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Ramadan 13, 1446 AH	
Fajr	: 04:41
Shrooq	: 06:00
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Asr	: 15:22
Maghrib	: 17:55
Isha	: 19:11

Amir calls to safeguard Kuwait

Sheikh Meshal visits Interior Ministry and Kuwait Fire Force HQ, hails personnel



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets senior officials and officers during his visits to the Ministry of Interior and Kuwait Fire Force on March 11, 2025. — Amiri Diwan photos (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: HH the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Tuesday visited the headquarters of the Ministry of Interior and Kuwait Fire Force, where he reaffirmed his support for security and emergency personnel, emphasizing vigilance, modernization and the protection of society.

During his visit to the interior ministry headquarters, HH the Amir, accompanied by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, addressed Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and ministry personnel. He urged them to remain vigilant, uphold the law without exception and combat drug trafficking with utmost firmness to protect the nation's youth and families. He also stressed the importance of upgrading security operations, enhancing personnel efficiency through training and integrating modern technologies.

HH the Amir called for advancing public trust in the interior ministry, protecting human rights and ensuring justice and equality in law enforcement. He emphasized the need to implement the new traffic law to reduce accidents and enhance road safety. Commending interior ministry personnel for their pivotal role in safeguarding national security, he praised their use of advanced biometric technology and digital transformation efforts, which streamline services. Additionally, he lauded the contributions of Kuwaiti women in the security sector, recognizing their professionalism and dedication.

Following his speech, Sheikh Abdullah delivered a statement, after which a film showcasing interior ministry's 2024 achievements was screened. Col Dr Lujain Al-Rushaid spoke on behalf of the women police, and Maj Mohammad Madi Ayed recited poetry. HH the Amir was presented with a commemorative gift.

Later, HH the Amir visited the Kuwait Fire Force headquarters, accompanied by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad.

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RAMADAN KAREEM

Purity of the heart

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

Purity of the heart is one of the best deeds and tasks because the center of our deeds, rewards, punishments, acceptance and rejection is the heart. So you will not enter Paradise without punishment, except with purity of the heart. Almighty Allah says what can be translated as: "The Day when wealth or children will not benefit anyone, but only the one who will come to Allah with a sound (and clear) heart." (Ash-Shura'a 26:88-89)

About the purity of the heart, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Verily, Allah does not look at your faces and your wealth, but (rather) He looks at your hearts and your deeds." (Muslim) Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Beware, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, then the whole body gets spoilt; and that is the heart." (Al-Bukhari)

Purity of the heart is not attained with water and clean clothes like the purity of the body, but rather by eliminating reprehensible characteristics and adopting good character; and this includes getting rid of polytheism and its encumbrances. All the deeds of a pure heart belong to Almighty Allah. The person with a pure and clean heart doesn't ask for praise, appreciation, or reverence from other creatures. Rather, he indulges in worshipping Almighty secretly and publicly (within the parameters of the Islamic teachings), not for show off, but to seek the pleasure of Almighty Allah.

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Palestinian victims of Zionist sexual abuse testify at UN

GENEVA: Palestinians who say they suffered brutal beatings and sexual abuse in Zionist detention and at the hands of Zionist settlers testified about their ordeals at the United Nations this week. "I was humiliated and tortured," said Said Abdel Fattah, a 28-year-old nurse detained in November 2023 near Gaza City's Al Shifa hospital, where he worked.

Fattah gave his testimony from Gaza via vid-

eo-link to a public hearing, speaking through an interpreter. He described being stripped naked in the cold, suffering beatings, threats of rape and other abuse over the next two months as he was shuttled between overcrowded detention facilities. "I was like a punching bag," he said of one particularly harrowing interrogation he endured in January 2024.

The interrogator, he said, "kept hitting me on my genitals... I was bleeding everywhere, I was bleeding from my penis, I was bleeding from my anus". "I felt like my soul (left) my body," Fattah spoke Tuesday during the latest of a series of public hearings hosted by the UN's independent Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

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GAZA: A Palestinian boy cries over the bodies of loved ones after they were killed in a Zionist strike south of Gaza City on March 11, 2025. — AFP

Pak forces free 190 hostages, 50 killed

SIBI, Pakistan: Pakistan security sources on Wednesday said the military had freed 190 train passengers taken hostage by gunmen on the second day of a siege in the mountainous southwest. More than 450 passengers were on board when a separatist militant group

captured the train in a remote frontier district, with an unknown number of hostages still being held. The militants claimed on Wednesday they had killed 50 hostages, which could not be independently verified.

