

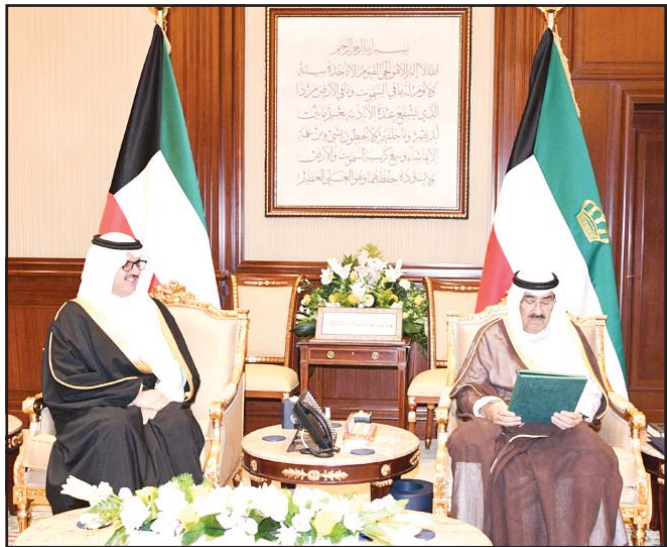


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Amir receives invitation to WEF meeting from Saudi Crown Prince



HH the Amir receives Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Kuwait, Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.



HH the Amir receives Qatari Minister of Sports and Youth, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Thani.

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a handwritten letter Tuesday from the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud.

The letter contained an invitation to participate in the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Riyadh next April, under the title "International Cooperation, Growth, and Energy for Development".

The letter was delivered by Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Kuwait, Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on

Continued on Page 5

Cabinet announces 5 days Eid holidays

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): The Cabinet held its weekly session on Monday at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Mousherji made the following statement:

The Cabinet was briefed with outcomes His Highness the Prime Minister's official visit to Saudi Arabia last Thursday. His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom, reviewed deep-rooted and historic relations between the two countries and means to develop them on all levels to benefit both brotherly peoples.

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Opinion

Minister of Social Affairs, where's the zakat money?

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

ONE of the most frequently asked questions in Kuwait is - Where do the zakat funds go? This question is also usually asked when corruption involving the fund is discovered. In recent years, newspapers have been publishing about the corruption in the donation of these funds. No reliable investigation has been conducted in this regard, and the matter is under a microscope.

It is also known legally that zakat must first be given to the needy people of the country to which donors belong, and whatever remains is sent abroad. However, to allocate all of it abroad and deprive citizens who are in need is in violation of the legitimate and legal principle of the concept of zakat. Almost every day, we come across reports about sending the zakat funds abroad, and that the zakat funds are being used to establish projects in Asia and Africa.

In fact, some of those countries are richer than Kuwait, but no one is held accountable for this major defect.

In recent years, international reports have indicated that some of these donations go to terrorist groups abroad. This undoubtedly means that corruption is rampant in these funds and associations, and this in turn harms Kuwait's global reputation.

This is why we call for limiting donations to those in need in Kuwait such as those in debt, and specifically those imprisoned for issuing dud cheques to usurers and loan sharks.

Our objective here is to relieve people of the dilemma imposed on them. Therefore, it is necessary to have transparency when spending these zakat funds in a way that pleases Almighty Allah, and inspire reassurance into the donors, instead of those with pot-bellies who swindle people by spending on projects that no one knows about.

Given that, remembrance is good for those who believe, we are reminded of the biography of the eighth Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty Omar bin Abdulaziz. It is said that when zakat money was brought to him, he ordered it to be spent on the poor. After finding no poor person under his rule to spend on, he ordered the surplus to be spent on equipping his army. After that, he ordered young men to be married with the surplus of the zakat. He then ordered to settle the debts of those in debt, and the remaining surplus, he ordered that it be used to buy wheat and scatter it on the tops of the mountains so that no one will say that a bird went hungry under his rule.

We do not say you must scatter wheat in the desert, but when we talk about debtors, especially those who issue dud cheques, we are not talking about large sums. We are also not talking about commercial debts.

The debt we are talking about involves an insolvent person who was unable to pay KD 5,000 or KD 6,000, and got imprisoned for that. We are talking about the debts of women who were duped by their husbands and forced to take loans and sign dud cheques, for which they were issued heavy sentences reaching five to ten years.

As for the one who forced her to do this, he took the money and divorced her, and then married another woman. Others got travel bans imposed on them, and all their transactions with the state got suspended. His case is almost, if not worse, similar to a criminal. All of these problems can be solved quickly if there is an intention to close this annoying file.

We also reiterate that the relevant committees can negotiate with the creditor to reduce

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Ramadan Timings

Iftar Wednesday 18:04, Imsak Thursday 04:20

Buying, selling votes 'haram'



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits the Nabat Poets' Diwan, accompanied by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



Photos show His Highness the Amir during his visit to the Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf.



Amiri Diwan photos

Amir visits Nabat Poets' Diwan, Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday visited the Nabat Poets' Diwan, accompanied by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

They were welcomed by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Secretary and Director of the Diwan Nassar Al-Khamsan.

His Highness the Amir, in a speech, congratulated the audience on the holy month of Ramadan.

His Highness the Amir praised the Diwan as a great edifice for conserving the literary heritage, social traditions and national

identity of the country, hailing efforts of the Diwan to digitize the traditional Nabati poetry, keep abreast with the advancement of information technology, and tap into the experience of the Ministry of Information in this regard.

Further, His Highness the Amir called on the Diwan members to adhere to the rules and parameters of Nabati poetry; continue excelling in producing creative poems; organize more competitions and symposia; encourage young poets to adopt this style of poetry; and publicize this poetry via the traditional and modern mass media.

On his part, Secretary and Director of the

Diwaniya Nassar Al-Khamsan expressed, on behalf of Diwan members, best wishes for His Highness the Amir.

He also read a Nabati poem welcoming His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister and other officials.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also paid a visit Monday to Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf.

His Highness, accompanied by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, delivered a speech, in which he greeted and congratulated the Club's members and staff on the holy month of Ramadan. (KUNA)

Forgers warned

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami, Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Director of the Center for Promoting Religious Moderation Dr. Abdullah Al-Sharika says, "The electoral vote does not belong to any person and no one has the right to sell or buy votes as they please."

"This is because the state has entrusted voters to choose and nominate candidates whom they consider most suitable and most worthy for parliamentary representation to enact laws, carry out oversight and monitoring roles, and hold the executive performance in the state accountable. Selling votes is forbidden and reprehensible. It is a form of bribery. Cursed is the one who takes it, gives it, and mediates between them."

He cautioned those who sell votes against the repercussions, such as afflictions, diseases and other consequences, for engaging in such forbidden actions, and compromising their conscience and integrity in exchange for temporary worldly gains.

Al-Sharika indicated that one of the modern forms of buying votes is offering gifts to male and female voters who attend electoral campaigns.

He emphasized the impermissibility of such actions (haram), stating that anyone who exchanges their vote for money is no different from someone who exchanges it for gifts.

In the same electoral matter, Al-Sharika stressed the necessity of verifying the authenticity of the news, warning against believing and sharing it, especially if it is related to a person's reputation and honor.

Highlighting that this is an image of preserving human rights in Islam, he expressed his regret that many people share all the accusations they come across

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Al-Azmi appeals disqualification

Kuwait Municipality sets '24 Assembly election strategy

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh, Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Former MP and parliamentary election candidate Ahmed Mutei Al-Azmi has filed an appeal at the Court of Cassation against the verdict of the Court of Appeals, which upheld the decision of the Ministry of Interior to disqualify him.

On the other hand, former MP and candidate for the upcoming parliamentary election Marzouq Al-Hebeini, who was also disqualified, said the decisions of the committee assigned by the Ministry of Interior to review the candidacies do not meet the conditions as per the relevant laws. He wondered why he was disqualified despite the fact that he was allowed to contest the previous election and he has neither been involved in any crime nor subjected to court penalties since then.

The Cassation Court is expected to issue its final ruling on the disqualification cases next week.



Municipality photo, Kuwait Municipality meeting in session.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality announced on Tuesday the field plan regarding the National Assembly 2024 elections set on April 4.

Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous said in a press release, that the election committee meeting discussed the preparations of

Continued on Page 5

News watch

SANAA: An attack by al-Qaida in southern Yemen killed at least two troops loyal to a secessionist group, officials said Monday, in the first attack since the extremist group's branch in the Arab country announced the death of its leader earlier this month.

The attack, which took place late Sunday in the mountainous Wadi Omran area of Abyan province, also wounded four troops from the Southern Armed Forces, which is loyal to the secessionist Southern Transitional Council, according to a statement from the southern forces. (AP)

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi police officer previously sentenced to death for the murder of a prominent security analyst who had criticized powerful Iran-backed militias was released from prison following a retrial, officials said Monday.

An intelligence official with the Ministry of Interior said Ahmed Hamdawi al-Kinani was released after the case was reopened and the court issued an acquittal. It was not clear on what grounds he was acquitted. (AP)

Kuwait welcomes UNSC's Gaza ceasefire resolution

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait welcomed Monday the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2728 demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed regret for the inability of the UNSC to carry out its responsibilities stipulated in the UN Charter and to stop the aggression and crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against defenseless Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip during the past five months.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Kuwait's firm position in supporting the Palestinian people and their legitimate political rights and their right to self-determination and establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Jassim Al-Budaiwi, welcomed Monday the UN Security Council

resolution 2728 demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

In a press statement, the Secretary-General stressed the necessity of adopting the resolution to reach a permanent and sustainable ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the parties' compliance with their obligations under international law,

Continued on Page 5



Humanitarian aid is airdropped over Gaza from a RAF A400M aircraft on Monday, March 25, 2024. The Royal Air Force airdropped over 10 tonnes of food supplies into Gaza for the first time on Monday, as part of international efforts to provide life-saving assistance to civilians. (AP)

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 04:26 Asr ..... 15:23  
 Sunrise .. 05:46 Maghrib .. 18:03  
 Zohr ..... 11:54 Isha ..... 19:20

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Warm and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind, with speeds of 06-22 km/h.  
**By Night:** Rather cold with light

## Weather

variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	25	16	Kuwait Airport	25
			Abdaly	26
			Jahra	26
			Salmiyah	23
			Nuwaisib	27
			Wafra	25
				13
				11
				14
				18
				13
				12

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

## Force to be reckoned with: Dashti

### Kuwaiti women vital component in Assembly election campaigns

By Dalal Sharar

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Becoming an essential part of the democratic process via voting and running, Kuwaiti women also proved vital in making or breaking candidates chances for the coveted seat at the National Assembly.

Women in Kuwait contributed immensely in various election campaigns, promoting candidates to eligible voters throughout Kuwait.

Women in Kuwait play a key role as campaign managers and activists to promote candidates, professor of political science at Kuwait University (KU) Wafa Al-Arabi told KUNA.

She indicated that women usually promote male candidates more effectively due to the social fabric of society, noting that they were strong in social networking, which contribute to the success of candidates.

Women represent around 50 percent of the population and it is very important to gain their votes to sway the polls, Al-Arabi affirmed, stressing

that they were an important factor and a vital human resource during election season.

Meanwhile, Eman Dashti -- a political activist vying for rights of women to reach the highest levels in parliament -- from the level of voters to becoming Members of Parliament, women were a force to be reckoned with.

All candidates, whether male or female, made a necessity to include a women's committee in their campaign, Dashti said, pointing out that this factor enable candidates to gain an edge in elections.

It is very important to educate women on political participation in decision-making, Dashti noted, and added that this would enable women to gain prominent positions in the country.

On her part, member of the board of the women Cultural and Social Society Sharifa Al-Khamis affirmed that women played a part in the logistic part of election campaigns via coordinating committees works and highlighting candidates messages.

The active social nature of Kuwaiti society made women crucial for the task of luring voters to vote for certain candidates, she indicated.

She said that gaining full voter and campaign rights in 2005, Kuwaiti women had compiled a decent record in the political scene and hopefully this would continue for the future.



Eman Dashti

## Other Voices

### The US-China TikTok war

By Ahmad alsarraf

The United States is facing intense competition from China across various industries, including the automotive sector where Chinese production now nearly triples that of the US. This competition extends across tens of thousands of industries, including advanced sectors such as memory chips, next-generation Internet technologies, and Huawei's innovations.

One notable example is TikTok, originally recognized as a platform for short video clips. Since its launch in 2016, TikTok has garnered widespread popularity due to its high-quality content, captivating sound effects, and addictive nature.

It has emerged as a significant source of entertainment and revenue for advertisers, with 36% of its user base aged between 18 and 24, and children spending an average of 75 minutes daily on the platform. In February alone, the app recorded over 4.7 billion downloads, and its revenues for 2023 exceeded \$16 billion.

TikTok, like many other social media platforms, has been under scrutiny for its handling of user data, particularly given its Chinese ownership. Concerns regarding the potential misuse of private information have led several countries, including India, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, to ban its use.

In July 2020, then-US President Donald Trump intensified the pressure on TikTok, citing national security concerns. He threatened to ban the app from the United States over fears that the Chinese government

could exploit user data for espionage purposes. Trump demanded that TikTok be sold to American interests to mitigate this perceived threat.

Despite efforts by American investors to acquire the company, all attempts were unsuccessful. TikTok now faces an uncertain future in the US and the European Union. Legislative attempts to ban its use have faltered due to its popularity and the lobbying efforts of its parent company, ByteDance, which boasts a market capitalization of \$120 billion.

The gravest accusations against TikTok revolve around the potential for the Chinese government to access American user data and influence users through the platform's algorithm, particularly the "For You" function. This algorithm remains opaque to Americans and could potentially be exploited for political messaging or interference in US elections.

Following the recent approval by a significant majority in the US House of Representatives, a draft law aimed at banning the social media application "TikTok" has gained momentum.

The proposed legislation stipulates that TikTok must be separated from its Chinese parent company within 180 days. Failure to comply with this requirement would result in TikTok being banned from American app stores, and web hosting services in the United States would be instructed to block access to the platform.

However, the fate of this legislation remains uncertain as it heads to the Senate for further consideration. If passed into law, it would mark a significant development in the ongoing debate surrounding TikTok's ownership and its potential implications for national security.

□ □ □  
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alsarraf

## I've taken dose of Shabu: suspect

### KD2,000 fine for insulting doctor

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Misdemeanor Court has imposed a fine of KD2,000 on a citizen for insulting a doctor at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Public Prosecution had earlier charged the citizen with insulting the victim, who works as an emergency doctor at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, as he grabbed the stethoscope that the doctor was wearing around her neck.

Case files indicate that when the doctor examined the accused, the latter asked if he could speak to her alone. Then, he told her that he took a dose of Shabu. She then reassured him that his condition was stable, but she was surprised when he shouted angrily: "Shut up!" He also assaulted her and grabbed her stethoscope.

Attorney Elaf Al-Saleh, representative of Kuwait Medical Society, submitted a surveillance camera recording of the incident, in addition to the statements of witnesses.

After the issuance of the ruling, Al-Saleh pointed out "it is unfortunate that the assault on doctors is no longer an anomaly, as it has become a widespread phenomenon, up to the point that many of the victims requested for transfer to other workplaces after they were insulted and assaulted in front of their colleagues." She promised to continue filing such cases and demand compensation

for damages.

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**'Eye on Asherij coast':** Acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Eng Samira Al-Kandari has confirmed the continuation of inspection campaigns along Asherij coast as part of joint efforts between the authority and the Ministry of Interior to protect the environment, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Kandari confirmed that EPA's teams, in cooperation with the ministry, carried out a number of campaigns during Ramadan; which resulted in the issuance of 16 citations for various violations.

Commenting on viral video clips showing some people violating Environmental Protection Law No. 42/2014 and its amendments by driving on the tidal zone, Al-Kandari affirmed that there is coordination with the ministry to summon those who committed violations to complete legal procedures against them. She pointed out these violations are against articles 100 and Article 108 of the law, the penalty for which ranges from KD250 to KD50,000.

She added the judicial officers affiliated with EPA and the Environmental Police have been dispatched to Asherij coast, stressing the need to adhere to environmental protection laws.



PM Diwan photo  
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah in talks with the visiting Director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in the United Kingdom Dr. Farhan Nizami.

## PM receives Oxford Center for Islamic Studies' director

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received on Monday at Bayan Palace the visiting director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in the United Kingdom Dr. Farhan Nizami and his accompanying delegation. (KUNA)

# National campaign launched to pay off debts of Kuwaiti citizens

PAAET to disburse bonus for 850 employees

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Sheikh Firas Al-Malik, the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, announced the initiation of the national campaign named "Your Dismay is a Joy for Them 2" in cooperation with various government entities and charitable organizations. The campaign aims to collect donations to pay off the debts of Kuwaiti citizens who are burdened by financial obligations, reports Al-Jarida daily.**

The primary objective of the campaign is to bring joy to the faces of Kuwaiti families grappling with debt, thereby presenting an honorable image of charitable work and demonstrating Kuwait's commitment to easing the burdens of its citizens. Sheikh Firas emphasized the importance of relieving the distress of debtors, highlighting the significant merit and reward associated with helping those in need.

Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Abdulaziz Sari, clarified that the campaign targets Kuwaiti debtors, both male and female, who are unable to repay their debts, resulting in enforceable civil court rulings against them. Executive procedures, such as salary withholding, vehicle seizure, and travel bans, have been taken against these individuals.

Sari further elaborated that a committee comprising representatives from relevant government agencies, including the Ministries of Justice and Endowments, as well as charitable organizations, will be formed to discuss the requirements and controls for repaying the debts of debtors. The committee will also determine the maximum amounts of money allowed to be paid towards these debts.

Importantly, the process for debt repayment under this campaign will not require individuals to visit any government agency or submit any documents. The names of beneficiaries will be automatically included by the General Administration for Implementation in the Ministry of Justice. An electronic link has been provided for individuals to donate, and a hotline has been established to receive donations from various entities.

The campaign aligns with the directives of Kuwait's political leadership and the Council of Ministers, reflecting the country's commitment to localizing charitable work and prioritizing assistance to its citizens, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan.

Cooperative societies have been urged to participate in the campaign by donating from their annual zakat funds, thereby contributing to the localization of charitable efforts within the country.

Coops willing to participate must issue a check for the donation amount to the Ministry of Justice, General Administration of Implementation.

The previous national campaign organized during Ramadan last year raised 11.5 million dinars, with approximately 59 thousand donors contributing to the cause.

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**Bonus nod for 850 staff:** Deputy Director General of the Administrative and Financial Affairs Sector at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Meshal Al-Mansouri has confirmed approval of the excellent job performance bonus for 850 employees at the authority, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Mansouri said the sector has completed the evaluation of all employees and entered the results in the integrated service system in preparation for granting the bonus to deserving employees.

He disclosed that the bonus will be deposited into the bank accounts of the eligible employees after completion of the necessary documentary procedures in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), as well as the circular issued in this regard.

He pointed out the bonus amount will be based on the job grade, job title and CSC regulations; provided the employee obtained an excellent job performance rating for the year 2023.

He added the covered job titles include department directors, controllers, department heads, division heads, administrative staff employees, job grades one to eight for Kuwaiti employees, and non-Kuwaiti contractual employees.

He then praised the efforts of employees in all sectors; particularly their dedication in performing their duties. He said the bonus is a way to motivate employees to improve their performance at work.

Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah



PM Diwan photo  
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud.

## PM receives Saudi Ambassador

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud. The Saudi Minister delivered

an invitation from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to attend The World Economic Forum (Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development) to be held in Riyadh next April. (KUNA)

## 80 states go to polls in 2024: NWG

### 'Geopolitical developments to impact Kuwait, GCC countries'

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The National Wealth Group (NWG) has highlighted the significance of 2024, which is poised to witness a historic wave of elections across 80 countries, involving more than two billion voters, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This democratic surge is expected to have profound implications for the global geopolitical landscape amidst escalating polarization, governance challenges, and geo-economic fragmentation.

In 2024, residents of over 80 countries, representing over half of the world's population, will engage in the democratic process, including major nations like India, the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Russia, Mexico, South Africa, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.

Developments in the geopolitical arena could also impact the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, particularly Kuwait, through changes in oil prices and global trade dynamics. Diplomatic efforts and geopolitical stability play pivotal roles in shaping the economic outcomes of oil-exporting countries.

A stable international order could facilitate positive changes in clean energy transition and economic cooperation efforts, whereas geopolitical tensions may exacerbate economic challenges.

In navigating geopolitical uncertainties and economic challenges, strategic planning and forward-looking perspectives are essential to effectively address the complexities of the modern world and capitalize

on emerging opportunities.

With approximately two billion voters participating, these elections hold considerable sway over the macroeconomy, financial markets, and the international system, potentially influencing long-term financial discipline and sustainability.

The global geopolitical landscape is currently characterized by increasing polarization and governance challenges, which could potentially lead to shifts in power dynamics. Major geopolitical events, such as the US presidential elections, have significant repercussions on global markets, affecting financial policies, trade relations, and regulatory measures.

Geoeconomic fragmentation and power struggles may result in higher inflation rates, supply chain disruptions, and heightened market volatility.

Continued geopolitical tensions have spurred the formation of new alliances and blocs challenging the existing global order. Regional conflicts and financial sanctions have also impacted economic stability. The intertwining of geopolitical and economic factors has led to the division of countries into winners and losers, prompting adaptations in trade patterns and technological competition between major powers like China and the United States.

Financial markets, both emerging and developed, face mounting challenges amid the upcoming global electoral cycle. Pressure on financial discipline is mounting amidst rising populism and deficit financing policies.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Voters political awareness vital for free and fair polls in Kuwait'

"THE twenty-first elections in the history of Kuwait will be held on April 4, with 255 candidates, including 14 Kuwaiti women competing for the 50 parliamentary seats. The results in each electoral round depend on the culture of male and female voters in any society, as it may be an impetus for development or an obstacle to it in the coming period," columnist **Dr Ghadeer Muhammad Asiri** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Dr. Ghadeer Asiri

"Awareness of politics is what is required in the coming period, and fair elections cannot be held without the political awareness of voters. It is important that this awareness be built with the citizen from a young age through educational curricula. The wrong practices of the electoral process reinforce error and make it a welcome behavior in elections, such as voting by tribe, origin, sect, family, gender, or interest.

"Many of the wrong practices that have become behavior in the state come from a reactionary ideology that urges voting in the name of democracy but calls for self-interest. Developed countries criminalize racist and sectarian calls, and in 2024 there are many who call to vote according to sect, race, sect, or family.

"Those who use democracy must also practice it in a healthy and sound manner for society. Using advanced terminology to implement reactionary practices and instill them in the next generation is nothing but a crime against civilization, development and modernity.

"The scene of appeals, advertisements, and videos with modern technical production of candidates is only an image that may not reflect the reality that those who claim advanced legislation carry.

"This statement highlights the challenges and complexities associated with the implementation of development and modernization in political culture, particularly within the context of democratic processes. It emphasizes the importance of monitoring the political situation, analyzing voter behavior, and understanding the dynamics of democracy to ensure its integrity.

"The statement condemns uncivilized behavior in the electoral process, including the manipulation of voters through various means such as buying votes or exerting pressure to support a particular candidate. It also criticizes the misuse of resources, including financing campaigns, controlling media channels, and engaging in corrupt practices to influence government decisions or commercial tenders.

"Moreover, the statement warns voters to be vigilant against those who seek to exploit their votes for personal gain or to advance divisive agendas that could harm the country. It calls for accountability and transparency in political processes to prevent the abuse of power and resources for narrow interests, ultimately safeguarding democracy and promoting the common good. Stay safe!"

### Also:

"In an age marked by profound technological advancements and the pervasive reach of media, its role has evolved beyond mere dissemination of information and entertainment. Contemporary media has become a potent tool in shaping public opinion and influencing individual behaviors. Media effects, resulting from exposure to its messages, manifest in various forms, including cognitive changes and shifts in attitudes and perceptions towards issues or individuals," columnist **Shaima Nabil Al-Mulla** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"One notable influence of media is its impact on socialization, a process involving multiple contributors such as family, schools, communities, friends, and the media itself.

"Despite the presence of traditional socialization institutions like schools and families, modern media, particularly social networking platforms, increasingly play a significant role in shaping societal norms and behaviors.

"With media permeating all facets of society and reaching diverse demographics, its influence has eclipsed that of traditional information sources, leading to a shift in societal dynamics.

"Constant exposure to media messages, whether through news or entertainment content, shapes individuals' values and beliefs over time.

"For instance, seemingly innocuous entertainment content, like a comedic play set in an educational environment, can subtly alter perceptions and diminish respect for authority figures such as teachers.

"In essence, the pervasive influence of contemporary media underscores the need for critical engagement and media literacy. It is imperative for individuals to discern and analyze media content to mitigate the potential negative impact on societal values and behaviors."

"Indeed, Kuwait's history is rich and multifaceted, extending far beyond its oil wealth. During a period of enlightenment, openness, and genuine personal freedoms, Kuwait thrived as a beacon of science, education, art, media, development, and commerce, unrivaled by any other," **Talal AbdulKarim Al-Arab** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"It pioneered the establishment of sovereign funds and future generation funds, setting benchmarks for responsible financial management on a global scale. Kuwait also spearheaded initiatives such as the Kuwait Development Fund, International Oil Companies, National Petroleum Company, Kuwait Oil Tankers, Kuwait Ship Company, and the groundbreaking Arab Sakhr program.

