palestinians residing there. This ban does not mean the Brotherhood’s political and religious role has been eliminated. Jordanians are among the most conservative Arab peoples, adhering to religious beliefs, particularly Islamic ones. They are still known as a conservative and religiously strict society.” Journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The decision to ban the Brotherhood is the latest, but not the first, in an Arab country. The group is banned in some Gulf states and Tunisia. However, in Kuwait, they still enjoy a good standing and are considered partners in political action. Each new government appoints a minister representing them. Sometimes, they hold an important portfolio, such as the Ministry of Oil or the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, which they share with the Salafists.

“The Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait is allied with the government. This is neither new nor surprising. After the Liberation War, a committee of legal and religious experts was formed to review the laws. It was headed by Dr. Khaled Al-Madhkur.

“A decision was taken to dissolve the committee, as it failed to correct a single law. This was a wise decision, as the committee was spending thousands of Kuwaiti dinars each year, without results. After the committee was dissolved, the aforementioned doctor was elected or chosen as president of the Reform Society, and he remains so. The question here is: Can the Kuwaiti government, following the example of Arab countries that have banned the activities of religious parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, curb the influence of religious parties of all descriptions (Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, Cultural Society, Dawa Party, Shirazi and others not included on the list of political parties)?

“The Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait is a deeply rooted party founded in 1948 when the late Abdulaziz Al-Mutawa met Hassan Al-Banna during the Hajj season in Makkah. Nonetheless, I believe that a day will come, perhaps soon, when the role of religious parties will cease in the Arab region, which is

currently moving toward openness and the liberation of the Arab mind. This is not a departure from religion, but rather a greater openness to others and the liberation of the mind -- the others we still see as infidels, plundering the resources of our countries.

“When World War II ended in 1945 and the Soviet Union emerged as a force opposed to western capitalism, many Western and Arab countries surfaced with pro-capitalist tendencies, parties and movements including the communist thought and socialist system.

“This undoubtedly demonstrated failure years later, ushering the return of the capitalist system to markets and the global economy. This is neither because capitalism makes the poor eat honey nor because it achieves justice. Rather, it is the worst of the worst. In capitalism, hunger is greater and the homeless fill the streets of New York, London, Paris and elsewhere.

“Social justice is not achieved on earth. ‘In heaven is your provision and that which you are promised.’ Allah has His own plans for His creation.

“Religions are not political parties for people to be divided, with each competing for control over the government. Reform cannot be achieved on Earth and among the people if a group of them calls for the formation of a party that ostensibly seeks to achieve social justice, but in reality, it is a partisanship for their own personal, social or financial interests. You must monitor the amount of money and wealth accumulated by party leaders, not to mention their social and political standing.

“In short, will Jordan’s decision to ban the Muslim Brotherhood hold up in a divided, conservative and religiously extremist society?

“Returning to the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, we recall King Hussein’s strong support for Saddam and the invasion, not because the invasion was justified, but because the king’s support for Saddam was a religious call against the infidel West, which came to liberate Kuwait.

“Look at how active the Islamists in Jordan were in supporting the invasion of Kuwait. Unfortunately, the Jordanian mind still holds the belief that Kuwait belongs to Iraq.

“This is why religion is called the ‘opium’ of the people. This is not because it plays with the mind, but because some can corrupt minds by filling them with lies and nonsensical thoughts.

“The so-called religious or Islamic parties are nothing but models of global Freemasonry; similar to the Masons Sheikh Mohammad Abdo and Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani, among others.”

□ □ □

“The statement of the Israeli prisoner held by Hamas shocked the occupying authorities. Released Israeli prisoner Alexander Turbanov made a statement that shocked the occupying power. He said: You have forever engraved your



Al-Hataab

wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“‘You were the besieged free men, while I was a prisoner, and you were the protectors of my life. You cared for me as a caring father cares for his children. You preserved my health, my dignity and my blessings. Even though I was in the hands of men fighting for their land and their usurped rights, and even though my country’s government was committing the most heinous genocide against a besieged people, you never allowed me to go hungry or be humiliated.

“‘I never knew the true meaning of manhood until I saw it in your eyes. I never realized the value of sacrifice until I lived among you, until I saw you smiling in the face of death, resisting an enemy armed with tools of destruction. You had nothing but your naked bodies. No matter how eloquent or expressive I am, I will never find words that reflect your true worth or express my astonishment and admiration for your noble morals.

“‘Does your religion truly teach you to treat prisoners in this manner? How great is this faith that elevates you to a level before which all human rights laws, established by man, and all war protocols crumble! Even in the most difficult moments, you demonstrate justice and mercy, not through empty slogans, but through the reality of your experience. You have never compromised your principles, even in the darkest of circumstances.

“‘Believe me, if I were to return here, I would only be a ‘mujahid’ in your ranks, because I learned the truth from your people and realized that you are not only the owners of the land, but also the owners of principles and a just cause.”

“What comment remains for commentators after this statement by the released prisoner? He is now free, able to say whatever he wants. Just as they did to the prisoner; with their humanity, nations triumph, even in their wars. Principles come first.”

— **Compiled by Mahmoud Attiye/Simi K. Kutty**



KUNA photo

A group photo of members of the Kuwaiti and French naval forces during the third edition of the joint exercise, Arabian Breeze 2025.

Kuwait, France launch 3rd Arabian Breeze naval drills

The third edition of the joint “Arab Breeze” 2025 military exercise kicked off on Saturday, with the participation of clearance and explosive ordnance disposal divers from the Kuwaiti Naval Force’s Divers Battalion and

divers from the French Naval Forces, the Kuwaiti Army General Staff said in a statement. The military drills aimed at boosting the technical performance of personnel and enhancing cooperation within the framework of military

and defense partnership, statement added. The exercise, which runs until May 8, aims to boost combat readiness, exchange expertise, and train on the latest technologies in maritime surveying. (KUNA)

Nazaha pushes for stronger laws against financial crimes

Experts urge enhanced coordination, training

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) recently concluded the first legal forum, held at its headquarters in Shamiya with the theme, “The Law on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Crimes: Facing Challenges.”

A group of legal experts and academicians, representatives of regulatory and competent authorities, as well as financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions attended the forum.

Following are the five recommendations presented at the forum:

- Strengthen coordination between all public regulatory and competent authorities in charge of combating money laundering, financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Intensify training and qualification programs for employees of regulatory and competent authorities in charge of combating money laundering, financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Raise community awareness on the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing.
- Call on the legislature to review certain legal provisions to enhance the effectiveness of procedures, close legal loopholes, and keep pace with technological developments, in line with the international standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- Prepare guidelines for financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions, which contribute to clarifying legal and regulatory requirements and enhance regulatory and legal compliance, in accordance with international law and standards.



KUNA photo

Discussion session of the first legal forum organized by the General Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha).

logical developments, in line with the international standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

■ Prepare guidelines for financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions, which contribute to clarifying legal and regulatory requirements and enhance regulatory and legal compliance, in accordance with international law and standards.

On the other hand, Director of the Legal Affairs Department at Nazaha Abdul Hamid Al-Hamar stressed the need to intensify national efforts in relevant sectors and agencies, and to continuously update legal frameworks to keep pace with the development of criminal methods in money laundering and terrorist financing crimes. He emphasized the direct threat these crimes pose to the financial and security stability of countries.

He added that the discussion session stems from Nazaha’s pivotal and important role in periodically studying legislation and legal tools related to combating corruption and proposing necessary amendments. “It also explores the legal and regulatory frameworks adopted to combat money laundering and terrorist financing crimes, in addition to reviewing the latest methods used in these crimes and methods for tracking and detecting them. The panelists tackled several topics, including the legislative structure of Law No. 106/2013 on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, both in terms of wording

and content, and the effectiveness of the legal provisions in practice, in light of the outcomes of judicial rulings and practical applications,” he elaborated.

He went on to say that they discussed developments in financial technology and the legal and regulatory status of virtual and digital assets, as well as improving mechanisms for international cooperation and information exchange between relevant authorities and their counterparts in other countries. “They stressed the need to continuously update relevant laws and regulations to keep pace with rapid developments in money laundering and terrorist financing methods, especially in light of the increasing reliance on digital and modern technology,” he concluded.



Al-Seyassah photo

Photo from the collision.

Deadly crash on Abdali Road leaves 2 dead and 2 injured

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: A collision between a molten sulfur tanker and a vehicle on Abdali Road today resulted in two fatalities and two injuries, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Firefighters from Abdali Fire Station rushed to the location and provided necessary assistance before handing the site over to the relevant authorities for further investigation.

News in Brief

Police officer under probe: In response to a complaint by a shop owner alleging that a Ministry of Interior employee assaulted him, verbally abused him, and damaged his phone, the General Department of Security Media stated that Case No. 124/2025 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Misdemeanor) has been officially filed, and referred to the concerned investigation authority to take the necessary legal action, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its commitment to enforcing the law equally without exception.

It is worth mentioning that a video clip went viral on social media platforms of footage showing a police officer assaulting a shop owner at Al-Qurain Markets during a routine inspection carried out by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

□ □ □

Citizen files complaint: A citizen, born in 1976, has lodged a complaint against an Arab man who purportedly insulted and slandered him while processing a transaction in a government building, reports Al-Anba daily.

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Author signings spark joy among visitors

Kuwait’s cultural presence at 29th Muscat Book Fair hailed

MUSCAT, April 26, (KUNA): Director of the Muscat International Book Fair, Ahmad Al-Rawahi, praised on Friday Kuwait’s participation in the 29th edition of the fair, highlighting the cultural and intellectual value of the publications presented at the Kuwaiti pavilion.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Rawahi said the Kuwaiti pavilion enriches the fair and described the participation as an important opportunity to introduce the latest publications by Kuwaiti authors across various fields of knowledge.

He noted Kuwait’s consistent presence at the Muscat International Book Fair through its cultural and intellectual institutions, emphasizing that Kuwaiti publishers offer a wide range of books suitable for all age groups and interests.

Al-Rawahi added that the pavilion features an extensive collection of historical, literary, cultural, and scientific titles, contributing to the dissemination of Kuwaiti thought and literature to a broader audience.

He also expressed satisfaction with the strong participation of regional and international publishing institutions, noting their commitment to providing readers with new and diverse publications.

The 29th Muscat International Book Fair began on Thursday with the participation of 674 publishing houses from 35 countries, including Kuwait. The fair will run until May 3 and features a wide range of literary and cultural events.

The Book Fair kicked off with notable public engagement, particularly around author signing events, which remain a popular feature among visitors.



Director of the 29th Muscat International Book Fair, Ahmed Al Rawahi.



KUNA photos
Book signings are one of the most beautiful scenes and moments when a reader meets his favorite author.

Attendees from various age groups and backgrounds gathered at publishing booths to meet their favorite authors and obtain signed copies of their books. These

events, often considered highlights of literary fairs, allow readers to engage directly with writers and collect personalized editions of their works.

Events to stay on-campus

Al-Tabtabaei regulates school celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has issued a ministerial decision for regulating the organization of school celebrations, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The decision mandates that all events, such as graduation ceremonies, honoring ceremonies for outstanding students, and other celebrations, must be held only within the school theater and not outside school premises. It affirmed the importance of coordinating with school ad-

ministrations to ensure that celebrations are held in line with the ministry’s approved regulations outlined in the current circular on organizing school events. Informed sources revealed that the decision was preceded by an extensive study for examining its potential implications, particularly regarding reactions from conservative circles and private and foreign schools. The study concluded that the decision is sound and will be applied to all schools in Kuwait.

Cabinet approves longer paid leave for patient care abroad

Ministry of Health hails new amendment

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Ministry of Health has expressed its appreciation for the decision of the Cabinet to approve the draft decree-law on amending Article 45 of the Civil Service Law.

This amendment grants employees special leave with full remuneration for a period of up to one year to accompany a patient who needs overseas treatment as per the confirmation of the ministry. Such

leave will not be deducted from the accrued leave days and may be extended for an additional period not exceeding six months, but the extension will be without remuneration.

The ministry affirmed that this legislative change is the result of collaborative efforts; as it has identified the humanitarian challenges that families face when accompanying relatives for medical treatment, especially those with complex conditions necessitating long period of treatment abroad. The presence of a family member is a crucial psychological support mechanism that significantly contributes to patient morale and responsiveness to treatment.

The ministry added this measure

will reduce the psychological and financial strain experienced by families, particularly given that the previous maximum leave allowance of six months frequently resulted in disruption and uncertainty for both the companion and the patient.

The revised legislation now provides for sustained familial support throughout the duration of treatment; thus, ensuring a stable and comprehensive therapeutic environment.

The enactment of this amendment is a manifestation that the State is fully aware of the needs of citizens in line with the humanitarian principles of the national healthcare system, which prioritizes the well-being of patients and the interests of their families.

Mosques adopt new energy-saving measures

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: In line with the confirmation of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs that the call (Iqama) for all prayers will be reduced to 10 minutes in compliance with electricity conservation efforts, Imam of Al-Ghanim and Al-Kharafi Mosques Sheikh Dr. Nayef Al-Ajmi announced that funeral prayers for the deceased will be held immediately after the prayer.

The ministry previously affirmed its commitment -- along with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy -- to comply with electricity conservation guidelines by reducing the time to call for prayers in mosques to not more than 10 minutes.

The ministry explained this is due to the rising electrical loads and the maintenance of many power production units; hence, the need for concerted efforts to conserve electricity. It also reaffirmed its full response and cooperation with its electricity counterpart to implement the energy conservation plan.

International enrollment surge

Egypt’s higher education opens doors wider for Kuwaitis, Arabs

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Arab Republic of Egypt Dr. Ayman Ashour confirmed that around 4,000 Kuwaitis are enrolled in Egyptian universities -- public and private institutions; indicating 25 percent of them are on scholarship.

Ashour made the announcement at a press conference, held in the presence of the representatives of the Kuwaiti media at the Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait.

He also disclosed that the Council of Ministers sanctioned the establishment of 12 public and private universities, in addition to the existing 12.

He said Cairo Private University in Sheikh Zayed will soon open the enrollment in its seven faculties for the upcoming academic year. “Educational relations between Egypt and Kuwait are anticipated to experience substantial growth, with the imminent signing of multiple joint agreements in academic and research domains,” he added.

On the higher education strategy of Egypt, he detailed the adoption of a novel approach to establish partnerships with international universities, wherein 60 percent of technological educational programs incorporate practical training in the labor market.

He clarified that the objective is to empower the youths in the Arab world by providing them with necessary labor market

skills through a contemporary and interdisciplinary educational system. “The number of universities in Egypt has doubled over the past decade -- 116 public, private, community and technological universities, compared to 50 in 2014,” he revealed.

He said Egypt hosts 20 branches of prestigious foreign universities and about four million students in higher education -- 53 percent of whom are women.

He added Egypt accommodates more than 200,000 international students. He described the ‘Egyptian Knowledge Bank’ as a leading platform for digital transformation and distance learning, serving all educational levels.

He stated that UNESCO has recognized this platform and requested Egypt to share its experience with other countries.

“The new educational system allows dual degrees in collaboration with foreign universities. It supports interdisciplinary specializations, signifying a substantial development in academic programs,” he affirmed.

On the enrollment of expatriates, he pointed out there is a quota for outstanding students in free public universities; while private and national universities and foreign branches remain unrestricted. “The system ensures fairness and merit-based opportunity distribution. Egypt has become a regional center for higher education in the Arab world and Africa. It welcomes cooperation for the benefit of Arab students and to develop their academic and professional capabilities,” he concluded.

Tamdeen Group hosts educational tour

Students explore real estate realities

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The Real Estate Association, in collaboration with Associate Professor in the Department of Finance and Financial Institutions at the College of Business Administration in Kuwait University Dr. Fahad Al-Mudhaf, arranged an educational excursion to 360 Mall and Grand Hyatt Hotel, hosted by Tamdeen Group.

This activity aims to develop the practical proficiencies of university students; considering the excursion presented an exceptional prospect to acquire firsthand knowledge of the administration and operation of shopping centers, huge commercial establishments and hotels.

The executive leadership of Tamdeen Group presented a detailed exposition of the project’s developmental phases, commencing with conceptualization and progressing to leasing, marketing and operational execution, while considering the return on capital investment.

Students raised a number of questions and had a substantive dialogue with the Tamdeen Group executive staff.

This resulted in deeper comprehension of the operational setting of shopping centers and hotels, as well as the distinctive characteristics of the commercial real estate field. Many students expressed their appreciation for the organization of this experiential learning opportunity, which contributed to the practical dimension of their academic curriculum.

Al-Mudhaf underscored the value of such field visits in enhancing the practical

acumen of students and integrating theoretical frameworks with pragmatic insights.

He also unveiled his plan to expand this initiative in the future, taking into consideration the positive effect in preparing students for the professional sphere.

The Tamdeen Group executive body expressed their satisfaction in hosting the educational tour, commending the students’ dynamism and interest, particularly on the strategic management of commercial projects and leasing policies, which are the determinants of real estate project success.

Chief Executive Officer of Tamdeen Real Estate Company Mahmoud Dawood Al-Marzouq, asserted that the group gives importance to empowering young individuals to acquire knowledge of the pragmatic realities of the shopping mall and hospitality sectors; enhancing their professional qualifications and raising their awareness on the vital contribution of the real estate sector to the national economy. He stressed the need to familiarize students with the intricacies of the landlord-tenant relationship and its management during periods of exigency to safeguard its enduring viability.

Executive Director for Public Relations and Government Relations at the association Munira Al-Khamis lauded the activity; indicating it is in line with role in bolstering educational and awareness endeavors and cultivating a generation of students capable of appraising the market landscape, navigating challenges, and leveraging opportunities within the Kuwaiti real estate sector.

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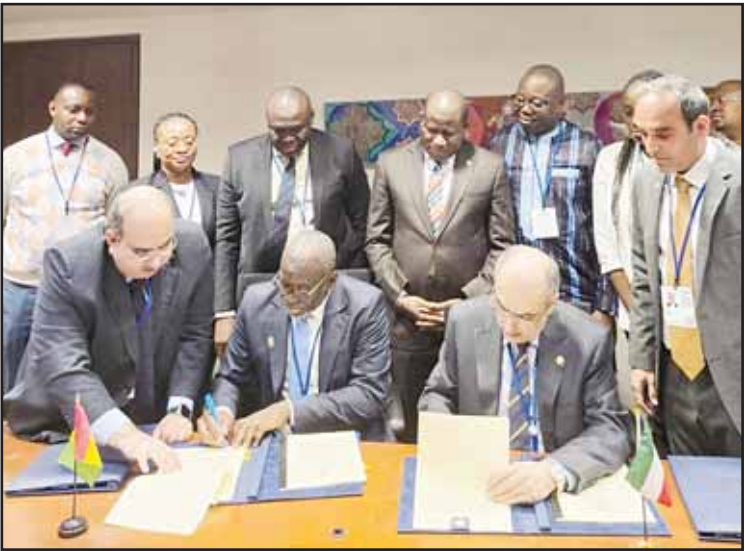
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KUNA photo
KFAED, Guinea seal loan agreement estimated at KD 4 million (about USD 12.8 million) to fund a road project in the Guinean capital.

Loan to boost transport, jobs

KFAED, Guinea sign \$12.8mn deal for Conakry road project

WASHINGTON, April 26, (KUNA): The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Guinea have signed a loan agreement estimated at KD four million (about USD 12.8 million) to fund a road project in the Guinean capital.

In a statement on Friday, the deal inked during the 2025 Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington is to finance the project in Guinea’s capital, Conakry.

Guinea’s Minister of Economy and Finance Mourana Soumah and Acting Director General of KFAED Waleed Al-Bahar attended the signing ceremony.

The arrangement aims to support social and economic development in Guinea through facilitating traffic to transport passengers in the capital and curb congestion on high ways, mainly during rush hours, it stated

It also contributes to achieving international sustainable development goals, especially combating poverty, creating proper job opportunities, encouraging innovation and others, it noted.

It is one of Guinean government’s priorities and part of a four-intersection project planned in the capital.

This is the 15th loan provided by the fund to Guinea that are estimated totally KD 63.4 million to fund varied projects.

BRUSSELS, April 26, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium Nawaf Al-Enezi highlighted on Friday the importance of the upcoming visit of a Belgian trade delegation to the State of Kuwait, scheduled for 28-30 April 2025.

In statements to KUNA, Al-Enezi underlined its role in enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries and exploring cooperation opportunities in development projects aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Ambassador Al-Enezi noted that the visit of the Belgian delegation has been coordinated with various economic bodies across the main Belgian regions, the Arab Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority.

He pointed out that the last visit



KUNA photo
Kuwait’s Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium Nawaf Al-Esawy with the Belgian Economic Representative Resident in Kuwait and representatives of Belgian regional trade bodies.

by a Belgian trade delegation to

Kuwait in 2019 was a significant milestone in advancing econom-

ic cooperation between the two friendly nations, during which both sides discussed partnership and investment opportunities.

He added that the success of that visit is reflected in the increased number of companies participating in this year’s delegation, which includes more than 40 companies operating in fields such as cybersecurity, renewable energy, sustainable development, healthcare services, and construction, along with the participation of businessmen and companies from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The delegation is expected to visit more than ten Kuwaiti institutions and government entities, in addition to meeting several representatives from Kuwait’s private sector, to explore trade and economic cooperation opportunities, reflecting the growing relationship between the two countries in the fields of economy and investment.