"So far, 190 passengers have been rescued, and 30 terrorists have been killed. Due to the presence of women and children with suicide bombers, extreme caution is being exercised," security sources told AFP. "The operation continues to eliminate the remaining militants." Attacks by separatist groups who accuse outsiders of plundering natural resources in

Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, have soared in the past few years.

The assault was immediately claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army, who released a video of an explosion on the track followed by dozens of militants emerging from mountainous hiding places and storming onto the carriages. "Information suggests that some militants have fled, taking an unknown number of hostages into the local mountainous areas," a security official in the area told AFP.

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Trump talks up Tesla in show of Musk support

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump sought to boost plummeting Tesla share prices Tuesday by briefly turning the White House into a showroom, announcing he was buying one of the electric cars made by close advisor Elon Musk and threatening anti-Musk protesters with "hell". The unprecedented product endorsement

by a sitting president came after Tesla shares cratered amid market fears spurred by Trump's tariffs and backlash to Musk's controversial role in slashing the US government.

Despite his troubles, Musk still announced that he plans to double Tesla production in the United States in the next two years. "I said, 'you know, Elon, I don't like what's happening to you, and Tesla's a great company,'" Trump told reporters while stood alongside Musk, his top donor, in front of a red Tesla on the White House south portico. "He has never asked me for a thing, and he's built this great company, and

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and Tesla CEO Elon Musk speak to the press as they stand next to a Tesla vehicle on the South Portico of the White House on March 11, 2025. — AFP



Amir visits Interior Ministry



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, paid a visit to Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Building at the Ministry of Interior on Tuesday evening. He was accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. Upon arrival, His Highness the Amir

was received by Minister of Defense and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, as well as Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. During the visit, His Highness the Amir delivered a speech, in which he extended his greetings on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. He commended the dedication of the Ministry of Interior's

personnel, both military and civilian, acknowledging their vital role in safeguarding national security and ensuring the safety of the Kuwaiti people. "Security is the foundation of a nation's development and a cornerstone of its progress and prosperity," His Highness stated. "We take great pride in the men and women of the Ministry of Interior, whose vigilance and unwavering commitment serve as the nation's protective shield."

His Highness expressed appreciation for the tireless efforts of security personnel, emphasizing their pivotal role in maintaining stability and upholding the safety of society. He also prayed for the success of the ministry's leadership and members in fulfilling their national duties. The visit reaffirmed the leadership's support for the security forces and their mission to preserve Kuwait's safety and stability. — KUNA

Amir visits Fire Force HQ



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, visited the General Fire Force headquarters on Tuesday evening, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. Upon his arrival, His Highness was received by Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, along with Chief of the General Fire Force Major General Talal Al-Roumi. On the occasion, His Highness the Amir delivered a speech, in which he expressed his appreciation for the General Fire Force's vital role in safeguarding lives and property.

The following is the text of His Highness the Amir's speech: "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and may the best prayers and most complete peace be upon His faithful Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and upon his family and companions. In the esteemed company of my brother, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, and our honorable brothers, I am pleased to meet with the distinguished members of the General Fire Force, both military and civilian,

to exchange warm congratulations and blessings on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. May God Almighty grant our beloved homeland and its loyal people continued progress and prosperity, and may He bless our Arab and Islamic nations with goodness and peace. My brothers and sons, leaders, officers and members of the General Fire Force, you are the frontline guardians of our nation's safety, entrusted with protecting lives, national assets and both public and private property. We deeply appreciate your dedication, great sacrifices, and unwavering commitment to your national duties, which you fulfill with the highest level of competence and professionalism. We reaffirm our steadfast support for the General Fire Force's efforts to enhance its capabilities and operational readiness. It is our aspiration that the force continues to advance toward regional leadership in fire prevention, protection and community security. We closely follow the force's developments and achievements, guided by strategic planning rooted in scientific methodologies, ensuring optimal utilization of resources while keeping pace with evolving challenges in pre-

vention and civil protection. We also commend Fire Force's leadership for prioritizing human capital — the backbone of the force — by investing in education, training, and specialization through academic collaborations. Additionally, we take pride in Kuwait's successful hosting of the Sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction last February, with the participation of 22 Arab nations and numerous international organizations, underscoring our nation's commitment to regional and global safety initiatives." — KUNA



Daajj Al-Oud, Waleed Al-Khashti and Omar Al-Damkhi with Zain's team.

Zain distributes iftar meals at historic Souq Al-Mubarakia

In collaboration with Kuwait Food Bank



Al-Oud joins in distributing iftar meals.