"Moreover, Kuwait prioritized social welfare by implementing free compulsory education, healthcare, housing assistance, and insurance, ensuring the well-being of its citizens. This golden era of prosperity and progress is fondly remembered and yearned for by all who experienced it.

"However, in recent times, Kuwait has faced challenges that have hindered its advancement. The focus shifted away from prioritizing competence and integrity in leadership, leading to a decline in progress and development. Corruption became pervasive, with bribery and forgery undermining the integrity of public institutions and processes. Talented Kuwaiti youth, driven by aspirations for innovation and accomplishment, were either forced abroad or hindered by systemic obstacles at home.

"Despite these setbacks, there remains hope for Kuwait's resurgence. With a renewed commitment to freedom, innovation, integrity, and hard work, Kuwait can reclaim its position as a leader in the global community. The vision for Kuwait's future includes a return to its roots as a country of freedoms, art, innovation, and achievement, characterized by security, safety, and a high quality of life.

"Through the energy and dedication of its educated youth, Kuwait will overcome current challenges and emerge as a shining example of progress and prosperity once again. As His Highness the President aptly stated, "Yes, Kuwait will return to what it was, not just oil."

□ □ □

"Support... His Highness the Prime Minister, may Allah bless his face, has his eye on support and does not tire of talking about it on occasion or without. He talks about subsidies and reminds us that they consume a large part of the budget, as if we do not deserve the subsidies. His Highness is trying to classify employees into deserving and undeserving, meaning he is trying to withhold subsidies from people unless he is certain they are in need, forgetting that the dignity of the authentic Kuwaiti citizen prevents him from saying he is needy, even if he is in dire need!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This is what we were born to do and what our previous rulers were accustomed to: support for everyone -- the needy and not needy -- in order to preserve people's dignity!"

"Then, His Highness talks about the middle class, as if he is sure of its existence or knows about it. Certainly, he does not know that this class no longer exists, as it has been crushed and our society has become either rich or poor. Without support, the citizen would not have been able to light a fire in his house!"

"We expected His Highness the Prime Minister to approve the increments and come up with effective solutions to the loan interest issue, which has exhausted citizens, and then he pursued us regarding subsidies!"

"Let the long-lived person know that we are responding to his unsuccessful statements, which indicate his Council of Ministers is in one valley and the Kuwaiti citizen is in another valley, and that he is not much different from the Council of Ministers of employees who passed away unhappily, and that theorizing is very easy, but the reality is totally different!"

"I do not know who they consulted before making statements that do not benefit them or the people. Rather, such statements infuriated the Kuwaiti citizen. Talking about reconsidering the subsidies carries a strong sensitivity for the Kuwaiti citizen who, even if he is in need, does not accept being classified as needy. His self-esteem prevents him from standing on the 'biban-doors'!"

"For our part, we constantly pray for them -- that Allah will grant them a good lining which will help them and explain to them the facts. Perhaps, Allah will respond. Unfortunately, what we are seeing does not bode well. His Highness the Prime Minister is still in the orbit of subsidies that devour the budget, while we know it is certain that corruption and theft devour the budget, so think about recovering Kuwait's money from the thieves, and leave behind the subsidies..."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Acting Chief of the General Fire Force, Major General Khaled Abdullah Fahd receives the team returning from Saudi Arabia.

### Fire-fighters team returns from Saudi

The Acting Chief of the General Fire Force, Major General Khaled Abdullah Fahd, warmly welcomed the General Fire Force team on Monday morning as they returned from their participation in the International Firefighters Challenge Championship. The championship took place earlier this month in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with Aramco Al Khobar overseeing the

event. A total of 28 countries and 46 teams, comprising over 200 firefighters, took part in this prestigious competition, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The primary objective of the tournament was to enhance the physical fitness standards essential for firefighters while also providing valuable sports experience through international engagements.

## 1,770 traffic mishaps, 20,352 violations in one week; 14 juveniles caught driving

### Gang of three held in 11 campsite robberies

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The General Traffic Department in the Ministry of Interior has announced that its operation units dealt with 1,770 traffic accidents from March 15-22; indicating 276 accidents caused injuries while 1,494 accidents that did not lead to injuries, reports Al-Anba daily.**

The statistics showed that the campaigns carried out within the above-mentioned week, under the supervision of Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major General Yousef Al-Khadda resulted in the referral of 55 individuals to the traffic police for committing serious violations. They were released after the issuance of citations for their violations.

Also, 14 juveniles were arrested for driving their parents' vehicles without a license. They were referred to the Juvenile Prosecution. A total of 22 persons wanted by law were arrested as well and they were referred to the competent authorities.

In addition, 20,352 citations were issued for various traffic violations; while 138 vehicles and bicycles were impounded. These violations include non-compliance with security, safety and shading regulations.

**Campsite robberies:** Officers from the Criminal Investigation Department in the Ministry of Interior closed 11 theft cases in Jahra Governorate after arresting a three-member gang involved in robbing camping sites, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Acting on a tip-off, the officers put the gang under surveillance, then the gang members were searched and investigated. It turned out that they are three young men whose ages did not exceed 29 years old. They have previous convictions including the consumption of narcotic substances.

After verifying the tip-off, the officers arrested the suspects in Amghara scrapyard while they were selling the stolen items. When they were interrogated, they admitted to carrying out 11 theft operations in a number of camps in Barr Sulabiya, Rahiya and Kabd. They also confessed to selling the stolen items at the Friday Market and Amghara scrapyard.

**Drug addict arrested:** Ahmadi Security Directorate patrol officers arrested a man, in his 40s, for the consumption and possession of narcotic substances, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

A security source disclosed that the officers got suspicious when they noticed a car parked on the side of the road in Ahmadi. They approached the car to verify their suspicions and then the suspect tried to escape. He was arrested and found to be under the influence of drugs.

Upon inquiring about him, the officers found out he has a criminal record. They also discovered an undisclosed quantity of narcotics when they searched his car.

A case was registered and the suspect was referred to the concerned authorities, along with the confiscated drugs.

**522 adverts removed:** Kuwait Municipality's Hawalli Governorate's Audit and Services Follow-up Department has conducted rigorous inspection campaigns over the past three weeks, resulting in the removal of 522 violating advertisements. The municipality disclosed that the violations encompassed a range of infractions, including 130 advertisements related to the upcoming 2024 National Assembly elections, with 392 cases already addressed, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

In a statement, Kuwait Municipality emphasized its commitment to ongoing field campaigns across governorates to address advertisement violations, especially during the forthcoming election period slated for April 4. The municipality assured the public of its continued vigilance in ensuring compliance with advertising regulations.



A view of Souk Mubarakiya

### Mubarakiya deal scheduled

Kuwait Municipality is set to finalize the contract for the redevelopment of the Mubarakiya area, which suffered damage from a fire at the Mubarakiya market. The signing ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday.

The signing event will witness the participation of key figures, including the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan.

### Lightning kills expat

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** An expatriate employed as a guard in Jakhour tragically lost his life when struck by lightning in Bar Al-Liyah. The incident occurred the evening before last, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

A swift report reached the Ministry of Interior's operations room, informing them of the lightning strike on a guard stationed in Jakhour, Bar Al-Liyah. Responding promptly, security personnel and ambulances rushed to the scene.

Upon arrival, it was confirmed that the guard, aged in his forties, had succumbed to the lightning strike. His body was swiftly transported to the designated area.

Meanwhile, the General Department of Forensic Medicine commenced their procedures as security officials initiated an investigation into the incident.

### Collection confiscated

## Four 'unknown' charity boxes found in mosques

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** The inspection and monitoring teams for charitable work recently found four boxes for collecting cash donations in mosques, reports **Al-Anba** daily quoting a reliable source from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The source said these boxes do not belong to any charitable organization and do not bear the name of any party.

On the measures being taken, the source revealed the Charitable Societies Department has confiscated the funds and a violation is recorded in each case; including the name of the mosque, time and the collected amount, and then submitted to the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs to take the necessary action concerning the Imam of the mosque where the violation was discovered and with regard to the confiscated funds, which will later be handed over to one of the charitable work agencies.

The source confirmed that the charitable organizations participating in the charitable project for the month of Ramadan are committed to the rules and regulations, as they did not commit any serious violation. The source pointed out the only observation recorded is the failure of 'mandooobs' to follow the approved fundraising schedule for mosques.

On the other hand, the daily has obtained information that the Cooperatives Sector has finalized the schedule of the general assemblies and elections of the boards of directors after the Eid Al-Fitr holiday. The April schedule is for 13 cooperative societies as follows: Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Abdullah Al-Mubarak, Al-Shamiya & Shuwaikh, Al-Nuzha, Al-Naeem, Bayan, Sulabikhat, Doha, Al-Itifaf, Al-Daiya, Al-Sabahiya, Al-Fahaheel, Al-Shaab and Ali Sabah Al-Salem. The source confirmed that elections will be conducted using the automated voting system.

# Calls for legal action as social media insults 'hurt' Kuwait's national unity

Cursing a person without legal right is forbidden: religious figure

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Religious figures in the country have rejected what was reported about the exchange of insults that ensued on social media between some components of society.**

They called on the government to intervene and stop both sides from escalating lest it ignites strife in the country.

In this regard, the Director of the Center for Promoting Religious Moderation Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Sharika said in a press statement that cursing is forbidden, and those who insult each other must be stopped by the force of the law.

He said, "Islam has forbidden harming one another. It also forbids insults and cursing. Almighty Allah has ruled profanity upon anyone who insults another or disgraces another undeservingly."

Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said, "... if anyone makes an untruthful accusation against a Muslim, Allah will make him dwell in the corrupt fluid flowing from the inhabitants of Hell till he retracts his statement." If this is against individuals, then how about attacking a component of Kuwaiti society?"



Sheikh Dr Al-Sharika



Sheikh Dr Al-Najdi

Islamic Heritage Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Najdi said the cursing that occurred is forbidden, and it is necessary to guard tongues and consider the consequences of speech.

In a press statement, he stressed that cursing a person without a legal right is forbidden.

Al-Najdi quoted a hadith, which is, "... another one speaks a word displeasing to Allah without considering it of any importance, and for this reason he will sink down into Hell", explaining, "So his saying without considering it of any importance means without confirmation."

As for someone who unjustly insults an entire tribe or an entire people, he is exposed to the possibility of the sin of every man among them, or anyone who satirizes or insults him unjustly, and the rights of all of these are attached to his responsibility.

If the Sharia has warned and feared the attachment of the right of one Muslim, then what about the one who is exposed to the rights of an entire tribe or to whom the rights of all men are attached?

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Indeed, the worst of people in the eyes of Allah is a man who satirizes another man and the latter satirizes the entire tribe. The one who reviles people has been subjected to the sin of every man who did not deserve what he reviled against them. Has he forgotten that among them are the truthful ones, the martyrs, the righteous, the imams, and the preachers? Will he be able to dispute all these?"

Al-Sharika said he considers this as one of the reasons behind harming national unity, provoking strife, and tampering with societal peace.

He called on the state to prevent these phenomena by force of law, and to address all involved parties.

Al-Sharika said, "We noticed an exchange of insults from several parties in a disgusting way that threatens the ignition of strife in the country. However, we believe in the wisdom of the esteemed wise Kuwaiti government in being the first to close these mouths and prevent the trumpets that provoke and ignite internal strife in society."

Meanwhile, an imam and preacher at Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Head of the Scientific Committee of the Society for the Revival of Is-

## MEW joins global 'Earth Hour' event

## MPW to sign contract for operation of pumping stations

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** The Ministry of Public Works will soon sign a contract for the operation and maintenance of pumping stations, main lines and a treated water distribution network for Abdally farms, report Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the ministry has obtained approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to sign the contract with a general trading and contracting company. They said the value of the contract is estimated at KDI.3 million and will last for three years.

The ministry also obtained the approval of the Central Agency for Public Tenders to award this tender, while its finance counterpart has approved

the budget.

Sources said this tender includes transporting and installing agricultural connections as needed, carrying out maintenance work on manholes and tanks, repairing subsidiary and main fractures on the lines, and providing manpower, materials, equipment, construction machinery and all that is necessary to complete the work, maintain and operate it in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the contract documents.



'Earth Hour' event: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy took part in the global event "Earth Hour" by turning off the lights

in the main ministry building located in South Surra during the evening, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The ministry announced that it observed the event by switching off the lights for one hour, from 8:30 to 9:30 pm local time in Kuwait, as a gesture of support for environmental sustainability and conservation efforts.

This initiative demonstrates the ministry's commitment to raising awareness about environmental issues and contributing to the global movement aimed at protecting the planet. By participating in "Earth Hour," the ministry aligns itself with the global community in promoting actions that help mitigate climate change and preserve natural resources for future generations.

## National Day greetings

### HH Amir congratulates Bangladesh

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a cable of congratulations to the President of Bangladesh Mohammed Shahabuddin on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the

president lasting good health and his nation more progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah has also sent a cable of congratulations to President Mohammed Shahabuddin on his country's National Day.



Annahar photo

Governor of Hawalli and Acting Governor of Capital, Al-Asfar receiving the senior military officials.

## Governor of Hawalli receives senior officials

His Excellency the Governor of Hawalli and the Acting Governor of the Capital, Ali Salem Al-Asfar, welcomed Brigadier General Sulaiman Al-Jarrah, Director General of the Capital Governorate Security Directorate, and Brigadier Tala Al-Anzi, Assistant Director General of the Capital Governorate Security Directorate, to his office at the Governorate General Court yesterday morning, reports Annahar daily.

During the meeting, His Excellency congratulated them on their new posi-

tions and emphasized the importance of implementing the directives of His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. These directives aim to maintain security, stability, and law enforcement in the Capital Governorate.

The meeting underscores the commitment of the authorities to uphold security measures and ensure the well-being of citizens and residents in the Capital Governorate.



Al-Qabas photo

Nabil Shuail and Nawal Al-Kuwaiti.

## Concert set for May 2

## Nawal and Nabil Shuail to kick off 'Lailat Omar 2024' festival

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** The Kuwaiti luminaries Nawal Al-Kuwaiti and Nabil Shuail are set to inaugurate the eagerly anticipated "Lailat Omar 2024" festival's first concerts in its upcoming edition, slated for May 2 at the Arena Theater in Kuwait, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Abdulaziz Al-Zaidi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the "Laila Omar" Company, revealed to Al-Qabas, "This concert marks a historic occasion as it unites the Gulf's beloved songbirds, Nabil Shuail and Nawal Al-Kuwaiti, sharing a stage in Kuwait for the very first time."

Al-Zaidi emphasized the distinctiveness

of the "Lailat Omar 2024" concerts, featuring a curated selection of stars from both the Gulf region and the broader Arab world. These concerts will span the summer season, building upon the success of the company's previous festival held last summer.

He reassured the Kuwaiti audience of an exceptional season ahead, stating, "Extensive preparations have been underway for months to ensure that the music festival surpasses expectations, encompassing advancements in technology, state-of-the-art equipment, innovative artistic direction, and a diverse repertoire catering to various tastes."

Total number of beneficiaries hits 143K

## Kuwait disburses around KD3.7 bln for rent allowance in past 33 years

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** Over the past 33 years, approximately 3.7 billion dinars have been disbursed for rent allowance, with 255 million dinars spent in the last fiscal year alone. The total number of beneficiaries of the rental allowance reached 143,000 citizens, with the allowance remaining in effect until the citizen submits a request for a power receipt or 38 months from receiving the voucher, whichever comes first, according to official data a copy of which has been obtained by the Al-Rai daily.

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare has submitted several current and future construction projects to the concerned authorities to address the housing crisis in Kuwait. These projects are accompanied by detailed data on distributions, requests, and rent allowance. From 1956 to 2013, 97,000 housing units were distributed, and from 2014 to 2023, approximately 71,500 units were distributed, accounting for 74 percent of the planned total distributions.

Housing applications have fluctuated in recent years, with 91,794 applications submitted in 2020, increasing to 94,781 in 2021, but declining to 90,683 in 2023. This decline in applications underscores the need for legislative measures to expedite housing projects and reduce the backlog of applications.

Currently, there are 39 housing contracts under implementation, valued at approximately 526 million dinars, including projects in various cities such as Al-Mutlaa City and Sabah Al-Ahmad Complex. Additionally, there are approximately 45,000 plots and units in the planning, tendering, and awarding phase, with future projects totaling 52,000 in Sabriya, 25,000 in Nawaf Al-Ahmad City, and 45,000 in Al-Khiran City. Challenges facing housing projects in-

## Former minister

### Al-Hamadhan passes away at the age of 89

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** Muhammad Nasser Al-Hamadhan, the former Minister of Endowments, passed away at the age of 89, marking the end of a lifetime dedicated to extensive national contributions, reports Al-Rai daily.

Revered for his unwavering commitment to advocacy and charity endeavors, both within Kuwait and on the international stage, his legacy embodies a profound commitment to service.

He was laid to rest today (Tuesday).



Al-Hamadhan

clude the high financial cost, expected to range between 60 and 65 billion dinars, representing 15 to 20 percent of oil revenues at a price of \$50 per barrel. These costs include infrastructure development, construction, rent allowance, financing support, and operating expenses.

If factors like residential land costs and infrastructure subsidies are considered, the costs could exceed 100 billion dinars. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning and government support to ensure the timely completion of housing projects and meet the needs of eligible citizens.

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## Kuwait's efforts towards effective project management

## SCPD's Gen-Sec executes automated system for gov't work monitoring

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development has instructed government agencies to designate their specialists to input project data and legislative requirements into the automated system for preparing and monitoring the government's work program at the Secretariat, reports Al-Rai daily.

Several government agencies have initiated the necessary measures to validate project data and legislative requirements within the automated system, enabling the submission of periodic reports on the program's implementation status to the Council of Ministers.

According to informed sources, this initiative will facilitate accurate tracking of project completion rates and provide insights into the progress of each ministry and government agency in project execution. It will also enable identification of challenges and obstacles, facilitating

efforts to address them effectively.

Among the potential challenges highlighted by the sources are those related to the work environment, such as sudden administrative changes, coordination gaps between responsible departments, and competency overlaps. These challenges extend to human resource issues, including excessive layers of supervision and decision-making, skills shortages, and insufficient accountability.

Furthermore, technological hurdles pose challenges, including limited digitization and project management capabilities, outdated infrastructure with unreliable data, and methodological obstacles in measuring work indicators. Notably, the lack of performance indicators for project stages and delayed error reporting are significant concerns.

Addressing these challenges will be crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of the government's work program and achieving its objectives.

## Municipal Council approves criteria for 'private housing' constructions

Nod given for revisions to ministerial decree on advt regulations

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: During its regular session Monday, which was chaired by Abdullah Al-Mahri, the Municipal Council gave its endorsement to the criteria and standards governing private and model housing constructions, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The Council also gave nod for revisions to the ministerial decree pertaining to advertising regulations, specifically amending the fifth article to introduce an annual fee of 75 dinars per square meter for dynamic electronic advertisements and 50 dinars per square meter for static and non-animated electronic commercial ads.

Council President Abdullah Al-Mahri commenced the session by formally approving the resolutions outlined in the minutes of Council Meeting No. 15 of 2024, followed by addressing correspondence from the Chair of the Joint Committee comprising Technical and Legal Committees concerning the prerequisites and specifications for private and model housing constructions.

Subsequently, council members endorsed the building guidelines for private and model housing zones, incorporating amendments suggested by the executive branch and council members themselves.

## Amendments

The amendments included setting the maximum building height at 20 meters and making one basement, and allowing the owner or owners of the plot the freedom to design the building in one of the following ways, provided that it does not exceed three floors, including the ground floor, according to the following:

- Design it as a single unit
- Make two apartments on the second floor only, provided that the other floors (ground and first) are designed as one unit.
- Only the second floor must be as one separate unit, provided that the other floors, ground and first, are designed (as one unit).
- Each floor work in its entirety as one unit, separate from (ground, first, second).

In all cases, if there is a basement, the ground floor and the basement must form a single unit.

The council decided to approve an increase in the construction percentage for plots with an area larger than 400 square meters, not to exceed 210 percent or 960 square meters, whichever is greater.

The new regulations stipulate that the following are not counted among the prescribed building percentages:

Basement area; elevators per floor, and drawer dispensers, provided that the dispensers are specific and their area does not exceed 7 square meters per floor, and anything more than that is counted within the percentage; covered corridors open to one side, open and covered unused suspensions from the main building on the ground floor, provided that their area does not exceed 5 percent of the plot area, and canopies for open-sided entrances from the main building up to Bab al-Surah, so that their width does not exceed 3 meters.

Moreover, the staircase on the roof of the second floor, with an area not exceeding 25 square meters; the machine room on the roof of the second floor, with an area not exceeding 25 square meters within 100 square meters.

The Council has sanctioned specific regulations governing construction in private and model housing, outlining several key provisions:

Basements and Elevators -- Only one basement is permitted per plot, along with the construction



His Highness the PM Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah receiving the Minister of Sports and Youth of the sisterly State of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa.

## HH PM receives Qatari Minister of Sports and Youth

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday Qatari Minister of Sports and Youth Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmad Al-Thani.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for the National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Dawood Marafi. (KUNA)

## Qatar Tourism Authority unveils exciting events

## Kuwaitis among top visitors to Qatar: official

DOHA, March 26, (KUNA): According to statistics, Kuwaitis are amongst top ten of number of visitors to Qatar, stated director of shared services at Qatar Tourism Authority, Omar Al-Jaber on Tuesday.

He spoke to KUNA of the recently launched events calendar for the year 2024, filled with wondrous activities charming young and old. Days of the holy month have also been filled with events attracting visitors from neighboring Gulf countries and the world as a whole.

Al-Jaber named a few events and festivals, some displaying traditional textiles and offering a variety of international cuisines, while others include kiosks selling traditional products.

The calendar also includes entertaining events for children, whether it is the Lego Show, a games festival, or interactive activities and musical shows.

While Qatar employs the use of impressive modern air-conditioning technologies to provide visitors with the opportunity of enjoying outdoor activities without suffering the heat of summer as seen in 21 High Street and Um Al-Naseem Park, it is also keen on shedding light on its traditional side with Waqif and Souq Garangoh.

Al-Jaber also pointed out Qatar's keenness on promoting the tourism sector and cooperation with Gulf countries in that regard, as it recently held the eighth tourism ministerial meeting dis-

cussing a number of themes and strategies.

He added that work on the joint tourism visa remains underway, saying that it would largely contribute to social and cultural exchange as well as stimulate development and prosperity in the region.

Qatar saw an increase in number of visitors as it reached 1.5 million visitor this current year compared 1.3 million of the same period of last year.

Qatar Tourism Authority specializes in development of tourism and hospitality, promoting investments in the field, as well as putting for a national tourism strategy, overseeing execution and reviewing it regularly.

## Asian markets for crude oil export growth in focus

## KPC plans to increase production capacity to 3.2 million barrels per day in fiscal 2026/'27

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is working according to ambitious plans, through which it is considering its strategic international marketing schemes to seize opportunities to increase its market share in growing markets, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the studies that KPC is conducting, the Asian markets will remain the main importer of Kuwaiti crude oil; while the Arab, Gulf and Asian countries will be the largest importers of refined materials.

The daily obtained information that KPC aims to reach crude oil production capacity of 3.2 million barrels per day by fiscal 2026/2027 -- a growth of 32 percent compared to 2.422 million barrels per day in fiscal 2020/2021.

The data revealed that the country's production capacity in fiscal 2023/2024 reached 2.9 million barrels and it is expected to

increase to three million barrels per day in fiscal 2024/2025.

The target production capacity for fiscal 2024/2025 is three million barrels per day divided as follows: 1.326 million barrels for export to Asian countries, 1.333 million barrels locally and 319,000 barrels for the International Petroleum Company.

In the following year (2025/2026), KPC aims to reach 3.1 million barrels per day; including 1.444 million barrels for export, 1.314 million barrels locally and 342,000 for the refineries of International Petroleum Company.

In fiscal 2026/2027, the target is 3.2 million barrels per day; including 1.538 million barrels for export, 1.331 million barrels locally and 331,000 barrels for the International Petroleum Company's refineries.

The domestic consumption of 1.33 million barrels of crude oil per day is covered by the refining capacity of Kuwait National

Petroleum Company's refineries -- Mina Abdullah Refinery and Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery, as well as Zour Refinery under Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC).

The quantities of refined oil in the International Petroleum Company's refineries, specifically in the Duqm and Vietnam refineries, will jump from Kuwait's external refining capacity from 167,000 barrels per day in 2020 to 331,000 barrels per day in fiscal 2026/2027.

Kuwait intends to increase its production capacity to 3.5 million barrels per day by 2025, which will be divided equally between Kuwait Oil Company at 3.2 million barrels per day and 300,000 barrels per day from Kuwait Gulf Oil Company; but production is expected to decrease by 339,000 barrels per day due to the failure to achieve the strategic goals of 284,000 and 55,000 barrels per day.

## Minister of

Continued from Page 1

the amount so that the donors' money is distributed to the largest number of people.