Al-Nouri Charity participates in rehabilitation program in Turkiye

ISTANBUL, April 26, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society participated in launching the “STEP Program”, which aims to train displaced refugees and provide them with job opportunities through rehabilitation and project financing, Friday.

The program is in cooperation with Core Istanbul for Turkish-Arab entrepreneurship.

Chairman of the Society Jamal Al-Nouri said during the launch ceremony that the program is a noble humanitarian project that is a symbol of

hope to improve the social and economic situation of young refugees and earthquake survivors in Turkiye.

For his part, Executive Director of Core Istanbul Abdul Rahman Al-Esawy said that the afflicted need someone to help them to contribute to society and achieve economic development, which Core Istanbul has done through entrepreneurship and initiatives that empower them.

He continued say that about 350 people have graduated in vocational training in

several fields, and 85 percent have been provided with opportunities to enter the job market.

In 2022, Core Istanbul was founded by a group of Turkish-Arab youth with the support of elite businessmen and international organizations from inside and outside Turkiye.

The foundation seeks to create a community for the youth that stimulates creativity and innovation, supported by experts and investors.

Political consultations propel Kuwait-China ties

Infrastructure, energy deals top Beijing talks agenda

BEIJING, April 26, (KUNA): Foreign ministries of Kuwait and China have concluded the fifth round of their political consultations in Beijing today.

The Kuwaiti side was headed by Ambassador Samih Jawhar Hayat, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, while the Chinese side was headed by Ambassador Chen Weiqing, assistant minister of foreign affairs for the Department of West

Asia and North Africa at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador Hayat described the meetings as very positive, noting that they have demonstrated that both countries share almost identical views on a wide array of issues.

He added that the consultations witnessed a lengthy, frank and open dialogue on various issues of common interest.

He expressed both sides’ satisfaction with the progress of their distinguished and historical relations.

He unveiled that they have discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations between the two friendly countries in various

political, economic, and developmental fields, in light of the continuous development of Kuwaiti-Chinese relations.

Both sides affirmed their commitment to enhancing cooperation and coordination in regional and international forums and supporting each other’s positions in international organizations to serve their common interests, he disclosed.

Ambassador Hayat stated that these political consultations come in light of the directives of the highest political leaderships to continue high-level visits between the two countries, keep the peculiarity of historical relations between the two countries in various fields.

During the meeting, the two sides re-

viewed the latest developments related to the agreements and memoranda of understanding signed between the two governments, particularly those related to the execution of major development projects in Kuwait, including the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, Al-Shagaya and Al-Abdaliya renewable energy projects, the wastewater treatment plant project, the workers’ and housing cities projects and the low-carbon green waste recycling system project, in addition to cooperation in the fields of economic zones and free zones.

On the sidelines of the visit, Ambassador Hayat held several bilateral meetings with senior officials from the

Chinese government, the International Relations Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and senior advisors from the Chinese Presidency’s Development and Reform Commission.

During the meetings, they underlined the importance of continuing political and diplomatic consultations and advancing bilateral cooperation, building on the results of the successful visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the People’s Republic of China in September 2023.

Ambassador Hayat affirmed the commitment of the Kuwaiti political

leadership to strengthening the strategic partnership with China.

The two sides agreed to continue the political consultation mechanism on a regular basis, with the next session to be held in Kuwait at a date to be determined later through diplomatic channels.

The meetings were attended by Ambassador Jassim Ibrahim Al-Najem, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to China, Counselor Abdulaziz Al-Dakhil, members of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Beijing, and Diplomatic Attachés Ajil Al-Ahmad and Mubarak Al-Qamis, from the Asian Affairs Department at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Continued from Page 1

Pressure to

debtor live under such penalties? The debtor has only two options -- resort to illegal means or die from starvation. How can the debtor live without a salary, even though he is an employee? Is the goal to destroy the debtor?

Mercy is the fundamental goal of legislation. Even in deterrent penalties, a certain principle must be taken into account -- the judicial ruling must be acceptable and consistent with reason and logic. Recent legal developments are replacing temporary problems with more harmful ones.

When a debtor finds himself subject to the merciless control of a creditor, he resorts to declaring bankruptcy to avoid a travel ban and to be able to live his life without disruption. In Kuwait, lawsuits have been filed against about 120,000 borrowers. Arrest warrants have been issued and they have been banned from traveling. This means paralyzing economic life, destroying families, and creating an ongoing social crisis that extends beyond the debtor -- up to his family members. The government and its agencies are transformed into debt collectors in the interest of creditors.

Based on this, the issue of seizing the debtor’s salary -- whether whole or part of it -- means, at best, pushing people to declare bankruptcy. This will undoubtedly confuse the judiciary due to the large number of lawsuits that will be filed.

On the other hand, this situation will deprive the law of its most important principles -- respect for social guidelines and maintaining social stability. Is it reasonable for the law to become a ‘destabilizer’ of society?

This question is for the Council of Ministers and the committees tasked with drafting laws, some of which serve a certain group at the expense of the majority.

Power outages

Monday, April 28:

Bneid Al-Gar, Block 1, Substation G4 OLD; Sabah Al-Salem, Blocks 11 and 2; Saad Al-Abdullah, Block 2, Substations 62 and 64; Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 4; Ardiya Residential, Block 10; Health Zone, Substation No. 43; Mangaf, Global Clinic (Substation 110), Substations 92A and 20A; Salwa, Block 11; Jabriya, Block 9.

Tuesday, April 29:

Bneid Al-Gar, Block 1, Substation G4 NEW; Sabah Al-Salem, Block 11, Substation 36; Messilla,

Block 6, Substation 11; Saad Al-Abdullah, Block 4 (Substation 38) and Block 1 (Substation 7); Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 2, Substation 44; Funaitees, Block 5, Substation 42; Saad Al-Abdullah, Block 4 (Substation 42) and Block 1 (Substation 9); Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 2, Substation 21 NEW; Ardiya Residential, Block 9, Substation 43; Health Zone, Substation 41; Mangaf, Substations 54A, 39A, and 31A; Al-Shaab, Block 8, Substation 5 NEW; Jabriya, Block 10, Substation 41.

Wednesday, April 30:

Nuzha, Block 2, Substation N14; Sabah Al-Salem, Block 5, Substation 44; Funaitees, Block 5, Substation 42; Saad Al-Abdullah, Block 4 (Substation 42) and Block 1 (Substation 9); Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 2, Substation 21 NEW; Ardiya Residential, Block 9, Substation 43; Health Zone, Substation 41; Mangaf, Substations 54A, 39A, and 31A; Al-Shaab, Block 8, Substation 5 NEW; Jabriya, Block 10, Substation 41.

Thursday, May 1:

Nuzha, Block 1, Substation N15; Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 2, Substation 24; Ardiya Residential, Block 1, Substation 119; Health Zone, Substation 51; Al-Shaab, Block 8 (Substation 7) and Block 7 (Substation 25).

Meanwhile, the electricity load index reached the orange zone on Friday, reaching 13.72 thousand megawatts the highest level recorded so far this summer marking an increase of 162 megawatts compared to Thursday’s load of 12.91 thousand megawatts.

Informed sources stressed the importance of adhering to the ministry’s energy rationalization guidelines during peak hours, which extend from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm.

They particularly emphasized minimizing the use of air conditioners, which account for approximately 70 percent of total electricity consumption, as well as turning off lights in unoccupied areas of homes and gardens.

The sources highlighted the ministry’s commitment to accelerating the completion of maintenance work on existing power generation units and reintegrating them into the grid as quickly as possible, in preparation for increased demand amid rising temperatures expected in the coming weeks.

In related development, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy imported electricity worth KD4.532 million from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) in March and April this year.

The regulatory approvals for the contract of the ministry stated that the imported quantity was distributed as follows: 300 megawatt-hours at a cost of KD3.330 million in March and 140 megawatts at a cost of KD1.202 million on April 12-20.

Sources indicated that the sudden

rise in temperatures during the aforementioned period and the ongoing maintenance of many production units prompted the ministry to import electricity earlier than last year, when imports from the GCCIA began in June.

Sources affirmed the commitment of the Production Stations Sector in the ministry to complete the maintenance works in the remaining units in record time in order to strengthen the electricity grid and prepare it for the challenges posed by the high temperatures expected in the coming months until the end of September.

Kuwait hits

The campaign targeted several houses used for cryptocurrency mining activities in violation of laws and regulations, and had resulted in the identification of multiple violating properties and the seizure of mining equipment and devices. Legal action has been taken against the violators in preparation for referral to the relevant authorities.

CITRA okays

CITRA had obtained regulatory approval last year to implement the “Kuwait International Gateway Project” at a total cost of KD 3,078 million.

The contract with the company will be executed over a 36-month period. The project aims to expand the capacity of internet data ports and enhance the protection of the gateway against cybersecurity threats, contributing to the development of internet infrastructure amid rising demand.

The sources affirmed that the Kuwait International Gateway will play a role in strengthening cybersecurity and will serve as an advanced shield against cyberattacks, thereby enhancing the digital infrastructure’s ability to respond to escalating cyber threats.

Justice reloaded

This new decree protects public funds, preserves state rights, and enhances the execution of judgments, preventing offenders from escaping punishment, while balancing justice with the rights of individuals and the community.

In response to practical cases where solvent debtors evade measures against them, the Cabinet issued a draft law to amend (Article 5) of Law No. 71 of 2020 on bankruptcy. It reinstates the power to detain debtors who stubbornly avoid repayment.

The new law strengthens the General Department of Enforcement’s powers against defaulting debtors, granting

it authority to take decisive actions and request a financial disclosure of assets including properties, movable assets, bank accounts, and the identities of asset transferees.

The Cabinet also issued a draft decree-law amending the Civil and Commercial Procedure Law (Decree No. 38 of 1980), enabling the Enforcement Department to notify credit reporting agencies about default events, to reflect the debtor’s creditworthiness when dealing with legal entities.

In parallel, Kuwait enhanced the powers of the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) through a draft decree-law amending Law No. 2 of 2016, which governs the establishment of Nazaha and financial disclosure regulations.

These amendments aim to advance the legal framework for combating corruption. They expanded the scope of corruption crimes to include embezzlement of cooperative society funds, ensuring shareholder protection and enhanced oversight.

New provisions require reasoning for decisions to dismiss reports, boosting transparency and oversight, and enable the use of electronic tools for submitting financial disclosures-especially beneficial for diplomatic and consular staff abroad. Procedural protections for Nazaha employees were also introduced.

Decree-Law No. 94 of 2024 amending Decree-Law No. 20 of 1981 defined a value threshold for cases before the Court of Cassation in administrative matters, ensuring the court focuses on significant disputes and its role in unifying legal principles and ensuring proper application of the law.

To improve the justice process and equality among litigants, Decree-Law No. 104 of 2024 amended the Criminal Procedure Law, extending the appeal period to 30 days. This change addresses the practical delays in delivering verdict copies to parties.

The law also added a new article (22 bis), permitting modern communication methods for summoning defendants in criminal cases, similar to those approved in civil and commercial procedure laws.

To enhance transparency in real estate transactions, the Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, issued Decision No. 194 of 2025 regulating payments in contracts and official debt/rental documents issued by the Ministry of Justice.

This decision mandates proof of payment via bank transfer or certified check to combat money laundering and limit fictitious mortgages and debt declarations, while closing legal loopholes used for illicit transactions.

The decision helps safeguard the real estate market from financial manipulation, increases transparency,

protects buyers and sellers from fraud, and enhances financial oversight and anti-money laundering efforts in real estate.

As part of Kuwait’s reform and rehabilitation efforts, the decision to reduce life imprisonment to 20 years was issued by the Acting Prime Minister, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, in line with political leadership’s directives. The goal is to balance punishment with justice and allow inmates a chance to reintegrate into society.

Kuwait also inaugurated the new Palace of Justice building in early February, representing a modern leap that supports a technologically advanced judicial environment and full digital transformation in litigation.

Following the political leadership’s directives, the Ministry of Justice has laid out a set of strategic goals to strengthen the justice system-reviewing existing legislation, simplifying procedures, reducing case resolution times, expanding digital services to enhance access to justice, and reinforcing transparency and oversight to ensure judicial independence and integrity.

The ministry is also working on legislative amendments to fully digitize the judiciary, speed up case processing, improve access to legal services, and reduce case backlogs and delays.

Money laundering

The funds were then received by the two defendants from the other defendants who deposited the money into the accounts of other implicated companies, as well as the accounts of the two other defendants.

The funds were then transferred either through banks to companies outside the Kuwait, with the knowledge of four defendants, or through exchange companies, with the knowledge of two defendants.

Two defendants signed the remittance forms used to complete all financial transfers for two of the implicated companies in their capacity as directors of the companies.

Three defendants assisted the others involved in the crime from which the funds in question were obtained by transporting the equipment used in the incident to the locations specified in the documents, with the aim of concealing evidence of the crime and helping the defendants escape punishment.

The defendants possessed and appropriated these funds and then used them to conduct foreign transfers with the aim of concealing and disguising the nature and truth of the illicit source of these funds, their ownership, and the rights related to them, as evidenced by the investigations.

Many filed court challenges against Trump administration

ICE reverses termination of legal status for international students around US

SAN FRANCISCO, April 26, (AP): The US government is reversing the termination of legal status for international students around the country after many filed court challenges against the Trump administration crackdown, federal officials said Friday.

The records in a federal student database maintained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement had been terminated in recent weeks. Judges across the US had already issued orders temporarily restoring students' records in dozens of lawsuits challenging the terminations.

More than 1,200 students nationwide suddenly lost their legal status or had visas revoked, leaving them at risk for deportation. Many said they had only minor infractions on their record or did not know why they were targeted. Some left the country while others have gone into hiding or stopped going to class.

Word of the policy pivot came Friday from lawyers representing the government in several of the lawsuits.

A lawyer for the plaintiff in one of the lawsuits, Brian Green, provided The Associated Press with a copy of a statement a government lawyer emailed to him on the restoration of legal status for people whose records were recently terminated.

It says: "ICE is developing a policy that will provide a framework for SEVIS record terminations. Until such a policy is issued, the SEVIS records for plaintiff(s) in this case (and other similarly situated plaintiffs) will remain Active or shall be re-activated if not currently active and ICE will not modify the record solely based on the NCIC finding that resulted in the recent SEVIS record termination."

SEVIS is the Student and Exchange Visitor Information Systems database that tracks international students' compliance with their visa status. NCIC is the National Crime Information Center, a database of criminal justice information maintained by the FBI. Tricia McLaughlin, an assistant Homeland Security secretary, said ICE had not reversed course on any visa revocations but did "restore SEVIS access for people who had not had their visa revoked."

Several colleges said Friday they noticed legal status already had been restored for some of their students, but uncertainty remained.

"It is still unclear whether ICE will restore status to everyone it has targeted and whether the State Department will help students whose visas were wrongly



Students march at Arizona State University in protest of ASU's chapter of College Republicans United-led event encouraging students to report 'their criminal classmates to ICE for deportations' on Jan 31, 2025, in Tempe, Ariz. (AP)

revoked," said Greg Chen of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Green, who is involved in lawsuits on behalf of several dozen students, said his cases only sought restoration of the student status and that he would be withdrawing them as a result of the statement Friday from ICE.

But lawyers in the Oakland case are seeking a nationwide order from the court prohibiting the government from arresting or incarcerating students, transferring them to places outside their district or preventing them from continuing work or

studies.

Pam Johann, a government lawyer, said it was premature to consider anything like that given that ICE was in the process of reactivating records and developing a policy. "We should take a pause while ICE is implementing this change that plaintiffs are seeking right now, on its own," she said.

But US District Judge Jeffrey S. White asked her to humor the court.

"It seems like with this administration there's a new world order every single day," he said. "It's like whack-a-mole."

He ordered the government to clarify the new policy.

Last month, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said his department was revoking visas held by people acting counter to national interests.

In lawsuits, students argued they were denied due process. Many were told that their status was terminated as a result of a criminal records check or that their visa had been revoked.

International students and their schools were caught off guard by the terminations of the students' records. Many of the terminations were discovered when school officials were doing routine checks of the international student database.

Charles Kuck, who filed a case in Atlanta on behalf of 133 students across the country said ice's reversal can't undo the distress and hardship they have faced in recent weeks.

"I've got kids who lost their jobs, who might not get them back," he said. "I've got kids who lost school opportunities who might not get them back. We've got kids who missed finals, missed graduation. How do you get any of that stuff back?"

Jodie Ferise, a higher education attorney in Indiana, said some students at schools her law firm works with already left the country after receiving instructions to self-deport.

"This unprecedented treatment of student status had caused tremendous fear among international students," Ferise said. "Some of them were too frightened to wait and hope for the administration to change course."

Earlier this week, before the government's reversal, Ferise said the situation could hurt international student enrollment.

Some see Trump weaponizing government in targeting of judge, Democratic fundraising site

WASHINGTON, April 26, (AP): US President Donald Trump directed his Department of Justice to investigate ActBlue, the Democratic Party-aligned fundraising site that has fueled so many successful challenges against his own party.

The next day, amid a long-running feud with judges who have put some of his initiatives on hold because they may violate the Constitution, Trump's FBI arrested a Milwaukee judge, alleging she had helped a migrant evade immigration authorities.

The two acts sent shockwaves through the legal and political worlds, which already have been reeling as Trump has used his office to target law firms, media outlets and individuals with whom he disagrees. The investigations are the latest version of a clear pattern in Trump's second term: The president has harnessed the power of the federal government to punish his enemies and anyone he sees as standing in his way.

"This government has been consistent, from the moment it took office, in weaponizing the government and deploying it against critics," said Steve Levitsky, a Harvard political scientist and the coauthor of "How Democracies Die." "This is not a surprise. Trump campaigned on it and he's been doing it since day one."

The complaint filed by the U.S. Department of Justice on Friday accused Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Hannah Dugan of ushering the man, who is accused of being in the country illegally, out the "jury door" of her courtroom. The complaint alleges the judge became "visibly angry" when told there were immigration agents in the courthouse.

Her arrest Friday morning was announced in a post on X by Trump's FBI director, Kash Patel, a Trump loyalist

who before the election had compiled an "enemies list" to target during the president's second term. Patel later deleted the post.

Shortly after Dugan's arrest, a few dozen protesters marched outside the courthouse, chanting, "Judge Dugan will be free, no justice, no peace." Democrats across the country were alarmed. During an appearance on Fox News after the arrest, Attorney General Pam Bondi sent a warning to judges across the country. She was addressing the case of Dugan and a retired New Mexico judge, whom the administration also is targeting for allegedly harboring someone in the country illegally.

Also:

CENTRAL ISLIP, NY: Disgraced former US Rep **George Santos** was sentenced Friday to over seven years in prison, sobbing as he learned his punishment for the crimes that led to his expulsion from Congress.

Santos, who pleaded guilty last summer to federal wire fraud and aggravated identity theft, appealed for mercy. In a federal court a short drive from his old congressional district, he said through tears that he was "humbled" and "chastened" and understood he had betrayed his constituents' trust.

"I offer my deepest apologies," he said, adding: "I cannot rewrite the past, but I can control the road ahead."

U.S. District Court Judge **Joanna Seybert** evidently wasn't convinced.

"Where is your remorse? Where do I see it?" she asked as she sentenced him to 87 months behind bars. "It's always someone else's fault." The **New York Republican**, who must report to prison July 25, didn't respond to reporters' questions outside the courthouse.

Trump and Zelenskyy meet briefly at Vatican to discuss Russia-Ukraine war

KYIV, Ukraine, April 26, (AP): US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met briefly Saturday before the funeral for Pope Francis as the American leader steps up the pressure to end Russia's war against Ukraine.

Zelenskyy's office had said teams were making arrangements for the leaders to talk again Saturday, but Trump went directly to the Rome airport after the funeral and boarded Air Force One for the 10-hour flight back to the United States, which seemed to rule out a second in-person conversation.

The White House said their discussion was "very productive" and that more details would be released later. The meeting lasted about 15 minutes inside St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican just before they took their seats for the outdoor funeral service.

Zelenskyy said "good meeting" on social media after the funeral.

"We discussed a lot one on one. Hoping for results on everything we covered. Protecting lives of our people. Full and unconditional ceasefire. Reliable and lasting peace that will prevent another war from breaking out," he wrote. "Very symbolic meeting that has potential to become historic, if we achieve joint results. Thank you."

The meeting took place hours after Trump said on social media, after he arrived in Italy late Friday, that Russia and Ukraine should meet for "very high level talks" on ending the three-year war sparked by Russia's invasion.

Trump has pressed both sides to agree to a ceasefire. His special envoy, Steve Witkoff, had met earlier Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, right, and US President Donald Trump, talk as they attend the funeral of Pope Francis in Vatican on April 26. (AP)

in Moscow, and Trump said both sides were "very close to a deal."

Putin did not attend Francis' funeral. He faces an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court, which has accused him of war crimes stemming from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in a statement Friday night, Zelenskyy said "very significant meetings may take place" in coming days, and that an unconditional ceasefire was needed.