KUWAIT: Zain organized a visit to the historic Souq Al-Mubarakia market in the heart of Kuwait City to distribute iftar meals to market workers. This initiative, which runs daily throughout the Holy Month for the 18th consecutive year, is part of the company's annual Ramadan campaign, Zain Al-Shuhoor. The visit was attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Technology Officer, Daajj Al-Oud, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti, Deputy Director General for Administrative Affairs at the Kuwait Food Bank, Mahmoud Al-Kandari, Grand Mosque Imam Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi, as well as representatives from Zain, Kuwait Food Bank, and members of the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team.

This initiative is a key pillar of Zain's annual Ramadan program, through which the company, in partnership with its strategic ally, the Kuwait Food Bank, provides daily iftar meals. These meals are distributed via food trucks that travel across the

country, reaching densely populated areas to serve workers, individuals, and underprivileged families.

Additionally, Zain provides daily iftar meals at Manahi Al-Dawas Hall in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, bringing the total number of meals distributed throughout the Holy Month to 40,000. Zain's team actively supervises and organizes this initiative, with support from the Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team, comprising employees from various departments, reinforcing Zain's commitment to meaningful community engagement.

Year after year, Zain Al-Shuhoor continues to expand and evolve, introducing new programs and initiatives. Through this campaign, the company strengthens its collaboration with various organizations across the country, embodying the spirit of generosity that defines Ramadan. It also reflects the deep-rooted values of Kuwaiti society in supporting others and fostering love and peace.



The Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team actively participates in the company's Ramadan initiatives.

Envoy highlights 250 years of UK-Kuwait trade relations

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: The British Embassy in Kuwait hosted its annual Ramadan Ghabga on Tuesday, celebrating the achievements of distinguished female business leaders and their contributions to the longstanding UK-Kuwait trade partnership. The event, which followed closely after International Women's Day on March 8, underscored the growing role of women in shaping the economic landscape. British Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, highlighted the significance of this year's theme. "This year's Ghabga celebrates the Holy Month of Ramadan and – given the recent International Women's Day – the valuable contributions of female business leaders to the UK and Kuwait's 250-year-old trading partnership," she said.

She further emphasized the UK's commitment to gender equality in business, adding, "The UK is



Diplomats, embassies' staff and officials pose for a group photo at the event.



British ambassador poses for a group photo alongside embassy members, diplomats and government officials.

committed to working with our partners, including Kuwait, to create a business environment where innovation and hard work are rewarded, and people succeed irrespective of their gender." She noted that the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, has appointed former Minister and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Baroness Harriet Harman KC, as the new UK Special Envoy for Women and Girls to act as a champion for this work. The Ghabga brought together key figures from Kuwait's business com-

munity, highlighting the significant role of women in strengthening the economic ties between the two nations.

Naz Demir, Country Director at the Department for Business and Trade, reinforced this sentiment in her speech, stating: "This evening, we celebrate past, present, and future female business leaders and their significant impact on the UK and Kuwait's trade relationship – which is now worth a record £6.2 billion a year. Events like this reaffirm our

shared commitment to empowering the next generation of female leaders and strengthening further the special bond between our two countries."

The UK-Kuwait partnership spans 250 years, with trade and investment between the two countries reaching new heights. The event not only served as a platform to recognize the achievements of women in business but also reiterated the commitment to fostering an inclusive and thriving economic environment for future generations.



Kuwait, Lebanon discuss ways to empower women

NEW YORK: Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah discussed Tuesday with Lebanese First Lady Nemat Aoun ways to enhance the role of women and empower them within the framework of enhancing relations between the two countries. The two parties stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation in the fields of supporting families and children and promoting joint initiatives that contribute to the development of Arab societies. They also agreed on the need to empower women and enhance their role in community development, which would contribute to achieving social cohesion and enhancing family stability in both countries. — KUNA

NBK launches 'Reduce Food Waste' Campaign

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) reinforces its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility with the launch of the Reduce Food Waste Campaign, aimed at minimizing food waste and encouraging the community to preserve food resources. As part of this initiative, NBK installed refrigerators at the entrances of its branches across all governorates (two branches per governorate) and filled it with iftar meals.