Those who gave zakat to these organizations and funds were aiming for it to go to the needy, instead of it being used to build palaces for those in charge of it or for spending it on terrorist groups, or for entertaining corrupt people who do not fear Allah with the money entrusted to them.

## Kuwait Municipality

Continued from Page 1

the upcoming elections, noting that they will be cooperating with other government sectors to ease the voting process for citizens.

Al-Dabbous stressed the importance of the municipality's governorates chiefs to prepare the 118 schools, which will hold the voting process in the five constituencies.

He also added that the municipality will empty schools parking from any cars, as well as remove candidates banners or posters near any polling stations.

## Amir receives

Continued from Page 1

Tuesday Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communication Dawood Marafi at Bayan Palace.

He also received Qatari Minister of Sports and Youth, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Thani, on occasion of visit to the country.

The meeting was attended by senior officials.

## Cabinet announces

Continued from Page 1

The Cabinet then expressed denunciation of all acts that harm national unity, especially via social media platform. Condemning all acts leading to splitting the Kuwaiti society, the Cabinet stressed utter rejection of such manner, and that nobody is above the law, lauding the firm role played by the Interior Ministry to confront such acts of bigotry via apprehending those responsible and bringing them to justice.

The Cabinet also announced that the Eid Al-Fitr holiday at all ministries, and governmental bodies and institutions would start on Tuesday, April 9. Work will resume on Tuesday, April 14, while agencies of special work nature will determine their Eid holiday by competent bodies to take into consideration the public interest.

On an international scale, the Cabinet expressed strong condemnation of the terrorist attack that targeted a commercial complex in the Russian capital, Moscow, leaving dozens dead and injured. While emphasizing its condemnation of this terrorist act and its rejection of violence in all its forms, the State of Kuwait also called on the international community to stand up to these terrorist acts that target civilians.

## Buying, selling

Continued from Page 1

against people without piety or patience and confirmation.

Dr. Al-Sharika commented on the trend of some candidates citing Quranic verses in their speeches, stressing that, "I hope that the candidates will be careful in pronouncing the Quran verses correctly, as people have unfortunately noticed many errors."

In another matter, Dr. Al-Sharika said, "Those who forge passports and certificates are in dire need of sincere and loving advice that will save them from using illicit money and save them from the torment of the grave and entering Hell. Any part of the body that grows from unlawful earnings, then Hell is more deserving of it. As for the attempts to justify their forgery, consuming illicit earnings, and belittling their status, this is deceitful to them and a betrayal of the trustworthiness of reporting and advice."

In response to a question presented by a social media user - "Does the curse include the officials who helped in the forgery and received the price for it?", Dr. Al-Sharika said, "Any official involved in forging nationalities or any illicit activity is deemed complicit in the crime, sin, and adverse repercussions. Every penny accepted in exchange for such actions constitutes a sinful, prohibited act, which will haunt them in the afterlife unless they repent before their Creator."

## Kuwait welcomes

Continued from Page 1

expanding the scope of the flow of humanitarian aid to civilians in the entire Gaza Strip, and enhancing their protection.

He hoped that this decision would lead to alleviating the suffering of the people of Gaza and would contribute to stopping the escalation, targeting and forcibly displacing Palestinian civilians, achieving a comprehensive cessation of the crisis, and ending the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

He also called on the Israeli occupation forces to immediately comply with this resolution and adhere to United Nations resolutions and the requirements of international humanitarian law, while immediately stopping targeting civilians in Gaza and humanitarian institutions and headquarters, including hospitals, schools and shelters.

Earlier, the United Nations Security Council issued its first demand for a cease-fire in Gaza, with the U.S. angering Israel by abstaining from the vote. Israel responded by canceling a visit to Washington by a high-level delegation in the strongest public clash between the allies since the war began.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the U.S. of "retreating" from a "principled position" by allowing the vote to pass without conditioning the cease-fire on the release of hostages held by Hamas.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the administration was "kind of perplexed" by Netanyahu's decision. He said the Israelis were "choosing to create a perception of daylight here when they don't need to do that."

Kirby and the American ambassador to the U.N. said the U.S. abstained because the resolution did not condemn Hamas. U.S. officials chose to abstain rather than veto the proposal "because it does fairly reflect our view that a cease-fire and the release of hostages come together," Kirby said.

The 15-member council voted 14-0 to approve the resolution, which also demanded the release of all hostages taken captive during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack on southern Israel. The chamber broke into loud applause after the vote.

The U.S. vetoed past Security Council cease-fire resolutions in large part because of the failure to tie them directly to the release of hostages, the failure to condemn Hamas' attacks and the delicacy of ongoing negotiations. American officials have argued that the cease-fire and hostage releases are linked, while Russia, China and many other council members favored unconditional calls for a cease-fire.

The resolution approved Monday demands the release of hostages but does not make it a condition for the cease-fire for the month of Ramadan, which ends in April.

Hamas said it welcomed the U.N.'s move but said the cease-fire needs to be permanent.

"We confirm our readiness to engage in an immediate prisoner exchange process that leads to the release of prisoners on both sides," the group said. For months, the militants have sought a deal that includes a complete end to the conflict.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tweeted: "This resolution must be implemented. Failure would be unforgivable."

The U.S. decision to abstain comes at a time of growing tensions between President Joe Biden's administration and Netanyahu over Israel's prosecution of the war, the high number of civilian casualties and the limited amounts of humanitarian assistance reaching Gaza. The two countries have also clashed over Netanyahu's rejection of a Palestinian state, Jewish settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and the expansion of settlements there.

In addition, the well-known antagonism between Netanyahu and Biden - which dates from Biden's tenure as vice president - deepened after Biden questioned Israel's strategy in combating Hamas.

Then Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a Biden ally, suggested that Netanyahu was not operating in Israel's best interests and called for Israel to hold new elections. Biden signaled his approval of Schumer's remarks, prompting a rebuke from Netanyahu.

During its U.S. visit, the Israeli delegation was to present White House officials with its plans for a possible ground invasion of Rafah, a city on the Egyptian border in southern Gaza where over 1 million Palestinian civilians have sought shelter from the war.

Last week, Netanyahu rebuffed a U.S. request to halt the planned Rafah invasion - voting during a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to act alone if necessary. Blinken warned that Israel could soon face growing international isolation, while Vice President Kamala Harris said Israel could soon face unspecified consequences if it launches the ground assault.

The Security Council vote came after Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution Friday that would have supported "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israeli-Hamas conflict. That resolution featured a weakened link between a cease-fire and the release of hostages, leaving it open to interpretation, and no time limit.



Abdullah Al-Mahri

tion of an elevator in the main building. Plots larger than 750 square meters may install a second elevator, while those smaller than 750 square meters may install a second elevator for individuals with disabilities, provided they present a mobility disability certificate from the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs. The distance between the elevator and its distributor should not exceed 5 meters from the plot's boundary. Approval from adjacent neighbors is required if the elevator is situated next to their property, with a limit of two elevators per parcel.

Food Elevator -- A food elevator

linking the main kitchen to the rest of the house is permissible, with the dimensions of its well not exceeding 1.2 meters and not extending to the roof floor. Such elevators are not included in the total building percentage calculation, provided legal setbacks are observed.

Arbors and Awnings -- Construction of arbors (pergolas) and awnings across all floors is allowed, not counting toward the total building percentage, as long as their combined area does not exceed 10 percent of the plot's area. On the roof, their area should not exceed 20 square meters, counted within the awning

percentage, and must adhere to legal setbacks and height regulations.

Pergolas or canopies over stairwells -- Pergolas or canopies over stairwells to protect water tanks are permissible, not exceeding a height of 1.80 meters, with their area not counted toward the total building proportion or height.

Protrusions -- Protrusions should not exceed 60 centimeters in width if located adjacent to a neighbor's property. Additionally, air conditioning ducts may be added on the neighbor's side, with protrusions not exceeding 60 centimeters, ensuring aesthetic considerations.

## World News Roundup

## Europe

**UK court orders to delay extradition of Assange:** A British court ruled Tuesday that Julian Assange can't immediately be extradited to the United States on espionage charges, in a partial victory for the WikiLeaks founder.

Two High Court judges said they would grant Assange a new appeal unless US authorities give further assurances about what will happen to him. The ruling means the legal saga, which has dragged on for more than a decade, will continue.

The case has been adjourned until May 20.

Judges Victoria Sharp and Jeremy Johnson said that if no assurances are filed by the US, they will grant Assange permission to appeal extradition on grounds including breach of freedom of expression, and because he might receive the death penalty.

"If assurances are not given then we will grant leave to appeal without a further hearing," they said. "If assurances are given then we will give the parties an opportunity to make further submissions before we make a final decision on the application for leave to appeal."

During a two-day hearing in the High Court in February, Assange's lawyer Edward Fitzgerald said American authorities were seeking to punish him for WikiLeaks' "exposure of criminality on the part of the US government on an unprecedented scale," including torture and killings.

Assange's supporters have argued he is a journalist protected by the First Amendment who exposed US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan that was in the public interest. They have argued his prosecution is politically motivated and he can't get a fair trial in the US. (AP)



Assange

**Ukraine ramps up spending on homemade arms:** Ukraine needs any edge it can get to repel Russia from its territory. One emerging bright spot is its small but fast-growing defense industry, which the government is flooding with money in hopes that a surge of homemade weapons and ammunition can help turn the tide.

The effort ramped up sharply over the past year as the US and Europe strained to deliver weapons and other aid to Ukraine, which is up against a much bigger Russian military backed by a thriving domestic defense industry.

The Ukrainian government under its president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, budgeted nearly \$1.4 billion in 2024 to buy and develop weapons at home - 20 times more than before Russia's full-scale invasion.

And in another major shift, a huge portion of weapons are now being bought from privately owned factories. They are sprouting up across the country and rapidly taking over an industry that had been dominated by state-owned companies.

A privately owned mortar factory that launched in western Ukraine last year is making roughly 20,000 shells a month. "I feel that we are bringing our country closer to victory," said Anatoliy Kuzmin, the factory's 64-year-old owner, who used to make farm equipment and fled his home in southern Ukraine after Russia invaded in 2022. (AP)

**US, Baltic states affirm support for Ukraine:** The United States and Baltic countries have affirmed joint resolve in backing Ukraine to defend itself in the face of the Russian military operation launched three years ago.

US State Department Matthew Miller said in a statement that the common stance was expressed during a meeting that grouped US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna, Latvian Foreign Minister Krisjanis Karins, and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, late on Monday in Washington.

Secretary Blinken and the Baltic foreign ministers affirmed the strength of the NATO Alliance and its role in ensuring security and prosperity in Europe, noting in particular the importance of securing NATO's eastern flank.

The Secretary also congratulated the three foreign ministers on their upcoming 20th anniversary in the Alliance.

The Secretary and the foreign ministers underlined that the United States, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania stand united in support of Ukraine as it defends itself against "Russias aggression and are committed to holding Russia accountable." (KUNA)

**Russia extends arrest of US reporter:** A Moscow court on Tuesday ordered Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich to remain in jail on espionage charges until at least late June, court officials said.

The 32-year-old US citizen was arrested in late March 2023 while on a reporting trip and has spent nearly a year behind bars. His arrest was extended until June 30.

Photos from the courtroom released by court officials showed Gershkovich, clad in a black checkered shirt, smiling from the glass defendant's box.

Gershkovich and his employer have denied the allegations, and the U.S. government has declared him to be wrongfully detained.

His arrest in the city of Yekaterinburg rattled journalists in Russia, where authorities have not detailed what, if any, evidence they have to support the espionage charges.

Gershkovich is being held at Moscow's Lefortovo prison, which is notorious for its harsh conditions.

US ambassador to Russia Lynne Tracy attended the court hearing on Tuesday and reiterated that "the accusations against Evan are categorically untrue."

Analysts have pointed out that Moscow may be using jailed Americans as bargaining chips in soaring US-Russian tensions over the Kremlin's military operation in Ukraine. (AP)

**'Masterminds are yet to be found':** Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that the gunmen who killed 139 people at a suburban Moscow concert hall are "radical Islamists," but he repeated his accusation that Ukraine could have played a role despite Kyiv's strong denials.

Two days after the Islamic State's Afghanistan affiliate claimed responsibility for Friday night's attack at the music venue, Putin acknowledged during a meeting with government officials that the killings were carried out by extremists "whose ideology the Islamic world has been fighting for centuries."

Putin, who declared over the weekend that the four attackers were arrested while trying to escape to Ukraine, said investigators haven't determined who ordered the attack, but that it was necessary to find out "why the terrorists after committing their crime tried to flee to Ukraine and who was waiting for them there."

The IS affiliate claimed it carried out the attack, and US intelligence said it had information confirming the group was responsible. French President Emmanuel Macron said France has intelligence pointing to "an IS entity" as responsible for the attack. (AP)

**Russian ambassador a no-show:** The Russian ambassador to Poland did not show up Monday for a meeting at the Polish Foreign Ministry where he had been summoned because of a Russian cruise missile that violated Polish airspace on the weekend, the Polish ministry's spokesman said. Russian Ambassador Sergey Andreev was to be given a note of protest after the Russian missile entered the airspace of the NATO member for 39 seconds early Sunday amid a Russian attack targeting western Ukraine.

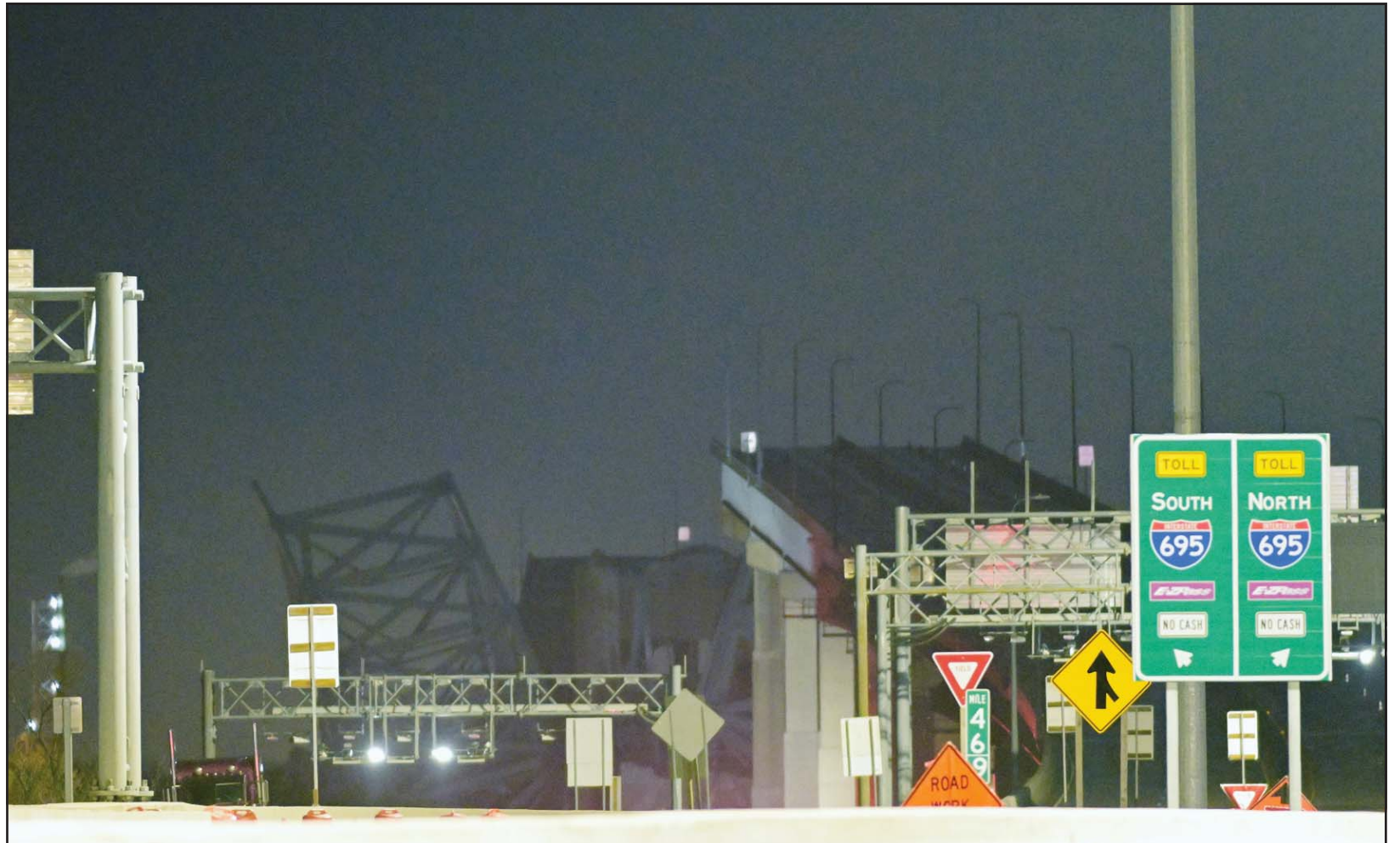
Pawel Wroski, the Polish Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters in a brief statement outside the ministry that Andreev did not come to the meeting, and that his failure to appear has led the Warsaw government to wonder "whether he is able to properly represent the interests of the Russian Federation in Warsaw."

Wroski said the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations "clearly defines the duties of an ambassador in a host state." (AP)

**Italy follows France in raising security:** Italy followed France on Monday in stepping up security following the attack on a suburban Moscow concert hall and the claim of responsibility by an affiliate of the Islamic State group.

The attack renewed attention in Europe on the risk from the extremists, and particularly the Central Asian affiliate, as the continent gears up for big events such as the Paris Olympics and the European Championship in Germany.

France on Sunday increased its security alert posture to the highest level. In Italy, a national security council meeting Monday resulted in a decision to increase security around Holy Week observances leading up to Easter this weekend. (AP)



Parts of the Francis Scott Key Bridge remain after a container ship collided with a support on March 26, in Baltimore. The major bridge in Baltimore snapped and collapsed after a container ship rammed into it on Tuesday, and several vehicles fell into the river below. (AP)

## Cargo ship hits Baltimore's Key Bridge, bringing it down

A major bridge in Baltimore snapped and collapsed after a container ship rammed into it early Tuesday, and several vehicles fell into the river below. Rescuers were searching for at least seven people in the water.

The vessel appears to have hit one of the supports of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing the roadway to break apart in several places and plunge into the water, according to a video posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. The ship caught fire, and thick, black smoke billowed out of it.

"This is a dire emergency," Kevin Cartwright, director of communications for the Baltimore Fire Department, told The Associated Press. "Our focus right now is trying to rescue and recover these people."

Emergency responders were searching for at least seven people believed to be in the water, Cartwright said, though he said it's too early to know how many people were affected. He called the collapse a "developing mass casualty event."

He added that some cargo appeared to be

dangling from the bridge, which spans the Patapsco River, a vital artery that along with the Port of Baltimore is a hub for shipping on the East Coast. Opened in 1977, the bridge is named for the writer of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Agencies received emergency calls around 1:30 am reporting that a ship leaving Baltimore had struck a column on the bridge, according to Cartwright. Several vehicles were on the bridge at the time, including one the size of a tractor-trailer truck. (AP)

## Politics

## VP praises Guatemalan leader

## Biden, Harris discuss migration with Arévalo

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): US Vice President Kamala Harris welcomed Bernardo Arévalo, the newly elected president of Guatemala, to the White House on Monday to praise his battle against corruption and promote their work on stemming migration from Central America.

"Your leadership can help rebuild the Guatemalan people's trust in their institutions, and give them a sense of hope and opportunity," Harris said.

President Joe Biden met privately afterward with Arévalo to congratulate him on his inauguration, the White House said later Monday. They discussed good governance, effective migration management, the importance of upholding democracy and other issues, the White House said.

The Democratic vice president announced that her efforts to address the root causes of migration by improving economic opportunity in the region have generated \$5.2 billion in private sector commitments.

"The problems, of course, did not occur overnight, and the solutions will not be achieved overnight," Harris said. But there has been short-term progress, she said.

Migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras - an area known as the Northern Triangle - have long made the journey north to the US-Mexico border. Successive administrations have struggled to manage the flow of migrants, and it's become a humanitarian and political challenge for Biden during this year's election. Both Democrats and Republicans in Congress say the nation's immigration system is broken, but lawmakers have failed to address the problem.

## Also:

**MIAMI:** Two graduate students from China whose studies were put on hold, and a professor who says he is unable

## Some Republicans who supported Haley still 'refusing' to back Trump

COLUMBIA, SC, March 26, (AP): Now that Nikki Haley has shuttered her presidential campaign, one person who voted for her refuses to back former President Donald Trump and plans to reluctantly vote for US President Joe Biden.

Another Haley primary supporter acknowledges that he was probably always a "closet Trump fan" and will vote for the former president again in November.

The former UN ambassador's base was never big enough to seriously challenge Trump before he clinched a third straight Republican nomination. But in what's shaping up to be a tight rematch between Trump and Biden, the apparent splintering of Haley's voters and donors could hurt Trump's general election chances, particularly in battleground states full of suburban voters who remain dubious of a Trump return to the White House.

For now, interviews with Haley's supporters suggest they could go in a variety of directions - some back-

ing Trump, some going to Biden and others seeking third-party options or avoiding making a decision about the presidential race yet.

Haley has not spoken publicly since leaving the race and urging Trump to reach out to all Republicans. She has not endorsed Trump and suggested she may not at all.

"She said it's up to him to earn the support of those who supported her, and he's got to earn it," said Eric Tanenblatt, a longtime GOP donor who was Haley's Georgia campaign's co-chairman.

"Right now, I'm definitely not there. It tells me there are things that are still up in the air among other key Haley donors waiting for a sign."

The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Glenn Swanson caucused for Haley after seeing her campaign in his hometown of Cedar Falls, Iowa. At the time, the retired architect said he was open to a Trump alternative.

to recruit research assistants, sued Florida education officials on Monday, trying to stop enforcement of a new state law which limits research exchanges between state universities and academics from seven prohibited countries.

The law passed last year by the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature and signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis was designed to stop the Chinese Communist government and others

from influencing the state's public colleges and universities. The countries on the prohibited list are China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Syria, and Venezuela.

The law is discriminatory, unconstitutional and reminiscent of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which instituted a 10-year ban on Chinese laborers immigrating to the United States, according to the lawsuit filed in federal court in Miami.



US Republican presidential candidate former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley speaks at a campaign event on Jan 14, 2024, in Adel, Iowa. Haley's base of voters and donors was never big enough to seriously challenge Donald Trump. But her supporters are still splintered weeks after she dropped out of the GOP primary. If that holds, it could hurt Trump's general election chances. (AP)



Trump



Adams

## America

**Cop killed during traffic stop:** A New York City police officer was shot and killed Monday during a traffic stop, the city's mayor said. It marked the first slaying of an NYPD officer in two years.

"We lost one of our sons today and it is extremely painful. It is extremely painful," Mayor Eric Adams said, addressing reporters at a hospital in Queens. The shooting happened just before 5:50 pm in the Far Rockaway section of Queens, police said. Officer Jonathan Diller and his partner were part of the NYPD Community Response Team and were conducting a traffic stop at the time.

As they approached the vehicle, the suspect pointed a gun toward the officers and shot Diller beneath his bullet-proof vest, said Police Commissioner Edward Caban, who identified the slain officer on X, formerly known as Twitter. He said Diller's partner returned fire and shot one of the people in the vehicle, who was taken to an area hospital. (AP)

**Trump case set for trial April 15:** The first of Donald Trump's four criminal trials will begin April 15, a Manhattan judge ruled Monday after tearing into the former president's lawyers for what he said were unfounded claims that the hush-money case had been tainted by prosecutorial misconduct.

Judge Juan M. Merchan scoffed at the defense's calls to delay the case longer or throw it out entirely because of a last-minute document dump that had bumped the first-ever trial of a former president from its scheduled Monday start. Trump vowed to appeal the ruling.

Barring another delay, the presumptive Republican nominee will be on trial as a criminal defendant in just three weeks - an inauspicious homecoming in the city where

he grew up, built a real estate empire and gained wealth and celebrity that propelled him to the White House. (AP)

**SC court official resigns:** A South Carolina court official under investigation amid allegations of tampering with the jury in the Alex Murdaugh trial announced her resignation on Monday.



Engineers install components on exploding drones in Kyiv region, Ukraine, on Feb 7. Ukraine needs any edge it can get to repel Russia from its territory. One emerging bright spot is its small but fast-growing defense industry, which the government is flooding with money in hopes that a surge of homemade weapons and ammunition can help turn the tide. (AP)

tion on Monday.

Colleton County Clerk of Court Becky Hill said that her resignation would take effect immediately during a news conference in front of the courthouse. Serving as clerk since 2020 was an honor, she said, citing the office's work and its management of the high-profile Murdaugh trial last year.

"Managing a trial with such importance to the people of South Carolina, as well as of the national and international media interest and public scrutiny, it has caused me to reflect upon decisions involving my stay in the office of the clerk of court," Hill said. "And so after much reflection, I have decided that it is best not to run again for reelection." (AP)

**'800 officers in NY subway':** New York City plans to intensify a crackdown on subway fare-beating by sending at least 800 police officers specifically to keep watch on turnstiles, officials announced Monday.