"Real pressure on Russia is needed so that they accept either the American proposal to cease fire and move towards peace, or our proposal - which ever one can truly work and ensure a reliable, immediate, and unconditional ceasefire, and then - a dignified peace and security guarantees," he said.

"Diplomacy must succeed. And we are doing everything to make diplomacy truly meaningful and finally effective."

There was no immediate word on whether Trump and Zelenskyy spoke again after they paid their respects to the pope, who had repeatedly pressed for an end to the conflict.

In another development, all Ukrainian troops have been forced from Russia's Kursk region, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff for Russia's Armed Forces, gave Russian President Vladimir Putin the news in a meeting Saturday, Peskov told Russian state news outlet Interfax.



People stand in silence to commemorate the 16 victims killed after a railway concrete canopy fell in November, during a farewell ceremony for Serbia's protesting students embarking on 2,000-kilometer (1,200-mile) run to Brussels aimed to draw European Union attention to their months-long struggle against corruption and for the rule of law in Novi Sad, Serbia on April 25. (AP)

After cycling to France, Serbia's protesting students run to Brussels to stir EU attention

NOVI SAD, Serbia, April 26, (AP): After cycling all the way to France, Serbia's protesting students on Friday embarked on a new endeavor - a nearly 2,000-kilometer (1,200-mile) run to Brussels aimed at drawing European Union attention to their months-long struggle against corruption and for the rule of law in the Balkan country.

More than 20 students set off from the northern Serbian city of Novi Sad for a relay-style "ultra-marathon" that is expected to last for 18 days. Cheered off by hundreds of people, the students headed toward the eastern Croatian town of Osijek, the first stop on their journey.

Nikola Kojcin acknowledged that "it's going to be really hard, but we'll make it, we have to make it."

University students have been a key force behind a nationwide anti-graft movement in Serbia rattling populist President Aleksandar Vucic. He is formally leading Serbia toward EU membership but has been accused of stifling democratic freedoms while boosting ties with Russia and China.

Many pro-democracy Serbs are disappointed with what

they view as the EU's lukewarm response to Vucic's increasingly authoritarian ways. The students said their run to EU headquarters was a "reminder" that the bloc should insist on its own values of freedom, dignity and the rule of law.

Vucic has repeatedly accused the student protesters of staging a "color revolution" and working to "destroy Serbia" under orders from abroad. He told Informer TV on Thursday evening that Serbia has been "attacked" and blamed the protests for alleged huge damage to the country's economy.

The students said in a press release that they "are not asking to be rescued" by the EU but are "sending a clear reminder to Europe: democratic values ... must be upheld not only in official declarations but in public awareness and collective action."

The runners are carrying a letter they hope will be read at the EU institutions "so people could hear a bit more about the deep political and social crisis in Serbia," explained student Aleksa Dimitrijevic.

America

Mangione pleads not guilty: Luigi Mangione pleaded not guilty Friday to a federal murder charge in the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson as prosecutors formally declared their intent to seek the death penalty and the judge warned the Justice Department to stop making public comments that could spoil the case.



Mangione

Mangione, 26, stood with his lawyers as he entered the plea, leaning forward toward a microphone on the defense table as US District Judge Margaret Garnett asked him if understood the indictment, which charges him with stalking and shoot-

1 killed, 2 hurt as driver loses control during parade in Italy

ROME, April 26, (AP): A man was killed and two women injured when a driver lost control of his car in Italy's central town of Lanciano on Friday during celebrations for Italy's 80th Liberation Day, local media and rescuers said.

The driver, an 80-year-old man, reportedly fell ill before hitting the crowd, firefighters said. An investigation was underway.

An 81-year-old man died immediately after being hit by the car, while two women were injured and transferred to the hospital, local media reported.

Italy celebrates its Liberation Day, known as "Festa della Liberazione," with a national public holiday on April 25. In addition to the closure of schools, public offices and most shops, the day is marked with parades and demonstrations across the country.

The accident in Lanciano happened at the end of the local parade organized by ANPI, the Italian partisans' association that preserves the memory of the Resistance movement against the Fascists.



Russo Mayor of Turin attends a ceremony to mark Liberation Day in Turin, Italy on April 25. (AP)

Australia prime minister condemns anti-Indigenous rights protests during war dead commemorations

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 26, (AP): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese condemned anti-Indigenous rights protesters who disrupted two Anzac Day dawn services on Friday as hundreds of thousands gathered across the nation to commemorate their war dead.

“The disruption of Anzac Day is beyond contempt and the people responsible must face the full force of the law,” Albanese told reporters.

“This was an act of low cowardice on a day when we honor courage and sacrifice,” he added.

The protests came during a heightened political atmosphere ahead of general elections on May 3 in which Indigenous rights are a campaign issue.

April 25, 1915 was the day when the newly-formed Australia and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the beaches of Gallipoli, in northwest Turkey, in an ill-fated campaign that was the soldiers’ first combat of World War I.

It is considered Australia’s most unifying national holiday and a sacred day when political point-scoring and protest are generally avoided.

A group of hecklers including self-described Nazi Jacob Hersant booed and jeered during a dawn service at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne



A pipe band marches past thousands of people lining the street to pay tribute to their war dead during the Anzac Day parade in Sydney, Australia on April 25. (AP)

where 50,000 gathered.

In Perth, a lone man yelled briefly during a dawn service at Kings Park before the 25,000 people who surrounded him persuaded him to stay silent, a police statement said. The man left soon after.

The disruptions were triggered in both cities by the so-called Welcome to Country ceremony, which is held at the outset of many Australian public events in which Indigenous leaders welcome visitors to their traditional land.

The Melbourne-based First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria, an Indigenous advocacy group, said in a statement it

“strongly condemns the racist attack during the Welcome to Country” in Melbourne.

Albanese said the disruptions in both Melbourne and Perth were a “disgrace.”

“There is no place in Australia for what occurred,” Albanese said.

In Melbourne, the interruptions continued after the Welcome to Country at mention by speakers of Indigenous soldiers or traditional owners of Australia.

Hecklers yelled “this is our country” and “we don’t have to be welcomed,” echoing a slogan of the minor party Trumpet of Patriots. The party’s extensive advertising is funded by mining magnate Clive Palmer and party officials say they are inspired by US President Donald Trump’s policies.

The hecklers were drowned out by the applause of others who urged the speakers to continue.

Lawmakers in the opposition conservative Liberal Party have complained that Welcome to Country ceremonies have become too prevalent and cost the center-left Labor Party government 452,953 Australian dollars (\$289,602) over two years.

But opposition leader Peter Dutton on Friday defended the place of such Indigenous ceremonies on Anzac Day.



In this photo provided by the Royal Thai Police, a small police plane is seen crashed into the sea, killing multiple people on board, in Prachuab Kiri Khan province, western of Thailand on April 25. (AP)

Thai police plane crash kills 6

A small police plane crashed into the sea near a popular beach town in Thailand, killing all six people on board, officials said Friday.

The plane was conducting a test flight to prepare for parachute training in Hua Hin district before it crashed around 8 am, Royal Thai Police spokesperson Archayon Kraithong said.

Officials did not immediately share the model of the propeller plane, but photos from the scene appear to show a Viking DHC-6 Twin Otter. The plane crashed near Hua Hin Airport, said the public relations department of Prachuab Kiri Khan province.

The photos show the plane in the sea about 100 meters (330 feet) offshore. The body of the plane appeared to be broken in two.

All six on board were police officers, Archayon said. Five of them died at the scene and one, the pilot, died later at the hospital, he said.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known. Archayon said officials are gathering evidence including data from the plane’s black box. (AP)

North Korean leader Kim touts new naval destroyer blames United States for tensions

SEOUL, South Korea, April 26, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has unveiled a new naval destroyer, claiming it as a significant advancement toward his goal of expanding the operational range and preemptive strike capabilities of his nuclear-armed military, state media said Saturday.

North Korea’s state-run Korean Central News Agency said Kim attended the launching ceremony for the 5,000-ton warship on Friday at the western port of Nampo.

Kim framed the arms buildup as a response to perceived threats from the United States and its allies in Asia, who have been expanding joint military exercises amid rising tensions over the North’s nuclear program. He added that the acquisition of a nuclear-powered submarine would be his next big step in strengthening his navy.

The new “multipurpose” destroyer, touted by state media as the first in a new class of heavily armed warships, is designed to handle various weapons systems, including anti-air and anti-naval weapons, as well as nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles, Kim said. He said the destroyer will be handed over to the navy early next year and begin active duty.

Kim criticized recent efforts by the United States and South Korea to expand joint military exercises and update their nuclear deterrence strategies, portraying them as preparations



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, (second right), and his daughter, (third right), seen at (bottom right), attend a ceremony to unveil a new naval destroyer at a western port in Nampo, North Korea on April 25. (AP)

for war. He vowed to “respond decisively to this geopolitical crisis and ongoing developments,” according to his speech carried by KCNA.

South Korea’s military didn’t immediately comment on the North Korean claims about its new warship. North Korea’s unveiling of the new warship follows its March revealing of a purported nuclear-powered submarine under construction. However, some experts question whether the impoverished and largely isolated nation could

develop such advanced capabilities without foreign assistance.

Nuclear-powered submarines were among a broad list of advanced weapons that Kim pledged to develop at a major political conference in 2021, citing growing US-led threats. His wish list also included solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, spy satellites, and multi-warhead missiles. Since then, North Korea has conducted a series of tests aimed at acquiring these capabilities.

Former South Korean president Moon Jae-in calls bribery indictment ‘unjust’

SEOUL, South Korea. April 26, (AP): Former South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday called his indictment on bribery charges “unjust,” accusing prosecutors of abusing their power in what he called a politically motivated investigation.

Moon’s comments came a day after prosecutors in the southern city of Jeonju announced his indictment over allegations that a budget airline gave his son-in-law a lucrative no-show job during his presidency.

Meeting with National Assembly speaker Woo Won-shik, Moon said he feels that prosecutors are “pushing forward in a predetermined direction, no matter what” and that his case was an example of “how politicized the prosecution has become and how prosecutorial power is being abused.”

The former liberal leader was visiting the National Assembly for an event marking the seventh anniversary of his 2018 summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, held during a brief period of engagement between the rival Koreans.

Moon’s indictment adds to a long list of South Korean leaders who have faced criminal allegations or scandals near the end of their terms or after leaving office. On June 3 South Korea will hold a presidential election to select a successor to conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was recently removed from office over an ill-conceived imposi-



South Korean former president Moon Jae-in gets out of a car upon his arrival at National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea on April 25. (AP)

tion of martial law in December.

Yoon, who previously served as prosecutor general under the Moon administration before a high-profile fallout with the liberal leadership, is now facing a criminal trial on rebellion charges related to the decree.

Moon’s political allies at the main opposition Democratic Party have portrayed the indictment as a political vendetta, pushed by Yoon’s supporters at the prosecution service to humiliate the former liberal leader ahead of the election.

Prosecutors allege that Moon, who served as president from 2017-2022, received bribes totaling 217 million won (\$151,000) from Lee Sang-jik, founder of the budget carrier Thai Eastar Jet. The bribes were allegedly in the form of financial support for Moon’s son-in-law between 2018-2020. Prosecutors say the man, who reportedly divorced Moon’s daughter in 2021, was hired by Lee’s company in Thailand despite having no experience in the airline industry, and performed minimal duties while claiming to work remotely from South Korea.

African leaders call for more peacekeepers for Somalia to defend against al-Shabab

KAMPALA, Uganda, April 26, (AP): African leaders meeting in Uganda on Friday called for more peacekeepers for Somalia to defend against the extremist al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab militant group that has been wreaking havoc in the Horn of Africa nation.

A statement at the end of a regional leaders’ meeting in the Ugandan capital of Kampala suggested additional troops could possibly come from Egypt.

More than 10,000 African Union troops are currently deployed to Somalia, nearly half of them from Uganda. The AU troops were authorized by the United Nations Security Council and multiple versions of the peacekeeping mission have been deployed there since 2007.

The latest mission, which took over earlier this year and is known as the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, faces funding challenges and regional disagreements over which countries are authorized to deploy troops. Somali authorities want Egyptian troops in the mission but not those from Ethiopia. However, relations between Ethiopia and Egypt have been strained in recent years over



African Union peacekeepers from Uganda provide security as Somali lawmakers arrive to cast their vote in the presidential election, at the Halane military camp in Mogadishu, Somalia on May 15, 2022. (AP)

Ethiopia’s construction of a \$4 billion dam on the Blue Nile, a key tributary of the Nile River. Egypt claims the project will likely diminish its share of the water from the Nile.

Al-Shabab militants have fought for more than 15 years to overthrow

Somalia’s internationally backed government. To this day, the extremists launch deadly raids and bombings, including in Somalia’s seaside capital of Mogadishu, despite a new offensive by government troops as well as routine airstrikes by the United States.



The Ricardo Plaza Coliseum is partially collapsed after an earthquake in Esmeraldas, Ecuador on April 25. (AP)

6.3 magnitude quake in Pacific Ocean rattles Ecuador

A strong 6.3 earthquake off Ecuador’s Pacific coast shook the northern part of the country Friday, with some initial reports of some damages to houses. No injuries were reported.

The earthquake was centered in the Pacific Ocean 13 miles (20.9 kilometers) northeast of the city of Esmeraldas, and it had a depth of 21.7 miles (35 kilometers).

ters), according to the United States Geological Survey.

Ecuador’s risk management office said on X that the earthquake was felt in at least 10 provinces, but it’s still monitoring and assessing the situation. Some local media showed images of Esmeraldas, the coastal town in the Pacific closest to the epicenter, where the facades of some houses suffered damage. (AP)

Gabon’s court confirms Oligui Nguema’s presidential win

DAKAR, Senegal, April 26, (AP): Gabon’s constitutional court confirmed Friday that Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, Gabon’s interim president who staged a 2023 coup, won the Central African nation’s April 12 presidential election. Oligui Nguema won the election with 58,074 votes, which accounts for 94.85% of votes cast, according to the final results announced by the Constitutional Court.

Oligui Nguema’s tally increased by almost 5% compared to the provisional results announced the day after the April 12 vote by the Ministry of the Interior.

He defeated seven other candidates, including immediate past Prime Minister Alain Claude Bilie-By-Nze, who came in a distant second with 3% of votes cast. None of the other six candidates crossed the 1% mark.

Bilie-By-Nze recently told The Associated Press that Oligui Nguema took advantage of state resources to support his campaign. The government denies this. Local observers deemed the conduct of the election satisfactory in nearly all the polling stations monitored.

The Constitutional Court announced a turnout of 70.11 % in the election in which some 920,000 voters, including



Gabon’s President Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema arrives at Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing, China on Sept 1, 2024, ahead of the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). (AP)

over 28,000 overseas, were registered to participate across more than 3,000 polling stations.

The Interior Ministry had previously announced a higher turnout of 87.21% in its provisional results announced the day after the vote.

It was Gabon’s first election since the 2023 military coup that ended a political dynasty that lasted over 50 years. It was seen as a crucial election for the central African nation’s 2.3 million people, a third of whom live in poverty despite its vast oil wealth.

Pakistani troops fired at positions along border in Kashmir, says Indian military

SRINAGAR, India, April 26, (AP): Pakistani soldiers fired at Indian posts along the highly militarized frontier in disputed Kashmir for a second consecutive night, the Indian military said Saturday, as tensions flared between the nuclear-armed rivals following a deadly attack on tourists last week.

India described the massacre, in which gunmen killed 26 people, most of them Indian tourists, as a “terror attack” and accused Pakistan of backing it. Pakistan denies the charge. The assault, near the resort town of Pahalgam in India-controlled Kashmir, was claimed by a previously unknown militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance.

It was the restive region’s worst assault targeting civilians in years. In the days since, tensions have risen dangerously between India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir. The region is split between them and claimed by both in its entirety.

The Indian army said Saturday that soldiers from multiple Pakistani army posts overnight opened fire at Indian



School children walk with candles and banners during a protest and solidarity march against the killing of tourists by militants near Pahalgam in Indian-controlled Kashmir, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on April 26. (AP)

troops “all across the Line of Control” in Kashmir. “Indian troops responded appropriately with small arms,” the statement said. There were no casualties reported, the statement added.

There was no comment from Pakistan, and the incidents could not be independently verified. In the past, each side has accused the other of starting border skirmishes in the Himalayan region. Markets and bazaars were open in Pakistan-administered Kashmir on Saturday, and there was no sign of evacuations from villages located near the Line of Control.

Kuwaiti crude drops to \$69.94 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 26, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price fell 44 cents during Friday's trading to reach USD 69.94 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 70.38 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said

Saturday.

Brent futures, however, rose by 32 cents to USD 66.87 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) gained 23 cents to USD 63.02 pb.

Other Voices

'Members violate quotas'

OPEC+ to boost oil output despite stagnant demand

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

WITH Brent crude oil prices hovering around \$67 per barrel, OPEC+ appears to be running out of patience. The group is set to pump more oil into the already saturated market, regardless of its outcome, which could further weaken the oil prices.



Kamel Al-Harami

However, OPEC+ 's justification for its intention remains unclear. It raises questions about the reasoning behind pumping more oil at a time when global demand is stagnant and international trade is nearly at a standstill, largely due to the ongoing tariff war between the United States and China.

Is this move part of a price war aimed at reclaiming OPEC+'s traditional market share from new suppliers who have benefited from the organization's production quotas? If so, it may serve the interests of non-OPEC+ producers by keeping prices stable at the expense of OPEC+ members themselves.

Starting in June, the oil organization is set to increase production for the second consecutive

month, largely due to some member states failing to comply with agreed quotas, most notably Kazakhstan and Iraq. This non-compliance has contributed to further weakening of oil prices.

Both countries have found excuses for not adhering to their committed quotas, citing national interests and concerns over potential damage to oil wells if production is halted.

Iraq, which is the largest over-producer among them, has pledged to curb output but has, in fact, continued to raise its production on a monthly basis since April.

In any case, lack of total compliance with OPEC quotas is not uncommon, and OPEC+ has a long history of quota violations. Typically, commitments hold for the first 30 days, after which the breakdown of the quota system gradually begins to unfold.

The current weak oil price, which is below \$70 per barrel, is a cause for concern among global oil producers. For some, this price level falls below their break-even point when factoring in production costs, profits, and shareholder dividends.

Oil prices will undoubtedly return to previous levels, but this requires a rebound in global trade and strict discipline and full compliance with production quotas by OPEC+.



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Kuwaiti oil in high demand

KPC delegation visits China to boost energy cooperation

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: The current visit of a high-level delegation from Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), headed by CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah, to Beijing -- the Chinese capital is aimed at strengthening cooperation with the Chinese side and expanding horizons for joint strategic projects in the energy sector between the two countries, sources told the newspaper.

Sources pointed out that China is

the largest importer of Kuwaiti oil, making it a key partner in the oil policy of Kuwait.

They said the visit was conducted at a time China is preparing to increase its oil consumption by more than one percent this year, driven by increased demand for petrochemicals.

They added the Kuwaiti crude oil is enjoying increasing demand from Chinese refineries due to its technical and environmental characteristics that meet the highest international standards.

Ahmadi tops real estate transactions

Real estate transactions hit KD 103.4 million in mid-April

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Official data from the Ministry of Justice confirmed the completion of 137 transactions worth KD103.4 million from April 13-17; including residential, investment, commercial, craft, warehouse, and showroom transactions.

On the contrary, there has been no transaction related to the coastal strip, banks and shops throughout the week.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the weekly statistical report on real estate trading released by the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Department at the ministry.

The report confirmed the processing of 94 transactions or 68.6 percent of the total in the residential real estate sector, with a trading value of about KD33 million or 30.4 percent. The investment real estate sector processed

35 transactions or 25.5 percent, with a value of KD47.4 million or 45.8. Commercial real estate had eight transactions worth KD8.3 million or 7.9 percent. The craft real estate sector had three transactions worth KD 2.6 million or 2.5 percent. The warehouse and showroom sectors had one transaction each worth KD4 million each or 3.9 percent, and one transaction for the exhibition sector worth KD 8.2 million (7.9 percent).

On real estate trading movement per governorate, the report stated that Ahmadi Governorate recorded the highest number of transactions with 53 or 38.7 percent, followed by Hawally Governorate with 39 or 28.5 percent, Farwaniya Governorate with 22 or 16 percent, Capital Governorate with 10 or 7.3 percent, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate with seven or 5.1 percent, and Jahra Governorate with six or 4.4 percent.

Saudi green initiatives praised

Arab Energy Organization reaffirms commitment to emissions reduction

RIYADH, April 26, (KUNA): The Secretary-General of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO), Eng. Jamal Al-Loughani, affirmed on Wednesday the member states' commitment to reducing emissions and enhancing sustainability in the petroleum manufacturing sector.

This came in the opening session of the second edition of the symposium, "Carbon Emissions Reduction Pathways in the Petroleum Processing Industries," which kicked off today in the presence of the Deputy Minister of Sustainability and Climate Change in Saudi Arabia, Khalid Al-Mahid.

Al-Loughani said the symposium builds on the success of the first edi-

tion held last year in Saudi Arabia and reflects the organization's and member states' commitment to sustainability in the refining and petrochemical sectors.