The community is also encouraged to donate excess food and fill the refrigerators with, ensuring that edible and fresh food reaches those in need while also fostering a culture of sustainable consumption. Yaqoub Al-Baqer, AVP at NBK Public Relations and Event Management, commented on the campaign, stating: "Through this initiative, we aim to make sure iftar meals are accessible to everyone in addition to instill a culture of food conservation and responsible



Yaqoub Al-Baqer

consumption. By placing refrigerators at our branches, we are providing the community with a practical and accessible way to contribute to reducing food waste and supporting those in need. At NBK, we believe in the power of collective action to drive meaningful change." Al-Baqer emphasized NBK's long-term dedication to sustainable initiatives, stating: "We believe that community work is an investment in the future. That's why we continue to introduce initiatives that foster generosity, awareness, and social cohesion — solidifying NBK's role as a key contributor to Kuwait's society."

This initiative is part of the Annual Ramadan Program, "Doing Good Deeds," which has been a cornerstone of its CSR initiatives for over 25 years. This year's program introduces new community-driven activities designed to strengthen social bonds and pro-



mote generosity during the holy month. Through this initiative, NBK aims to inspire the community to take active steps toward reducing food waste, reinforcing its broader efforts to support environmental sustainability and social wellbeing.

KPC chief leads delegation to CERAWeek in Houston

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Vice Chairman and CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah led a high-level delegation from the corporation and its subsidiaries to participate in the CERAWeek conference, which commenced on Monday in Houston, Texas. In a press statement on Wednesday, KPC emphasized the significance of the annual event, which concludes on Friday, as it gathers thousands of industry leaders, decision-makers, and experts from around the world to discuss critical energy issues amid evolving global economic conditions.

Sheikh Nawaf took part in a dialogue session moderated by CERAWeek Chairman and renowned energy expert Daniel Yergin, during which he reaffirmed KPC's commitment to ensuring the safe and reliable supply



Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah

low-emission energy products.

Meanwhile, KPC's Managing Director for Planning and Finance, Bader Al-Attar, participated in a session titled A Look at Future Oil Demand, where he outlined the corporation's strategy for managing price fluctuations through flexible planning and market diversification. Al-Attar emphasized that despite the volatility of



Managing Director of Planning and Finance at the Corporation, Badr Al-Attar, during his participation in one of the conference activities. — KUNA photos

global supply and demand, KPC remains on a steady growth trajectory. He affirmed that demand for Kuwaiti oil will persist for decades, even as the world transitions towards alternative energy sources. — KUNA

Local

Gulf women play pivotal role in tech development

NEW YORK: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthah Al-Huwailah affirmed the pivotal role of Gulf women in driving technological advancements. Speaking at an event organized by Kuwait, which currently chairs the GCC session, on the sidelines of the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), Al-Huwailah highlighted the remarkable contributions of Gulf women in various technological fields. She emphasized that Gulf women have demonstrated excellence across multiple sectors, including artificial intelligence, engineering, programming, cybersecurity, medicine, science, and technology. Their achievements have significantly bolstered the GCC states' standing on the global digital landscape, she noted.

Al-Huwailah underscored Kuwait's belief that empowering women in the technological sphere is a fundamental driver of the digital economy and technological progress. She reiterated Kuwait's ongoing efforts to foster innovation, digital entrepreneurship, and increased female participation in emerging fields such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and space technology. She also called for enhanced regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing to further empower women to lead the technological future of the GCC states. Commending the contributions of Gulf women, she described them as an inspiring model both regionally and internationally, reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to supporting women's advancement in digital and technological excellence.—KUNA

Kuwait Heritage



Safat Square, as it appeared in 1951, was considered the city center and a key commercial hub. It hosted numerous social and political events. (Source: The Voice of the Oud: A Story of Kuwait by Jehan S Rajab, 1997.) — Compiled by Mahmoud Zakaria, researcher in heritage

stc hosts Ramadan Ghabga gathering for entrepreneurs

Event organized under the umbrella of its 'weyak' initiative

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, held its 4th gathering for entrepreneurs that have participated in the 'weyak' initiative, this year in theme of a Ramadan Ghabga. The 'weyak' Ghabga aligns with stc's corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework, especially under the pillar that focuses on empowering entrepreneurs and providing them with innovative platforms to enhance their presence in the market and collaborate with like-minded individuals.

The Ghabga was held on the 55th floor of Al Hamra Business Tower, where the exclusive event brought

together over 100 entrepreneurs for an evening on networking and entertainment. Attendees had the opportunity to interact with stc's Executive Management as well as several stc employees, building closer connections between the Company and Kuwait's entrepreneurial community.