It's the latest in a string of recent moves to address concerns about safety and unruliness in the nation's busiest subway system. Now, the New York Police Department plans to deploy hundreds of uniformed and plainclothes officers this week to deter fare evasion. "The tone of law and order starts at the turnstiles," department Transit Chief Michael Kemper said at a news conference. Chief of Patrol John Chell said the additional officers would fan out to various stations, based on crime, ridership statistics and community complaints. (AP)

## Africa

## Kenya explosion kills 4

## Senegal prez-elect to 'fight' corruption

DAKAR, Senegal, March 26, (AP) — Senegal woke up Tuesday to a new president-elect, **Bassirou Diomaye Faye**, a former tax inspector and political newcomer who was released from prison just weeks ago and had inspired voters, many of them unemployed youth, with a vow to fight corruption and reform the economy.

Faye was catapulted into a presidential campaign after popular opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, who was barred from running due to a prior conviction, had backed him. As he gave his first speech as president-elect on Monday evening, it represented a dramatic rise for the 44-year-old who is due to be the youngest leader of the West African nation.

"I pledge to govern with humility and transparency, and to fight corruption at all levels. I pledge to devote myself fully to rebuilding our institutions," he said, restating promises made during his campaign.

While official results of Sunday's vote were not yet available, the other front-runner - the former prime minister who was backed by incumbent President Macky Sall - had conceded defeat. Sall followed with congratulations, also naming Faye as the winner.

The election followed months of unrest ignited by Faye and Sonko's arrest last year, and concerns that the president would seek a third term in office despite constitutional term limits. The violence shook Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy in a region that has seen a wave of coups. Rights groups said dozens were killed in the protests, while some 1,000 people were jailed.

## Reform

Considered the anti-establishment candidate, Faye's campaign messages of economic reform and anti-corruption resonated with the youth. Almost a third of young people are unemployed with thousands risking their lives on dangerous journeys in search of jobs in the West. Faye has vowed to improve Senegal's control over its natural resources by promoting national companies to prevent the country from falling into what his campaign called "economic enslavement." His manifesto promised to renegotiate Senegal's oil and gas contract and introduce a new currency.

On Monday night, Faye outlined some early foreign policy priorities, which included reforming the troubled West African regional bloc known as ECOWAS.

"A win by the opposition also means major changes ahead in domestic and foreign policies," said Rida Lyammouri of the Policy Center for the New South, a Morocco-based think tank, adding that a promise to move away from former colonial power France could define the foreign policy of the country's new government.

**Pan-African Parliament chief re-elected:** The senator from Zimbabwe and Geo-Political Chief Representative of South Africa Fortune Charumbira, was re-elected on Monday as president of the Pan-African Parliament to continue his term and represent the continent from 2022 until 2025.

During the same electoral session, which was held in Midrand, South Africa, two vice-presidents (the first and fourth) were chosen, and it was agreed to "renew confidence in the former officials and allow them to carry out their duties in their positions in order to preserve stability in appointments within the structures of this continental body."

A statement by the Algerian National Assembly said that "this took place during a closed session held within the framework of the special session of the sixth legislative term of the African Parliament," headed by the head of the committee in charge of elections, Algerian Member of Parliament (MP) Fatih Boutebek.

**More than 130 Nigerian kids back home:** More than 130 Nigerian schoolchildren rescued after more than two weeks in captivity arrived Monday in their home state in northwestern Nigeria ahead of their anticipated reunions with families, following the latest in a series of mass school abductions in the West African nation.

Six of the 137 students remain in hospital, and one staff member who was abducted along with the children died in captivity, military officials said.

The children were seized by motorcycle-riding gunmen at their school in the remote Kaduna state town of Kuriga on March 7, triggering a wide-ranging rescue operation. They were rescued Sunday by the military in a forest about 200 kilometers (more than 120 miles) to the north in neighboring Zamfara state, though authorities have provided no details of the rescue or said whether any suspected kidnapers were arrested.

**'Africa's parliamentary speaker took \$135K':** South African prosecutors said Monday they intend to charge the parliamentary speaker with corruption, alleging that she took \$135,000 and a wig in bribes over a three-year period while she was defense minister.

Speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula has not been arrested or charged. The prosecutors spoke at a court hearing over her claims that authorities hadn't properly informed her of allegations or followed correct procedure in their investigation.

Judge Sulet Potterill said that she would deliver a ruling on April 2 on Mapisa-Nqakula's application for a temporary block on police arresting her. Mapisa-Nqakula is also asking for access to documents outlining the evidence prosecutors have against her.

Prosecutors have rejected her request and say she is asking for special treatment.

**Explosion in northern Kenya kills 4:** An explosion at a small hotel located near a police station in northeastern Kenya killed four people, including three officers, and wounded several others on Monday, authorities said.

The blast in the town of Mandera, which is on the border with Somalia, was caused by an improvised explosive device that had been planted at the hotel and was detonated as a crowd of people sat down to eat breakfast, police said.

Mandera police chief Samwel Mutunga said that two of those wounded were in critical condition and would be flown to the capital, Nairobi.

Investigators have blamed east Africa-based extremist group al-Shabab for the attack. The group, which hasn't claimed responsibility for the explosion, has staged major attacks in Kenya and neighboring Somalia. The latest attack followed another one on Sunday in coastal Kenya's Lamu County, where two police reservists were killed.



Faye



Britain's Defense Minister Grant Shapps, (right), Italy's Defense Minister Guido Crosetto, (left), and Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara, (center), attend a joint press conference after a signing ceremony for Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) at the defense ministry on Dec 14, 2023, in Tokyo, Japan. Japan's Cabinet on March 26 approved a plan to sell future next-generation fighter jets that it's developing with Britain and Italy to other countries, in the latest move away from the country's postwar pacifist principles. (AP)

## Asia

## Van-truck collision kills 17 in Philippines

## Japan to sell fighter jets to other nations

TOKYO, March 26, (AP) — Japan's Cabinet on Tuesday approved a plan to sell future next-generation fighter jets that it's developing with Britain and Italy to other countries, in the latest move away from the country's postwar pacifist principles.

The contentious decision to allow international arms sales is expected to help secure Japan's role in the joint fighter jet project and part of a move to build up the Japanese arms industry and bolster its role in global security.

The Cabinet also endorsed a revision to Japan's arms equipment and technology transfer guidelines to allow coproduced lethal weapons to be sold to countries other than the partners.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said the changes are necessary given Japan's security environment, but stressed that Japan's pacifist principles remain unchanged.

"In order to achieve a fighter aircraft that meets the necessary performance and to avoid jeopardizing the defense of Japan, it is necessary to transfer finished products from Japan to countries other than partner countries," Hayashi told reporters, adding that Tokyo will follow a strict approval process for jet sales. "We have clearly demonstrated that we will continue to adhere to our basic philosophy as a peaceful nation," he said.

Japan has long restricted arms exports under the country's pacifist constitution, but has rapidly taken steps to deregulate amid rising regional and global tensions, especially from nearby China.

## Also:

**MANILA, Philippines:** At least 17 people were killed when their passenger van collided with a cargo truck then burst into flames Monday in the southern Philippines, police said.

Three other people were injured by the midday collision in an accident-prone road in Antipas town in Cotabato province, Antipas police chief Capt. Godofredo Tupas II said.

The 10-wheel cargo truck, which was loaded with sand and gravel, was negotiating a downhill road when its brakes apparently malfunctioned and caused it to slam into the passenger van, Tupas said.

All but one of the 18 people onboard the van, including the driver, were killed by the impact and the flames, Tupas told The Associated Press by telephone.

zila's Federal Police on Monday launched an investigation into former President **Jair Bolsonaro's** two-night stay last month at the Hungarian embassy in Brasilia, amid widespread speculation from his opponents that he may have been attempting to evade arrest.

## New Zealand joins US and UK in condemning China-linked hacks

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 26, (AP) — Hackers linked to the Chinese government launched a state-sponsored operation that targeted New Zealand's Parliament in 2021, the country's security minister said on Tuesday.

New Zealand's allegation comes a day after American and British authorities announced a set of criminal charges and sanctions against seven hackers, all believed to be living in China, who targeted US officials, journalists, corporations, pro-democracy activists and the UK's election watchdog.

"The use of cyber-enabled espionage operations to interfere with democratic institutions and processes anywhere is unacceptable," Minister Responsible for the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) Judith Collins said in a media statement.

Collins said the agency had also established links between a state-sponsored actor linked to China and malicious cyber activity targeting parliamentary entities in New Zealand.

The GCSB's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) completed a

robust technical assessment following a compromise of the Parliamentary Counsel Office and the Parliamentary Service in 2021, and has attributed this activity to a PRC (China) state-sponsored group known as APT40," Collins says.

"Fortunately, in this instance, the NCSC worked with the impacted organizations to contain the activity and remove the actor shortly after they were able to access the network."

Collins said New Zealand will not follow the US and UK in sanctioning China as New Zealand does not have a law allowing such penalties, nor were there plans to introduce legislation.

Foreign Minister Winston Peters confirmed New Zealand's concerns had been conveyed to the Chinese Ambassador Wang Xiaolong. "Unacceptable interference of this nature is unacceptable, and we have urged China to refrain from such activity in future," Peters said in a statement Tuesday.

"New Zealand will continue to speak out - consistently and predictably - where we see concerning behaviors like this."

Army troops, police and villagers extricated the victims from the van, many of them badly burned. Police took custody of the truck driver, who would be investigated before facing possible criminal complaints, Tupas said.

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's leader said Tuesday that prisoners convicted for serious national security crimes would not likely be granted early release under the tightened rules of a new national security law, signaling a hardening government stance against jailed political activists.

Chief Executive **John Lee** said the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance stipulates that people found guilty of endangering national security must not be granted remission unless the commissioner of correctional services believes the move would not be a national security risk. This also applies to inmates who received sentences be-

fore the new law was introduced last Saturday, Lee said.

Previously, inmates could have their prison sentences reduced by up to one-third for good conduct under the city's prison rules, provided they were serving terms longer than one month.

**BEIJING:** The former president of the Chinese Football Association has been sentenced to life in prison amid a wide-ranging crackdown on sports corruption.

Chinese courts on Tuesday handed down sentences of between eight years and life in prison to officials in the Communist Party-controlled sports programs, accusing them of taking bribes and committing other financial crimes.

**Chen Xuyuan**, the former CFA president, received a life sentence for helping fix matches and using his various positions to commit financial crimes, state media reported.



Opposition presidential candidate Corina Yoris gives a press conference in Caracas, Venezuela on March 25. Yoris became the substitute candidate for the opposition's presidential bid after Maria Corina Machado announced on March 22 that Yoris would replace her as she fights a government ban on running for office. (AP)



Bolsonaro



Maduro

## Lat/Am

**Yoris unable to register:** The main Venezuelan opposition coalition said early Tuesday that electoral authorities didn't let it register its presidential candidate as the deadline ended, in what it called the latest violation to the citizens' right to vote for change in the South American country.

The candidate, Corina Yoris, could not be registered by midnight Monday, which was the time limit for registering for the election set for July 28, said Omar Barboza, representative of the US-backed Unitary Platform coalition.

On a video posted on the Unitary Platform X account, Barboza said this was "a violation of the right of the majority of Venezuelans who want to vote for change," and he demanded the registry be reopened.

Yoris, an 80-year-old unknown newcomer, was named Friday the substitute to opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who faces a government ban on her running for office.

Hours before the opposition coalition couldn't register Yoris, President **Nicolás Maduro** got the support of thousands as he made official his candidacy for a third term that would last until 2031. (AP)

**Threats hinder creation of council:** Fresh turmoil involving a transitional presidential council that will be responsible for choosing Haiti's new leader triggered a flurry of meetings with Caribbean leaders and officials from the US, Canada and France, officials said Monday.

The council has yet to be sworn in given concerns over the security of its members, among other things, a regional official who was not authorized to talk to the media told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The official is based in Guyana, which serves as headquarters for the regional trade bloc known as Caricom that is helping create the transitional council.

The delay in establishing the council comes as gangs continue to launch attacks across Haiti's capital. Since Feb 29, gunmen have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remains closed and stormed the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

More than 340 US citizens have been evacuated out of Haiti since March 17, the majority from Port-au-Prince, according to the US Department of State. (AP)

**Bolsonaro's 'sleepover' probed:** Bra-



A soldier works to contain wildfires in Nogales, in the High Mountains area of Veracruz state, Mexico on March 25. Forest fires were burning in nearly half of Mexico's drought-stricken states on Monday fueled by strong winds. (AP)

**Forest fires burn in Mexico:** Forest fires were burning in nearly half of Mexico's drought-stricken states Monday fueled by strong winds.

The National Forestry Commission reported 58 active fires in 15 states, including in protected nature reserves in Morelos, Veracruz and Mexico states.

A preliminary estimate of the affected area reached more than 3,500 acres (1,421 hectares), the commission wrote on the social platform X.

Authorities had reported no injuries, but at least some homes were burned at a wildfire in Nogales, Veracruz Monday. A fire burned across mountain farms, killing livestock and charring homes. At least five families were moved to a shelter.

Firefighters battled with a water tanker while residents slapped at flames in their fields with branches.

Alondra Chávez a Nogales resident was among those fighting the flames. (AP)



Bedour Al Dhamkhi

### HSBC Kuwait appoints new head of human resources

Bedour Al Dhamkhi has been appointed Head of Human Resources for HSBC in Kuwait. Bedour brings 11 years' experience in the Kuwait banking sector to the role and has demonstrated her leadership, expertise and commitment to a supportive, inclusive workplace. In her previous role at KNET, a leading provider of electronic banking services in Kuwait, Bedour developed

a wealth of knowledge and skills within the financial sector which HSBC believes will help her drive the bank's local and regional people policies and further establish HSBC's Employee Value Proposition for graduates and experienced colleagues alike. "Energising for growth is a strategic priority for the bank which means that we aim to attract and retain the best

talent to the bank. Bedour's experience and important leadership role will contribute to driving our objectives investing in the personal and career development of our employees and commitment to nurturing local talent," said Samer Al Abed, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Kuwait. Commenting on her appointment, Bedour Al Dhamkhi, Head of Human Resources,

HSBC Kuwait, "HSBC offers a unique employee value proposition that includes a focus on employee well-being through flexible working, international career opportunities and a focus on future skills. I look forward to working with the leadership team and everyone on our business to support colleagues with career growth and making HSBC an employer of choice in Kuwait."

### oil price up

The price of Kuwaiti oil went up 18 cents reaching USD 85.57 per barrel on Monday compared to USD 85.39 pb last Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation on Tuesday. In international markets, Brent crude oil went up USD 1.32 reaching USD 86.75 pb, and U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose USD 1.32 reaching USD 81.95 a barrel. (KUNA)

### Market Movements

26-03-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+45.07	6,898.17	SAUDI - Tadawul	-71.40	12,585.54
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+404.02	65,949.00	UAE - DFM	-35.32	4,246.23
			JAPAN - Nikkei	-16.09	40,398.03

# Business

## Kuwait oil refineries expect strong profits in 2024-2025

Global market relies on Kuwaiti & Gulf refineries

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** Oil sources have confirmed to Al-Seyassah that the Kuwaiti oil refineries, namely Al-Zour and Al-Ahmadi, along with Mina Abdullah and Duqm, which are jointly owned by Kuwait and the Sultanate of Oman, are poised for significant profits in the years 2024 and 2025. This optimistic outlook extends to refineries in other Gulf countries as well.

These forecasts are grounded in several key considerations, among which the escalating conflict in the Russian-Ukrainian war holds prominence. The sources note a notable shift in the conflict dynamics, with Russian oil refineries becoming targets. According to reports, several Russian refineries were destroyed during the month of March, raising concerns about disruptions in Russian oil production.

The sources elaborate on the role of the United States in leveraging Ukraine to target Russian oil installations, a move that could potentially lead to the cessation of Russian refinery operations. This development marks a significant transformation in the ongoing conflict between the United States and Russia, further complicating the geopolitical landscape.

In addition to geopolitical factors, the global market's reliance on Kuwaiti and Gulf refineries is underscored by the challenges facing European and American refineries. Many of these refineries have deferred maintenance operations for several years, leading to operational inefficiencies and compromised performance. Moreover, extreme summer temperatures in recent years have exacerbated these challenges, particularly impacting aging infrastructure.

Furthermore, specific refineries such as the joint Milazzo refinery between Kuwait Petroleum International and the Italian company Eni, as well as the French Total Energy refinery, face profitability concerns. Partnerships associated with these refineries are reportedly exploring options to withdraw investments due to declining profitability in recent years.

Overall, amidst evolving geopolitical tensions and operational challenges faced by refineries globally, Kuwaiti and Gulf refineries are poised to capitalize on emerging opportunities in the oil market, positioning themselves for robust profitability in the years ahead.

### KIPIC CEO set to retire

## KNPC & KIPIC merger set to 'conclude' next month

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** According to information obtained by Al-Jarida daily from a reliable oil source, the merger between Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) is progressing rapidly, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The merger procedures are expected to conclude at the beginning of the next month, coinciding with the retirement of KIPIC's CEO, Walid Al-Badr, by the end of the current month.

The source indicated that the entity known as "KIPIC" will be dissolved, with its financial and legal status cancelled, and it will henceforth operate under the umbrella of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company.

Following the merger, the company will be structured into three sectors: production and operations, comprising the Quebec refinery along with maintenance and operations; refinery services,

dedicated to the Quebec refinery's services; and the export sector.

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is continuing its strategy to consolidate its eight affiliated oil companies, aiming to merge similar activities within the oil sector to enhance integration and operational efficiency, thereby maximizing the value derived from hydrocarbons.

In alignment with the Corporation's strategic directions for the oil sector until 2040, which were previously approved, KPC has undertaken an evaluation of its corporate structure and subsidiaries.

An international consulting firm has been tasked with conducting preliminary studies and reviewing the organizational structure of the Corporation based on strategic directives and plans of affiliated companies and sectors, including planning and finance, global marketing, and human resources.

## Markaz wins two accolades from EMEA Finance Middle East Banking Awards '23

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** Reinforcing its position as a leading investment banking and asset management company, Kuwait Financial Centre 'Markaz' was honoured with two prestigious awards at the EMEA Finance Middle East Banking Awards 2023, which were recently held in Dubai, UAE. During the event, Markaz was recognized with the 'Best Asset Manager' Award and the 'Best Local Investment Bank' Award. With this, the organization has added more than 80 laurels under its belt in the past decade, further solidifying its reputation for excellence.

The EMEA Finance Middle East Banking Awards are a prestigious recognition award that celebrates outstanding achievement and contributions within the financial services sector across the Middle East region. The prestigious financial magazine's awards are based on specific criteria in its selection process for the winning entities. It includes market share, growth rate, profitability, innovation, in addition to the quality of the business strategy.

These coveted honours reflect Markaz's continued success and solid performance in the asset management and investment banking business, despite the global economic challenges witnessed in 2023. The recognitions are also a testament to the organization's best-in-class financial services, innovative offerings, and pursuit of excellence in providing remarkable services to its valued clients. Markaz's 11th win from EMEA Finance attests to the company's 50-year legacy of expertise and excellence in the investment sector.

Expressing her pride and enthusiasm on Markaz being recognized with the 'Best Asset Manager' award, Mrs. Amani I. Al-Omani said: "This recognition honours our top-notch asset management services and reinforces our position as an industry leader in the MENA region. At Markaz, we continuously strive to provide our clients with advanced investment tools and solutions to enhance their risk-adjusted returns and based on the investment objectives of each. In 2023, we achieved significant progress in this endeavour by launching the newest GCC Momentum Fund, the first of its kind in the GCC markets, with a solid strategy focused on investing in shares with high momentum scores aligned with the S&P Momentum GCC Composite Index. Furthermore, these accolades serve as an encouragement for all of us at Markaz to persist in delivering innovative solutions that meet and exceed the expectations of our clients."

Commenting on the 'Best Local Investment Bank' Award, Ms. Rasha Othman, Executive Vice President, Investment Banking (Capital Markets

and Fixed Income), and representing both the Investment Banking Services team and Advisory and M&A team at the ceremony, said: "We are profoundly honoured to have been recognized with the 'Best Local Investment Bank' award at the Middle East Banking Awards. This accolade is a testament to our exceptional investment banking capabilities and our commitment to developing innovative investment solutions that cater to our clients' strategic objectives. Over the past year, Markaz has achieved significant successes in its Capital Market activity, which included facilitating bond issuances for eminent institutions, where Markaz played a pivotal role as a joint lead manager with the successful issuance of KD 50 million Subordinated Tier 2 Bonds of KD 50 million for Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait. Furthermore, our role as structuring advisor and lead manager was instrumental in issuing the first KD-denominated convertible bond with a nominal value of KD 9.65 million for Sultan Center Food Products Company K.S.C.P., as well as its role as lead manager and subscription agent in the completion of the issuance of the first tranche of the subordinated Tier 2 capital bonds program with a nominal value of KD 50 million for the Commercial Bank of Kuwait."

Markaz's Advisory and M&A team also implemented financial restructurings for high-profile companies, advised on mergers within the professional services and oil and gas sectors, conducted transaction feasibility studies, and prepared strategic expansion plans and valuations in the healthcare sector. These operations reflect the efficiency of Markaz's teams, which enjoy the trust and appreciation of both clients and prestigious institutions."

Markaz wrapped up 2023 with an impressive tally of 10 esteemed industry awards for its exceptional performance as a market leader in investment banking, commitment to corporate social responsibility programs, digital innovations, and promoting diversity and inclusion. The notable winnings include: 'The Best Private Bank in Kuwait' by Global Finance; 'The Best Private Bank or Wealth Manager Servicing the State of Kuwait' by Wealth Briefing; and 'Best Domestic Private Bank in Kuwait' by Euromoney, and its rankings as a market leader in Investment Banking services, highly regarded institution in the digital solutions and corporate social responsibility categories, and one of the most notable players in the diversity and inclusion category on Euromoney's list of market leaders. The company also received 'MENA Investment Bank of the Year' and 'Excellence in the Real Estate Investment Award' by MEED.

### 'Jeel Weyay revolutionizing digital banking for kids'

## Weyay Bank's podcast sparks conversations on kids' financial empowerment with 'Jeel'

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** Weyay Bank, a leading innovator in digital banking solutions, is thrilled to announce the launch of its pioneering podcast aimed at fostering insightful conversations surrounding the new Jeel feature within the Weyay App.

The podcast, which premiered on 24 March, 2024, The podcast featuring kids ages 8 to 14 will focus around discussing kid-friendly banking, exploring their financial needs, and the value of money and finances from their point of view.

Jeel Weyay, a feature that was introduced on February 15, 2024, revolutionizes the digital banking landscape for young users, offering a tailored experience distinct from traditional banking platforms. Designed to cater to the evolving needs of children and their parents, Jeel provides a seamless journey within the Weyay app, ensuring age-appropriate engagement and empowerment.

At the heart of Jeel lies its innovative features, including the ability for young users to customize their banking experience by selecting from three vibrant card colors: pink, blue, and yellow. Moreover, Jeel empowers children to take charge of their financial affairs, while also allowing parents to control their child's card and account within the app and supervise them.



"Jeel isn't just a card; it's a comprehensive digital banking solution," remarked Dana Al-Kharafi, Marketing & Engagement Manager at Weyay Bank. "Through our Jeel podcast, we aim to initiate meaningful conversations about financial literacy, empowerment, and the transformative impact of Jeel on young users and their families."

The podcast will delve into various aspects of Jeel, exploring its role



Jeel Weyay Podcast Images

in shaping financial habits, promoting transparency, and facilitating parent-child dialogue around money management. Listeners can expect engaging discussions and real-life anecdotes highlighting the significance of early financial education and the benefits of Jeel.

Join the conversation and stay informed about the latest episodes by following Weyay Bank on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. For more

information about Jeel and Weyay Bank's innovative digital banking offerings, visit [www.weyaybank.com](http://www.weyaybank.com).

Weyay Bank is a leading provider of digital banking solutions, dedicated to empowering individuals and families to achieve their financial goals. With a focus on innovation, transparency, and customer-centricity, Weyay Bank continues to redefine the standards of banking excellence in Kuwait and beyond.

### Kuwaiti-Italian partnership boosts healthcare innovation with VIVISOL

## Italian company SOL GROUP signs MoU with Green Flame in Kuwait

**KUWAIT CITY, March 26:** In line with the directives of the wise government of Kuwait and its efforts to facilitate local investment and attract foreign investment within the Kuwaiti market, the Green Flame Gas Company was able to attract the Italian company SOL GROUP to invest inside Kuwait, with the will to apply for registration in the Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), as Italian company.

SOL GROUP is one of the largest listed companies in Milan and Green Flame Gas Company was keen, during its contract negotiations with the Italian company SOL GROUP, to set a joint venture for supporting the enhancement of the health care model Green FlamenGas Company will establish Green Flamen Healthcare Company in order to sign a partnership contract with VIVISOL, one of the subsidiaries of the parent company SOL GROUP.

VIVISOL is one of the largest companies specialized in telemedicine and home treatment for respiratory and sleep apnea diseases, as it provides patients with medical and nursing care at the highest level, thanks to its rooted experience in this field is in accordance with European medical standards.