Al-Loughani expressed his deep appreciation to the Saudi Minister of Energy, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, for his continued support for the success of both editions of the symposium.

He also commended the efforts of the energy and petroleum ministers of the member states in nominating a group of experts to participate in this specialized technical dialogue.

He noted that the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries face increasing challenges due to competition and environmental legislation.

Boursa Kuwait concludes strategic IR workshops highlighting global trends

Hosted in collaboration with the Middle East Investor Relations Association

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Boursa Kuwait successfully concluded two high-impact workshops on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, in collaboration with the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA), bringing together capital market professionals, corporate leaders and investor relations (IR) practitioners for a day of insightful discussions and practical training.

The workshops provided IR practitioners with a valuable opportunity to deepen their understanding of international best practices and the evolving impact of global trends on the investor relations landscape. The event also formed part of Boursa Kuwait's ongoing commitment to raising awareness of the critical role that the IR function plays in supporting listed companies and enhancing market transparency.

Commenting on the success of the event, Boursa Kuwait Director of Investor Relations Mr. Fahad Al-Besher said, "These workshops reflect our ongoing commitment to empower listed companies with the tools and knowledge to advance investor relations capabilities within the Kuwaiti capital market and build a more transparent and accessible investment environment. By connecting global perspectives with local relevance, we are equipping market participants with the tools to foster investor confidence and drive sustainable market growth. I would like to sincerely thank our partners at MEIRA, our speakers and all attendees for their ongoing dedication to advancing investor relations in the region."

The first session, titled "From Global Trends to Local Impact – Understanding Macro Sentiment from the World to Kuwait," was led by Jaap Mejer, Head of Sell-side Research at Arqaam Capital and offered a comprehensive analysis of global macroeconomic trends and their ripple effects across the GCC, with a particular focus on Kuwait. Topics included interest rate trajectories, capital flows, regional fiscal sustainability and Kuwait's evolving regulatory and institutional landscape.

"Our session offered a timely overview of how macroeconomic dynamics – ranging from shifting monetary policies to geopolitical risk – are shaping investor sentiment and influencing capital flows across the GCC. By connecting these global trends to Kuwait's economic and regulatory context, we aimed to equip stakeholders with actionable insights to navigate today's complex market environment. I'd like to thank Boursa Kuwait for the opportunity to share these perspectives and for their continued leadership in advancing financial literacy and



Boursa Kuwait hosts successful IR workshops.

transparency," stated Mr. Mejer.

Meanwhile, the second session, "How to Best Target and Engage with Investors," was given by Mr. Sam Ryan Siahpolo, Partner at Instinctif Partners, who shared practical strategies for identifying, engaging, and retaining diverse investor types. Participants gained valuable insights into building targeted engagement plans, aligning corporate messaging with investor expectations, and leveraging disclosure and ESG commitments to broaden their shareholder base.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Siahpolo said, "Engaging with Kuwait's capital market professionals on how to refine investor targeting and deepen engagement strategies was a rewarding experience. As IR continues to evolve in both scope and complexity, companies must adapt their approaches to align with the expectations of a global investor base. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Boursa Kuwait for hosting this initiative and for their commitment to strengthening IR capabilities

in the region."

"Today's sessions highlighted the importance of continuous learning in an ever-evolving market landscape. Our long-standing strategic partnership with Boursa Kuwait reflects a shared commitment to advancing the IR function in Kuwait and across the region. At MEIRA, we believe our success is built on the dedication of our members and the expertise of our partners. I would like to thank the bourse for its unwavering support and its efforts to equip market participants with the tools and insights needed to thrive in today's dynamic financial environment," said MEIRA CEO Paolo Casamassima.

Mr. Mohammad Abdal, Chairman of the Kuwait chapter of the Middle East Investor Relations Association spoke about the rapidly evolving IR field, saying: "Investor relations is becoming a core pillar of effective corporate strategy and capital market development. In Kuwait, advancing IR standards is essential to building investor trust, promoting transparency and enhancing the global compet-

itiveness of our market. The Middle East Investor Relations Association and its Kuwait chapter are proud to support initiatives that equip listed companies with the skills and knowledge needed to engage more meaningfully with investors and adapt to evolving stakeholder expectations."

Organizing enlightening workshops and other educational initiatives form an integral part of Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy, which aims to create a lasting and meaningful impact on the communities where it operates. These programs also reinforce the exchange's unwavering commitment and continuous efforts to equip all market participants with an in-depth understanding of the functioning of capital markets and various tools and techniques required to make informed investment decisions and effectively meet investors' needs. It also aligns with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Reinforcing its commitment to national talent and youth empowerment

Gulf Bank sponsors and participates in Ktech Career Fair

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: As part of its ongoing commitment to empowering Kuwaiti youth and supporting national talent, Gulf Bank announced its sponsorship and participation in the 2025 Annual Career Fair organized by Kuwait Technical College (ktech). This initiative comes in line with the Bank's continuous efforts to provide employment opportunities for Kuwaiti graduates and students.

Gulf Bank's Talent Acquisition team participated in the fair to shed light on the dynamic role of the banking sector, introduce attendees to the Bank's diverse departments, offer personalized career guidance, and answer questions about the wide range of career opportunities available within the Bank.

Gulf Bank's participation in this career fair reflects its strategic approach to building a strong foundation of national talent, while reinforcing its presence at key events that open new professional horizons for ambitious young individuals.

Gulf Bank remains keen on taking part in such impactful initiatives as a demonstration of its deep-rooted commitment to the Kuwaiti community. By attracting and nurturing national talent, Gulf Bank aims to support the local job market by aligning educational outcomes with industry demands. This approach helps cultivate a future-ready workforce that can drive the Bank's long-term goals and contribute to a sustainable environment for the development and advancement of Kuwait's national talent.

It's worth highlighting that Gulf Bank entered into a partnership with Kuwait Technical College (ktech) last year, focused on training and equipping students with the skills needed for the job market. This partnership is part of the Bank's ongoing commitment to nurturing young Kuwaiti talent and continuously investing in their professional development.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The Bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.



Gulf Bank showcases career opportunities at KTech Fair.

Advancing its human capital strategy and New Kuwait Vision 2035 goals

Burgan Bank renews its participation in AUK’s Annual Career Fair

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Burgan Bank recently took part in the annual Career Fair hosted by the American University of Kuwait (AUK) alongside Kuwait’s top recruiters across numerous sectors and industries. As part of its robust human capital development strategy and steadfast efforts to advance Kuwait’s national calibers, Burgan representatives engaged with the event’s visitors in various conversations around the Bank’s employment and internship opportunities, while also promoting financial literacy and inclusion.

“AUK’s annual Career Growth Fair is an excellent opportunity for our team to connect with and potentially recruit Kuwait’s young and talented individuals who aspire to build a career in banking and finance,” commented Mr. Abdulwahab Jamal Abdulraheem, Executive Manager – Talent Acquisition at Burgan Bank. “Our renewed participation in this valuable event allowed us to be present among our community members, drawing us closer to them and enabling us to remain in tune with the market’s pulse and professional aspirations. This in-



Mr. Abdulwahab Jamal Abdulraheem, Executive Manager – Talent Acquisition at Burgan Bank

person proximity and rapport continue to fuel our efforts to develop our work environment and employment journey in a way that responds to talents’ evolving



Dr. Rawda Awwad, AUK President, with the Burgan Talent Acquisition Team.

needs.” Among the defining features of Burgan’s forward-looking and Great Place to Work-certified professional environ-

ment is its dynamic learning and development (L&D) strategy, which caters to employees’ diverse needs, interests, and preferred learning styles. This includes the flagship L&D program Ro’ya, which invests in the Bank’s future leaders, as well as Entelaqah, designed to smoothly transition fresh graduates from the university experience to the dynamic professional world – in addition to a wide range of other bespoke L&D programs and schemes.

Besides introducing candidates to Burgan’s work experience and professional opportunities, the Bank’s representatives also shared vital banking awareness and financial literacy information with the event’s visitors, in line with its continued support of the “Let’s Be Aware” (Diraya) campaign – launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), with the unanimous support of local banks.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank remains committed to its mission of becoming an employer of choice and stands among the leading institutions exerting dedicated efforts to realize the New Kuwait Vision 2035 goal of investing in national human capital and preparing Kuwaiti youth to become competitive and productive members of the community.

In an innovative social banking experiment

KFH’s ‘Diraya campaign’ educates customers on financial fraud risks

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) conducted a community banking experiment to assess public banking awareness and offer guidance on the risks, types, and avoidance of financial fraud. This initiative is part of the Diraya banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association and Kuwaiti banks, and aligns with KFH’s corporate social responsibility efforts.

Conducted during the Derasti exhibition at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref, the experiment focused on testing students’ banking knowledge. Its aim was to enhance financial awareness and highlight fraudulent activities customers may encounter through various channels, such as SMS, email, phone call, and social media.

The experiment elicited a range of responses from the students. Meanwhile, a KFH representative reassured the participating students that the bank would never solicit personal details through email, SMS, or phone call. KFH stressed the critical need to disregard such communications, identifying them as deceptive schemes aimed at acquiring banking credentials and pilfering funds or data.

KFH urged customers to safeguard their banking information by never sharing OTP codes and exercising caution with electronic links, as clicking them could lead to the theft of confidential data. The bank also advised enhancing account security by avoiding the storage of sensitive information like card numbers and PINs on phones, keeping PINs secret and unwritten, and always logging out of banking apps or websites after use.

KFH successfully utilized all its e-channels on social media platforms and its website, mobile app to disseminate awareness content. These endeavors amassed a significant interaction with customers due to the distinctive and useful contents of KFH’s cutting-



KFH & Diraya logo

edge services and products.

In conjunction with the rollout of its new digital services, KFH has published several awareness pieces. These services include Kuwait’s first instant printing of credit and prepaid cards, WAMD instant payment in collaboration with KNET, transfers via the Western Union network, and the AFAQ instant transfer service. KFH’s awareness efforts also encompass explanatory videos on topics such as new user registration on the mobile app, cardless cash withdrawals, ATM services, and how to benefit from KFHOnline financial solutions. These videos and other awareness posts are available on KFH’s social media channels (@KFHgroup).

In line with the continued awareness efforts, KFH is committed to participating in initiatives and forums that focus on raising banking awareness. These include its participation in the 5th Gulf Conference and Exhibition for Cybersecurity Challenges titled “A Secure Digital Environment”. During its participation, KFH shed light on the concept of fraud in general, with a specific focus on cyber fraud, explaining the various types of fraud that pose a threat to both individuals and the community.

Kuwait’s PIC inks deal to acquire 25 stake in Chinese Wanhua Chemical

New deal marks milestone in Kuwait-China petrochemical cooperation

YANTAI, China, April 26, (KUNA): Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), a subsidiary of Kuwait petroleum Corporation (KPC) and Wanhua Chemical Group Co., Ltd. have signed an Equity Subscription Agreement ESA in which PIC will subscribe to a 25 percent equity stake in selected petrochemical assets of Wanhua Chemical in Yantai, China.

This strategic partnership marks a new chapter in the long-standing collaboration between the two organizations and reflects their shared commitment to advancing the global petrochemical sector, the PIC said in a statement on Saturday.

The agreement was signed by Nadia Al Hajji, Chief Executive Officer of PIC, and Kou Guangwu, President of Wanhua Chemical, during an official ceremony held in Yantai. The signing was witnessed by Shaikh Nawaf Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer KPC, and Liao Zengtai, Chairman of Wanhua Chemical.

The ceremony took place in the presence of high-ranking officials and dignitaries, including Shaikh Khaled Al Sabah KPC Managing Director of International Marketing, Mr. Faisal Al-Moued, Counselor Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Beijing Waleed Al Mukhaizim, KPC Deputy Managing Director of International Marketing, Feras Al Awwad, PIC Deputy CEO of Projects and Business Development, as well as senior executives from both companies and a high-level delegation from Kuwait.

In his remarks, Shaikh Nawaf Al Sabah emphasized that, the signing of this landmark agreement between PIC and Wanhua Chemical marks Kuwait’s largest petrochemical investment in China and a significant milestone in the enduring relationship between the two nations. Built on a legacy of trade and cooperation, the partnership reflects

our commitment to transforming traditional supply arrangements into strategic, value-driven collaborations.

“Today marks another step in our strategy to transform our hydrocarbon supply relationships into long-term partnerships. In that vein, PIC’s partnership with Wanhua in the Yantai petrochemical complex represents a shared vision for industrial growth, value creation, and long-term collaboration.”

Liao Zengtai, Chairman of Wanhua Chemical, reflected on the historical ties between the two companies, noting that cooperation dates back to 2013.

“Over the years, we have built strong relationships based on shared values and complementary capabilities. This new venture brings fresh momentum to our shared vision and supports the broader development of the petrochemical industry in Yantai and beyond,” Liao said.

Nadia Al Hajji, Chief Executive Officer of PIC, highlighted the project’s strategic importance in creating value through petrochemical assets while fostering mutual growth and innovation.

Emphasizing that this collaboration with Wanhua Chemical reflects a shared vision, mutual trust, and aligned ambitions to drive innovation, foster growth, and create long-term value, Al Hajji extended her sincere appreciation affirming that this partnership marks a cornerstone in PIC’s continued growth in Asia and beyond.

“I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this partnership a reality. From the teams who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to the leaders who championed this vision - your dedication has made this proud moment possible.”

KOU Guangwu, President of Wanhua Chemical emphasized the Company’s commitment to intelligent manufacturing and green technologies, emphasizing the continued collaboration with PIC to leverage their respective strengths across the petrochemical value chain.

“This agreement marks a key milestone between Wanhua Chemical and PIC and a new phase in

Wanhua’s collaboration with petroleum entities in Kuwait. It is a continuation of aiming to fully leverage their respective geographical strengths, achieve resource sharing, mutual benefits and win-win, and rejuvenate the industry.”

Sheikh Khaled Al Sabah, KPC Managing Director International Marketing, highlighted the long-standing relationship between Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and Wanhua started years ago with supply agreements that laid the foundation of trust, liability and mutual respect between both organizations.

“I would like to take this opportunity to wish both PIC and Wanhua all the best as they embark on this journey together,” Sheikh Khaled said.

As part of the signing ceremony, representatives from Citigroup Global Markets Limited served as the exclusive financial advisor to PIC, while Ashurst LLP acted as PIC’s legal counsel.

Prior to the signing ceremony, Representatives from, KPC, PIC, Kuwait Embassy and Wanhua Chemical visited Wanhua’s Yantai Industrial Park to discuss further cooperation on intelligent manufacturing systems, green technologies, and integrated operations.

Founded in 1963, Petrochemical Industries Company is the petrochemical arm of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), and a regional petrochemical leader with a global manufacturing footprint across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

PIC’s portfolio includes successful joint ventures with world-class partners, operating cutting-edge manufacturing facilities strategically located near high-growth markets in Asia, North America, and Europe.

Wanhua Chemical is among the global leading suppliers of chemical innovative products.

Relying on the continuous innovation, commercialized facilities and efficient operation, the company provides customers with more competitive products and solutions. Wanhua Chemical’s business covers polyurethanes, petrochemicals, performance chemicals, and emerging materials for future industries.

KFEOCH and KAPP join forces for Kuwait PPP Conference

Kuwait to host key PPP Conference with regional and global specialists

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: “The Third Kuwait Public-Private Partnership Conference coincides with a significant leap made by the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects, based on the Kuwaiti government’s directive for public entities to implement their major and developmental projects through partnerships with the private sector.

This approach aims to leverage private sector expertise and attract foreign investment. The Authority plays a fundamental role in enabling government entities and the private sector to achieve this, while ensuring compliance with the standards, regulations, and legislative frameworks governing PPP systems in the State of Kuwait, in line with global best practices.

Through this conference, the government’s serious intent is evident – to empower the private sector to contribute to the development of the local economy, enhance the state’s infrastructure, improve public services, and fulfill citizens’ aspirations for a new Kuwait that keeps pace with global developments in investment and public service advancement.”

Al-Mousa added that one of the most distinctive features of this conference is the participation of a distinguished group of international and regional experts from friendly and brotherly countries, as well as from the State of Kuwait. This forms a high-level academic platform capable of raising awareness about the importance of implementing the PPP framework and understanding the procedural mechanisms required to activate it in line with the best global standards.



Asma Al-Mousa

demographic platform capable of raising awareness about the importance of implementing the PPP framework and understanding the procedural mechanisms required to activate it in line with the best global standards.

She emphasized KAPP’s commitment to applying these standards, as they represent essential guarantees for success. Additionally, they reinforce confidence in the promising investment opportunities the State of Kuwait offers through partnership projects.

Eng. Bader Al-Salman: A key role for KFEOCH and its members in implementing development projects in Kuwait

For his part, Eng. Bader Al-Salman, President of KFEOCH, emphasized the importance of the conference, saying: “KFEOCH plays a vital and central role in empowering the Kuwaiti private sector and enhancing its capabilities in executing major and developmental projects in the country according to the highest global standards and practices. In this context, we continuously strive to elevate the level of Kuwaiti engineering and consulting firms under KFEOCH’s umbrella, enabling them to compete internationally with the most established global institutions in the field.”



Bader Al-Salman

Al-Salman added: “At KFEOCH, we were keen to ensure the conference brings together a distinguished group of international, regional, and local experts, and that its program includes exposure to best practices, standards, and practical experiences. This contributes to addressing potential challenges and difficulties while enhancing our ability to find suitable solutions.”

Al-Salman extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to Her Excellency Eng. Noura Suleiman Salem Al-Fozan, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs and Chair of the Higher Committee for Public-Private Partnership Projects, for her generous patronage of the conference. He also expressed his gratitude to all sponsoring companies and institutions.

Al-Salman also welcomed the supporting entities, namely the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, and thanked all participating government entities. Finally, he welcomed Kuwait’s guests – international and regional experts and specialists – stressing that their participation will significantly positively impact transferring expertise and successful experiences to their counterparts in the State of Kuwait.



Khaled Mahdi

Dr. Khaled Mahdi, Chairman of the PPPKW3 Higher Committee, affirmed that the convening of the conference represents a valuable opportunity to benefit from the best global, regional, and local expertise and talents. He noted that the committee exerted great efforts during the preparation phase to attract influential figures capable of effectively contributing to the discussion of critical issues and providing the necessary solutions and answers to advance partnership projects in Kuwait into a new phase that will tangibly contribute to national economic growth.

Dr. Mahdi added: “The conference will be an exceptional opportunity to strengthen and deepen relationships with these experts and professionals, turning it into a permanent platform for dialogue, study, and ongoing exchange. The conference itself is a milestone, but partnership is a long-term journey that requires continuous care, follow-up, and development from all of us.”

The conference is being held with the participation of public and private sector institutions and regulatory bodies involved in partnership projects. Dr. Khaled Mahdi chairs the conference’s higher committee. Al-Yaqout & Al-Fouzan Legal Group and its partner LexisNexis serve as the conference’s Scientific partner, while Razen Events is responsible for providing the organizational and logistical services.

Ms. Asma Al-Mousa:

- A significant leap for partnership projects across various economic sectors in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, supported by the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects, “KAPP”

Bader Al-Salman:

- The Kuwaiti private sector is fully prepared and capable of contributing to national development plans through partnership projects

Khaled Mahdi:

- The conference serves as a supportive platform for national efforts to empower the private sector to lead development by reinforcing the principle of public-private partnership, with distinguished participation from local and international officials and experts.

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Company maintains its position as first most valuable brand in the Middle East

stc ranked 3rd strongest telco brand in the world by Brand Finance

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, has been ranked as the 3rd strongest telco brand in the world, while maintaining its ranking as the most valuable telco brand in the Middle East. According to the Brand Finance’s latest “Telecoms 150” Report, stc was also ranked as the 9th most valuable telco brand globally.

Developed by Brand Finance, the world’s leading independent brand valuation consultancy, the Telecom 150 Report is a dedicated industry ranking that assesses the world’s top 150 strongest telecoms brands. Utilizing the Brand Strength Index (BSI), the “Strongest Telecom Brand” ranking evaluates key factors such as resilience, customer perception, and the depth of a brand’s relationship with its audience.

The report highlighted stc Group’s outstanding performance, which saw a notable 16% growth in brand value in 2024, reaching USD16.1 billion. The growth is mainly attributed to the Masterbrand strategy implemented by

stc Group, where it extended the brand into new categories such as banking, cybersecurity, and the development of B2B and IT offerings through strategic M&A initiatives.

In 2024, stc Kuwait demonstrated its unwavering commitment to digital transformation and operational excellence, achieving several key milestones, mainly;

- stc Kuwait successfully tested 10Gbps using the 6GHz IMT frequency spectrum trial, marking a first in Kuwait
- stc Kuwait upgraded from the Main Market to the Premier Market in Boursa Kuwait, reinforcing its commitment to governance and investor confidence.
- stc Kuwait signed an MoU with Huawei to develop 5.5G intelligent wireless networks and incubate new services for both consumer and business sectors, enhancing network performance, efficiency, and innovation.
- stc Kuwait launched the first 5G RedCap Fixed Wireless Access in the Middle East, showcasing its commitment to technological leadership.
- stc Kuwait expanded its business

- 3rd strongest telco brand in the world
- Most valuable telco brand in the Middle East and 9th in the world
- stc achieved a brand strength index score of 88.7/100 and a AAA brand rating
- Brand value increased by 16% equating to USD16.1 billion

solutions with new multi-tenant SIEM services targeting SMEs.