As part of stc's commitment to supporting and engaging with the entrepreneurial community and startup ecosystem, the Ghabga served as an interactive platform for attendees to exchange insights, explore potential synergies, and build strong relationships, especially amongst stc representatives. The event also served as a token of appreciation from stc to all those who have participated or played

a role in the 'weyak' initiative, emphasizing their roles in fostering a thriving ecosystem for innovation and development in Kuwait.

stc expressed in a statement that its commitment to the SME community is deeply embedded within its CSR framework, reflecting the Company's strategic vision to support and empower entrepreneurs and startups in Kuwait. By providing access to innovative platforms, mentorship opportunities, and networking events, stc continues to enable the growth of emerging businesses and foster an ecosystem where SMEs can thrive. Through initiatives like the 'weyak' Ghabga, the Company strengthens its relationships with key players in the entrepreneurial sector, strengthening

its role as a key enabler of digital transformation and innovation.

The 'weyak' initiative was launched by stc as part of its CSR strategy to support and empower SMEs through various initiatives, workshops, and engagement platforms. The program is designed to provide entrepreneurs with valuable resources, exposure, and business development opportunities, helping them expand their presence in the market. Over the year, stc has evolved the 'weyak' initiative to bridge the gap between startups and industry leaders. Through the program, the Company aims to build a united collaborative community that nurtures innovation and supports long-term growth in Kuwait's business landscape.



Ahmed Al-Nuwaibet welcomes stc guests at Ghabga 'weyak'.



Entrepreneurs take a group photo during the twilight of weyak.



Photo shows rare hawksbill turtle.

Diving Team removes abandoned fishing nets and rescues rare turtle

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Diving Team, affiliated with the Voluntary Environmental Foundation, successfully removed three tons of abandoned fishing nets from the southern waters of Kuwait in Bnaider and rescued several stranded marine creatures, including a rare hawksbill turtle. The turtle was subsequently handed over to the Scientific Center for necessary care and rehabilitation.

Team leader Waleed Al-Fadhel told KUNA on Tuesday that the diving team received a report about the drifting nets, which were located approximately three kilometers off the coast of Bnaider. Given the imminent danger they posed to marine life and navigation, the team swiftly mobilized to extract them. Al-Fadhel explained that the operation was partic-

ularly challenging due to the large size of the nets, which required several hours to lift. He emphasized that this effort is part of the team's broader initiative to clean Kuwait's southern coastline of hazardous waste, ensuring the protection of the marine environment and maintaining the safety of the sea.

He urged seafarers to play an active role in safeguarding sea turtles, particularly as they are both rare and endangered. He warned against the disposal of waste into the sea, noting that entanglement in fishing nets often leads to suffocation and death for turtles. Additionally, he highlighted the dangers posed by transparent plastic bags floating in the water, which turtles frequently mistake for jellyfish—one of their primary food sources—leading to fatal starvation.

Al-Fadhel noted that turtle nesting sites in Kuwait have significantly declined, with Qaruh Island, located southeast of Kuwaiti waters, remaining one of the few known nesting grounds. Researchers continue to monitor nesting activities on the island, though turtles are widely spotted across Kuwaiti waters by divers and seafarers. He further explained that among the seven known species of sea turtles

worldwide, only two—the hawksbill turtle and the green turtle—inhabit Kuwaiti waters. These species can reach up to two meters in length and weigh as much as 900 kilograms.

Since its establishment in 1986, the Kuwaiti Diving Team has undertaken numerous initiatives to protect and rescue sea turtles. These include complex marine operations to free turtles trapped in fishing nets and industrial cooling station basins. The team has also launched extensive awareness campaigns targeting school students and the broader community, utilizing social media, publications, films, and interactive workshops to promote marine conservation.

Al-Fadhel added that the team participated in an integrated environmental program on Heron Island in Australia, where they were introduced to advanced conservation strategies for protecting turtle nests near the Great Barrier Reef. He expressed his appreciation for the efforts of governmental, scientific, and environmental institutions in Kuwait for their commitment to monitoring sea turtles locally and regionally. These efforts include satellite tracking programs and participation in international agreements and treaties aimed at turtle conservation.—KUNA



Tons of fishing net.