The contract signing ceremony between the two companies was held in the Italian city of Monza in the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Green Flame Gas Company, Engineer Bashar Hussein Al-Qattan, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of SOL GROUP, Engineer Aldo Fumagalli Romario, and the



Al-Qattan with Aldo Fumagalli Romario and Marco Annoni in a memorial photo after signing the partnership contract.

Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, Marco Annoni.

Both sides expressed their happiness with this strategic cooperation. Between the State of Kuwait and Italy, hoping that this joint cooperation will bring growth to both companies, which will help economic growth in the two countries.

On this occasion, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Green Flame Gas Company, Engineer Bashar Hussein Al-Qattan, said: "We are pleased to be aligned with the initiatives of the Minister of Health by putting quality and innovation at the service of Kuwaitis to improve the quality of lives of Kuwaiti nationals. Further, our company was the first to respond to the invitation of the Kuwaiti government, when it opened commercial visits with the aim of stimulating the Kuwaiti economy and attracting foreign

investors, and I take this happy occasion to thank His Highness the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Green Flame Gas Company the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem, and to His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, to facilitate all procedures related to local and international companies, open the Kuwaiti market to local and foreign investment, and remove the previous obstacles that local companies faced in bringing Foreign investors like entry visas to Kuwait, and this indicates the wise policy pursued by the Kuwaiti government in attracting foreign investment, its insightful future outlook and its keenness for Kuwait to become a global commercial and financial center and a distinctive interface for investors, which helps revitalize the Kuwaiti

economy and push the wheel of development to revolve and advance the country. "Kuwait is placed among the ranks of developed countries."

For his part, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of SOL GROUP, Engineer Aldo Fumagalli Romario, said, "It gives me great pleasure to sign a momentum of understanding today between our Italian company SOL GROUP and the Kuwaiti Green Flame Gas Company setting the premise for this important partnership alliance that starting from Kuwait can for sure in the future extend also in other Gulf region nations like Jordan Barhein or Qatar.

I mention that our relationship with the Green Torch Company has extended for a long time, and we are now happy to culminate this relationship. "we hope that this agreement will play an important role for economic growth, and will be a milestone in strengthening economic and development relations between the two countries."

Aldo Fumagalli Romario added during his speech that SOL GROUP is nearly a century old as it was founded in 1927, and was listed on the Milan Stock Exchange in 1998, until the volume of its investments reached 131 million euros, and annual revenues reached more than one billion and 400 million euros annually, and the number of the company employs about 6,000 employees in its branches spread in more than 35 countries, and the number of patients that the company treats worldwide has reached more than 650,000 patients.



Ms. Rasha Othman, Executive Vice President, Investment Banking



**Pakistani trade delegation visits Kabul**

A delegation from Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce arrived in Kabul on Monday to meet its Afghan counterparts to discuss how to improve trade relations, after tensions have risen over cross-border militant attacks.

Last week, Pakistan's military carried out rare airstrikes against suspected hideouts of the Pakistani Taliban inside Afghanistan, killing eight people and prompting Afghan forces to return fire.

The March 18 exchange came after seven Pakistani soldiers were killed in a suicide bombing and coordinated attack in northwest

Pakistan. It had further strained ties between the sides, and officials believe that Monday's visit by a senior bureaucrat, Mohammad Khurram, will play a role in easing tensions.

In Kabul, Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesman for the Afghan Commerce Ministry, said that the Pakistani delegation had arrived at the invitation of Afghan Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, said the visit was aimed at promoting trade and people-to-people ties with Afghanistan. (AP)

**Boeing CEO to step down in management shake-up**

A leadership shake-up at Boeing, including news Monday that its top executive plans to step down, highlights the difficult path facing the iconic aircraft manufacturer as it tries to navigate through yet another safety crisis.

CEO David Calhoun, who has been under unrelenting pressure since a panel blew off a Boeing 737 Max jetliner during a January flight, said he would retire at the end of the year. He said the decision to leave

was his and the timing would allow for an orderly transition.

The head of the company's commercial airplanes unit, Stan Deal, is already out. Boeing said he was replaced immediately by Stephanie Pope, a fast-rising insider who just became chief operating officer on Jan. 1.

In a third high-profile decision, board Chairman Lawrence Kellner, a former Continental Airlines chief, won't stand for reelection in May,

Boeing said. A former Qualcomm CEO who was appointed to succeed Kellner will lead the search for Calhoun's replacement.

Calhoun was on the Boeing board during its worst time - the crashes of two 737 Max planes in 2018 and 2019 that killed 346 people. He leaves with the company under intense scrutiny from regulators and lawmakers since a door-plug panel blew off a brand-new Alaska Airlines Max jet in midflight on Jan. 5. (AP)

**Japan escapes technical recession, BOJ pivots away from negative interest rates**

**US economic growth proceeds apace while Europe struggles**

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global economic prospects have diverged in recent months, with the US seeing solid growth and proving resilient to the current elevated interest rate environment. However, within Europe, conditions are much weaker with - alongside high interest rates - more restrictive fiscal policy, less exposure to the booming tech sector and greater exposure to sluggish global trade weighing heavily on activity. Meanwhile, in a historic move, the Bank of Japan tightened monetary policy on a view that inflation is finally heading sustainably back up to the 2% target, despite still-muted domestic activity. Elsewhere in Asia, the Chinese economy got off to a decent start in Q1, though structural issues compounded by a moribund property sector continue to pose questions over the strength and durability of the recovery. More positively, India continues to deliver above-expected growth rates, and remains the fastest-growing major economy.

**US economy powers ahead on resilient consumer spending amid a tight labor market**

Underpinned by a robust job market and resilient consumer spending, the US economy has defied slowdown predictions, growing by a solid 3.2% (annualized) in Q4 2023 versus expectations of a 2% rise. (Chart 1.) Although softened from +4.9% in Q3, there seem to be no major signs of a downturn. Household consumption remained largely intact (+3% y/y), while residential investment rose for the second quarter and business investments increased. This said, economic indicators thus far in Q1 have been relatively underwhelming, with retail sales (+0.6% m/m) and industrial production (+0.1% m/m) recovering somewhat in February after outsized drops in January, and consumer sentiment still somewhat subdued. As a result, GDP growth could slow to 1.5-2% in Q1, near its trend rate. Offering support to the ongoing momentum, the labor market remains solid despite a mixed set of data in February, with strong job gains (+275K) but substantial downward revisions to the previous two months' data, ebbing but still-robust wage growth (4.3% y/y), and a pickup in the unemployment rate (3.9%), albeit historically a low level.

Consumer price inflation has broadly decelerated, with the core rate receding to 3.8% y/y in February. Although well off its peak of 6.6% in September 2022, progress on disinflation seems to have lost steam, with the core rate moderating only marginally from 4% in October. With the Fed funds target rate now at 5.25-5.50%, real policy rates are in positive (and restrictive) territory, which risks

causing a sharp downturn if rates are kept too high for too long. But given the robust economic picture, the Fed wants to achieve greater confidence that inflation is heading back to the 2% target before shifting policy. For now, the FOMC, in its latest dot-plot projections, continued to see three rate cuts later this year and looked set to slow the pace of the bank's quantitative tightening program despite hotter inflation data so far this year.

**Europe remains stuck in a weaker growth pattern**

Euro Area GDP was unchanged in Q4 2023 after falling 0.1% q/q in Q3. Growth could edge up to 0.8% this year based on the European Commission's forecast, following a 0.5% rise in 2023 - though this is still a downgrade from an earlier forecast of 1.2%. France, Germany, and Italy will likely see slower growth, while others like Greece and Spain could deliver better outcomes. Growth should be helped by easing inflation, rises in real wages, and likely ECB interest rate cuts. However, the composite PMI in February remained in contraction for a ninth straight month at 47.2, signaling still-weak business conditions overall. Inflation fell to 2.6% y/y (from 2.8% in January), with the core rate coming in at 3.1% from 3.3% the previous month. Wages were up 5.6% in Q3 but could start to tick down as inflation drops towards the ECB's 2% inflation goal in 2025. Given weak growth and inflation now below that in the US, the ECB could now start cutting interest rates earlier (and more aggressively) than the Fed, not later than the bank's meeting in June.

The UK economy showed some signs of recovery, growing 0.2% m/m in January 2024 versus -0.1% in December after recording a minor recession in H2 2023. The IMF expects growth to reach 0.6% in 2024 versus 0.1% in 2023, with a somewhat positive outlook stemming from resilient wage growth (5.2% in December) and moderating inflation (3.4% in February). Additionally, the March budget announced that fiscal policy will be tightened by less than previously planned (ahead of a likely general election later this year), providing some help for household disposable incomes. With inflation trending steadily lower, the Bank of England could also start to cut interest rates in June.

**Japan escapes technical recession, BOJ pivots away from negative interest rates**

GDP growth was revised up for Q4 2023 to +0.1% q/q from -0.1% q/q in the previous estimate, following a large 0.8% drop in Q3, helping the country to avoid a technical recession. (Chart 3.) This was due to an upgraded estimate for private investment and despite steeper declines in private consumption. A favorable trade balance

Chart 3: Japan real GDP and personal consumption growth (% q/q)

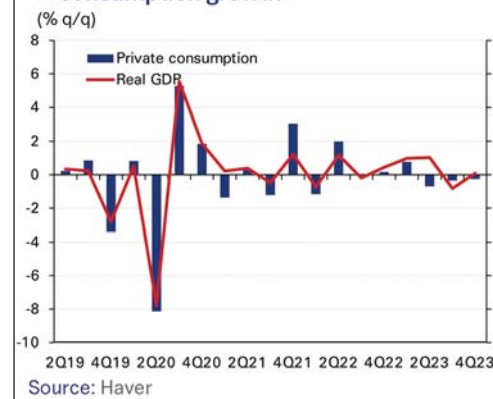
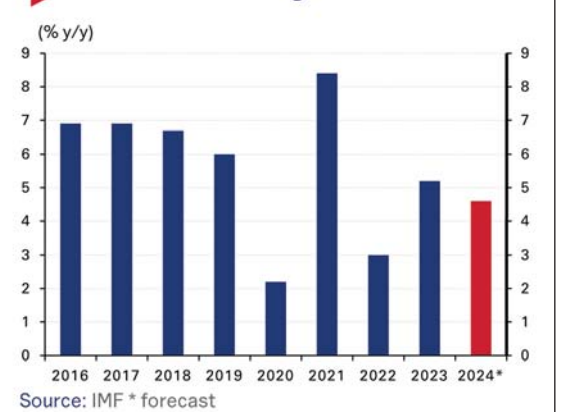


Chart 4: China GDP growth (% y/y)



partly offset weak domestic activity, with Japanese goods more competitive amid a weaker yen. Sluggish economic growth is expected in the current quarter, with leading indicators, including the PMI, signaling a continued contraction in manufacturing, weak household consumption, and a modest rise in retail sales. However, the expanding service activity in February, strong exports, and tumbling energy imports could provide some support.

Consumer price inflation reversed the declining trend and rose 2.8% in February from 2.2% in January, while core inflation also accelerated to 2.8% from 2% y/y. However, recent union negotiations have delivered decades-high wage growth to workers, moving wages into positive territory - a prerequisite for inflation being sustained at or above the 2% target according to the Bank of Japan (BOJ). This pushed the bank in March to abandon its eight-year negative interest rate policy and discontinue yield curve control (which capped long-term bond yields). But the small size of the widely anticipated rate move, the absence of commitment to further increases and the BOJ's pledge to keep buying government bonds all signaled a continuation of the bank's accommodative stance and resulted in the yen and government bond yields falling post-announcement.

**Chinese economy picked up last year but outlook remains tentative**

Economic growth surpassed the government's target of 5% in 2023, accelerating to 5.2% y/y, helped by base effects from severe "Covid-Zero" lockdowns in the preceding year. (Chart 4.) But excluding the pandemic period 2020-22, this was a multi-decade low. Recent economic indicators have painted a rosier picture. The trade data surprised positively as exports grew 7.1% y/y in the January-February period (on average) while imports edged up 3.5% y/y, signaling a slight pickup in domestic consumption. Industrial production and retail sales were also above forecast. Consumer prices rose 0.7% y/y in February following four months of deflation, though this could have been impacted by the Lunar New Year holiday falling in February compared to January in the previous year. Moreover, the decline in producer prices worsened to 2.7% y/y in February, signaling further deflationary pressure in the pipeline. The composite PMI remained steady in the first two months of the year at 50.9, but manufacturing activity was in contraction for the fifth month in a row. The uneven economic performance highlights the challenges the government will face in achieving its "around 5%" GDP growth target for 2024, considering property market and demographic headwinds.

In response to the subdued economic picture, the People's Bank of China kicked off the year with monetary policy loosening, lowering the reserve requirement ratio by 50 bps in January. In addition, state-owned banks earmarked \$8 billion in funds for eligible property projects. The authorities also introduced measures to boost stock market valuations, such as restrictions on short selling, increasing margin requirements, and suspending broker lending of shares. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting economic conditions, but details are scant.

**India's growth surprisingly accelerates to a six-quarter high**

India's economy continued to surprise positively, growing by a solid 8.4% y/y in Q3 of FY23/24 (October-December), much higher than the 6.6% forecast, accelerating from an upwardly-revised 8.1% in Q2 on strong public investments. A continued push by the government to accelerate capital spending and potentially create more job opportunities before this year's general election has been a key growth driver in recent periods. However, private consumption lagged, rising at a slower 3.5% pace, though better than +2.4% the previous quarter. On the back of a solid performance in Q3 and upward revisions to H1 growth, the government raised the growth forecast for the full-year to 7.6% from the 7.3% projected earlier. Despite the latest improvement, headwinds persist for private consumption, mainly in the rural segment where the impact of erratic rains is more visible, as the official forecast projects the slowest private consumption growth in over two decades outside the pandemic period at 3% for the current fiscal year.

Consumer price inflation remained broadly stable at 5.1% y/y in February on elevated food prices after irregular rains impacted agricultural production. The Reserve Bank of India has kept the repo rate steady at 6.5% since April 2023 as it grapples with food price uncertainty and an unclear inflation outlook amid worsening geopolitics and volatile oil prices.

	2023	2024f	2025f
US	2.5	2.1	1.7
Eurozone	0.5	0.5	1.3
UK	0.1	0.3	1.2
Japan	0.7	0.7	1.0
China	5.2	4.6	4.5
India*	7.0	6.5	6.5

Source: Refinitiv (third-party forecasts) Note: \*FY ending March of the following year

Chart 1: US GDP and personal consumption (% q/q, annualized)

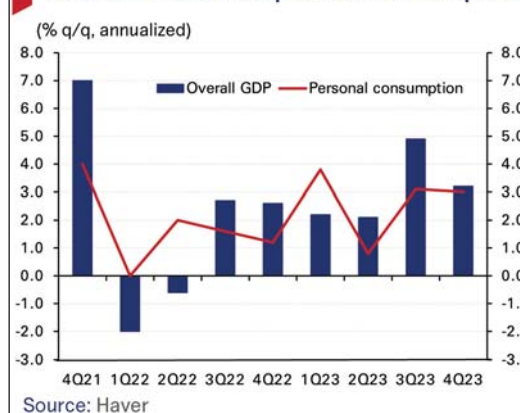
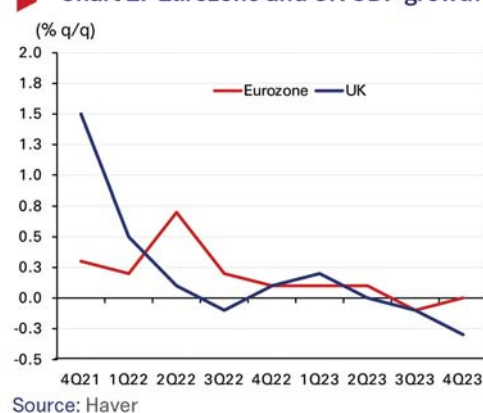


Chart 2: Eurozone and UK GDP growth (% q/q)



**KFH signs Al Mubarakiya reconstruction contract**

Al Marzouq: KFH's support underscores its pioneering social and national role

KUWAIT, March 26: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the signing of a contract with Alghanim International Co. and the Kuwait Municipality, represented by Her Excellency Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs. The contract pertains to the implementation of the reconstruction project for the damaged area in Al Mubarakiya.

At the signing ceremony, KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq announced, "We are delighted to celebrate the launch of the reconstruction project for the area damaged in the Al Mubarakiya fire. This follows the successful completion and approval of the design phase by the relevant advisory team dedicated to addressing the

**Dr. Al-Mashaan:**

We applaud KFH's initiative in supporting this vital project's implementation

**Alghanim:**

Al Mubarakiya holds priceless heritage and historical significance

effects of the incident."

He announced the official launch of the construction phase with Alghanim International Company, the project's contractor. This phase is expected to be completed in a record-breaking 13 months for a project of this scale featuring such authentic heritage architectural details.

Al Marzouq explained that the KFH Group's initiative involves reconstructing approximately 17 buildings in the damaged area of Al Mubarakiya, along with the development of some neighboring structures. The estimated cost of the project is around KD 8 million.

He emphasized that this support from KFH underscores the bank's commitment to its leading social

and national role. The bank actively contributes to various areas, working collaboratively with official entities.

He expressed his sincere thanks to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect and preserve him, for his support of the KFH initiative, his continued interest in, his constructive remarks, and diligent follow-up of Al Mubarakiya development project. He further thanked the advisory work team for their critical role in the project's success. He concluded by praying to Allah the Almighty for the continued protection of Kuwait and its people.

**Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs**

Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, expressed her pleasure in welcoming everyone to this significant event where the agreement for the reconstruction project of the affected area in Al Mubarakiya is being signed.

"The reconstruction of Al Mubarakiya has been a long-awaited project," she said. "We faced many challenges before reaching the implementation stage. However, thanks to Allah, and through the collaborative efforts of all ministries and state authorities, with the support of Kuwait Finance House, the project is finally underway." She commended KFH for its



Minister Noura Al-Mashaan, Hamad Al Marzouq and Mohammed Al-Ghanim.

contribution to this vital project and stressed the significance of Al Mubarakiya to Kuwaiti culture, heritage, and identity within society.

Al-Mashaan expressed her gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect and preserve him, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, and Her Excellency Sheikh Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Chairperson of the Kuwaiti Voluntary Work Center, for their unwavering commitment to preserving heritage.

She also commended the advisory team for their clear efforts in reconstructing Al Mubarakiya and praised the distinguished role of the Kuwait Municipality in bringing the project to this stage.

Al-Mashaan extended her gratitude to all relevant parties for their

crucial role in completing the design and preparation stages, distributing blocks, obtaining approvals, and finalizing all project-related procedures. "This marks the beginning of implementation, and we look forward to seeing the affected areas in Al Mubarakiya vibrant again."

She also commended the prominent role played by the former Ministers of the Kuwait Municipality in achieving this success, namely Dr. Rana Abdullah Al-Fares, Abdulaziz Waleed Almejel, and Fahad Al-Shula.

**Mohammed Alghanim**

Meanwhile, Mohammed Fouad Alghanim, Vice Chairman and CEO of Alghanim International Co., said: "We at Alghanim International are honored to have been entrusted with the significant task of developing and rebuilding Al Mubarakiya."

He added that Al Mubarakiya

holds priceless heritage and historical significance. It showcases the originality and distinctiveness of Kuwait's history and documents the architectural style prevalent in the country at the start of the twentieth century. The market served as a central hub for trade with neighboring countries, Africa, and India.

The heritage market in the State of Kuwait has become well-known for its historical significance and unique attractions, making it a popular tourist destination.

"Alghanim International is committed to developing and reviving the heritage market, recognizing the importance of preserving its heritage and commercial appeal. The company is fully dedicated to completing the reconstruction work to maintain the market's historical value and distinct heritage style, directing all its efforts towards achieving this goal."



From right: Minister Noura Al-Mashaan, Sheikh Amthal Al-Sabah, Hamad Al Marzouq, Mohammed Fouad Al-Ghanim, and Abdul-Wahab Al-Rashoud.

## Ongoing effort to provide customers with services that fulfill their needs and aspirations

# KIB revives 'Eidiya' service at all branches, ATMs ahead of Eid Al Fitr

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that its Eidiya service will be available across its nationwide network of branches and ATMs in the lead-up to Eid Al Fitr. This annual initiative aligns with the initiative launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) on the same occasion. The revival of the Eidiya service further confirms the Bank's commitment to offering a wide range of banking services and solutions that fulfill its customers' needs and

guarantee they enjoy a banking experience that is convenient and rewarding. The initiative also comes under KIB's expansive social responsibility program.

On this occasion, Hassan Al Wayer, Executive Manager - Head of Quality & Control of Retail Banking at KIB, said: "We are delighted to be among the first to greet the Kuwaiti government and people on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr, and what better way to celebrate than to uphold our steadfast commitment to offering our customers banking products and services that



Hassan Al Wayer, Executive Manager - Head of Quality & Control of Retail Banking at KIB.

are tailored to suit their needs and match their modern lifestyles. We are fully aware of the importance of making the Eidiya service available for our customers no matter where in Kuwait they are, noting that this initiative is one of many that bring us closer to our community as it allows us to share their celebrations during these blessed annual festivities."

He added: "This vital initiative enables our customers to conveniently withdraw cash in all denominations, including KD 1, KD 5, KD 10, and KD 20, to give out as Ei-

diya to children, preserving one of the primary traditional features of Eid celebrations in Kuwait."

It serves to note that KIB continues to offer its Eidiya delivery service exclusively to its Black segment customers on a 24/7 basis, in a continued bid to fulfill their needs with the utmost convenience without any waste of their time or effort. Every year, this service is met with great enthusiasm, confirming its success in realizing the aspirations of KIB's distinguished customers. Interested KIB Black segment customers can request the

exclusive Eidiya delivery service by calling the customer service hotline on 1866866 or by contacting their designated customer support agent.

Stemming from its philosophy and slogan "Bank for Life", KIB remains steadfast in its efforts to elevate the banking experience it provides its customers across all segments by offering innovative and unique banking solutions, such as Eidiya, that exceed customers' expectations and add convenience and luxury to their everyday lives.

## Zain and Jaber Al Ahmad Hospitals celebrate Girgeaan

# Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team visits children in hospitals

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team has visited pediatric wards at the Zain Otolaryngology Specialized Hospital and Jaber Al Ahmad Hospital to celebrate the local Ramadan tradition of Girgeaan (candy distribution) with children, their families, and medical staff.

The initiative reflected the deeply rooted spirit of giving during the Holy Month.

The visits came in collaboration with the Ministry of Health under the Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan campaign, where the company extends its support with various partners from the public and private sectors to share the blessings of Ramadan with the entire community.

Members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team, comprising Zain employees from various divisions and departments, actively participated in the initiative, embodying the Zain family's dedication to fostering positive social impact. The team visited pediatric wards at both the Zain Otolaryngology Specialized Hospital and Jaber Al Ahmad Hospital, where they were accompanied by Dr. Waleed Al Busairi, Director of Mubarak Al Kabeer Health District.

During these visits, the team distributed Girgeaan candy, gifts, and toys to the children, greatly uplifting not only the spirits of the young patients but also those of their families and the medical staff present.

Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most successful community programs during the Holy Month. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continue throughout Ramadan. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year's initiatives and programs.

The Zain Otolaryngology Specialized Hospital, established by Zain, features state of the art medical



Zain Alshuhoor volunteers at Zain Hospital.



Dr. Waleed Al Busairi and Zain's team at Jaber Al Ahmad Hospital.

equipment and facilities, and specializes in ear, nose, and throat cases. The hospital serves over 37,000

patients every year, with over 4500 operations conducted annually. Zain volunteers visit the hospital during

special occasions like national holidays, the Holy Month of Ramadan, and Eid.

## Diverse gathering advocates brotherhood

# Kuwait Wayanad Association hosts Iftar for members, guests

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Kuwait Wayanad Association organized an Iftar at Mangaf Delight Hall for its members and distinguished guests.

Secretary Menish Vas led the programs at the event, which was attended by personalities from the social and cultural Indian diaspora of Kuwait. Program Convener Abdul Latif welcomed the attendees, while President Jinesh Jose presided over the function. KWA Patron Babuji Batheri inaugurated the public program, and religious scholar Muhammad Shibili delivered

the Ramadan message.

Women Chairperson Praseetha and Media Convener Mubarak Kambra, along with Ernakulam Association Chairman Jino, Santhvanam Kuwait President Jyothidas, Ex-President Santosh Kumar, Kollam District Pravasi Samajam Gen. Secretary Binil TD, Alappuzha district office bearer and KUDA convener Binoy Chandran, Pravasi Welfare Kerala representative Aniankunjnu Pappachan, and Folk Kannur Secretary Hariprasad U.K., delivered greetings. Auditor Sharafuddin Valli handed

over a memento to speaker Muhammad Shibili.

Those who spoke conveyed a common message to maintain social balance, mutual brotherhood, eradicate casteism and hateful thoughts, and uphold peace and harmony in society.

P.M. Nair, Voice Kuwait PG Binu, Thrissur Association Representative Biju, Jobin (Idukki Association), and HSPA Representative Dr. Saju were present. Treasurer Ajesh Sebastian expressed a vote of thanks.