- stc Kuwait completed a PoC for a new long-range microwave technology, enabling high-capacity backhauling of up to 5Gbps over 8 kilometers.
- stc Kuwait introduced ‘youth from stc,’ exclusive telecom plans tailored for young customers in Kuwait
- stc Kuwait successfully maintained its ISO certifications, including ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, ISO 27001:2022, ISO 20000-1:2018, ISO 22301:2019, and ISO 31000:2018
- stc Kuwait partnered with HomeWagon to introduce innovative smart home solutions.
- stc Kuwait signed a strategic contract with the Ministry of Electricity,

Water & Renewable Energy (MEW) to supply Smart Electricity Meter solutions

- stc Kuwait was ranked the #1 ideal employer for engineers and IT professionals in Kuwait by Universum’s research.
- stc Kuwait signed a final contract with CITRA for the allocation of a 5,698.5 square meter area to serve as its new administrative headquarters in Kuwait City, Al-Mirqab Area.

In terms of corporate social responsibility and sustainability, stc Kuwait continued to implement its extensive agenda with active campaign throughout the year initiated under various campaigns. The Company focused on its core pillars under CSR and sustain-



Brand announcement

ability which included areas such as education, environmental sustainability, sports, health, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, the Company enhanced its existing campaigns, which included “weyak” – that aims at supporting young entrepreneurs and startups, and the educational ‘upgrade’ initiative – that aims at empowering youth and supporting the

education initiatives.

Due to these remarkable achievements, as well as other successful accomplishments witnessed throughout the year, stc Kuwait received numerous reputable awards. These recognitions were awarded to stc Kuwait on both regional and international platforms, recognizing the Company’s excellence across all fronts.

Higher taxes on millionaires? Trump says he’s open, but many in his party are not

Potential showdown being set up

WASHINGTON, April 26, (AP): Why not tax the millionaires?

As Congress begins drafting a massive package for President Donald Trump’s “big, beautiful bill” with trillions of dollars in tax breaks and federal program cuts, it’s a question that won’t seem to go away.

Trump himself has mused he’d “love” to tax wealthier Americans a little bit more, but the Republican president has also repeatedly walked it back. This week, the president dismissed a tax hike as “disruptive” when asked about it at the White House.

But still it swirls.

And it’s setting up a potential showdown between the old guard of the Republican Party, which sees almost any tax hike as contrary to the GOP goal of slashing government, and its rising populist-nationalists, who view a millionaire’s tax as championing working-class voters who helped deliver the White House.

“Bring it, baby,” said former Trump strategist Stephen Bannon on his podcast.

Think of it as Bannon on the one side, versus Newt Gingrich, anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist and others on the other - a debate that once seemed unfathomable for Republicans who have spent generations working to lower taxes and reduce the scope of the federal government.

“I don’t think we’re raising taxes on anybody,” House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said this week on Fox News Channel.

Johnson said there have been lots of ideas thrown out but the Republicans are working against the idea of a tax on millionaires. “I’m not in favor of raising the

tax rates because our party is the group that stands against that, traditionally,” he said.

This spring and summer, the Republican-led Congress is determined to make progress on the package, which is central to the party’s domestic policy agenda. It revolves around extending many of the GOP tax cuts that Congress approved in 2017, during Trump’s first term, but are expiring later this year.

As it stands, the top individual tax rate is now 37%, on annual incomes above \$611,000 for single filers and \$767,000 for married couples. If Congress fails to act, that rate is set to revert to what it was before the 2017 tax law, 39.6%, on top filers.

It seems impossible that Republicans in Congress will purposefully wade into the debate. They are striving to keep all the existing tax brackets in place, while adding new tax breaks the president campaigned on during the 2024 election - including no taxes on tips, Social Security income, overtime pay and others. It’s a potentially \$5 trillion-plus package.

But the Bannon wing is working to force the issue, saying it’s time to raise that top rate on the wealthier households, at least \$1 million and above.

Sounding at times more like progressive Democrats, Bannon’s flank sees a tax hike as a way not only to ensure wealthy Americans pay their fair share but to generate federal revenue. With federal debt at \$36 trillion, they say it can help counter annual deficits that cannot be offset by budget cuts alone.

“The current system we have is not sustainable,” Bannon said at Semafor’s World Economy Summit on Wednesday in Washington. “You have to go to an alternative. I think the alternative is budget cuts. And ... it has to be tax increases

on the wealthy.”

That’s drawing fierce blowback from the traditional tax-cutters, who have gone into overdrive, warning of nothing short of a political shattering of GOP orthodoxy, and the party itself, if Republicans entertain the idea.

“Madness,” Gingrich, the former Republican House speaker, told Fox News’ Larry Kudlow.

Gingrich warns of a George Bush-style political implosion similar to his “Read my lips: No new taxes” pledge, which contributed to his failed 1992 presidential reelection bid.

“It would be a disaster,” Gingrich said.

Trump appears to be weighing the arguments, sending mixed messages about what he prefers.

“Newt is quite possibly right on this,” the president said in a note Gingrich said he received from the president and reposted Tuesday on social media.

“While I love the idea of a small increase,” Trump said in the note, “the Democrats would probably use it against us, and we would be, like Bush, helpless to do anything about it.”

Trump went on to counsel that if they can do without it, they’re probably better off. “We don’t need to be the ‘READ MY LIPS’ gang who lost an election,” he posted.

Asked about a tax hike on millionaires Wednesday in the Oval Office, Trump was more definitive. “I think it would be very disruptive,” he said, suggesting wealthy Americans would simply leave the country, rather than pay the higher tax, and end up costing in lost revenues.

March home sales slowed in a lethargic opening to the spring buying season

WASHINGTON, April 26, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes slowed in March, a lackluster start to the spring homebuying season as elevated mortgage rates and rising prices discouraged home shoppers.

Existing home sales fell 5.9% last month from February to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.02 million units, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday. The March sales decline is the largest monthly drop since November 2022, when sales fell 6.7% from the previous month.

Sales also fell 2.4% compared with March last year. The latest home sales fell short of the 4.12 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

The average cost of a U.S. mortgage, which climbed to its highest level in two months last week, is a significant barrier for would-be homebuyers, said Lawrence Yun, NAR’s chief economist.

“Residential housing mobility, cur-



A housing development in Cranberry Township, Pa., is shown on March 29, 2024. (AP)

rently at historical lows, signals the troublesome possibility of less economic mobility for society,” Yun said.

Home prices increased on an annual basis for the 21st consecutive month,

although at a slower rate. The national median sales price rose 2.7% in March from a year earlier to \$403,700, an all-time high for March, but the smallest annual increase since August.

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

Higher mortgage rates also dampened the start of the spring homebuying season in 2024. This year, after climbing to a just above 7% in mid-January, the average rate on a 30-year mortgage has remained mostly elevated, climbing last week to 6.83%, its highest level in eight weeks, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

Homes purchased last month likely went under contract in February and early March, when the average rate on a 30-year mortgage ranged from 6.89% to 6.63%, according to Freddie Mac. While sales of existing home fell last month, sales of newly built homes surged in March. They jumped 7.4% from February and 6% from March last year, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday.



A ‘For Sale’ sign is displayed in front of a home in Des Plaines, Ill., Monday, Aug. 26, 2024. (AP)

Figure hovering near highest level

Average rate on a US 30-yr mortgage eases to 6.81 pct

WASHINGTON, April 26, (AP): The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. eased this week, though it remains close to its highest level in more than two months.

The rate fell to 6.81% from 6.83% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 7.17%.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners refinancing their home loans, also fell. The average rate dropped to 5.94% from 6.03% last week. It’s down from 6.44% a year ago, Freddie Mac said.

Mortgage rates are influenced by several factors, including global demand for U.S. Treasuries, the Federal Reserve’s interest rate policy decisions and bond market investors’ expectations for future inflation.

After climbing to a just above 7% in mid-January, the average rate on a 30-year mortgage has remained above 6.62%, where it was just two weeks ago. It has risen sharply since then, reflecting volatility in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing home loans.

The yield, which had mostly fallen this year after climbing to around 4.8% in mid-January, spiked earlier this month to 4.5% amid a sell-off in government bonds triggered by investor anxiety over the potential fallout from the Trump administration’s ongoing trade war.

The 10-year Treasury yield was at 4.34% in midday trading Thursday, down from 4.40% late Wednesday.

“The recent back and forth on tariffs and other economic policy has led to market turmoil and a general sense of unease, which can be felt in stubbornly high mortgage rates,” said Hannah Jones, senior economic research analyst at Realtor.com.

Lower mortgage rates help boost homebuyers’ purchasing power, but they haven’t come down enough to encourage more home shoppers at a time when real estate prices are still rising nationally, albeit more slowly, and the number of properties on the market has risen sharply from a year ago.

The elevated mortgage rates have dampened homes sales so far this spring, traditionally the busiest period of the year for the housing market. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell in March, posting the largest monthly drop since November 2022.

Last week, mortgage applications fell 12.7% from a week earlier, as mortgage rates climbed to their highest level in two months, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association.

“With rates now close to 7%, many potential borrowers will likely stay on the sidelines until they have a better idea of the direction that rates, and the economy, are headed,” said MBA CEO Bob Broeksmit.

Economists expect mortgage rates to remain volatile in coming months, though they generally call for the average rate on a 30-year mortgage to remain around 6.5% this year.

The Conversation

Alaska, rich in petroleum, faces an energy shortage

By Brett Watson

University of Alaska Anchorage

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

□ □ □

In the state with the fourth-largest proven reserves of oil and gas in the U.S., there is a looming energy shortage.

Above the Arctic Circle, oil producers on Alaska’s North Slope send an average of 465,000 barrels of crude oil south each day for shipping to refineries and users around the country and the world.

But in south-central Alaska - Anchorage and the surrounding region, home to 63% of the state’s population - utility companies are warning they may not have enough natural gas from current sources to keep the power and heat on without interruption.

As a professor at the University of Alaska Anchorage who studies the economics of natural resources, I can see this apparent contradiction has a



A man shovels snow off the roof of a house. Winter in Alaska means deep cold and lots of snow. (AP)

straightforward cause but no simple solution.

The North Slope region once produced nearly 2 million barrels of oil per day at its peak in the 1980s. Every barrel is transported via the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System to the port of Valdez, where it is loaded onto

tanker ships.

The state government collects significant taxes and royalties on oil production. For decades, oil revenue allowed the state to fund all government spending without imposing broad-based income, sales or property taxes. At the height of the oil boom,

there was so much money that Alaska established a wealth fund, now valued at over US\$80 billion, and began distributing dividends to every resident.

But the Trans-Alaska Pipeline is designed to carry oil, not natural gas. A state law prevents producers from burning off excess gas, or flaring, as happens in many fields. With nowhere to send it, gas extracted from Alaska’s oil fields is reinjected into the ground to boost well pressure and push more oil out.

Alaska’s gas reserves are significant. State estimates suggest the North Slope has about 35 trillion cubic feet of proven reserves. That’s almost as much natural gas as the U.S. as a whole produced in 2023.

But that is just the beginning: The North Slope also has the potential for another 200 trillion cubic feet that remains undiscovered. And improving technologies and techniques may be able to extract another 590 trillion cubic feet, according to the Alaska Gasline Development Corp., a company owned by the state of Alaska that is trying develop a project to extract and sell the state’s natural gas. (AP)

Hollywood film stirs debate over papal election accuracy

What ‘Conclave’ got right, wrong about real-life conclaves

LOS ANGELES, April 26, (AP): Speculation surrounding a conclave to elect a pope is a time-honored tradition. But for the impending conclave following the death of Pope Francis, the ranks of armchair Vatican experts have swelled thanks to Hollywood.

“Conclave” the film, a moody 2024 political thriller, introduced many laypeople to the ancient selection process with its arcane rules and grand ceremony, albeit with a silver screen twist packed full of palace intrigue and surprise.

Though it has its critics, the film treats the gravity of a papal election with respect and accurately portrays many rituals and contemporary problems facing today’s Catholic Church. But Vatican experts warn the movie doesn’t get everything right.

Here’s a look at what “Conclave” does get right - and wrong - about conclaves.

The movie excels at re-creating the look and feel of a conclave.

“The film gets a lot right. They tried to reproduce the mise-en-scene of the Vatican accurately,” William

Cavanaugh, a Catholic studies professor at DePaul University in Chicago, said in an email. “They show that a lot of the drama is around the preconclave conversations among cardinals.”

It’s not a perfect re-creation, according to the Rev. Thomas Reese, a senior analyst with the Religion News Service and a Vatican expert.

He called the movie’s production values “marvelous,” but noted slight discrepancies in the cardinals’ dress.

“The red in the cardinals’ garments was a deep red, while the reality is more orange. Frankly, I like the Hollywood version better,” Reese, a Jesuit priest who wrote “Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church,” said in an email.

The movie aligns with real-life expectations for a quick conclave, said Massimo Faggioli, a historical theology professor at Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

“A long conclave would send the message of a Church divided and possibly on the verge of a schism. The history of the conclaves in the



New Cardinals sit during consistory inside St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2022. (AP)

last century is really a story of short conclaves,” he said via email.

Reese pointed out other discrepancies. While the voting process was depicted accurately, he said, the ballots are burned not after each vote, but after each session, which is typically two votes.

There are a few particularly egregious errors that, if corrected, would lead to a very different movie.

A key character in the film, the archbishop of Kabul, Afghanistan, arrives just before the conclave with paperwork declaring the late pope had made him a cardinal “in pectore”

- “in secret” - allowing him to vote for the next pope.

“The biggest mistake in the movie was the admission of a cardinal in pectore into the conclave,” said Reese. “If the name is not announced publicly by the pope in the presence of the College of Cardinals, he has no right to attend a conclave.”

Cavanaugh agreed and noted that while the movie’s twist about the Kabul archbishop was far-fetched, it does point to a certain truth about conclaves.

“The cardinals do not always know who they’re getting when they elect a pope,” he said. “If the cardinals knew how (Jorge Mario) Bergoglio would be as Pope Francis, many of them wouldn’t have voted for him. Pius IX was elected as a liberal and turned into an archconservative. John XXIII was supposed to be a jolly caretaker pope, and he unleashed Vatican II,” a series of modernizing reforms.

Another of the movie’s more outlandish storylines involves the dean of the College of Cardinals breaking the seal of the confessional by revealing to another car-

dinal what a nun confessed to him, said Reese.

“He committed a mortal sin and would be automatically excommunicated. Such an action would be egregiously wrong,” Reese said.

In addition to that, a cardinal paying for votes, as shown in the film, is unheard of in modern times, said Cavanaugh, and the politicking is exaggerated.

And so are the politics. The movie errs in making cardinals into either liberal or conservative champions, said Kurt Martens, professor of canon law at the Catholic University of America in Washington.

“Those labels don’t help us,” he said because cardinals are very cautious in expressing their opinions and “even someone we think is a liberal cardinal is pretty conservative by secular standards.”

And he added that even in an unusually large conclave like this year’s, the rule requiring the next pope wins at least a two-thirds majority of the vote ensures that “whatever we call extreme” likely won’t get enough votes.

Next chapter

Jones fearless on 1st album

NEW YORK, April 26, (AP): What music would you create if there weren’t any outside influences or self-imposed creative restraints? That’s what singer-actor Coco Jones contemplated.

“What would I do if I didn’t have any fear of comparing myself to ‘ICU’ and my EP? Or if I thought there was some formula that people wanted from me?” Jones wondered. “That was kind of the mood: just be fearless.”

The R&B star attempted to answer herself on her debut album - “Why Not More?,” - released Friday. It follows her 2022 breakout EP “What I Didn’t Tell You.”

“I’m just proud of every version of myself that I’ve been, and who I’ll become after this album,” said Jones, who took home her first Grammy earlier this year with “ICU” winning best R&B performance. “And really proud of putting together a project that I feel confident in.”

The 14-track album from the “Bel-Air” actor traverses through a spectrum of R&B sonics and vibes, from introspective to seductive, Pop&B to Trap&B. Writing on every song, Jones secured production from StarGate, London on Da Track and Jasper Harris and features from Future and YG Marley.

Pressure

One of the faces of the new generation of R&B, she doesn’t shy away from the pressure that can come with attempting to replicate the success of a song like “ICU.”

“There was a pressure to outdo myself. But I also have to remind myself that I wasn’t trying to win anything ... I was just doing me,” explained Jones, who said for the first time, she was patient with herself during studio sessions for her debut, not focused on leaving with a completed song each time. “I was just doing what felt right. I was being honest, I was just being vulnerable.”

“Why Not More?” highlights Jones’ vast range of melodic styles. Four singles have been released including “Here We Go (Uh Oh),” which earned Jones her first No. 1 on Billboard’s Adult R&B Airplay chart, and “Taste,” which contains an interpolation of Britney Spears’ hit song “Toxic” and is currently at No. 15.

In the ballad “Other Side of Love,” Jones finds herself at a crossroads in a relationship, singing “I don’t know why I can’t get your love outta my mind / It’s like I try but you come back around every time.”

“It’s probably the oldest song on the album ... It was always a song that I knew was on the back burner whenever I was ready, I had something right there ready for them. But it was kind of just not time yet,” said the 27-year-old Tennessee native. “I might drop a song like ‘Taste,’ but I’m always gonna have a song like ‘Other Side of Love’ because I can’t deny that version of myself either.”



Coco Jones poses for a portrait on Monday, April 21, in New York. (AP)

Film



This image released by Metrograph Pictures shows Ia Sukhitashvili in a scene from ‘April.’ (AP)

Film depicts a brutal portrait of womanhood

‘April’ is shattering and essential

LOS ANGELES, April 26, (AP): Whatever cruelty you might assign to the month, Dea Kulumbegashvili’s “April” probably has it beat.

Kulumbegashvili’s shattering, sensational film is set in a hardscrabble, provincial region of Georgia, the Eastern European country. Nina (Ia Sukhitashvili) is the leading obstetrician at the local hospital and she leads a punishing life.

In the film’s opening scenes, she delivers a baby - Kulumbegashvili films it from overhead - who doesn’t cry once born. Sterile hallways and men demanding answers follow the stillbirth and the fleshy, bloody images of the operating room. Though Nina has done thousands of deliveries, the father calls for a police investigation. Left alone with Nina, he tells her he knows she gives abortions in the village. He calls her a murderer and spits on her.

Nina experiences the moment with horror and silence, a pervading register in “April.” Kulumbegashvili’s film is formally composed and rigorously opaque, but it churns with an underlying, aching despair.

Abortion - legal but fraught in Georgia - is central to “April.” But Nina’s predicament and loneliness stem from something even

deeper. Again and again, “April” places its solitary female protagonist in scenes where every gesture - professional or intimate - is treated as lesser, an imbalance that’s violently and brutally impressed upon Nina.

In “April,” where Nina traverses a harsh, isolating landscape, the most resonate, disquieting sounds are the soft, sad murmurs of the deaf-mute teen (Roza Kancheishvili) for whom Nina performs a kitchen table abortion. It’s a procedure, shot statically from the side with only half of her visible, necessitated by a mysterious rape. The girl’s mother has no answers. In “April,” even howls of pain go unuttered, and only the storm cloud skies cry.

“April” confirms Kulumbegashvili as among the most essential and uncompromising European filmmakers, extending the promise of her 2020 debut “Beginning,” about the wife of a Jehovah’s Witness leader. A prize-winner at last fall’s Venice Film Festival, “April” could be accused of leaning too much into an austere, art-film obliqueness. But Kulumbegashvili’s absolute control over the camera and the intensity of her calling make her film a grimly spellbinding and unforgettable experience.

Nina says little through the course of “April,” but when she does, it’s powerful. Be-

ing on the front lines of treating women in a place where their freedom is so restricted has brought Nina closer to desperation. When the investigation proceeds, she flatly tells her boss, “Other than my job, I have nothing to lose.” Sukhitashvili’s deft performance is most expressive in her yearning eyes.

Cinematographer Arseni Khachatryan, trading objective and subjective perspectives, toggles between images of Nina alone - driving at night, looking for a partner - or crowded by men. When she explains the stillbirth circumstances, we see her view: three men, sitting in judgment.

Mixed throughout are separate, unexplained scenes of a faceless, humanlike figure with drooping, unformed bags of skin. We see her slowly shifting from one foot to the other, and hear her breathing heavily. Who is this? Is it a malformed expression of Nina’s tortured soul? Is it some adult fetus whose plight, in contrast to the unborn, has no sympathizers? These are some of the questions that this haunting film leave you to ponder.

“April,” a Metrograph Pictures release, is unrated by the Motion Picture Association. In Georgian, with English subtitles. Running time: 134 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four

Variety

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.: Authorities released more videos Friday related to their investigation of the deaths of actor **Gene Hackman** and his wife, Betsy Arakawa, including images of agents returning to the couple’s Santa Fe home days after they were found to look for more evidence.

The bodies of Hackman, 95, and Arakawa, 65, were discovered Feb. 26 after maintenance and security workers called police.

The Santa Fe County Sheriff’s Office has been releasing redacted records on a rolling basis since a recent court order allowing them to be made public as long as any images of the dead couple are obscured. More are expected.

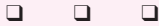
The latest release includes hours of police body camera video and builds on what has already been made public, including a lengthy investigative report, photos and hours of body camera and security video showing the initial police response.

The new videos show authorities interviewing workers and returning to the home to search for more evidence early on in the investigation before they knew how Hackman and Arakawa died.

An hourlong video shows detectives searching the home in early March for Arakawa’s laptop and any other clues. Representatives of Arakawa’s family let them inside the house and led them to the bathroom where her body was found.

In another video, detectives are reviewing security videos at a pharmacy for any footage of Arakawa in mid-February.

The employee helping them asks what they’re looking for, and one of the detectives says a woman is dead. (AP)



NEW YORK: Prosecutors at Sean “Diddy” Combs’ upcoming federal sex trafficking trial can show jurors video of the hip-hop mogul hitting and kicking one of his accusers in a Los Angeles hotel hallway, a judge ruled at a hearing Friday.

US District Judge Arun Subramanian said Combs’ lawyers failed to convince him that the explosive security camera footage should be excluded. Its relevance to the case outweighs any potential prejudice to the 55-year-old defendant, the judge said.

Subramanian ruled on the video as he set ground rules for the May 5 trial in New York City.

Combs sat between his lawyers in a yellow jail suit, his formerly jet black hair now almost fully gray because dye isn’t allowed at the Brooklyn federal lockup where he’s been held since his arrest last September.

Prosecutors disclosed that Combs was offered a plea deal, which he rejected.

The video shows Combs - wearing only a white towel - punching, shoving and dragging his former protege and girlfriend, R&B singer Cassie, and throwing a vase in her direction on March 5, 2016, at the InterContinental Hotel in Los Angeles’ Century City district.

The video wasn’t public until CNN obtained and aired it in May 2024. The network turned the footage over to prosecutors in response to a subpoena.

Prosecutors say it’s “critical to the case.” (AP)



Harvey Fierstein accepts the Tony Award for best actor for ‘Hairspray’ on June 8, 2003, in New York. (AP)

NEW YORK, April 26, (AP): Actor and playwright Harvey Fierstein needs to find room for another award. He’s going to be honored with a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre.

The four-time Tony-winner behind “Torch Song Trilogy” and “Kinky Boots” will get the award June 8 at Radio City Music Hall. The telecast will be hosted by Cynthia Erivo. “Harvey Fierstein’s contributions to the

American theatre, both as an artist and activist, represent an extraordinary legacy,” Heather Hitchens, president & CEO of the American Theatre Wing, and Jason Laks, president of the Broadway League, said in a statement.

Fierstein joins an impressive group who have earned the special Tony, including Carol Channing, Joel Gray, James Earl Jones, John Kander, Angela Lansbury, Chita Rivera, Ste-

phen Sondheim, Tommy Tune, Andrew Lloyd Webber and George C. Wolfe.

Fierstein won two Tonys for “Torch Song Trilogy” - best play and best actor in a play - as well as Tonys for best book of a musical for “La Cage Aux Folles” and best actor in a musical for “Hairspray.” His other works include “Newsies,” “Casa Valentina” and “A Catered Affair.”

A regional arts, culture powerhouse

UAE sees vibrant cultural, artistic movement

ABU DHABI, April 26, (KUNA): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is witnessing a remarkable cultural and artistic movement, reflected in numerous events and initiatives that enhance the country’s position as a beacon of human creativity and cultural enlightenment in the region and the world.

Five major events have recently stood out as milestones in the UAE’s cultural scene. These include the completion of the restoration of Al-Hadba Minaret in Mosul, the opening of the “teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi” museum, the establishment of the National Orchestra, the launch of the “Dubai Heritage” initiative, and the adoption of the UAE Order for Culture and Creativity.

Al-Hadba Minaret was announced as complete in February, joining the list of historic global treasures revived through UAE efforts, which also includes Al-Nuri Mosque, Al-Tahira and Al-Saa’a Churches in Mosul, the Dome of the Rock, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Mosque, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Theater (formerly the Fontainebleau Imperial Palace) in France, the Museum of Islamic Art in Egypt, the Macmillan Library in Nairobi, and the Al-Salam Inn in Muharraq, Bahrain.

The UAE joined UNESCO’s “Revive the Spirit of Mosul” initiative in 2018 and pledged over USD 50 million to rebuild Mosul’s cultural heritage.

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, confirmed that the UAE was the main funder of this ambitious project, successfully rebuilding Mosul’s historic landmarks such as Al-Nuri Mosque and its minaret, Al-Tahira Church, and the Dominican Monastery. It also restored 124 historic homes, allowing for the return of over 170 families.

Azoulay added that the UAE plays a central role in international cultural cooperation, whether through the

UN or the G20, making it a key partner of UNESCO.

As for teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi, it added a significant new dimension to the cultural district on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, which is set to become one of the largest cultural hubs in the world upon completion.

The museum spans 17,000 square meters and is designed to unleash visitors’ artistic imagination.

The artwork evolves through the interaction of light, sound, and movement. It consists of two distinct zones: the Dry Zone and the Wet Zone, offering visitors a series of enchanting scenes and lively, immersive installations where the boundaries between art and audience dissolve.

The interactive zones enable guests to engage in artistic experiences through visual displays and digital artworks that connect with the surrounding environment, blending art, science, and technology.

Vision

Mohammad Khalifa Al-Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi, said: “teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi is a world-class addition to interactive art, presenting a bold vision that takes visitors on a journey beyond the limits of creativity, technology, and art.”

In November, the UAE also inaugurated the “Noor wa Salam” Museum at the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Center in Abu Dhabi and launched the “Dubai Photography Museum” project.

Moreover, the Emirate of Dubai launched the “Dubai Heritage” initiative, aiming to revive the city’s historical memory by collecting and preserving stories and life experiences that depict the evolution of Dubai and the lives of its people across generations.

The first phase targets Dubai residents of all ages,

to gather as many narratives and stories as possible about the emirate’s history.

A digital platform will be established for individuals and families with unique cultural and historical stories.

The initiative will be implemented in phases throughout this year, starting with collecting community contributions, which will be assessed for their historical, social, and cultural significance.

It will offer comprehensive questions about Dubai’s history, individuals’ contributions to its development, old Dubai life, and how it evolved into the present, helping build a comprehensive historical record that reflects the emirate’s true spirit.

The UAE’s National Orchestra is a valuable addition to the rich and diverse cultural and artistic scene in the country.

It reflects the UAE’s dedication to its musical heritage while embracing contemporary music from around the world.

The orchestra symbolizes the intellectual and cultural openness that characterizes Emirati society and its desire to exchange artistic and knowledge-based experiences, while also strengthening its cultural identity and preserving its traditional heritage.

Minister of State and Chairwoman of the UAE National Orchestra Board, Noura bint Mohammad Al-Kaabi, stated that the orchestra’s establishment reflects the leadership’s commitment to developing the arts as a foundation for cultural and human values, progress, and fostering tolerance and coexistence.

Sheikha Alya bint Khalid Al-Qasimi, Director-General of the UAE National Orchestra, emphasized that the orchestra represents more than just music-it’s a symbol of commitment to cultural heritage and artistic excellence.



KUNA photos
Photos from the screening of Kuwaiti films in Kuwait on Friday.

Variety

LAS VEGAS: Former NFL star **Shannon Sharpe** said Thursday he is stepping away temporarily from his ESPN duties while he deals with what he called false allegations in a \$50 million civil lawsuit filed against him by a woman who alleges he raped and threatened her.

Sharpe said in a statement that he would return to ESPN at the start of the NFL preseason. The first preseason game is set for July 31.

“I will be devoting this time to my family, and responding and dealing with these false and disruptive allegations set against me,” Sharpe said, adding: “I sincerely appreciate the overwhelming and ongoing support I have received from my family, fans, friends and colleagues.”

Attorneys filed the lawsuit Sunday in Clark County, Nevada, for a woman listed in court documents as Jane Doe. The lawsuit also accuses Sharpe of using physical force on her and inflicting emotional distress. (AP)

NEW YORK: “Saturday Night Live” will close out its epic 50th season with Scarlett Johansson as host and Bad Bunny as musical guest.

NBC announced the lineup for its final three shows on Thursday, with Johansson and Bad Bunny headlining the May 17 show.

The final show has in recent years gotten lots of attention for its final edition of Weekend Update, where cast members Michael Che and Colin Hanks read jokes the other wrote for them. Many of the jokes that Hanks is forced to read are about Johansson, his wife.

The final bloc of three episodes will begin May 3 with “Abbott Elementary” creator and star Quinta Brunson hosting and Benson Boone performing. (AP)

NEW YORK: Cornell University has canceled a performance by R&B star Kehlani after complaints to the Ivy League school’s president that she expressed antisemitic and anti-Israel sentiments.

Kehlani was scheduled to perform next month as the headliner at an annual celebration at the upstate New York school called Slope Day. But President Michael Kotlikoff said Wednesday he was rescinding the invitation because it has “injected division and discord” into the May 7 event.

“In the days since Kehlani was announced, I have heard grave concerns from our community that many are angry, hurt, and confused that Slope Day would feature a performer who has espoused antisemitic, anti-Israel sentiments in performances, videos, and on social media,” Kotlikoff wrote in an open letter. “While any artist has the right in our country to express hateful views, Slope Day is about uniting our community, not dividing it.” (AP)

NEW YORK: Carlos Santana has postponed a second Texas concert after testing positive for COVID-19.

The guitar virtuoso’s official Facebook page said he is scrubbing Thursday night’s stop on his Oneness Tour at Smart Financial Center in Sugar Land, Texas and will rest at his hotel. He previously postponed a Tuesday night concert at the Majestic Theatre in San Antonio.

His manager, Michael Vrionis, initially said the 77-year-old Santana was suffering from dehydration in an email to The Associated Press, and later provided the update after the COVID diagnosis, saying the second show would be postponed out of caution.

The tour, which began April 16 in Highland, California, is expected to resume with a Friday night concert in Thackerville, Oklahoma, and a Saturday show in Tulsa. (AP)

Film



Anna Tikhomirova, Russian ballerina, the first soloist of Bolshoi Theatre, poses for photographers upon arrival at the closing ceremony of the 47th Moscow International Film Festival in Moscow, Russia, Thursday, April 24. (AP)

‘Maisel’ creators pirouette to ballet-themed show

Can ‘Étoile’ make ballet cool, relevant?

NEW YORK, April 26, (AP): Ballet is beautiful. Ballet is ethereal. Ballet is mysterious.

Can ballet also be cool?

The creators of the new Prime Video show “Étoile” - Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino, of “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” fame - are betting yes. Or, shall we say “oui” - the show is split between New York and Paris as it tracks the story of two ballet companies joining forces to attract audiences and stay afloat.

And “afloat” is a good word to describe the chief appeal of the show: real lifts, not to mention turns and leaps, by real ballet dancers, many of whom are in the cast. Sharp-eyed viewers might notice several New York City Ballet stars in supporting roles. A mix of “Bunheads” (also from the Palladinos), “Emily in Paris” - with way more leg warmers - and perhaps classic ballet movie “The Turning Point,” “Étoile” seems to know it lives and dies by the quality of its dancing.

And that’s because, as actor David Alvarez says, “Ballet is one of those things you can’t fake.”

“You can’t just wing it and pretend you can do it,” says Alvarez, who made his name as one of the original dancing Billy Elliots on Broadway, winning a best-actor Tony along with two other Billeys at age 14, and later played Bernardo in Steven Spielberg’s “West Side Story” remake.

“Any dancer will be able to spot from a mile away that you’re not actually a ballet dancer, just by how you walk or your posture,” he says.

Alvarez plays Gael, a dancer who has a stormy relationship with Cheyenne, herself a very stormy prima ballerina - or “étoile,” the French word for “star” - who comes to New York as part of an elaborate talent swap between the two companies.

The gimmick has made uneasy partners of Jack, who runs Metropolitan Ballet Theater in New York, and Geneviève (Charlotte Gainsbourg),

who runs the top company in Paris. (The two troupes are very thinly veiled versions of New York City Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet.)

Alvarez is one of those hybrids, an actor who also dances. Taïs Vinolo, who plays young dancer Mishi, is a real-life ballet dancer who’s making her acting debut.

Normally, she says, “We express with our body. Expressing with another form, like speaking and acting, was a bit of a challenge.”

Vinolo feels confident that the creators found the truth in ballet. “People don’t have a good idea of what ballet is and how hard it is,” she says. “They see the pink tutu and the pointe shoes. But they don’t see that it’s very physical. And it’s hard. It’s a lot of discipline, and it’s also very hard mentally.”

Challenge

The physical challenge of ballet was just what Sherman-Palladino was looking to get across. The showrunner trained seriously in ballet from the age of 4, before fate guided her into a writing career.

“And she has the back surgeries to prove it,” quips husband Dan.

“It’s an amazing world,” says Sherman-Palladino. “They’re amazing artists. And it’s literally an art form where you’re just guaranteed not to make any money. So you have to truly just love it.

“You know, they’re trained athletes,” Sherman-Palladino adds. “They’re unbelievably strong, and just the things that they can do with their bodies is ridiculous.”

She sees dance as like “silent movies almost - it’s storytelling, it’s acting, it’s emotion and heartache and happiness and love ... I think that so many people who think that dance is not for them just haven’t seen it.”

Some of the French cast members barely spoke English, and vice versa. The show takes place in two languages - but the signature ratatat Palladino banter can be hard to translate.

“It was tricky because we are very precise with our language, but our language doesn’t exactly translate to French,” Sherman-Palladino says. “Finding a translator may have been the hardest thing that we had to deal with on the entire show - the right translator that caught the essence of our script. So we kept changing translators ‘til we finally found one that everybody could agree on.”

For Lou De Laâge, who plays Cheyenne, it was especially challenging because she spoke little English when she was cast. But the writer’s strike meant she had nine months to prepare, rather than three, which proved a huge help.

Gainsbourg, a British-French actor and singer-songwriter, spoke English but still found it tricky to get into the Palladino rhythm. “I was very nervous about learning the lines,” she says. “I’m very slow. That was already challenging. Then the rhythm was something completely new. ... in the end, I got to understand the humor



Charlotte Gainsbourg attends the premiere of ‘Étoile’ at the Museum of Modern Art on Tuesday, April 15, in New York. (AP)

and the pace, (but) it took me a little while.”

Kirby, whose Jack runs Metropolitan Ballet Theater, says he knew little about ballet beforehand - but had a cousin who was a dancer, “and so I’d see her putting her body through torment.”

Gainsbourg only spent a year studying ballet when she was 4. She stopped but did piano in the same building - the Salle Pleyel in Paris - and remembers the elevator stopping on the ballet floor, where she’d go into the dressing room and pick up “a very good, talcum powder smell. And that’s my emotional remembrance of ballet.”

As for De Laâge, her mother enrolled her in intensive dance training as a child, but it was a mother’s dream and not the daughter’s.

“So that became a fight between us because she wanted that for me, and I didn’t want that for me,” De Laâge says. As an actor, “I worked with really good dancers, but that wasn’t my passion. I love watching dance.”

What Gainsbourg has taken away from doing a series on ballet is “the fact that it’s so extreme and that everybody is working there for their passion. It’s not about money ... it’s really about the art, and they’re all completely passionate.”

Ask the real ballerinas in the cast - for example, NYCB stars Tiler Peck and Unity Phelan, who play small roles, as does former principal Robbie Fairchild - and they’ll tell you: Ballerinas sew their own ribbons on their pointe shoes. Nobody does it for them.

So Minolo had to demur when, on the series, the crew offered to sew the ribbons on for her.

“I have a very specific way,” she explains. “And I don’t like when people touch my pointe shoes. I like to stitch the edge of my pointe shoes to make the platform bigger.”

“I do that too!” replies Alvarez, and the two laugh. “Good for balancing.”

“Yeah exactly,” Minolo giggles. “You understand.”

Obit

Pre-show crash
Aerobatic pilot
Holland ‘killed’

NORFOLK, Va., April 26, (AP): **Rob Holland**, a famed aerobatic pilot who wowed airshow crowds and championship judges with tight spirals, meticulous loops and inventive sequences in the sky, has died in a plane crash. He was 50.

Holland died Thursday while landing his custom-built, single-seat aircraft at Joint-Base Langley-Eustis in Hampton, Virginia, in preparation for an upcoming airshow at the military installation.

The plane was making a normal landing and was not conducting aerobatic maneuvers, National Transportation Safety Board investigator Dan Boggs said at a Friday news conference. The crash remains under investigation.

Holland’s death was confirmed by his official Facebook page, Rob Holland Aerosports, and by Jim Bourke, president of the International Aerobatic Club, for which Holland served as vice president.

Holland was probably the best-known airshow pilot and the winningest competitor in aerobatic contests, Bourke said. The airborne competitions could be compared to figure skating for the required grace, precision and discipline, but with punishing gravitational forces.

“I flew against him many times, and, like a lot of people, I couldn’t beat him,” said Bourke, who was Holland’s friend, rival and teammate on the US Unlimited Aerobatic Team. “They didn’t have anyone who could beat him. He was just that good.”

Championships

Holland won 12 consecutive US National Aerobatic Championships, which was a record, according to his website. He also racked up five world Freestyle Aerobatic Championships and a prestigious award for showmanship from the International Council of Airshows.

Holland was known for inventing new maneuvers that no one saw before, Bourke said. One of them was his famous “frisbee” that rotated his 1,200-pound (540-kilogram) plane horizontally, while the “inverted frisbee” pulled off the same maneuver upside down.

“A lot of people expect an airplane to fly like an arrow, it’s moving very fast in one direction,” Bourke said. “With Rob, the airplane would be pointed in some crazy direction. It wouldn’t be pointed the way it’s traveling. It would be flipping on an axis that would be unexpected.”

Videos from Holland’s YouTube channel show his red-and-black MXS streaking through the sky with a stream of billowing white smoke. A video from Holland’s cockpit presents a nausea-inducing blur of sky and farmland.

Holland was a big guy whose body could handle the gravitational forces of aerobatic flight more than most pilots, Bourke said. It allowed him to spend more time practicing.

“Rob would fly figures faster than we would because the g-forces weren’t as much as a concern for him,” Bourke said. “And he developed an airshow style of flying that no one else has. People have copied it, but it was his.”



Holland

New pact empowers Kuwaiti pharmacists in family care

KPA signs MoU with Organon to boost women’s health

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Kuwait Pharmaceutical Association (KPA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Organon -- a leading healthcare organization -- to improve women’s and family health, and activate the role of pharmacists in the provision of high-quality healthcare in the country.

The memorandum was signed on the sidelines of the Kuwait Conference for Pharmaceutical Progress in the presence of Chairman of the KPA Board of Directors Dr. Ahmed Taqi; Director of Organon Group in Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain Ahmed Lashin; Saudi Society of Clinical Pharmacy President Dr. Ahmed Al-Jedaie; Chairman of Kuwait Pharmaceutical Suppliers Association Faisal Al-Moajel; and other prominent figures in

the country’s pharmaceutical sector.

Taqi disclosed that this collaboration contributes to strengthening the role of pharmacists as frontline healthcare providers.

He explained that the memorandum aims to raise the standards of care provided in pharmacies in the country and ensure pharmacists are provided with the latest medical information and medications.

He added “this collaboration is an important step towards promoting innovation, empowerment and excellence in pharmaceutical care to improve the patients’ access to healthcare services and support community health.” Lasheen affirmed that “our partnership with Kuwait Pharmaceutical Association is in line with our mission to improve women’s and family health, as well as empower healthcare professionals to provide the necessary services. “By investing in the education and train-

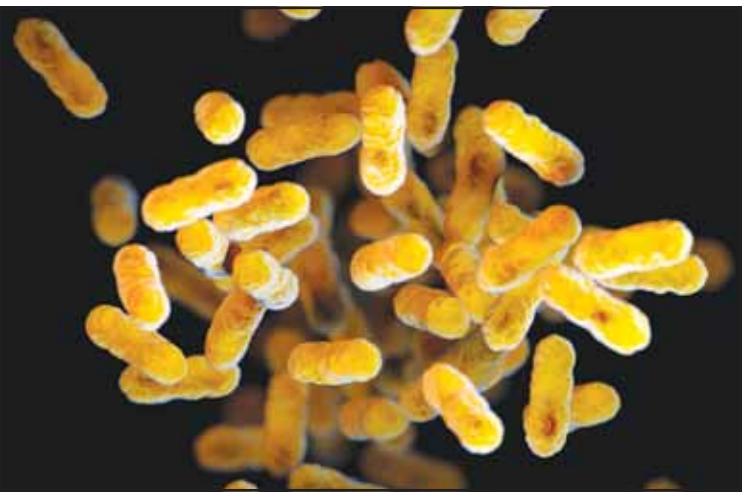
ing of pharmacists, we are keen on providing a solid foundation for patient-centered healthcare services and address the most important aspects of women’s and family health to improve community health.

Thus, we are proud of this collaboration as part of our commitment to improve women’s and family healthcare in the region,” he elaborated.