Photos taken from the event.

# Indian Arts Federation organizes Iftar meet

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Iftar banquet hosted by the Indian Arts Federation Kuwait (IAF) at the Mangaf Kalasadan Auditorium was distinguished for its public representation and exceptional organization. Sherine Mathew, the President of IAF, led the event, which saw the attendance and active participation of social workers, prominent figures, as well as artistic and cultural talents. Addressing the gathering, Sameer Mohammed, a respected religious scholar and principal of an English Madrasa in Kuwait, highlighted the significance of Ramadan beyond mere hunger, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing the struggles of others.

Preman Illath, the Chairman of IAF and a renowned writer, inaugurated the ceremony, reminding attendees that fasting fosters heightened empathy. Greetings and well wishes were extended by notable figures such as Shemej Kumar,

Chairman of Future Eye Theater, Bijukadavil, President of Trissur Association, Unnimaya, a member of Loka Kerala Sabha, Rajive Naduvilenu, Chairman of AJAPAK, Shyji, General Secretary of Pravasi Legal Cell, Anil P Alex, a Senior Journalist, Anu, Chairperson of Malappuram District Association, Aniyankunju, Vice President of Welfare Kerala, and George, General Secretary of Thiruvananthapuram (Texas) Association.

Sameer Muhammad, the keynote speaker, was honored with a memento by Chairman Preman Illath on behalf of the Indian Arts Federation. In her address, President Sherine Mathew expressed IAF's commitment to preserving India's rich artistic heritage and transmitting it to future generations. The Iftar party was overseen by Cultural Secretary Nirmala Devi, with the support of Joint Secretary Murali Murukanandan, Bony Kurian, Kannan, Prateesh, Jerry, Kiran, and Priya.



Group photo during the Indian Arts Federation Kuwait's Iftar meet.

## The Conversation

### Roadmap to inclusive education

Schools can close summer learning 'disparities' with these 4 strategies

By Rhea Almeida  
New York University

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

Additionally, 42% mentioned English-language learners, and 35% mentioned students with disabilities.

When it comes to summer learning, the benefits are well documented. Students who consistently attend well-planned, high-quality programs achieve higher scores on math and language arts testing. They also earn higher ratings from teachers on their social and emotional skills, research shows. Unfortunately, research also shows that students from low-income and minority backgrounds are less likely to attend - and benefit from - summer learning programs than their affluent and white peers.

Other distinct groups included low-income students, migrants, racial and ethnic minorities and gifted and talented students. Among districts that prioritized special groups, almost all of them included more than one group in their strategic outreach.

Summer learning can play a crucial role in helping these students - and all kids - recover learning lost during the pandemic. The federal government has also acknowledged the importance of summer learning through its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or ESSER. The fund infused states with nearly US\$190.5 billion, with 20% allocated to academic recovery, including summer programs.

Which students get served in summer learning programs, and how they are served, has implications for equity. For instance, research has found that middle-income students often benefit more from summer learning programs than lower-income students.

So how can school districts capitalize on the crucial summer months and make learning more equitable?

This could be because high-quality programs tend to serve higher-income students, which raises concerns that summer learning programs may actually increase the summer gap if they are not targeted. High-quality programs that target lower-income students and other minority students can move the needle toward equity.

In partnership with the Wallace Foundation and the District Summer Learning Network implemented by the nonprofit development organization FHI 360, our team at the Center for Policy, Research, and Evaluation at New York University is studying how districts implement high-quality summer programs with an eye toward equity. We analyzed 2022 summer planning documents from 26 districts and identified four strategies they're using to make the programs more equitable.

For students to access programs outside of the regular school day in an equitable way, simple accommodations, such as transportation, are key.

Several district summer learning plans we analyzed went above and beyond academics. They provided not just transportation but also free and nutritious meals, outreach material in different languages and extended day care services to support working families.

Students learn best when they feel a sense of safety and belonging. By affirming and nurturing the unique identities of students, districts can make summer programming more equitable and accelerate learning. Research shows, for instance, that summer supports for English-language learners are key for their overall academic development.

Of the summer learning plans we analyzed, we found that half prioritized students who need academic or behavioral support.

Some districts tailored their programming to the individual interests and cultural needs of their students. (AP)

# MSNBC hosts object to McDaniel's hiring as paid contributor

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): The internal furor over NBC News' decision to hire former Republican National Committee head Ronna McDaniel as a paid contributor spread Monday, with MSNBC personalities Rachel Maddow, Jen Psaki, Nicolle Wallace, Lawrence O'Donnell and Joe Scarborough all using their shows to publicly object.

Maddow, MSNBC's most popular personality, compared it to putting a mobster to work in a district attorney's office.

"I find the decision to put her on the payroll inexplicable and I hope they will reconsider that decision," she said on her weekly program Monday night.

There was no immediate comment on Monday from NBC News or McDaniel about the extraordinary public revolt against network management that began with former "Meet the Press" moderator Chuck Todd a day earlier. Todd said that many NBC News journalists were uncomfortable with the hiring because of McDaniel's "gaslighting" and "character assassination" while at the RNC.

The network announced McDaniel's hiring on Friday, two weeks after she stepped down as the RNC leader, saying McDaniel would add to NBC News' coverage with an insider's perspective on national politics and the future of the Republican Party.

Maddow said she'd been told that MSNBC management had signed off on the hiring, but that when staff "expressed outrage," it was made clear that McDaniel would not appear on the cable network, which appeals primarily to liberal viewers. Since then, she said there's been an effort in other parts of the company to "muddy that up in the press" and make it seem like that's not what happened.

"I can assure you, that is what happened at MSNBC," she said.

Maddow told her viewers - and presumably her bosses - that "it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to acknowledge that you're wrong."

The on-air MSNBC rebellion stretched from pre-dawn to late in the evening, starting with "Morning Joe" hosts Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski promising viewers they would not see McDaniel in her NBC News capacity. Brzezinski said it's fair to seek Republican voices to balance election coverage, but "not a person who used her position of power to be an anti-democracy election denier."

### Controversy

Wallace said that with the hiring, NBC has said to election deniers "not just that they can do that on our airwaves, but that they can do that as one of us, a badge-carrying employee of NBC News, as a paid contributor to our sacred airwaves."

Said O'Donnell: "There is an easy way to avoid the controversy that NBC News has stumbled into. Don't hire anyone close to the crimes."

Psaki said she decided to speak up because, as a former press secretary to President Joe Biden, her name has been used by McDaniel supporters to point out that a former Democratic political appointee was hired by MSNBC without internal objection.

She said that for a television personality, that kind of experience in government "only matters and only has value to viewers if it is paired with honesty and good faith."

One of those GOP critics was US Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, who mentioned Psaki among several others who switched to news after working

in politics for Democrats, including the late "Meet the Press" moderator Tim Russert.

"But NBC hired a Republican?!!!" he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "It's the end of the world."

In a social media posting on Monday, Todd said that those who are trying to make it an issue of left vs. right were being intentionally dishonest. "This is about whether honest journalists are supposed to lend their credibility to someone who intentionally tried to ruin ours," he said.

The "Morning Joe" hosts aired an exchange from McDaniel's interview the day before on "Meet the Press" with current moderator Kristen Welker, who wondered why the former RNC chairwoman didn't speak up earlier after saying Sunday she disagreed with Trump's contention that people jailed for their part in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol should be freed.

"When you're the RNC chair you kind of take one for the whole team, right?" McDaniel said. "Now I get to be a little bit more myself, right? This is what I believe."

It's not unusual for television news outlets to hire politicians as analysts and commentators. One of McDaniel's predecessors at the RNC, Michael Steele, is an MSNBC contributor who hosts a weekend news program there. CBS News faced some backlash for hiring two former officials in the Trump administration, Reince Priebus and Mick Mulvaney, as analysts. Alyssa Farah Griffin, a former White House communications director during the Trump administration, became a CNN political commentator.

Media

Variety



Shakira celebrates the official release of her new album, 'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran,' early Friday, March 22, in Hollywood, Fla. (AP)

Music

'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran' celebrates strength and resilience

## Shakira returns, turns pain into art

LOS ANGELES, March 26, (AP): Shakira, the boundary-breaking Colombian performer, has been remarkably consistent since beginning her career in the early '90s. Without fail, she toured, released albums, won awards, woven global, genre-defying sounds into her pioneering singles, performed at the Super Bowl half-time show and more. Then, things slowed. Or so it appeared.

In reality, the last few years haven't been kind to Shakira. In 2022, after 11 years and two children together, she separated from soccer player Gerard Piqué, leading to what she's called the "dissolution of my family." She faced charges of tax evasion in Spain; in November 2023, she received a suspended three-year sentence and paid a fine of 7.3 million euros (\$8 million) in addition to previously unpaid taxes and interest.

On "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran," her first new album in seven years, Shakira transforms her pain into art - from the bachata "Monotonía" to the electro-pop "Te Felicito" to the mega viral "Shakira: Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53" and beyond.

"I've been through so much in these past few years that I had to literally pick up the pieces of myself and put them back together," Shakira told The Associated Press over Zoom from Miami. "And during that process, I think that music was the glue."

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**AP:** It has been seven years since your last album, "El Dorado." What did you learn about yourself, musically, in that time?

**Shakira:** Well, in those seven years I've been raising kids, I've been learning a lot about myself as a mother, as a woman. But I've also been making music. It's just that it's been more of a sporadic thing, you know, here and there. Whenever I had a chance to put out a song, I did that. But I didn't have the time to really put a whole body of work. This time, it was a compulsion and a need. It was really important for me to be able to express, in and through these songs, so many life experiences and to find catharsis, you know, and to be able to find the therapeutic effects of writing and see

myself back in the studio.

**AP:** You've called "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran" a concept album. What story is it telling?

**Shakira:** Because there's a great diversity in this album - I know it's a conceptual album - but it didn't happen on purpose. Nobody chooses to go through the kind of life experiences that I went through when I was writing and creating this album, you know, life gives you lemons. So what do you do? Make lemonade. So I made songs. But there is a great variety within this album. There's pop, there's Afrobeat, there's reggaeton. There's some Mexican regionals as well. Rock. But there is a common thread. And that is based off of genuine, authentic life experiences and the process of elaborating those intense emotions and feelings that I've been having to deal with during this past couple of years.

**AP:** You're no stranger to embracing global sounds. On this album, you worked with Grupo Frontera and Fuerza Regida - two regional Mexican artists who are bringing their music to the global stage. That's something you know a thing or two about.

**Shakira:** When I first started out in this industry, it was predominantly male. It was difficult for a Colombian girl. I had to knock (on) so many doors, just do a lot of convincing. Convince all the gatekeepers, the directors of radio stations who would decide back in the day, who would like what music would get programmed, what music wouldn't. But now it is different, you know, now people decide for themselves. I think music has been democratized in a way. And that's why, Latin artists have really, found a platform for their music not like it was 10, 20 years ago... And now, Latin artists have a lot more opportunities. And it's true that the Mexican regional artists are also among that group of artists that are now being played in so many more stations in Colombia and other places of the world and here in the United States as well.

Mexico has been such an important part of my career. It's a country that I owe so much to. And it's been just a wonderful experience to be able to collaborate with some Mexican artists as well on this album. It's my small homage to Mexican music, that genre and to

the Mexican people.

**AP:** "She Wolf" turns 15 this year. As a listener, that album felt like a shift in your career - and so does this one. Do you see parallels?

**Shakira:** I do, because it is the renaissance of the "She Wolf," in a way. It is the rebirth of that primal force that I feel that all women have within ourselves. It's that force that allows us to give birth, feed our offspring, guarantee their survival of their species, fight whatever fight we have to fight against.

I had to resort to that She Wolf within me to be able to survive.

I was in a fight or flight sort of mode for a while and I think it is that She Wolf within us women today that is taking society to where it's going, you know, at the moment. Women are natural multitaskers. We can do everything. We can really survive wars and rebuild cities after they're destroyed. So, my life was in pieces after, you know, the dissolution of my family, and so many other things that I had to go through.

That's why this album is called "Women No Longer Cry." Because I feel that women, you know, for ages have been sent to cry with a script in their hands. And just because we women conceal our emotions in front of our kids and just show good manners and accept it all, and now it's different. I think that as women now we decide when to cry, when not to cry and how to do it, if we decide to cry. So, it's like no one has to tell us how to heal.

**AP:** I haven't seen anyone refer to this as a "divorce album."

**Shakira:** This is not a divorce album. It's an album that gathers many different life experiences, that gathers the transformation of vulnerability into resilience, the empowerment of finding your strength.

It doesn't only talk about pain; it also talks about triumph. And that's why these tears are not tears made of resentment anger or just sadness, but tears of triumph and tears of self-recognition and finding confidence within.

It's not linear. There's ups and downs and valleys and peaks. And this album is made of all of those dynamics.

NEW YORK: Emmy, Tony and Olivier Award winner **Bryan Cranston** is a leading face of Major League Baseball's promotional campaign ahead of opening day for the second straight season, recording a video at Dodger Stadium highlighting several stars.

The actor is the voice of an "Anything Can Happen" campaign that launched Monday after last year's video promoting rules changes. The new ad features two-way star **Shohei Ohtani** of the Los Angeles Dodgers along with fellow MVP **Ronald Acuña Jr.** of the Atlanta Braves, **Arizona's Corbin Carroll** and **Cincinnati's Elly De La Cruz**.

"Here I am at 68 years old and I'm walking around this citadel of my childhood," he said during a Zoom interview last week. "When I first went to Dodger Stadium, it was this monolith, this magnificent, huge place."

Cranston has memories of attending games dating to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in 1961, the year before Dodger Stadium opened, and lists players who stick out in his mind: **Sandy Koufax**, **Don Drysdale**, **Wally Moon**, **Don Sutton**, **Duke Snider**, **Bill Russell**, **Davey Lopes**, **Steve Garvey**, **Reggie Smith**, **Rick Monday**, **Fernando Valenzuela** and **Kirk Gibson**.

His production company is named Moonshot Entertainment after Wally Moon, whose opposite-field drives over the Coliseum's short left-field wall were dubbed Moon Shots by Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully.

Cranston still has his old programs. (AP)

LONDON: **Prince Harry** alleged Thursday that the publisher of The Sun tabloid unlawfully intercepted phone calls of his late mother, **Princess Diana**, and father, now **King Charles III**, as he sought to expand his privacy invasion lawsuit against News Group Newspapers.

The Duke of **Sussex** is seeking permission during a three-day hearing in the High Court to allow the new claims to be added to his ongoing litigation after evidence surfaced largely through materials turned over by NGN, a subsidiary of the media empire built by **Rupert Murdoch**, his

lawyer said.

Attorney **David Sherborne** said that the eavesdropping on **Diana**, her then-estranged husband, **Charles**, **Prince of Wales** at the time, and his then paramour, **Camilla Parker Bowles**, who is now **Queen Camilla**, inevitably revealed private information about **Harry** as early as age 9.



Cranston



Harry

**Diana** was suspicious she was being followed and her calls were being listened to, the amended complaint said. Articles in The Sun and now-defunct News of the World referred to conversations **Diana** had with close confidants and show that journalists and paparazzi had inside knowledge where she was going to be, includ-

ing her therapy sessions.

"The defendant's newspapers described his late mother's concerns as 'paranoid delusions,' when the true position was that she was under close surveillance and her calls were being unlawfully intercepted by (NGN), which was known about by its editors and senior executives," Sherborne said

in court papers.

The new claims in **Harry's** case follow allegations his lawyer raised Wednesday in the High Court that implicated **Murdoch** for taking part in the cover-up of unlawful information gathering at his newspapers or that he had "at the very least turned a blind eye" to it. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024

## People &amp; Places

## People

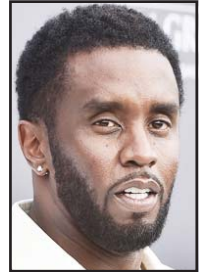
## Sex trafficking claims

## Feds search Combs' homes amid 'probe'

LOS ANGELES, March 26, (AP) — In the first nine months of 2023, Sean "Diddy" Combs triumphantly performed at the MTV VMAs, released an R&B album that garnered a Grammy nomination and was a suitor to buy the BET network.

But several lawsuits filed late last year raised allegations of sexual assault and rape against Combs — one of hip-hop's most recognizable names as a performer and producer.

The music mogul's homes in Los Angeles and Miami were searched Monday by federal agents with Homeland Security Investigators and other law enforcement. Officials said the searches were connected to an investigation by federal authorities in New York.



Combs

The officials spoke to The Associated Press on conditions of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation. Combs' attorney and other representatives didn't immediately respond to a request for comment, and his whereabouts are unknown.

Although Diddy was embroiled in one high-profile business dispute for part of 2023, it was a case filed by his former girlfriend and R&B singer Cassie that opened the door to other claims of sexual violence. Combs has vehemently denied the allegations.

It is not clear whether the search is related to any of the allegations raised in the lawsuits, which include one from a woman who claims Combs raped her when she was 17.

Here are some things to know about Combs and the investigation.

Combs is among the most influential hip-hop producers and executives of the past three decades. He built one of music's biggest empires, blazing a trail with several entities attached to his famous name. He is the founder of Bad Boy Records and a three-time Grammy winner who has worked with a slew of top-tier artists including Notorious B.I.G., Mary J. Blige, Usher, Lil Kim, Faith Evans and 112.

## Justice

The music mogul created the fashion clothing line called Sean John, was associated with a well-known vodka brand and launched Revolt TV network, which focuses on music and social justice issues targeting African Americans. He also produced the reality show "Making the Band" for MTV.

In 2022, BET honored Combs with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his ability to shape culture through his career.

Combs won Grammys for his platinum-selling 1997 album "No Way Out" and the single "I'll Be Missing You," a song dedicated to the late Notorious B.I.G. who was killed earlier that year. He won another Grammy for "Shake Ya Tailfeather" with Nelly and Murphy Lee.

Last year, Combs released his fifth studio album "The Love Album: Off the Grid," which was nominated for best progressive R&B album at February's Grammy Awards, which he did not attend. The album was his first solo project since his 2006 chart-topping "Press Play," which had two top 10 hit singles: "Last Night" with Keyshia Cole and "Come to Me" featuring Nicole Scherzinger.

In 2004, Combs played Walter Lee Younger in the Broadway revival of "A Raisin in the Sun," which aired as a television adaptation four years later. He's also appeared in films including "Get Him to the Greek" and "Monster's Ball."

In November, Combs' protegee and singer Cassie sued him for alleging years of sexual abuse including rape. The lawsuit alleged he forced her to have sex with male prostitutes while he filmed them.

Combs and Ventura began dating in 2007 and had an on-and-off relationship for more than a decade.

The suit was settled the day after it was filed, but the lawsuits against Combs kept coming against.

Combs had said in a December statement, "I did not do any of the awful things being alleged."

In February, a music producer filed a lawsuit alleging Combs coerced him to solicit prostitutes and pressured him to have sex with them. Combs' attorney Shawn Holley has said of those allegations that "we have overwhelming, indisputable proof that his claims are complete lies."

Another of Combs' accusers was a woman who said the rap producer raped her two decades ago when she was 17.

## Assault

The filings detail acts of sexual assault, beatings and forced drugging allegedly committed in the early 1990s by Combs, then a talent director, party promoter and rising figure in New York City's hip-hop community.

Last year, Combs stepped down as chairman of his cable television network Revolt amid the sexual abuse allegations against him.

Revolt announced Combs' decision via social media. It's not clear if he will ever return to the media company — which said Combs previously had "no operational or day-to-day role" at the network.

"This decision helps to ensure that Revolt remains steadfastly focused on our mission to create meaningful content for the culture and amplify the voices of all Black people throughout this country and African diaspora," the network said.

The network had been preparing to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Combs also created an online marketplace called Empower Global that featured Black-owned brands. The website for the curated marketplace is still active, but shows no products being sold.

Earlier this year, Combs withdrew the lawsuit filed last year against Diageo as part of a settlement with the London-based spirits giant.

Combs said the company didn't make promised investments in Ciroc vodka and DeLeon tequila — two brands Combs promoted in the past — and treated them as inferior "urban" products. He also accused Diageo of racism.

In court filings, Combs said Diageo leadership told him race was one of the reasons it limited distribution to "urban" neighborhoods. Combs said he was also told some Diageo leaders resented him for making too much money.

In legal filings, Diageo accused Combs of resorting to "false and reckless" allegations "in an effort to extract additional billions" from the company.

Combs' reputation took a serious hit after the lawsuit was filed. Diageo became the sole owner of Ciroc and DeLeon after the lawsuit was withdrawn.



Dexter Holland, lead vocalist of the US band The Offspring, performs at the Estereo Picnic music festival in Bogota, Colombia, Sunday, March 24. (AP)

## Books

## Author talks balancing reality and fantasy

## Serle on magic of 'Expiration Dates'

LOS ANGELES, March 26, (AP) — In Rebecca Serle's new book "Expiration Dates: A Novel," the protagonist, Daphne, knows when her relationships will end. A slip of paper always shows up with a name and a number for how long they will date.

We meet Daphne on her way to a blind date with Jake — whose paper doesn't have a number. This must mean he's the one. Or is he? Is it helpful or a hindrance to have the answers?

"I was thinking about fate and free will and which one wins," Serle said recently over Zoom from her home in Los Angeles. "How much is within our control and how much is going to happen regardless of the decisions we make and the choices that we make?"

Serle's recent novels have blended fantasy and realism. In her last book, "One Italian Summer," a woman meets a younger version of her mother while on vacation.

In "Expiration Dates," Serle, who married in 2023, was inspired by her own dating history.

"I was single for a really long time," she said. "I remember relationships would end and I would feel like, 'This again? Didn't I already learn this lesson?' Looking back, I see who I had to become before I met my husband, but it's hard to see in the moment. That's where the wish fulfillment of 'Expiration Dates' comes in. There is something so compelling about the idea how you might see a relationship if you weren't entering into every one, as I did, thinking 'This could be the one.'"

Serle spoke to The Associated

Press about philosophy, what she tells her husband about her books, and why running and writing are a lot alike.

Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

**AP:** What inspired you to start adding fantasy elements to your books?

**Serle:** In college I would write magical realism short stories. I read a lot of Aimee Bender and Haruki Murakami and enjoyed the way they would open up a universe and not explain it. Something about that just sparkled. I published four young adult novels before writing my first novel for adults which was "The Dinner List" in 2018. With that, I went back to how I began by writing magical realism.

**AP:** Did you by chance study philosophy in school?

**Serle:** I was actually obsessed with philosophy in high school. I remember reading Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" and being blown away.

**AP:** Your readers enjoy the magic elements in your book. Do you ever feel pressure to continue to include those?

**Serle:** I'm working on a book right now that might be the last book that has some kind of magic in it. I want to keep reinventing myself as a writer and growing. But I'm also aware that I have an audience that for whatever reason, lovingly and wonderfully and surprisingly really likes what I do. We'll see. Once the thing is no longer interesting to me, the books are not going to be interesting to read. That's just the truth.

**AP:** What has it been like introducing your husband to your writing?

**Serle:** I said to my husband early on, and I remind him all the time, "Happy marriages doesn't make interesting books." He's going to inevitably recognize himself in everything that comes next, because the fabric of our lives are now woven together. We live together. We share a life together. He's going to recognize details of himself in a husband character. Of course he is. I'm writing it. But just because that person you know, has an affair doesn't mean that that's how I feel about him. That's a hard thing sometimes for non-writers to understand.

**AP:** You've recently started running regularly and say running is like writing. How so?

**Serle:** By the way, by running I mean like, 3 miles. I'm not marathoning. OK? But I never ran a mile in my life. I really had never run five minutes in my life. I recently started running because it was something I really wanted to learn how to do. My knees would hurt when I ran for five minutes, but they don't hurt now that I run for half an hour. Your ability to keep moving and your lung capacity adapts, but I think what really adapts is your brain. Your brain says, "I know I can do this; I know I can complete this." I think that is exactly what it means to write a book. Every time I sit down to do it, it gets a little bit easier, because I've done it before, and I know I can do it again. You keep on and eventually something gets built.



Author Rebecca Serle poses for a portrait in West Hollywood, Calif., on Feb. 29, 2024, to promote her latest book 'Expiration Dates.' (AP)



Gelb



Assange

## Variety

**LONDON:** A London court is scheduled Tuesday to rule whether WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gets one final appeal in England to challenge extradition to the United States on espionage charges.

Two judges are due to issue a judgment in the High Court that could put an end to Assange's long legal saga — or further extend it.

If he fails in winning the right to appeal, his legal team fears he could be swiftly sent to the US to face charges, though they're likely to ask the European Court of Human Rights to block any transfer.

Assange, 52, has been indicted on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over his website's publication of a trove of classified US documents almost 15 years ago. American prosecutors allege that Assange encouraged and helped US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks published.

During a two-day hearing last month, Assange's lawyers argued that he was a secrecy-busting journalist who exposed US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sending him to the United States, they said, would expose him to a politically motivated prosecution and risk a "flagrant denial of justice." (AP)

**LONDON:** The newest endangered baby gorilla at the London Zoo is more than six weeks old but doesn't yet have a name. Zookeepers aren't even sure if it's a male or female because they haven't been able to get close enough to examine it.