It is worth mentioning that the cooperation between the two parties includes offering a training program titled, “Excellence in Patient Care in Pharmacy,” designed to enhance the role of pharmacists in improving women’s and family health; particularly in the field of family planning. The program aims to develop the skills of pharmacists in patient communication, pharmacy operations, and the use of artificial intelligence tools to ensure they are fully prepared to provide high-quality healthcare services.



Kuwait Pharmaceutical Association (KPA) signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Organon to improve women’s and family health.



This 2016 illustration provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, based on electron microscope imagery, depicts Bordetella pertussis bacteria, which causes whooping cough. (AP)

Over 8,000 cases report

Whooping cough cases on the rise again in US

NEW YORK, April 26, (AP): Whooping cough cases are rising, and doctors are bracing for yet another tough year.

There have been 8,485 cases reported in 2025, according to preliminary data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That’s twice as many cases as this time last year, based on the CDC’s final tally.

Rates of whooping cough, or pertussis, soared last year, which experts said wasn’t unexpected. The number of cases fell during COVID-19 because of masking and social distancing. Plus, experts said, the illness peaks every two to five years.

But experts say the outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses, like measles and whooping cough, could be indicative of changing attitudes toward vaccines. U.S. kindergarten vaccination rates fell last year, and the number of children with vaccine exemptions hit an all-time high.

“There’s unfortunately been increasing anti-vaccine sentiment in the United States,” said Dr. Ericka Hayes at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “Our recovery is not nearly as quick as we expected it to be and we needed it to be. And again, when you fall below 95% for vaccinations, you lose that herd immunity protection.”

Whooping cough tends to peak around this time of year and in the fall. It’s usually spread through respiratory droplets in the air, when people with pertussis cough, sneeze or breathe close to others. The symptoms are similar to a cold but the cough becomes increasingly severe with a distinctive sound - a “whoop” as the person tries to take in air. It is treated with antibiotics.

In the past six months, two babies in Louisiana and a 5-year-old in Wash-

ington state have died from whooping cough.

The pertussis vaccine, which also protects against diphtheria and tetanus, is given at two months, four months and six months. The CDC recommends adults get follow-up doses every 10 years.

The illness is most dangerous for infants, especially before they receive their first round of vaccinations. That’s why the vaccine is also recommended for expecting mothers - it can protect newborns. But not enough people are getting the vaccine during pregnancy, said Hayes, who is the hospital’s senior medical director of infection prevention and control.

“The uptake of the vaccine for pregnant mothers is not where we need to be at all,” she said.

Pennsylvania, one of the states hit hardest by the illness last year, has recorded 207 whooping cough cases in 2025.

Neil Ruhlman, a state health department spokesman, said the biggest increases are in populated areas like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and in middle and high schools and colleges. He said 94.6% of the state’s kindergarteners are vaccinated.

Michigan is on track for a similar pertussis season to last year’s, said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, the state’s chief medical executive. The state has recorded 516 cases thus far, mostly among children aged 5 to 17, and saw a total of 2,081 cases in 2024.

Bagdasarian said vaccination rates vary from county to county. Some schools have rates as low as 30%, creating pockets of vulnerable communities to vaccine-preventable diseases like pertussis and measles, she said.

Kuwait pioneers genetic disease prevention

Kuwait’s genetic disease center cuts SMA cases from 11 to 1 in four years

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Assistant Undersecretary for Medical Support Services at the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Faris said Kuwait is one of the first countries to recognize the importance of addressing genetic diseases.

Al-Faris made the statement at the opening of the Ninth Kuwait International Conference on Genetic Diseases recently, when he delivered a speech on behalf of the conference sponsor -- Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi.

He disclosed that Kuwait Center for Genetic Diseases was established in 1979 to serve as the nucleus of scientific and applied work in this field. “Since then, the center has continued to grow, becoming a distinguished medical institution today, housing the latest laboratories and providing advanced diagnostic and therapeutic services that rival the most prestigious international centers. Its achievements include the newborn screening program, which covers all newborns in public and private hospitals; in addition to programs for registering congenital irregularities, premarital screening, pre-implantation genetic testing, and other initiatives aimed at building a healthy society free of genetic diseases,” he elaborated.

He expressed pride in the ongoing scientific cooperation between the center and international universities and research centers, such as Harvard University and the University of San Diego.

He also highlighted the publication of dozens of research papers in international journals and its contribution to raising community awareness through continuous educational and awareness-raising activities.

He added the conference is an important scientific event that brings together a group of brilliant minds and interna-

tional experts from around the world to discuss the latest developments and innovations in the field of medical genetics.

On the other hand, President of the center and chairperson of the conference Dr. Laila Al-Bastaki enumerated the projects expected to be completed soon; such as increasing the number of diseases covered by the premarital screening program, making this screening effective in reducing disabilities in newborns.

She revealed the conference includes the introduction of new technology for next-generation sequencing (NGS), expanding genetic testing, and screening carriers of recessive mutations for genetic diseases. “This is in addition to other diseases for which treatments are available through the newborn screening program,” she stated.

She talked about some of the services provided by the center since its inception like genetic counseling, prevention, diagnosis and treatment; serving 12,000 families annually.

She affirmed that the center aims to better serve the society by preventing genetic diseases, deformities and hereditary disorders. She stressed the importance of the center in reducing many genetic diseases prevalent among some Kuwaiti tribes and families, such as the spinal muscular atrophy (SMA).

She said the center’s services have contributed to reducing the incidence rate from 11 cases among newborns in 2020 to just one case in 2024, citing the high cost of treating SMA -- around KD 25 million.

She also emphasized the importance of the “Newborn Screening” program, which covers all newborns public and private hospitals -- around 55,000 births annually.

She added the center greatly contributed to the success of the birth defect registration program, which will be the basis for assessing the extent of the problem and providing decision-makers with a comprehensive understanding of the deformities.

Food safety

Salmonella limit in poultry nixed

NEW YORK, April 26, (AP): The Agriculture Department will not require poultry companies to limit salmonella bacteria in their products, halting a Biden Administration effort to prevent food poisoning from contaminated meat.

The department on Thursday said it was withdrawing a rule proposed in August after three years of development. Officials with the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service cited feedback from more than 7,000 public comments and said they would “evaluate whether it should update” current salmonella regulations.

The rule would have required poultry companies to keep levels of salmonella bacteria under a certain threshold and test for the presence of six strains most associated with illness, including three found in turkey and three in chicken.

If the levels exceeded the standard or any of those strains were found, the poultry couldn’t be sold and would be subject to recall, the proposal had said.

Infections

The plan aimed to reduce an estimated 125,000 salmonella infections from chicken and 43,000 from turkey each year, according to USDA. Overall, salmonella causes 1.35 million infections a year, most through food, and about 420 deaths, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The withdrawal drew praise from the National Chicken Council, an industry trade group, which said the proposed rule was legally unsound, misinterpreted science, would have increased costs and create more food waste, all “with no meaningful impact on public health.”

“We remain committed to further reducing salmonella and fully support food safety regulations and policies that are based on sound science,” said Ashley Peterson, the group’s senior vice president of science and regulatory affairs.

But the move drew swift criticism from food safety advocates, including Sandra Eskin, a former USDA official who helped draft the plan.

The withdrawal “sends the clear message that the Make America Healthy Again initiative does not care about the thousands of people who get sick from preventable foodborne salmonella infections linked to poultry,” Eskin said in a statement.

The proposed rule had been regarded as a food safety victory similar to a 1994 decision to ban certain strains of dangerous E. coli bacteria from ground beef after deadly outbreaks, said Sarah Sorscher, of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

New breast imaging innovations launched

AI-powered mammography tech to improve detection of breast cancer

MARLBOROUGH, Mass., April 26, (AP): Hologic, Inc. will have a strong presence at the Society of Breast Imaging (SBI) Annual Symposium in Colorado Springs, Colorado this week, including the presentation of pivotal new research conducted by a top-tier healthcare facility focused on the company’s AI-driven mammography technology.

In a retrospective study conducted at Massachusetts General Hospital, researchers analyzed 5,000 digital breast tomosynthesis (3D mammography) screening exams performed between 2016 and 2019 using Hologic’s Genius AI Detection 2.0 mammography solution. Among the 5,000 exams, there were 100 cancer cases that were not initially detected by radiologists but were later confirmed to be malignant. The study looked at whether Genius AI

Detection 2.0 was able to identify any of these previously missed cancers, as well as its ability to detect and correctly localize the 500 cancers that were initially identified by radiologists.

“As AI continues to evolve, I believe it will become an increasingly vital tool for radiologists, helping to transform breast cancer detection and ultimately reduce the burden of this disease for patients,” said Manisha Bahl, M.D., MPH, FSBI, Breast Imaging Division Quality Director and Co-Service Chief at Massachusetts General Hospital and Associate Professor of Radiology at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Bahl presented a summary of the research, titled “Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Based Computer-Assisted Detection and Diagnosis for Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (DBT): Characteris-

tics of AI-Detected versus AI-Missed Breast Cancers,” at Broadmoor Hall C.

At the symposium, Hologic will also highlight its contrast-enhanced mammography technology, the Envision Mammography Platform, and the new Genius AI Detection PRO solution, which offers advanced cancer detection by analyzing prior exams and an AI assistant with automated reporting and other workflow features. Genius AI Detection PRO also includes a red-yellow-green color-coded system, where green cases signify that the AI is confident there is no breast cancer present while red means the AI is confident there is cancer present. Designed to simplify the entire reading workflow, Genius AI Detection PRO solution has been shown to reduce radiologists’ overall reading time up to 24%.

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Top seed cruises past home favorite Agut

Zverev and Sabalenka advance with easy wins at Madrid Open

MADRID, April 26, (AP): Top seeds Alexander Zverev and Aryna Sabalenka scored comfortable victories in their opening matches at the Madrid Open.

Zverev cruised past home favorite Roberto Bautista Agut 6-2, 6-2, while Sabalenka triumphed against qualifier Anna Blinkova 6-3, 6-4.

Zverev, the Madrid champion in 2018 and 2021, extended his winning streak to six matches. The German player moved to No. 2 in the world after capturing the Munich title last weekend.

“A good match, I knew I had to focus against Roberto,” said Zverev, who improved to 24-5 in Madrid. “This is my favourite center court in the world, I only lost twice here in my entire life. I hope that stays the way throughout the next 10 days and that I can continue playing good tennis.”

In the third round, Zverev faces Nuno Borges or Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

Sabalenka, Madrid winner in 2021 and 2023 and last year’s runner-up to Iga Swiatek, convert-

ed three of her seven break opportunities to defeat the 76th-ranked Blinkova.

The top-ranked Sabalenka will face No. 28 seed Elise Mertens in the third round.

Anastasia Potapova upset eighth-seeded Qinwen Zheng, while 15th-seeded Amanda Anisimova lost to fellow American Peyton Stearns 6-2, 2-6, 7-5. Sixth-seeded Jasmine Paolini eased past Katie Boulter 6-1, 6-2.

Third-seeded Jessica Pegula reached the third round by defeating Eva Lys 6-2, 6-2. Pegula reached the Madrid final in 2022, losing to Ons Jabeur.

Pegula, who has a tour-leading 27 wins, will next face Moyuka Uchijima, who defeated Jabeur in three sets.

In other action on the men’s side, fourth-ranked Taylor Fritz of the U.S. - who returned from an abdominal injury that kept him sidelined since Miami - routed Christopher O’Connell of Britain 6-1, 6-4, and Casper Ruud beat Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 6-4.

“It feels great to come back and play a really solid match,” Fritz said. “The first ball I hit since the match I lost in Miami was the day before I flew here, so I had three weeks of nothing, then five days of tennis. I’m super happy I can come out and produce that level on the little bit of prep I had.”

Fellow American Ben Shelton rallied past Mariano Navone 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-3. The 85th-ranked Navone served for the match at 5-4 in the third set.

Juan Manuel Cerundolo beat Felix Auger-Aliassime in straight sets, while Daniil Medvedev advanced after Laslo Djere withdrew because of a shoulder injury.

Gael Monfils, who on Wednesday became the oldest winner in the tournament’s history, withdrew from his meeting with defending champion Andrey Rublev because of an illness.

Holger, who beat Carlos Alcaraz in the Barcelona final last weekend, retired because of a thigh injury with Flavio Cobolli leading 6-2 in the first set.



Alexander Zverev, of Germany, returns the ball against Roberto Bautista Agut, of Spain, during the Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Hyderabad notches its 1st IPL win at Chepauk



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Kamindu Mendis plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Sunrisers Hyderabad at M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, India. (AP)

Chennai's struggles continue

CHENNAI, India, April 26, (AP): Sunrisers Hyderabad routed the Chennai Super Kings for 154 and won at Chepauk for the first time in the Indian Premier League by five wickets.

Chennai was squeezed by medium-pacer Harshal Patel, who took 4-28 and Pat Cummins, 2-21.

Hyderabad chased it down in 18.4 overs at 155-5 thanks mainly to Ishan Kishan’s 44 and Kamindu Mendis’ unbeaten 32 off 22 balls.

“Our record against CSK isn’t that great so it’s good to fix that one up,” Hyderabad captain Cummins said.

“We wish we finished that more comfortably, but overall, happy with that win.”

Hyderabad was eighth on the table after its third win in nine matches while Chennai was in danger of missing the playoffs after a seventh defeat.

Chennai made early inroads in Hyderabad’s chase when Khaleel Ahmed had Abhishek Sharma caught at extra cover for 0 off the second ball, and Travis Head’s off bail was knocked back on 19 by Anshul Kamboj in the last over of the batting powerplay.

Hyderabad promoted in-form batter Heinrich Klaasen ahead of Nitish Kumar Reddy but the South African could score only 7 off eight balls, holing out against Ravindra Jadeja.

But with heavy dew settling in, it became difficult for the bowlers to grip the ball. Kishan timed the ball



Sunrisers Hyderabad's captain Pat Cummins, right, bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Sunrisers Hyderabad at M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, India. (AP)

well and struck five boundaries and a six.

Left-arm spinner Noor Ahmad gave Chennai hope when he dismissed Kishan to a great catch by Sam Curran and Aniket Verma to reduce Hyderabad to 106-5 in the 14th over.

But Mendis and Reddy, 19 not out, combined in a match-winning stand of 49 runs to finish off the game with eight balls to spare.

Chennai top order has struggled to fire all season.

Shaik Rasheed was caught in the slips off the first ball and Curran’s promotion to No. 3 didn’t work out. The 17-year-old Ayush Mah-tre showed smashed six fours in his

19-ball 30 but he, too, fell inside the powerplay as Chennai limped 47-3.

South Africa Dewald Brevis, known for his big hitting, made an impactful debut for Chennai as he slammed four sixes in his 42. He was out to a stunning diving catch by Mendis at long-off.

The middle order couldn’t compensate for the top order as Patel and Cummins squeezed, and Chennai was all out with one ball remaining.

“In the first innings the wicket was slightly better and 157 wasn’t a justifiable score,” Dhoni said. “It wasn’t turning a lot, a little two-paced but nothing out of the ordinary. Yes, second innings there was a bit of help ... but we were 15, 20 runs short.”

Vignola’s own goal sinks Angel City in loss to Pride

WASHINGTON, April 26, (AP): Mary Alice Vignola scored an own goal in second half stoppage time as the Orlando Pride rallied from two goals down to beat Angel City 3-2 in the National Women’s Soccer League.

In the only other NWSL game, the host Houston Dash defeated the Utah Royals 1-0.

Riley Tiernan opened the scoring for Angel City at Inter & Co Stadium in Orlando when she cut in from the left wing and sliced a shot past the near post of goalkeeper Anna Moorehouse in the ninth minute.

Moments before halftime, Katie Zelem scored her first goal of the season to make it 2-0. Orlando failed to clear its lines from a corner kick and Zelem scored from 10 yards out.

Marta ignited the comeback for the hosts in the 71st minute. The Brazilian slipped a low shot into the hand of Angelina Anderson, but the force was too much for the Angel City goalkeeper, and the ball found the back of the net.

Barbra Banda got the equalizer in the 76th minute. The Zambian forward executed a glancing header from a Carson Pickett cross.

The comeback for the NWSL’s reigning champions was complete when Vignola headed the ball into her own net with pressure from Pride forward Ally Watt in the 93rd minute.

Delanie Sheehan scored her first goal for the Dash, collecting a Utah clearance on the edge of the box, and after one touch smashed the ball into the top corner with her right foot in the 80th minute.

After an even first half, the Royals hit the crossbar and forced several saves from goalkeeper Jane Campbell before the Dash’s late surge.

The Royals had 57% possession and outshot the Dash 13-7, 5-4 on target.

It was the first home win of the season for Houston (2-3-1), while last place Utah (1-4-1) has now lost all three of its away matches in 2025.

‘I think it has never been so exciting for a top-4, top-5 finish’ An easy Premier League title? Slot says ‘no’ as Reds try to clinch No. 20

LONDON, April 26, (AP): Liverpool manager Arne Slot rejected the notion that his team’s imminent Premier League title triumph has come easy, saying that it is harder than ever to win games in England’s top division.

Slot is on the verge of becoming just the 12th manager - and first Dutch coach - to capture English soccer’s biggest prize, with Con Sunday to clinch a record-tying 20th top-flight title.

Liverpool holds a 12-point lead over Arsenal, whose inconsistency is highlighted by drawing 13 games this campaign, and is 18 points clear of third-place Manchester City, the team which won the last four titles but has regressed spectacularly this season because of a mixture of injuries and mental fatigue.

When questioned at his pre-match news conference whether it was fair to say the Premier League hasn’t been the strongest this season, Slot pointed to the tight race for the five Champions League qualification spots that sees just four points separate City and seventh-place Aston Villa.

“I think it has never been so exciting for a top-four, top-five finish,” Slot said. “The year before, it was quite clear which clubs would probably get the first three or four posi-



In this file photo, Liverpool's manager Arne Slot celebrates at the end of the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and West Ham United at Anfield in Liverpool. (AP)

tions. It’s never been as hard to end up top four or top five in the Premier League.

“In my opinion, it’s a really difficult league because that’s what I’ve experienced over here. There has never been an easy game. It has always been really hard to win a game of football, but maybe that tells you something about us.”

Liverpool has won 24 of its 33 games so far, exerting more control in matches under Slot that it used to under his predecessor, Jurgen Klopp. The margin of victory has only been more than two goals on five occasions.

“Although we aren’t the only team in this league who finds it hard to win a game of football by a margin of three or four goals,” Slot said. “That was maybe easier two, three, four, five years ago.

“So either the teams aren’t so good anymore - the Liverpools, the Citys, the Arsenals - or we are still very good and the other teams have the funds to spend just as much, or in some situations even more, than Arsenal, City and Liverpool.”

Slot described getting the chance to seal the league in front of Liverpool’s fans as a “big responsibility.” In 2020, when Liverpool claimed league title No. 19 to end a 30-year drought, it was clinched as a result of a loss by second-place City and no fans could attend the final matches at Anfield during the pandemic.

“We are aware of the fact the last time this club won the league, it was Covid time,” Slot said. “So everyone is looking forward to Sunday. But we know there is still a job to be done. And that’s one point.”

Wyden asks Trump admin officials to reconsider travel policies ahead of WC

WASHINGTON, April 26, (AP): Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon has asked top Trump administration officials to reconsider policies that are impacting travelers arriving in the United States, citing upcoming sporting events like the 2026 World Cup.

Wyden, top Democrat on the finance committee, wrote Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem on Friday to air his concerns over recent reports of international travelers being detained and other travel issues.

“This has turned ordinary travel into a needlessly grueling ordeal for tourists, business travelers, lawful permanent residents and U.S. citizens,” Wyden wrote.

International travelers appear increasingly wary of the administration’s immigration and border policies. Several countries have updated travel guidelines for their citizens planning on visiting the United States.

The travel forecasting company Tourism Economics recently revised its annual outlook last month to predict a 9.4% decline in international arrivals this year.

In February, a German visitor who attempted to return to the United States with his American fiancé after a road trip to Mexico was detained for 16 days. A backpacker from Britain, Becky Burke, was stopped at the U.S.-Canada border and held for nearly three weeks at a detention facility in the state of Washington, according to her father.

Wyden’s plea comes after the federal government’s National Travel and Tourism Office released preliminary figures showing visits to the U.S. from overseas fell 11.6% in March compared to the same month last year.

That slump has financial consequences. Tourism Economics expects U.S. spending by international visitors to drop by \$9 billion this year.

In addition to the 2026 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada, Wyden also pointed to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The United States also will host the Club World Cup this summer in 11 cities across the country.

“Ahead of these events, your departments will experience a sig-

nificant increase in travelers seeking entry to the United States, to include extraordinary athletes, support staff, government officials, journalists, business owners, and spectators,” Wyden wrote. “If your harsh and unnecessary approaches to travelers continue, foreign-born athletes who have spent their whole lives training for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity may be unable to travel to the United States to participate in these games.”

Border issues have already worried a number of soccer players. Venezuelan forward Deyna Castellanos, who plays in the National Women’s Soccer League, did not join her national team for a pair of recent matches because of fears she wouldn’t be allowed to return.

Zambia’s national team did not call up four women playing in the United States for games in China out of similar concerns.

In a March meeting with FIFA President Gianni Infantino, President Trump announced the formation of a task force to coordinate the federal government’s security and planning for next year’s World Cup.