A photo taken Monday by The Associated Press shows why: The gorilla's mother, Effie, has the baby in her loving cuddle.

"It's actually quite tricky to sex a young gorilla without a close-up examination," said Rebecca Blanchard, a zoo spokesperson. "The infant is still held closely by its mum most of the time, and here at London Zoo, we leave the baby in mum's capable hands."

The tiny ape that arrived Feb. 8 is one of two baby western lowland gorillas born at the zoo this winter. Another mother, Mjuku, gave birth to a little one almost a

month earlier. (AP)

**WASHINGTON:** The Cherry Blossom



From left to right: Joel Citron, University of Southern California President Carol Folt, Steven Spielberg, and Holocaust survivor Celina Biniaz pose with the USC Medallion, which was awarded to Holocaust survivors and the USC Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles on Monday, March 25, 2024. This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Shoah Foundation, founded by Spielberg following his 1993 film, 'Schindler's List.' The foundation has an archive of more than 56,000 testimonies. This is the fourth time the medallion has been awarded in USC's history. (AP)

Festival, Washington, features the flowers along the Potomac River, linking the capital to the state of Virginia, attracting large numbers of local visitors and tourists

to enjoy the sight, which lasts one month a year.

The cherry blossom season is an annual occasion to celebrate friendship between the American and Japanese peoples.

The connection between cherry blossoms and friendship between the two peoples originated in the story of planting these flowers for the first time on the banks of the Potomac River.

In 1912, Japan gifted 3,000 cherry blossom trees to the United States to be planted in the capital, Washington, and the neighboring states of Virginia and Maryland. This gift has since become an annual commemoration of friendship between the two peoples, preserved by nature at the beginning of each spring. (KUNA)

**NEW YORK:** The Metropolitan Opera was forced to stage a semi-staged performance of Puccini's "Turandot" recently after a stage elevator jammed.

Met general manager Peter Gelb made an announcement from the stage before the show.

"I'm sorry to say that this is not going to be a normal night at the opera — not that when it comes to the Met, normal and opera are two words that are typically used in the same sentence," Gelb said.

The Met usually has sets for four different operas in the house at any given time, and Gelb said the malfunction occurred as sets were moved following a daytime rehearsal of Puccini's "La Rondine (The Swallow)." (AP)

## The Conversation

## New technology paving way for personalized care

## AI can help predict patient response to TB treatments

By Sriram Chandrasekaran  
University of Michigan

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

Tuberculosis is the world's deadliest bacterial infection. It afflicted over 10 million people and took 1.3 million lives in 2022. These numbers are predicted to increase dramatically because of the spread of multidrug-resistant TB.

Why does one TB patient recover from the infection while another succumbs? And why does one drug work in one patient but not another, even if they have the same disease?

People have been battling TB for millennia. For example, researchers have found Egyptian mummies from 2400 BCE that show signs of TB. While TB infections occur worldwide, the countries with the highest number of multidrug-resistant TB cases are Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia.

Researchers predict that the ongoing war in Ukraine will result in an increase in multidrug-resistant TB cases because of health care disruptions. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced access to TB diagnosis and treatment, reversing decades of progress worldwide.

Rapidly and holistically analyzing available medical data can help optimize treatments for each patient and reduce drug resistance. In our recently published research, my team and I describe a new AI tool we developed that uses worldwide patient data to guide more personalized and effective treatment of TB.

My team and I wanted to identify what variables can predict how a patient responds to TB treatment. So we analyzed more than 200 types of clinical test results, medical imaging and drug prescriptions from over 5,000 TB patients in 10 countries. We examined demographic information such as age and gender, prior treatment history and whether patients had other conditions. Finally, we also analyzed data on various TB strains, such as what drugs the pathogen is resistant to and what genetic mutations the pathogen had.

## Studies

Looking at enormous datasets like these can be overwhelming. Even most existing AI tools have had difficulty analyzing large datasets. Prior studies using AI have focused on a single data type - such as imaging or age alone - and had limited success predicting TB treatment outcomes.

We used an approach to AI that allowed us to analyze a large and diverse number of variables simultaneously and identify their relationship to TB outcomes. Our AI model was transparent, meaning we can see through its inner workings to identify the most meaningful clinical features. It was also multimodal, meaning it could interpret different types of data at the same time.

Once we trained our AI model on the dataset, we found that it could predict treatment prognosis with 83% accuracy on newer, unseen patient data and outperform existing AI models. In other words, we could feed a new patient's information into the model and the AI would determine whether a specific type of treatment will either succeed or fail.

We observed that clinical features related to nutrition, particularly lower

BMI, are associated with treatment failure. This supports the use of interventions to improve nourishment, as TB is typically more prevalent in undernourished populations.

We also found that certain drug combinations worked better in patients with certain types of drug-resistant infections but not others, leading to treatment failure. Combining drugs that are synergistic, meaning they enhance each other's potency in the lab, could result in better outcomes. Given the complex environment in the body compared with conditions in the lab, it has so far been unclear whether synergistic relationships between drugs in the lab hold up in the clinic. Our results suggest that using AI to weed out antagonistic drugs, or drugs that inhibit or counteract each other, early in the drug discovery process can avoid treatment failures down the line.

Our findings may help researchers and clinicians meet the World Health Organization's goal to end TB by 2035, by highlighting the relative importance of different types of clinical data. This can help prioritize public health efforts to mitigate TB.

While the performance of our AI tool is promising, it isn't perfect in every case, and more training is needed before it can be used in the clinic. Demographic diversity can be high within a country and may even vary between hospitals. We are working to make this tool more generalizable across regions.

Our goal is to eventually tailor our AI model to identify drug regimens suitable for individuals with certain conditions. Instead of a one-size-fits-all treatment approach, we hope that studying multiple types of data can help physicians personalize treatments for each patient to provide the best outcomes. (AP)

## US cattle test bird flu positive

## Puerto Rico declares dengue epidemic as cases increase

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, March 26, (AP): Puerto Rico's health secretary declared an epidemic on Monday following a spike in dengue cases.

The US territory of 3.2 million people has reported at least 549 cases so far this year, compared with a total of 1,293 cases for all of last year. The majority of cases have been reported in the capital of San Juan.

More than 340 people have been hospitalized for the mosquito-borne virus, according to the island's health department.

Puerto Rico last declared a dengue epidemic in 2012.

More than 5 million dengue cases were reported worldwide last year, with nearly 80% of them occurring in the Western Hemisphere, according to the World Health Organization. The region has reported some 3 million cases so far this year, with health officials noting that higher rainfall along with humidity and heat linked to climate change have contributed to a rise in cases.

The virus can cause crushing headaches, fever, vomiting, a rash and other symptoms. While most infected people don't get symptoms, severe cases can lead to plasma leakage and death.

**Bird flu:** Milk from dairy cows in Texas and Kansas has tested positive for bird flu, US officials said Monday.

Officials with the Texas Animal Health Commission confirmed the flu virus is the Type A H5N1 strain, known for decades to cause outbreaks in birds and to occasionally infect people. The virus is affecting older dairy cows in those states and in New Mexico, causing decreased lactation and low appetite.

It comes a week after officials in Minnesota announced that goats on a farm where there had been an outbreak of bird flu among poultry were diagnosed with the virus. It's believed to be the first time bird flu - also known as highly pathogenic avian influenza - was found in US livestock.

The commercial milk supply is safe and risk to people is low, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Dairies are required to only allow milk from healthy animals to enter the food supply, and milk from the sick animals is being diverted or destroyed. Pasteurization also kills viruses and other bacteria, and the process is required for milk sold through interstate commerce, the agency said.

"At this stage, there is no concern about the safety of the commercial milk supply or that

this circumstance poses a risk to consumer health," the USDA said in a statement.

The federal government said its tests in the cattle did not detect any changes to the virus that would make it spread more easily to people.

Dairy farmers in Texas first became concerned three weeks ago when cattle started falling ill with what officials called "mystery dairy cow disease," Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said. Milk production fell sharply and the cows were lethargic and weren't eating much.

"We hadn't seen anything like it before," he said. "It was kind of like they had a cold."

The state's animal health commission began an investigation that included tests for bird flu, spokeswoman Erin Robinson said. Based on findings from Texas, USDA officials think the cows got the virus from infected wild birds.

Experts say livestock appear to recover on their own within seven to 10 days. That's different than bird flu outbreaks in poultry, which necessitate killing flocks to get rid of the virus. Since 2022, outbreaks in have led to the loss of about 80 million birds in U.S. commercial flocks.

**Smoking ban:** West Virginia, which has the highest rate of adult cigarette use in the nation, became the 12th state to ban smoking in vehicles with children present under a bill signed by Republican Gov. Jim Justice on Friday.

But violators can only be fined up to \$25 if they're pulled over for another offense. Smoking with children present cannot be the main reason a driver is stopped.

About 22% of West Virginia adults smoked in 2021, the latest year available, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC says there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Justice didn't comment on the bill, which was among 15 he signed Friday. West Virginia's 60-day legislative session ended on March 9.

The bill originated in the Republican-dominated state Senate, whose majority leader, Tom Takubo, is a lung doctor. Takubo has said he made a promise long ago to a patient whose father was a heavy smoker that he would try to get such legislation passed. Takubo has made it almost an annual effort since 2017 to introduce the legislation.

The biggest hurdle came in the House of Delegates finance committee, where it won narrow passage after Republican Del. John Hardy called it "just another big government bill."

## Early intervention ignored in aging population

## Silent struggle: Millions unaware of mild cognitive impairment: research

By Soeren Mattke, University of Southern California and Ying Liu, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Mild cognitive impairment - an early stage of dementia - is widely underdiagnosed in people 65 and older. That is the key takeaway from two recent studies from our team.

In the first study, we used Medicare data for about 40 million beneficiaries age 65 and older from 2015 to 2019 to estimate the prevalence of mild cognitive impairment in that population and to identify what proportion of them had actually been diagnosed.

Our finding was sobering: A mere 8% of the number of cases with mild cognitive impairment that we expected based on a statistical model had actually been diagnosed. Scaled up to the general population 65 and older, this means that approximately 7.4 million cases across the country remain undiagnosed.

In the second study, we analyzed data for 226,756 primary care clinicians and found that over 99% of them underdiagnosed mild cognitive impairment in this population.

Mild cognitive impairment is an early symptom of Alzheimer's disease in about half of cases and progresses to dementia at a rate of 10% to 15% per year. It includes symptoms such as losing the ability to remember recent events and appointments, make sound decisions and master complex tasks. Failure to detect it might deprive patients of an opportunity to get treated

and to slow down disease progression.

Mild cognitive impairment can sometimes be caused by easily addressable factors, such as medication side effects, thyroid dysfunction or vitamin B12 deficiency. Since mild cognitive impairment has the same risk factors as cardiovascular disease, such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, medication management of these risks combined with diet and exercise can reduce the risk of progression.

In 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved the drug lecanemab as the first disease-modifying treatment

for Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of mild cognitive impairment. In contrast to previous drugs, which can temporarily improve symptoms of the disease, such as memory loss and agitation, this new treatment addresses the underlying cause of the disease.

## Progression

Lecanemab, a monoclonal antibody, reduces amyloid plaques in the brain, which are toxic protein clumps that are believed to contribute to the progression of the disease. In a large clinical trial, lecanemab was able to reduce the progression of early-stage Alzheimer's disease. A similar drug, donanemab, also succeeded in a clinical trial and is expected to be approved sometime in 2024.

However, these drugs must be used in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, ideally when a patient has only mild cognitive impairment, as there is no evidence that they are effective in advanced stages.

Many factors contribute to the lack of timely detection. But researchers don't have a good understanding of the relative importance of those individual factors or how to reduce the high rate of underdiagnosis.

While distinct, symptoms are subtle and their slow progression means that they can be overlooked or misinterpreted as normal aging. A neurologist in China told our research team that diagnosis rates spike in China after the New Year's holiday, when children who haven't seen their parents for a year notice changes that are harder to pick up when interacting with someone daily.

Doctors also commonly discount memory concerns as normal aging and doubt that much can be done about it. While cognitive tests to distinguish mild cognitive impairment from pathologic decline do exist, they take about 15 minutes, which can be hard to come by during the limited time of a doctor's visit and may require a follow-up appointment.

People, particularly those in their 60s and beyond, as well as their families and friends need to be vigilant about cognitive decline, bring it up during doctor's appointments and insist on a formal assessment.

The Medicare yearly "wellness" visit is an opportunity to explore such concerns, but only about half of beneficiaries take advantage of it.

Just as physicians ask patients about unexplained weight loss and take those concerns seriously, we believe questions that explore a patient's cognitive state need to become the norm.

The Research Brief is a short take on interesting academic work. (AP)

## Dispute over medical school plan deepens

## Tensions rise as senior doctors quit in S. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, March 26, (AP): Senior doctors at major hospitals in South Korea began submitting their resignations en masse on Monday in support of medical interns and residents who have been on strike for five weeks over the government's push to sharply increase medical school admissions.

The senior doctors' action isn't likely to cause an immediate worsening of hospital operations in South Korea because they have said they would continue to work even after sub-

mitting their resignations. But prospects for an early end to the medical impasse were dim, as the doctors' resignation submissions came after President Yoon Suk Yeol called for talks with doctors while suggesting a possible softening of punitive steps against the striking junior doctors.

About 12,000 interns and medical residents have faced impending suspensions of their licenses over their refusal to end their strikes, which have caused hundreds of canceled sur-

geries and other treatments at their hospitals.

They oppose the government's plan to increase the country's medical school admission cap by two-thirds, saying schools can't handle such a steep increase in students and that it would eventually hurt South Korea's medical services. But officials say more doctors are urgently needed because South Korea has a rapidly aging population and its doctor-to-population ratio is one of the lowest in the developed world.

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There are currently only two Black managers in the Premier League

# Black coaches rare in soccer. Is this because of a lack of diversity in the club boardroom?

## Notre Dame 'dumps' Ole Miss 71-56 to advance to Sweet 16



UConn guard Paige Bueckers gestures for a timeout while under pressure from Syracuse guards Georgia Woolley, left, and Dyaisha Fair, right, as teammate Ashlynn Shade (12) looks on in the second half of a second-round college basketball game in the NCAA Tournament, Monday, March 25, 2024, in Storrs, Conn. (AP)

### Indiana squeezes past Oklahoma

**SOUTH BEND, Ind., March 26 (AP): Maddy Westbeld scored 20 points and Hannah Hidalgo added 19 to help No. 2 seed Notre Dame beat seventh-seeded Mississippi 71-56 on Monday in the second round of the women's NCAA Tournament.**

Sonia Citron added 17 for the Fighting Irish (28-6), who advanced to the Sweet 16 where they will play No. 3 seed Oregon State in the Albany Regional 1.

Kennedy Todd-Williams and Madison Scott led Ole Miss (24-9) with 15 points each.

Notre Dame hit Ole Miss with an intense attack from the opening tip, establishing an uptempo tone on offense and a relentless but controlled defense early.

The Fighting Irish bolted to a 21-9 lead after one quarter, harassing Ole Miss into 4-of-17 shooting in the first quarter while connecting on 6-of-12 shots.

Notre Dame expanded its lead to 19 points at 33-14 on a 3 by Westbeld from the top of the key with 5:10 left. The Fighting Irish led by 17 points, 43-26, at halftime. Ole Miss committed 13 turnovers and only hit 38% of its shots (11-of-29).

**Indiana 70, Oklahoma 68**  
In Bloomington, Ind., Mackenzie Holmes scored 29 points, including six in a row, to give fourth-seeded Indiana a late lead Monday night as the Hoosiers rallied past fifth-seeded Oklahoma.

Sydney Parrish added 17 points, eight rebounds and five assists for the Hoosiers (26-6), who advanced to their second Sweet 16 in three years and now face undefeated South Carolina in Albany, New York.

Indiana's players celebrated by racing into the student section and up the steps at Assembly Hall as music blared and fans pumped their hands in the air.

Big 12 Player of the Year Skylar Vann led the Sooners (23-10) with 20 points and eight rebounds. Aubrey Jones had 16 points for Oklahoma, which walked off the floor dejectedly after a fourth consecutive second-round loss in the NCAA Tournament.

**Iowa 64, West Virginia 54**  
In Iowa City, Iowa, Caitlin Clark

scored 32 points and No. 1 seed Iowa survived one of its worst offensive performances of the season to beat No. 8 seed West Virginia in a women's NCAA Tournament second-round game.

The Hawkeyes (31-4) advanced to play No. 5 seed Colorado in Saturday's Albany 2 Regional semifinal.

Sydney Affolter's three-point play with 2:03 to play, the Hawkeyes' lone field goal of the fourth quarter, gave Iowa a 55-52 lead. Clark and Hannah Stuelke closed the game with nine free throws to clinch the win.

**UCLA 67, Creighton 63**  
In Los Angeles, Kiki Rice scored 24 points, Lauren Betts had 20 points and 10 rebounds and second-seeded UCLA rallied in the second half for a victory over seventh-seeded Creighton.

### BASKETBALL

The Bruins (27-6), who trailed by 10 points early in the third quarter, will face third-seeded LSU in an Albany 2 Regional semifinal Saturday afternoon. Top-seeded Iowa and fifth-seeded Colorado are in the other semi.

Lauren Jensen scored 20 points and Morgan Maly added 18 for the Bluejays (26-6).

**UConn 72, Syracuse 64**  
In Storrs, Conn., Paige Bueckers tied her season high with 32 points, freshman Ashlynn Shade added 19 and



Notre Dame forward Natalija Marshall (15) and Mississippi guard Marquasha Davis (2) fight for a loose ball during the first half of a second-round college basketball game in the NCAA Tournament Monday, March 25, 2024, in South Bend, Ind. (AP)

No. 3 seed UConn held off Syracuse to earn a 30th straight trip to the Sweet 16.

It was Bueckers' fifth straight game with at least 25 points, and seventh in her last eight games.

Dyaisha Fair scored 18 of her 20 points in the second half as Syracuse came back from a 12-point first half deficit to pull within two with just under two minutes left. But the Orange missed four 3-point attempts down the stretch and UConn scored seven of the game's final eight points.

**Southern Cal 73, Kansas 55**  
In Los Angeles, Julu Watkins had 28 points, 11 rebounds and five assists and top-seeded Southern California led all the way in defeating Kansas to reach the Sweet 16 of the women's NCAA Tournament.

McKenzie Forbes hit a career-high six 3-pointers and scored 20 points for the Trojans (28-5), who will face fifth-seeded Baylor (26-7) in the Portland Region 3 in Oregon on Saturday.

USC last went this deep when it reached the Elite Eight in 1994, 10 years after the school won the second of its back-to-back national championships.

Freshman S'Mya Nichols scored 22 points to lead the Jayhawks (20-13). Taiyanna Jackson had 10 points and 18 rebounds. Kansas fell to 0-6 all-time when facing a No. 1 seed in the tournament.

**Portland Regional 4**  
**Gonzaga 77, Utah 66**  
In Spokane, Wash., Kayleigh Tru-

ong scored 21 points, Yvonne Ejim added 17 points and 13 rebounds, and fourth-seeded Gonzaga advanced to the Sweet 16 for the first time in nearly a decade beating No. 5 seed Utah in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Zags used a barrage of 3-point shooting in the second and third quarters to overcome an early deficit and advanced to their first regional semifinal since 2015. Gonzaga (32-3) won its 36th consecutive game at home and will face top-seeded Texas in the Portland 4 Regional semifinal on Friday in Portland, Oregon.

Gonzaga received contributions from throughout the lineup. Truong and twin sister Kaylyne were on the mark from the perimeter as the Bulldogs hit 12 3-pointers in the first three quarters and led by as many as 21.

Kaylyne Truong added 14 points and Elisa Hollingsworth added 13. The Bulldogs finished 12 of 22 from beyond the 3-point line and took a victory lap through the crammed Kennel Club student section following the victory.

Alissa Pili led Utah (23-11) with 35 points, her fifth 30-point game of the season, in her final game for the Utes. Pili scored the first 10 points of the game for the Utes and closed her career with a 3-pointer with 2 seconds left before having a long hug with Utah coach Lynne Roberts.

**NC State 79, Tennessee 72**  
In Raleigh, N.C., Aziaha James scored 22 points and the Wolfpack blew nearly all of a 20-point lead before holding off the Volunteers, sending them back to the Sweet 16.

Saniya Rivers added 20 points for the Wolfpack (29-6), who dominated the second quarter to build that huge margin before the Lady Vols (20-13) started creeping their way back.

Tennessee got as close as two points in the fourth, but N.C. State did just enough to protect its lead. That sent the Wolfpack on to a date with No. 2 seed Stanford in the Portland 4 Region.

James came up big in the critical moment amid the Lady Vols' surge. First the 5-foot-9 junior scored on a floater over the outstretched arms of 6-6 post Tamari Key. Then, after Baldwin blocked a shot from Rickea Jackson from behind, James curled around the left wing to catch and feed from Saniya Rivers and stick a huge 3-pointer for a 70-63 lead at the 2:48 mark.

Tennessee didn't get it back to a one-possession game again.

MANCHESTER, England, March 26. (AP) Ricky Hill packed his bags and prepared to uproot his life again. Next stop: Chicago. The former England international soccer player is accustomed to making sacrifices and traveling far to build his coaching career, an effort he says has been stymied because he is Black.

"It is something that I hate to do because home is where the heart is," Hill said of leaving behind his wife of 38 years and his 99-year-old mother to chase a rare management opportunity.

Racism has long permeated the world's most popular sport, with players subjected to racist chants and taunts online. While soccer governing bodies such as FIFA and UEFA have taken steps to combat the abuse of players, the lack of diversity in the upper ranks at major clubs remains an unsolved problem.

"It's two fights for equality," Hill told The Associated Press.

Hill - who as a teenager in the 1970s was among the first generation of Black players in England - says he routinely faced racist abuse from fans when he played for Luton Town.

"You would hear songs about you, see people spitting, that kind of vitriolic behavior."

That racism, he says, has continued to hold him back in the pursuit of his top-flight coaching dream.

"The difficulty we've had as racially diverse individuals and Black individuals, specifically, is there is no way of showing your worth as a coach or manager without actually having the opportunity to do so," he said.

The issue needs to be considered "through a Black lens," Delroy Corinaldi, co-founder of the British-based advocacy group Black Footballers Partnership, told The AP.

### SOCCER

A BFP report in 2022 found that while some 43% of players in England's Premier League are Black, only 4% land coaching jobs in English professional soccer. There are currently only two Black managers in the Premier League.

Under-representation is not just an English problem. There are only two Black head coaches in France's Ligue 1, one in Italy's Serie A, and none in the top divisions of Spain and Germany.

Wilfried Nancy, who is French, built his coaching career with Montreal in Canada and he now leads Ohio's championship-winning Columbus Crew. He is the only Black head coach in MLS.

Nancy is puzzled by the lack of diversity in soccer coaching in Europe and the U.S.

"A lot of people like me, we have a lot of competency, but they don't have the opportunity for the moment to do it," he said.

Hill is standing up to racism in the sport. In 2022, he sued MLS and the USL Championship claiming discrimination after repeatedly being overlooked for jobs despite his decorated coaching career with Tampa Bay Rowdies and in Trinidad and Tobago.

A lack of diversity in boardrooms may be the root of the problem.

The Football Association in England launched a leadership diversity code in 2020, setting hiring targets to address inequality. Yet its most recent report in November said workforce representation still does not reflect the diversity of players. Of last season's hires, the report said, 9% of senior leaders, 11% of team operations, 16% of coaches and 9% of senior coaches were Black, Asian or of mixed heritage.

FA chief executive Mark Bullingham admits there is "still a huge amount of work to be done."

Burnley coach Vincent Kompany, who is Black, said this must be addressed to effect real change.

"If you have a boardroom that's diverse, you can't brush things under the carpet," Kompany said.

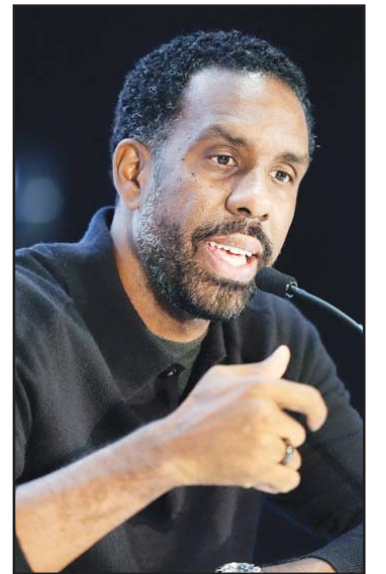
The Premier League's Coach Inclusion and Diversity Scheme aims to increase minority representation in coaching. The initiative provides coaches with a bursary and work placements.

Yet the BFP's latest report found that non-Black former players are 50% more likely than their Black counterparts to progress into management in England, and Black managers or assistants are 41% more likely to be fired.

"They are less likely to get in. Once they get in they are less likely to get promoted. And once they do get promoted they are more likely to get fired," one of the report's authors, Stefan Szymanski, a professor of sport management at the University of Michigan, told AP.

"I'd like to hear what an explanation of this is, other than racism."