Norwegian shaved 0.21 off his previous mark set in Oslo

Warholm sets unofficial world record in 300m hurdles at Diamond League opener

XIAMEN, China, April 26, (AP): Norwegian standout Karsten Warholm improved on his unofficial world record in the 300-meter hurdles by clocking 33.05 seconds at the opening Diamond League meeting on Saturday.

Warholm shaved 0.21 off his previous mark set in Oslo in 2021, the same year he set the 400-meter hurdles world record.

While it is not an Olympic event, 300 hurdles will soon become an official world-record discipline, World Athletics recently announced.

“I was a little bit surprised by how easy my legs were feeling off the last bend,” Warholm said. “Of course you feel it a little bit in the end, but I managed to really push in the last 45 metres. This shows that the speed is there and the speed over the hurdles is there.”

Olympic champions Faith Kipyegon (1,000 meters), Mondo Duplantis (pole vault), Yelena Isinbayeva (high jump), Beatrice Chebet (5,000) and



Karsten Warholm of Norway celebrates after winning the Men’s 300 meters hurdles at the Wanda Diamond League season opener, in Xiamen in southeast China’s Fujian province. (AP)

Valarie Allman (discus) also posted victories.

In the 1,000, Kipyegon clocked

2:29.21 to come within striking distance of Svetlana Masterkova’s world record of 2:28.98 set in 1996.

First home defeat in almost a year

Nice shocks PSG, ends champion’s hopes of unbeaten Ligue 1 season

PARIS, April 26, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain’s bid to go unbeaten in Ligue 1 was ruined when it lost to Nice 3-1.

PSG’s first home defeat in almost a year was a shock reverse for a club which clinched the French league title three weeks ago and was shifting its focus to the Champions League semifinal first leg at Arsenal on Tuesday.

Coach Luis Enrique rested several starters but it was still one-way traffic as PSG dominated the early stages.

However, profligate finishing and an inspired performance by Nice goalkeeper Marcin Bulka kept PSG scoreless.

Nice’s Morgan Sanson broke the deadlock when Badredine Bouanani’s elegant through ball left him with only Gianluigi Don-

narumma to beat and he slipped the ball neatly under the keeper.

Nice’s lead, however, lasted only five minutes. PSG’s Fabián Ruiz turned inside the box and fired home a neat chip over the defense from Ousmane Dembélé.

Nice did the unlikely again a minute into the second half and once more it was Sanson who did the damage, scoring with a spectacular scissor kick volley.

Even with the introduction of Bradley Barcola, Gonçalo Ramos, Warren Zaire-Emery, and Lucas Beraldo, the home side failed to react and, incredibly, Nice scored again.

An unmarked Youssouf Ndayishimiye headed home the third in the 70th.



PSG's Willian Pacheco, left, and Nice's Gaetan Laborde fight for the ball during the League One soccer match between PSG and Nice in Paris. (AP)

Wolves top Lakers to take series lead behind both-ways standout McDaniels



Orlando Magic guard Cole Anthony (50) drives around Boston Celtics guard Derrick White (9) during the second half in Game 3 of a first-round NBA playoff basketball series in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

Magic, Bucks trim deficits

MINNEAPOLIS, April 26, (AP): Jaden McDaniels scored a career play-off-high 30 points and spearheaded Minnesota’s stifling defense on an ailing Luka Doncic, and the Timberwolves beat the Los Angeles Lakers 116-104 to take a 2-1 lead in their first-round series on Friday night.

Anthony Edwards scored 29 points and Julius Randle added 22 points for the Wolves, who outscored the Lakers 13-1 over the final 4:37 of the game after Doncic’s tying baseline jumper.

LeBron James did the heavy lifting with Doncic playing through a stomach illness, scoring 38 points including three 3-pointers in a four-possession span midway through the fourth quarter. But he couldn’t find a shot after that, hitting the side of the backboard with a corner heave with the Lakers down 111-104 with 1:26 left.

Game 4 is in Minneapolis on Sunday afternoon.

Austin Reeves had 20 points on 5-for-11 shooting from 3-point range, where the Lakers stayed hot all night to stay close - offsetting 19 turnovers the Wolves converted into 28 points.

Randle, a first-round draft pick by the Lakers in 2014 who missed the playoffs last year with New York and has only played in 18 career postseason games, was especially fired up for his first home playoff game with Minnesota. He went 9 for 10 from the free throw line and hustled all over the floor, leading the charge in a 56-26 edge the Wolves

had in points in the paint.

Doncic was frequently smothered by McDaniels, Minnesota’s ace perimeter defender, and had a particularly sluggish start. Doncic needed a step-back 28-footer with Edwards guarding him in the closing seconds of the first half to get to eight points at the break.

Magic 95, Celtics 93

In Orlando, Franz Wagner scored 32 points, Paolo Banchero added 29 and the Orlando Magic beat Boston to cut the Celtics’ lead to 2-1 in the Eastern Conference first-round series.

Jayson Tatum had 36 points and nine rebounds for the Celtics in his return to the starting lineup after missing Game 2 with a bruised wrist.

The defending NBA champions were 33-8 on the road this season but are now 0-3 in Orlando in 2024-25. The Magic host Game 4 on Sunday.

The Celtics, who set several NBA records for 3-point shooting during the regular season, shot 9 for 27

in Game 3 and went 17 minutes between 3-pointers in the second half. The game included 43 fouls, a flagrant foul and 35 turnovers, 21 by the Celtics against the physical Magic defense.

The flagrant foul was called on Orlando’s Cole Anthony after a play in which Boston’s Jaylen Brown dislocated his left index finger.

The Celtics believe the Magic are already getting plenty of shots in.

Bucks 117, Pacers 101

In Milwaukee, Gary Trent Jr. got hot from deep, Gianni Antetokounmpo dominated in the paint and together they gave the Milwaukee Bucks new life in their first-round playoff series.

Trent tied a franchise playoff record with nine 3-pointers and scored 37 points. Antetokounmpo also had 37 and the Bucks used a big second half to beat Indiana and cut the Pacers’ series lead to 2-1.

Trent also was assigned to cover

Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton, who was held in check for most of the game.

Bucks coach Doc Rivers said Trent’s aggressiveness earned him a start.

The Pacers led 57-47 at halftime, but Trent hit three 3-pointers early in the third to pull the Bucks even at 62. The Bucks grabbed a 72-69 lead on Antetokounmpo’s three-point play and led 86-75 at the end of the quarter.

The lead grew to as many as 20 in the fourth and Trent finished 9 for 12 behind the arc to tie Hall of Famer Ray Allen’s mark for most 3-pointers in a postseason game. The Bucks outscored the Pacers 70-44 in the second half.

Antetokounmpo added 12 rebounds for Milwaukee, which hosts Game 4 on Sunday. A.J. Green scored 12 points and Bobby Portis had 10 for the Bucks, who took on the Pacers for the 18th time in the past two seasons.

Indiana had won five of the last six playoff games between the teams and ousted the Bucks from the playoffs in the opening round last season.

Pascal Siakam had 28 points and Aaron Nesmith scored 18 for the Pacers. Tyrese Haliburton finished with 14 points and 10 assists.

After trailing throughout Game 2, the Bucks grabbed an early lead. Antetokounmpo and Trent combined to score Milwaukee’s first 21 points. No other Bucks player scored until Green sank a 3-pointer with 2:28 left in the opening quarter.

Milwaukee shot 4 for 23 from 3-point range over the first two quarters but was 11 for 18 after halftime.

Bucks star guard Damian Lillard was held to seven points on 2-of-12 shooting. He made just 1-of-8 3-pointers.



Minnesota Timberwolves forward Jaden McDaniels, center, goes up for a shot as Los Angeles Lakers forwards Rui Hachimura (28) and Dorian Finney-Smith, right, defend during the second half of Game 3 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Minneapolis. (AP)

Irish earns lucky fan \$33,000

Sheffield, England, April 26, (AP): A rare perfect break of 147 at the world snooker championship earned a lucky fan 25,000 pounds (\$33,000).

The experience for Brian Nicholls came with a twist, however.

For this year’s championship at the Crucible Theatre, a random member of the audience gets picked each session to be the recipient of the cash prize should a player complete a maximum break - 15 reds, each followed by 15 blacks, and then all the colors.

Nicholls was the chosen fan but he was sitting on one side of the Crucible, watching a match between Mark Williams and Hossein Vafaei while Mark Allen was compiling his

147 on the other table.

With the two tables separated

by a partition, Nicholls had to watch on one of the screens in-



Iran's Hossein Vafaei during his match against Wales' Mark Williams on day eight of the World Snooker Championship at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, England. (AP)

side the arena as Allen finished off his maximum. TV footage showed Nicholls celebrating after the 39-year-old from Northern Ireland potted the final black to record only the 15th 147 made at the Crucible.

The money earned by Nicholls is more than is given to the first-round losers at the world championship. They receive 20,000 pounds (\$26,600) each.

As for Allen, he is in line to get nearly \$60,000 for making a 147.

According to the BBC, which is broadcasting the tournament, Nicholls had never been to the Crucible before and was bought a ticket by his son as a present for his 75th birthday.

Kane set to miss the party

Leverkusen delays Bayern’s Bundesliga title celebrations

BERLIN, April 26, (AP): Bayer Leverkusen postponed Bayern Munich’s Bundesliga title celebrations on Saturday, leaving the Bavarian powerhouse on the verge of winning the trophy without top-scorer Harry Kane.

Kane was shown his fifth yellow card of the season during Bayern’s 3-0 win at home over Mainz, meaning the England captain will be suspended for Bayern’s next match at Leipzig - where Bayern will likely win its 34th German league title.

Bayern needed a win over Mainz and favor from Augsburg against Leverkusen to be crowned champion on Saturday, but goals from Patrik Schick and Emiliano Buendia gave Leverkusen a 2-0 win and kept the defending champion eight points behind Bayern with three rounds remaining.

Leverkusen can still theoretically defend its first ever Bundesliga title by winning its last three games if Bayern loses its final three, but even a draw against Leipzig next weekend should be enough for Bayern, which has a far superior goal difference.

Waldemar Anton scored in the fifth minute of stoppage time to give Borussia Dortmund a 3-2 win at Hoffenheim, but the result was marred by arguments because Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann was struck in the head by Carney Chukwuemeka’s knee before Anton scored. Referee Benjamin Brand allowed the goal after a VAR check found it was an accidental clash.

The win lifted Dortmund to sixth, three

points behind Freiburg in fourth. Freiburg moved into the last place for Champions League qualification with a 1-0 win at Wolfsburg, for which captain Maximilian Arnold was sent off for a bad foul in the first half.

There was also stoppage time drama in Kiel, where Japanese forward Shuto Machino scored his second goal in stoppage time to give Holstein Kiel a 4-3 win over Borussia Mönchengladbach.

The win lifted Kiel off the bottom, three points behind Heidenheim in the relegation playoff place.

Relegation-threatened Heidenheim scored in the 89th minute to win at Stuttgart 1-0 and grab a vital three points in its fight to avoid the Bundesliga drop.

The result closed the gap to five points between Heidenheim and Hoffenheim, in the safe fourth-from-bottom position.

The third-to-last team goes into a playoff to preserve its Bundesliga status.

Mathias Honsak got the winner with a superb curling shot from outside the box to condemn Stuttgart to a sixth consecutive home defeat.

Stuttgart had most of the chances but could not score and it will rue missing a chance to bolster its hopes of a top-six finish. It remained 11th.

It could still qualify for Europe by beating third-tier Arminia Bielefeld in next month’s German Cup final.



Bayern's Kingsley Coman, left, duels for the ball with Mainz's Danny da Costa during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern Munich and 1. FSV Mainz 05 at the Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Ngetich breaks barrier: Kenya’s Agnes Ngetich became the first runner to break the 30-minute barrier in a women-only 10-kilometer road race Saturday, clocking 29 minutes, 27 seconds at the Adizero Road To Records event.

Ngetich smashed the old mark of 30:01 set by Agnes Jebet Tirop in 2021 at the same event in Germany.

Ngetich also holds the outright record of 28:46 set last year in a mixed-gender race.

“Last year I missed it by two seconds, so I wanted to come here today and try for it again,” Ngetich said. “After missing out on the Olympics last year, I want to make up for it this year at the world championships.” (AP)

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NEWS



Matteo Arnaldi of Italy serves against Novak Djokovic of Serbia during the Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Sports

Golden glory for Kuwait at Arab Shooting Champ'ship



Kuwaitis celebrate on the podium with other winners as the officials look on after the awarding ceremony.

KUNA photo

Medal count rises to 4

CAIRO, April 26, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti shooting team captured two gold medals at the 2025 Arab Shooting Championship, currently taking place in Cairo.

Kuwait's shooters – Saud Al-Kandari, Mohammad Al-Daihani, and Abdulaziz Al-Saad – claimed the gold medal in the men's team skeet competition, with Egypt securing the silver and Bahrain tak-

ing the bronze.

In the men's individual skeet event, Kuwait's Abdulaziz Al-Saad added another gold medal to his country's haul. Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiah finished second, while Bahrain's Tamar Al-Watta took third place.

With today's results, Kuwait's medal count at the tournament rose to four – two golds and two bronzes – according to Saad Al-Suwait, a member of the Kuwaiti

delegation.

The Kuwaiti mixed team secured the bronze medal in the pistol shooting event at the Arab Shooting Championship, currently underway in Cairo until May 1.

Head of the Kuwaiti shooting delegation, Abdullah Al-Barakat, told KUNA that shooters Hamad Al-Namshan and Ghezlan Al-Hassan clinched third place after a tough competition against several

Arab teams.

The mixed team rifle event will kick off on Sunday, expressing his hope for continued success for the Kuwaiti shooters.

In addition, the Kuwaiti women's shooting team claimed a bronze medal in the 10-meter team pistol shooting final on Thursday.

The championship has drawn around 300 participants from 19 Arab countries.

Al-Sharaf brothers dominate Qatar Jiu-Jitsu Championship

DOHA, April 26, (KUNA): Kuwaiti athletes Ahmad and Khaled Al-Sharaf captured three gold medals and one silver medal at the Qatar International Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship, held in Doha.

Khaled Al-Sharaf secured a gold medal in the 34-kilogram grey belt division and a silver medal in the 34-kilogram grey belt NO-GI category.

His brother, Ahmad Al-Sharaf, won two gold medals – one in the 27-kilogram grey belt division and another in the 27-kilogram grey belt NO-GI category.

Their father, Essa Al-Sharaf, told KUNA on Saturday that the championship, which concluded in Doha on , featured top professional athletes from various countries.

He expressed his joy over his sons' accomplishments and reaffirmed his continued support for their journey to achieve higher rankings and represent Kuwait proudly in international competitions.

Kuwaiti brothers Zaid and Abdulaziz Al-Sulaiten captured four gold medals on Friday at the 2025 Qatar International Open Jiu-Jitsu Championship, currently taking place in Doha.

The duo dominated two styles of competition – with and without the suit.

Zaid Al-Sulaiten secured two gold medals in the U-14, 41 kg category through submission grappling, while his brother Abdulaziz claimed two golds in the U-12, 20 kg division.



KUNA photo

Zaid and Abdulaziz Al-Sulaiten display the national flag and their medals.

Best of the Rest

Djokovic loses to Arnaldi: Novak Djokovic lost to Matteo Arnaldi in the opening round of the Madrid Open on Saturday, extending the 24-time Grand Slam winner's struggles on clay ahead of Roland Garros.

Arnaldi won 6-3, 6-4, delaying Djokovic's search for a career 100th title. The Serb was undermined by 32 unforced errors.

Arnaldi raised his arms and turned to the crowd after striking a winner that gave him a definite second-set break. Djokovic tried to hit right back and had three break points, but Arnaldi rallied to save his serve and finished off the three-time champion.

It was the first meeting between Djokovic and 44th-ranked Arnaldi of Italy. The 37-year-old Djokovic has lost three matches in a row; the Miami final, and his opener to Alejandro Tabilo at the Monte Carlo Masters two weeks ago.

Djokovic is still seeking his first title of the season after winning his 99th title last August at the Paris Olympics. He has lost four finals since then. The only two players to reach the 100-title milestone are Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103).

Arnaldi will next face Damir Dzumhur after he rallied past Sebastian Baez 1-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva reached the last 16 for the third straight year by defeating Magdalena Frech 7-5, 6-3. (AP)

Chelsea edges Everton

Celtic wins league title No. 55 to tie Rangers

DUNDEE, Scotland, April 26, (AP): Celtic tied fierce Glasgow rival Rangers on a record 55 Scottish top-flight titles by clinching the trophy on Saturday with four games to spare.

A 5-0 win at Dundee United in the Scottish Premiership put Celtic 18 points clear of second-place Rangers, which has five matches to play.

It was a fourth straight league title for Celtic and kept the team on course for a sixth domestic treble in the last nine seasons.

Celtic has already won the Scottish League Cup and has reached the final of the Scottish FA Cup, against Aberdeen on May 24.

Rangers won the last of its 55 league titles in 2021 but could not stave off its Old Firm rival for long, with Celtic overseeing an utterly dominant period in the Scottish game.

The team has captured 21 of the last 26 domestic trophies on offer in Scotland. That could soon be 22 from 27 if Celtic wins a third straight Scottish FA Cup title.

"Amazing performance, outstanding," Celtic captain Callum McGregor said. "It means the world to us."

For Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers, it's an 11th trophy – and fourth league title – from his two spells in charge. He is bidding for a third treble at the helm of Celtic.

"Leading into this game, there was a little bit of negativity around the league and the competition, but we can only concentrate on ourselves. Our mentality has been so, so good," Rodgers said.

"The competition is for everyone. When it matters, this team has produced. It's not our fault we're 18 points clear and scoring goals."

Rodgers insisted he would "200%" be at Celtic for next season, saying: "I have never been happier here."

"It's important," he added, "to keep the motivation and the hunger at this stage of the season and we know what we want to achieve and what records we want to beat."

The team's fans disrupted the game



Everton's Idrissa Gueye, left, and Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez battle for the ball during the Premier League match between Chelsea and Everton at Stamford Bridge, London. (AP)

against Dundee United early in the first half by throwing dozens of tangerines onto the field in protest at the host's pricing of tickets for away supporters.

Celtic's fans chanted about the prices as the pieces of fruit were lobbed on, and a banner was held up that read: "Enjoy the fruits of our labour."

Rangers last won the last of its 55 league titles in 2021.

Chelsea beat Everton 1-0 in the Premier League on Saturday thanks to Nicolas Jackson's first-half goal.

Jackson scored from just outside the area in the 27th minute to secure back-to-back victories for Chelsea.

Erling Haaland and Rodri, Manchester City's two star players, are closing in on a return after long injury absences.

Just not in time for the FA Cup semifinals this weekend.

Haaland hasn't played since hurting his ankle on March 30 but the striker is back in individual training.

"He's getting better, step by step," City manager Pep Guardiola said Friday. "Still didn't train with the team

but we'll see in the next days how it will evolve."

Rodri has been out for much longer, since sustaining an ACL injury on Sept. 22. The Ballon d'Or-winning midfielder is training with the main squad and "doing really well," said Guardiola, who will be guided by the club's medical staff.

"I don't know what Rodri wants," Guardiola said, "but the doctors are going to tell me. 'Pep, you have the green light to give him some minutes' or so on. I'll rely on the doctors in that case."

City plays Nottingham Forest at Wembley Stadium on Sunday after reaching the FA Cup semifinals for a seventh straight season. The team is aiming for a third straight appearance in the final, having won and lost the title match to Manchester United over the past two years.

After this weekend, City has four games left in the Premier League as it seeks to secure Champions League qualification before competing in the Club World Cup in the United States, which takes place in June and July.

Al-Qurain clinches historic squash league title with a flawless record

KUWAIT CITY, April 26: Al-Qurain Club was crowned champion of the Kuwait Squash League for the first time in the tournament's history, achieving a flawless record without a single defeat across both divisions.

Al-Yarmouk Club secured second place, while Al-Nasr Club finished third.

The Squash League championships for all categories concluded last Thursday, in the presence of General Secretary of the Squash Federation Hamed Al-Omran,

Board Member Ahmed Al-Adwani, Al-Qurain Club Secretary Khalifa Al-Shahoumi, and Al-Arabi Club Treasurer Fahad Al-Fahad.

Al-Qurain's championship-winning squad featured players Saif Heikal, Abdulrahman Al-Maghribi, Khaled Al-Fawzan, Abdullah Hani, Shaheen Amir, Fahad Al-Ghais, and Badr Al-Maghribi.

The team was coached by Tamer Raafat and managed by Mohamed Al-Jamal.

In the age group competitions:

Under-19: Al-Qurain claimed first place, with Khaitan second and Yarmouk third.

Under-17: Khaitan secured the title, followed by Al-Qurain and Al-Arabi.

Under-15: Al-Arabi emerged as champion, with Al-Qurain second and Yarmouk third.

Under-13: Al-Qurain captured first place, with Khaitan second and Yarmouk third.

Under-11: Khaitan took the top spot, Kuwait Club finished second, and Al-Qurain placed third.



Al-Omran hands over the trophy to Al-Qurain in the presence of Al-Shahoumi and Al-Adwani.