Two of the biggest coaching jobs in soccer will become available at the end of the season. And



Miami Beach, Fla. Nancy, who is French, built his coaching career with Montreal in Canada and he now leads Ohio's championship-winning Columbus Crew. He is the only Black head coach in MLS. (AP)

while it is not yet clear who will fill the positions at Liverpool and Bayern Munich, it's highly unlikely the successful candidates will be Black.

The standout favorite is Xabi Alonso, who is less than two years into his first job as head coach with Bayer Leverkusen. Alonso, who is white, had a distinguished playing career with Liverpool, Real Madrid and Bayern, and Bayer is on course to win the German title this season.

"You have to be fair. Who's qualified to do that job?" former Premier League player Troy Deeney told AP. "Part of the argument isn't to just say, 'Give Black people, women, whoever you think is marginalized, just give them the job.' Who's the Black manager that's doing really well at the moment that deserves that job?"

Ruud Gullit, then one of the most celebrated players in the world, became the Premier League's first Black manager when he was appointed by Chelsea in 1996. Multiple Champions League-winner Clarence Seedorf was hired by Italian giant AC Milan in 2014. He lasted only four months.

But high-profile Black players are more commonly hired as coaches to low-level teams.

Former England internationals Paul Ince and Sol Campbell began their managerial careers with then-fourth division team Macclesfield. Ince's only top-flight job was with Blackburn in 2008. He was fired after less than six months and has not been hired by a Premier League club since.

Meanwhile, Campbell's ex-England teammate, Frank Lampard, who is white, has held three Premier League coaching positions on the back of his one year at second division Derby.

Deeney was hired as head coach of fourth-tier Forest Green Rovers in December, but was fired less than a month later. He remains determined.

"If the reports coming out are suggesting the scale is tipped not in my favor, it doesn't mean I don't play the game. It just means I've got to play the game harder than everybody else," he said.

Hill had a four-month spell as manager of Luton, then in the third tier of English soccer, and has struggled to find work in England ever since. He has just taken a position as executive director of Evolution Soccer in suburban Chicago.

"The industry is such that everyone wants to stay in it and only a certain number of people can," he said. "But, disproportionately, Black people do not manage to stay within the game at a far greater rate than anyone else."

Inspiration could be drawn from the U.S., where the formerly white-dominated NFL implemented rules to try to level the playing field for people of color seeking positions as head coaches, general managers and executives.

The Rooney Rule requires teams to interview at least one person of color for a head coach position, and if any team loses a minority coach or executive to another team, it is awarded compensatory picks in upcoming drafts.

The system has paid off. In the NFL, four minority head coaches have been hired this year and there's a record nine coaches of color entering the 2024 season.

A similar scheme was adopted by England soccer's lower divisions in 2019, but statistics show diversity remains an issue.

Last week, the government introduced legislation to create an independent regulator in English soccer. Szymanski said this could push clubs to commit to diversity where FA and Premier League incentives have failed.

"I would say voluntary arrangements have shown themselves not to be satisfactory," he said. "You need some kind of regulation to push the clubs to embrace change."

## Kohli half-century sets up Bengaluru chasing down Punjab in IPL

BENGALURU, India, March 26. (AP) Royal Challengers Bengaluru rode Virat Kohli's 51st half-century in the Indian Premier League to beat Punjab Kings by four wickets on Monday.

After scoring a quiet 21 at Chennai in a losing cause on Friday, Kohli made a much noisier 77 off 49 balls to fire Bengaluru's chase.

Dinesh Karthik's unbeaten 28 off 10 balls carried Bengaluru home to 178-6 with four balls to spare.

Punjab posted a sub-par 176-6. Cap-

tain Shikhar Dhawan scored 45 and Shashank Singh made 21 off eight balls late in the innings.

Kohli, coming back after more than two months out to be with his wife for the birth of his second child, used his feet well to hit his trademark punching cover drives as Punjab paid the price for letting him escape twice.

In an eventful first over bowled by Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow couldn't hold onto a sharp overhead catch at first slip off the second ball Kohli

faced. Rahul Chahar then spilled a tough one-handed catching opportunity at short midwicket when Kohli was on 33.

### CRICKET

Despite Kohli's dominant innings, Punjab rallied in the middle overs through Harpreet Brar (2-13), and the required rate soared to nearly 12 an over. Brar clean-bowled Rajat Patidar

(18) and Glenn Maxwell (3) and held onto a sharp catch of Kohli at deep point in the 16th over.

But Karthik and impact player Mahipal Lamor, 17 not out, smacked 48 runs off the last 18 balls for Bengaluru.

Earlier, Mohammed Siraj (2-26) and Yash Dayal (1-23) bowled well up front and kept the Punjab batters in check as Dhawan struggled to up the ante before holing out in the deep to Maxwell (2-29).

## Al-Fahaheel exits the competition

## Al-Tadamon Club advances to Arab Clubs Table Tennis Championship quarters

JEDDAH, March 26: Al-Tadamon Club secured a spot in the quarter-finals of the 34th Arab Clubs Table Tennis Championship, while Al-Fahaheel and Al-Fatah faced elimination in the preliminary rounds.

In recent matches held in Jeddah, Al-Tadamon triumphed over Al-Aqsa of Atbara, Sudan, with a convincing score of 3-0. Similarly, Al-Fahaheel secured victory against Sulaymaniyah of Iraq with a score of 3-1. However, Al-Fatah suffered defeat at the hands of Zamalek from Egypt, concluding with a scoreline of 3-2.

Following these results, Al-Tada-

mon advances to the quarter-finals, where they will face Al-Ittihad. Meanwhile, Al-Fahaheel exits the competition, and Al-Fatah Club will compete in matches to determine positions from fifth to eighth for

## TENNIS

women.

Expressing his thoughts on the victory, Al-Tadamon team player Jaber Al-Balhan credited the team's diligence during the preparation period. He emphasized the club's aspirations to progress further in the tournament and achieve optimal



A Kuwait player returns a shot during a singles match.

outcomes.

Al-Balhan highlighted the positive impact of participating in such

tournaments on the team's performance locally. He extended gratitude to the administrative and tech-

nical staff of the club, as well as the General Sports Authority, for their unwavering support.

The preliminary round competitions for both men's and women's categories concluded recently. The men's semi-final, alongside matches to determine positions from fifth to eighth for women, will take place today. Additionally, the women's final and the tournament's conclusion with the men's final are scheduled for tomorrow.

Featuring more than 100 male and female athletes representing 23 clubs from nine Arab countries, the championship will run until March 28. Organized under the supervi-

sion of the Saudi Table Tennis Federation and in collaboration with the Arab Table Tennis Federation, the tournament showcases the talent and competitiveness of Arab table tennis clubs.

Among the participating clubs are Al-Fahaheel and Al-Tadamon from Kuwait, Al-Ittihad, Al-Ahly, and Al-Shabab from Saudi Arabia, Enppi from Egypt, Sulaymaniyah, and Al-Jaish Sports Club from Iraq, Al-Arabi and Qatar from Qatar, Al-Makki and Al-Aqsa Atbara from Sudan, Al-Hussein City from Jordan, and Saar and Al-Bahrain from Bahrain.



Sporty players pose for a group photo.

## Sporty Club set for Georgian league debut

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Ahmed Al-Madath, the owner of Sporty Sports Football Academy, disclosed that the "Sporty is set to partake in

## SOCCER

the Georgian Soccer League tournaments, following the official approval from the Board of Directors of the Georgian Football Association for

their inclusion in the Georgian fifth division league for the upcoming football season 2024-2025.

Al-Madath expressed his gratification at the prospect of their involvement in the Georgian League, viewing it as a significant stride towards the advancement of Sporty Club in the times ahead.

He extended his gratitude towards the Georgian Federation for their collaboration and swift action in enrolling the academy's inaugural

football team as one of the contenders in the fifth division league.

It is noteworthy that Sporty Club is presently engaged in the third-tier UAE League competitions, marking its distinction as the foremost Kuwaiti-managed team to partake in the UAE Football League tournaments, subsequent to receiving official endorsement from the Board of Directors of the UAE Football Association for their formal inclusion.

## Top-ranked Swiatek &amp; Coco knocked out of Miami Open

Azarenka makes the quarterfinals

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., March 26, (AP): Top-ranked Iga Swiatek and U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff have been knocked out of the Miami Open.

Swiatek lost to Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-4, 6-2 on Monday night, hours after the third-seeded Gauff fell in three sets to No. 23 Caroline Garcia 6-3, 1-6, 6-2.

In the men's draw, top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz advanced to the round of 16 with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Gael Monfils.

Alexandrova beat a top-ranked player for the first time and advanced to face Jessica Pegula, a 7-6(1), 6-3 winner over Emma Navarro, in the quarterfinals.

Alexandrova recorded her second win over Swiatek, following a 2021 victory in Melbourne. Swiatek had won their three matches since.

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"We played quite a few times before and sometimes it was three sets," Alexandrova said. "I think sometimes I was quite close to it, but still far away. Winning against her, of course it feels great. I'm not sure if it's a surprise or not, but I just worked quite hard on the court and it paid off."

Swiatek rallied from a set down and beat Linda Noskova a day earlier. Against Alexandrova, she struggled.

"Disappointed for sure because I thought I was going to play better here in Miami," Swiatek said. "But



Players gear up for training.

## Kuwaiti Olympic team wraps up training camp ahead of AFC Cup

ABU DHABI, March 26: The Kuwaiti Olympic team wrapped up its training camp in Abu Dhabi, which had been ongoing since mid-March, in preparation for the upcoming AFC U-23 Cup finals scheduled to take place in Qatar from April 15 to May 3.

Team director Jarrah Al-Ateeqi expressed satisfaction on behalf of the administrative and technical staff regarding the camp. The technical staff affirmed the readiness of the selected players, noting an enhanced

level of cohesion among the team members during daily training sessions.

Additionally, team manager Mohammed Al-Kandari highlighted that Portuguese

## SOCCER

coach Emilio Peixe provided opportunities for new players to showcase their abilities. He expressed hope that all team members would fulfill their respective roles effectively in the forthcoming matches.



Khaled Al-Shraida with other officials after his election as the Chairman of the Clubs Board of Directors.

## Al-Nasr Sports Club elects Al-Shraida as Chairman

The Electoral Committee of Al-Nasr Sports Club convened two days ago, with committee members Dabous Hassan Al-Dasam, acting as the committee's chair, Ali Nasser Misfer Al-Adwani, Hazza Bandar Sharida Al-Mutairi, and Mishaan Thamer Al-Mutairi present. However, Dr. Nasser Badr Al-Daihani was notably absent from the session.

During the meeting, the committee unanimously decided to entrust Khaled Al-Shraida with the role of Chairman of the Club's Board of Directors for the 2024-2028 electoral term. This decision was made in accordance with the club's approved bylaws, demonstrating adherence to legal protocols and respect for established positions within the organization.

## Best of the Rest

**Barbosa suspended for 2 years:** Brazilian striker Gabriel Barbosa was suspended for two years on Monday following a doping fraud investigation.

The country's Anti-Doping Sports Court of Justice voted 5-4 to punish Barbosa to April 2025.

He brought attention to himself by his erratic behavior during a surprise test on April 8, 2023, one day before Flamengo played the Rio de Janeiro state championship. Anti-doping officers who came to test players at the club training ground were largely ignored by Barbosa, who took his test hours after his teammates.

Barbosa's lawyers argued his blood test at the time, which is considered a more effective test, proved he was clean, and added his unfriendly behavior toward the officers did not mean he tricked the test.

"Despite my respect for the court,

I stress that I never tried to obstruct or fraud any test. I trust that I will be found not guilty in my appeal," Barbosa said on his social media channels. (AP)

**Di Maria receives threat:** Argentine police and prosecutors are investigating an anonymous death threat to soccer star Angel di Maria delivered in his hometown of Rosario early Monday.

Staffers of the Funes Hills Miraflores condominium where the World Cup winner usually stays in the region, said they found a package containing a death threat to Di Maria's family if he returned to play for one of the city clubs.

The 36-year-old winger at Benfica in Portugal said recently he could play again for his boyhood club Rosario Central. He was currently in

the United States touring with Argentina.

"That kind of threat brings a lot of social commotion and that is their aim - to make the population scared, hit public figures," Esteban Santantino, who works in security for the local government, told broadcaster Todo Noticias.

Rosario has been rocked by waves of violence between rival drug dealing groups. The city homicide rate is 22 per 100,000 residents, far above Argentina's average of 4.2 per 100,000.

The violence in Rosario affected another World Cup winner a year ago. Unidentified gunmen shot at a supermarket owned by a relative of Lionel Messi's. They also left a message that read: "Messi, we are waiting for you." (AP)



Alex de Minaur, of Australia, serves to Jan-Lennard Struff, of Germany, in their men's third round match at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

she played an amazing match and for sure, she was the better player out there today. Her serve, I had a had time reading it. I got a little bit tense when I couldn't return well."

Garcia defeated her second straight Grand Slam champion to reach Miami's quarterfinals. She ousted four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka 7-6 (4), 7-5 on Sunday.

Garcia said it had been a while since she had a victory over a top-10 opponent like Gauff.

"You keep working and trying to stay positive about what's coming, that it's going to pay off," she said. "Sometimes, it's very hard. But I'm lucky enough to have very good people behind me to help me and stay positive when I'm struggling."

"It means a lot to have this little reward and keep going in the tournament," she said.

Also moving into the quarterfi-

nals was No. 4 seed Elena Rybakina, who defeated 17th-seeded American Madison Keys 6-3, 7-5.

Rybakina will next face No. 8 seed Maria Sakkari, who advanced to her second Miami Open quarterfinal when Anna Kalinskaya, seeded 22nd, withdrew with a right thigh injury.

Victoria Azarenka, who's won the Australian Open twice, made the quarterfinals with a 7-5, 6-1 victory over Katie Boulter.

Yulia Putintseva also advanced, defeating No. 27 seed Anhalina Kalinina straight sets, 6-4, 7-6 (5), and No. 5 seed Jessica Pegula beat Emma Navarro 7-6 (1), 6-3.

Alcaraz will next face Lorenzo Musetti, who beat Ben Shelton 6-4, 7-6 (5). Alexander Zverev, the fourth seed, defeated Christopher Eubanks 7-6 (4), 6-3, and No. 9 seed Alex de Minaur beat Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6 (3), 6-4.



Houston Rockets guard Jalen Green (4) dunks the ball between Portland Trail Blazers guards Rayan Rupert, left, and Scoot Henderson (00) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Houston. (AP)

# Sports

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## Australia & Palestine win again in Asia qualifying for World Cup

Socceroos advance to the final round

**CANBERRA, Australia, March 26, (AP):** Australia thrashed Lebanon 5-0 and became the first team to advance to the final round of Asia qualifying for the 2026 World Cup on Tuesday.

An early goal from Kusini Yengi in Canberra sent the Socceroos on the way to a fourth successive win in Group I and ensured progress to the next stage with two matches to spare.

Palestine stayed second in the group after beating Bangladesh 1-0 and on course for a first appearance in the final round of qualifying.

With less than two minutes on the clock, the impressive Craig Goodwin crossed from the left for Yengi to score

### SOCCER

his first goal for Australia from close range.

Australia put the game beyond Lebanon in the first three minutes of the second half. Bassel Jradi knocked in an own goal following a corner and Goodwin fired home a third.

John Iredale came off the bench to make it 4-0 midway through the second half with his first international goal, and Goodwin added his second and Australia's fifth with nine minutes remaining thanks to an Iredale assist.

"It means the world to me personally, and to the boys," Iredale said. "We set out to score more goals tonight and we're pleased we did that."

"Craig Goodwin's got an unbelievable left foot, and having him in the squad really boosts our quality. I was really pleased to help him get his second goal."

Michel Termanini scored Palestine's winner in Dhaka four minutes into stoppage time.

Palestine has seven points, five more than Lebanon and six clear of Bangladesh.



Serbia's Andrija Zivkovic, (right), and Cyprus' Charalampos Charalampous challenge for the ball during an international friendly soccer match between Cyprus and Serbia at AEK arena stadium in Larnaca, Cyprus. Serbia won 1-0. (AP)

Sabonis' milestone night helps the Kings beat 76ers

## Hawks rally from 30 down to stun Celtics

**ATLANTA, March 26, (AP):** De'Andre Hunter could've held the ball and forced the Celtics to foul.

Instead, he let it fly. Considering what the Atlanta Hawks had done, rallying from a 30-point deficit against NBA-leading Boston, it was only appropriate the shot hit nothing but net.

Hunter scored 24 points, including a clinching 3-pointer with 9.2 seconds remaining, and the patched-together Hawks pulled off one of the most improbable wins in franchise history with a 120-118 stunner over the Celtics on Monday night.

The Celtics had won 20 of 22 and brought a nine-game winning streak into State Farm Arena - a run that certainly appeared in no jeopardy when Al Horford's 3-pointer put Boston up 68-38 with just under 4 1/2 minutes left in the first half.

### Kings 108, 76ers 96

In Sacramento, Domantas Sabonis had his NBA-leading 25th triple-double of the season on a milestone night, leading the Sacramento Kings to a victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Sabonis had 11 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists to become the fifth player in NBA history with at least 25 triple-doubles in a season, joining Nikola Jokic, Russell Westbrook, Wilt Chamberlain and Oscar Robertson.

Sabonis also posted his 54th consecutive double-double, breaking a tie with Kevin Love for the longest streak since the 1976-77 merger between the NBA and ABA. Sabonis is nowhere close to the all-time record of 227 straight double-doubles held by Chamberlain, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

### Nuggets 128, Grizzlies 103

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 29 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists, Christian Braun scored 17 points and the Denver Nuggets beat the Memphis Grizzlies.

Jokic, who left the game with 27 seconds remaining in the third quarter and Denver leading by 21 points, finished two assists shy of his 23rd triple-double of the season.

Lamar Stevens matched a season high with 19 points for the Grizzlies. Scotty Pippen Jr. added 17.

In the last two games between the teams, both in Denver, the Nuggets have won by a combined 62 points.

### Nicks 124, Pistons 99

In New York, Donte DiVincenzo was on the verge of history and in a hurry to get there.

Needing one more 3-pointer to break a franchise record, DiVincenzo found himself a bit flustered by a crowd that wanted him to fire as soon as he touched the ball from wherever he was, the way fans usually respond to Stephen Curry.

So he did, until he finally hit his franchise-record 11th 3-pointer. DiVincenzo scored a career-best 40 points, leading the New York Knicks to a rout of Detroit for their 15th straight victory over the Pistons.

### Rockets 110, Trail Blazers 92

In Houston, Jalen Green scored 27 points to lead the Houston Rockets to

### BASKETBALL

a 110-92 win over the Portland Trail Blazers on Monday night.

It was the Rockets' ninth straight win, their longest winning streak since 2019.

At 36-35, Houston is now just a half game behind Golden State for the final spot in the NBA Play-In Tournament.

Green entered Monday tied for fourth in the NBA in scoring in March with 27.8 points per game on 51.4% shooting. Against Portland, he made 9 of 26 shots, including 4 of 12 from 3.

### Mavericks 115, Jazz 105

In Salt Lake City, Luka Donic had 29 points, 13 assists, and 12 rebounds, and the Dallas Mavericks beat the Utah Jazz.

Kyrie Irving scored 27 points for the Mavericks, who earned their fourth consecutive victory. P.J. Washington had 16 points, and Daniel Gafford finished with 13 points and 10 rebounds.

Lauri Markkanen made six 3-pointers and scored 34 points for Utah. Markkanen ranks third among NBA 7-footers with 1,001 made 3-pointers for his career in his seventh season.

John Collins added 21 points and 11 rebounds for the Jazz, who lost to Dallas for the second time in five days. Collin Sexton had 20 points.

### Nets 96, Raptors 88

In Toronto, Dennis Schroder scored 19 points against his former team. Tendon Watford had 11 of his season-high 19 points in the second quarter and the Brooklyn Nets snapped a six-game losing streak by beating the short-handed Toronto Raptors.

Mikal Bridges scored 13 points and Jalen Wilson added 12 as the Nets outscored Toronto 28-19 in the fourth quarter to help Brooklyn win for the first time since March 10 at Cleveland.

### Suns 104, Spurs 102

In San Antonio, Jeremy Sochan hit a key 3-pointer in the final minute and finished with 26 points and a career-high 18 rebounds as San Antonio beat the Phoenix Suns with Spurs rookie Victor Wembanyama sidelined due to injury.

Devin Vassell added 26 points for San Antonio and celebrated the victory by yelling into the house microphone after the game: "That's a big win. That's a big win."

Devin Booker scored 36 points and Kevin Durant added 29 as Phoenix split a two-game set in San Antonio.

The Suns outscored the Spurs 14-7 in the final five minutes, but Sochan's 3-pointer with 29 seconds was the difference. Booker and Durant missed potential game-winning 3-pointers in the final seconds.

### Pacers 133, Clippers 116

In Los Angeles, Pascal Siakam scored 31 points to lead the Indiana Pacers to win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Myles Turner had 24 points and seven rebounds, helping the Pacers to their sixth win in their last seven road games. Tyrese Haliburton finished with 21 points and nine assists.

Los Angeles dropped its fifth consecutive home game. Kawhi Leonard and Paul George each scored 26 points for the Clippers, and Russell Westbrook had 14 points and seven assists in his return after missing 12 games because of a fractured left hand.

### Cavaliers 115, Hornets 92

In Cleveland, Marcus Morris Sr. threw a high, intentional elbow that flattened one of the Hornets.

It awakened the Cavaliers. Evan Mobley and Jarrett Allen each scored 17 points, and Cleveland bounced back from an embarrassing loss at Miami 24 hours earlier by beating Charlotte.



Phoenix Suns guard Bradley Beal, (front left), scores past San Antonio Spurs forward Keldon Johnson, (center), during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Antonio. (AP)

Forest appeal against 4-point penalty

**NOTTINGHAM, England, March 26, (AP):** Nottingham Forest lodged an appeal against the four-point penalty imposed by the English Premier League last week for breaching the competition's financial rules. Forest issued a terse statement confirming the course of action the club has taken. It was in contrast to a lengthy and indignant response published by Forest when the sanction was handed out.

Forest was found to have breached the league profitability and sustainabil-

ity regulations, which typically allow clubs to lose a maximum of 105 million pounds (\$133 million) over a three-year period or face sanctions.

### SOCCER

Forest's assessment period ended in 2022-23 and therefore included two seasons when the club was in the second-tier Championship.

Shakib back in Bangladesh squad

## Perth to host Australia season-opening Test in a five-match series against India

**MELBOURNE, Australia, March 26, (AP):** Perth will host the first cricket test between Australia and India in November, replacing Brisbane's Gabba ground as the traditional opening venue for international series Down Under.

Cricket Australia officials announced the 2024-25 schedule on Tuesday, confirming the Western Australian capital will kick off the five-test series against India on Nov. 22. Adelaide will host the second Border-Gavaskar test from Dec. 6 before the series moves to Brisbane on Dec. 14 and to Melbourne and Sydney for the traditional Boxing Day and New Year's tests.

Australia is undefeated in 31 season-opening tests at the Gabba since 1989. Its only two test defeats at the ground in that time have come when it closed out the summer schedule, including a series-deciding loss to India in 2021. Organizers of the Brisbane Olympics had originally



In this file photo, India's Rishabh Pant falls as he hits the ball for four runs during play on the final day of the fourth cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba, Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

picked in the Bangladesh squad for the second and final test against Sri Lanka starting on Saturday in Chattogram.

Bangladesh lost the first test by 328 runs inside four days.

Shakib has been out of the national team since November at the Cricket World Cup in India. The captain hit 82 and took two wickets to beat Sri Lanka. But he broke his left index finger, and a vision problem was revealed.

He's been playing for the last two months in the Bangladesh and Dhaka Premier Leagues with success. Shakib's last test was in April 2023 against Ireland in Mirpur.

Batter Towhid Hridoy has been dropped to accommodate Shakib.

Also out is pace bowler Mushfik Hasan, who has picked up a left ankle injury. Fellow pacer Hasan Mahmud, who has played 39 matches for Bangladesh in white ball cricket but has yet to feature in a test, replaced him. Mahmud has 49 wickets from 16 first-class outings.

**Bangladesh:** Najmul Hossain Shanto (captain), Zakir Hasan, Mahmudul Hasan, Shadman Islam, Liton Das, Mominul Haque, Shakib Al Hasan, Shahadat Hossain, Mehidy Hassan, Nayeem Hasan, Taijul Islam, Shoriful Islam, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud.

### CRICKET

planned to redevelop the Gabba as the centerpiece of the 2032 Games but scrapped the contentious proposal earlier this month.

Cricket Australia operations chief Peter Roach said the hard and fast Optus Stadium pitch Perth, where Australia has won all four tests it has played at the relatively new venue, was now more than comparable to the one traditionally used at the Gabba.

"The clear advice from our national team is there is a preference to start series strongly at venues where they're really comfortable," Roach said. "Perth and Brisbane they believe are somewhat comparable in terms of the advantage they get, in that they're the hardest and bounciest pitches in Australia. Australia will also play a three-match one-day international series and three Twenty20 against Pakistan over a two-week period starting Nov. 4."

### CRICKET

Allrounder Shakib Al Hasan was passed fit after an eye problem to be