Kuwait Diving Team lifts abandoned fishing nets. — KUNA photos





Morocco battles measles outbreak amid misinformation

Captain of cargo ship in North Sea crash is Russian

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US resumes Ukraine army aid

Ukraine backs 30-day ceasefire proposal; West says next step 'up to Putin'

KYIV: Kyiv's Western allies upped the pressure on Russia on Wednesday to respond to a US-proposed 30-day ceasefire plan, after Ukraine backed the proposal aimed at ending the three-year war. In its first comments on the proposition, the Kremlin said it was waiting for details from Washington. US President Donald Trump's administration lifted a freeze on military aid to Ukraine after Kyiv accepted the plan, the latest in a rapid-fire series of developments on the conflict. "The idea of a 30-day ceasefire is an important and correct step towards a just peace for Ukraine ... Now it's up to (President Vladimir) Putin," Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on social media platform X. Scholz echoed similar demands for a Russian reply that have already been made by Washington and Kyiv. "We'll take this offer now to the Russians and we hope they'll say yes to peace. The ball is now in their court," American Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday after talks in Saudi Arabia where Ukraine backed the US truce proposal.

Andriy Yermak, a top aide to President Volodymyr Zelensky, said Tuesday in Jeddah that Ukraine had made clear that its desire was peace. "Russia needs to say, very clearly, they want peace or not, they want to end this war, which they started, or no," Yermak told reporters. With Trump stunning allies by applying intense pressure on Kyiv and reaching out to Moscow, Ukrainian officials came to talks in Saudi Arabia eager to make up and had proposed a partial truce on air and sea attacks.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that Moscow did not rule out a "high-level" phone call with the United States about Ukraine. "We assume that Secretary of State Rubio and Advisor (Michael) Waltz through various channels in the coming days will inform us on the negotiations that took place and the understandings reached," Peskov said.

Earlier, Russian news agencies reported that the heads of CIA and Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency spoke by phone on Tuesday, in the first such contact in several years. CIA's John Ratcliffe and SVR's Sergei Naryshkin agreed on "regular contact" between their agencies "in order to contribute to the international stability and security, as well as a decrease in confrontation in relations between Moscow and Washington," Russia's state TASS news agency reported.



JEDDAH: (From left) US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Ukrainian Head of Presidential Office Andriy Yermak, Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Andrii Sybiha and Ukraine's Minister of Defense Rustem Umerov pose for a photo after attending the Ukrainian and US delegations meeting in Jeddah. — AFP

'Big meeting'

Rubio said the United States would immediately resume military assistance and intelligence sharing it had cut off to pressure its wartime partner following a disastrous February 28 meeting between Trump and Zelensky. In Washington, Trump said he was ready to welcome Zelensky back to the White House and may speak to President Vladimir Putin this week. Asked by a reporter about the prospects of a comprehensive ceasefire in Ukraine, Trump answered: "Well, I hope it will be over the next few days, I'd like to see." "I know we have a big meeting with Russia tomorrow and some great conversations hopefully will ensue."

Since the US cutoff of aid and intelligence sharing, Russia has stepped up attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and seized back land in Russia's Kursk region which Ukrainian forces had infiltrated. Hours before the Jeddah talks, Ukraine staged a major direct attack on Moscow, with hundreds of drones slamming into the capital and other areas, leaving three people dead. Trump's abrupt shift on Ukraine following Biden's strong support has rattled European allies, with France and Germany increasingly speaking of developing common European de-

fense if the United States no longer offers its security guarantees through NATO.

Allies cautious

Rubio will head on Wednesday to Canada — another country with which Trump is feuding — to meet fellow foreign ministers of the Group of Seven industrial democracies. Rubio has said he will push the G7 to avoid "antagonistic" language about Russia for fear of scuttling diplomacy. French President Emmanuel Macron, who has mulled European forces in Ukraine as part of any deal, on Tuesday hailed the "progress" made in the Jeddah talks but insisted that Kyiv needs "robust" security guarantees in any ceasefire. Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the deal a "remarkable breakthrough" while Italy's Giorgia Meloni said now the ceasefire "decision is up to Russia". In Poland, a top supporter of Ukraine and where historical memories of Russia run deep, Prime Minister Donald Tusk praised the "important step towards peace." Even if Russia agrees to a ceasefire, much remains uncertain in negotiations. Ukraine has pressed for security guarantees, but Trump, in another shift from Biden, has ruled out NATO membership. — AFP

With Trump letter en route, Iran weighs US talks

TEHRAN: With sanctions squeezing its economy, Iran is exploring the possibility of talks with the United States while resisting pressure to make major concessions. Since returning to the White House in January, US President Donald Trump has called for a new nuclear deal with Tehran while reinstating his "maximum pressure" policy of sanctions. Iran has officially ruled out direct talks as long as sanctions remain, with President Masoud Pezeshkian vowing on Tuesday that his country "will not bow in humiliation to anyone."

On Friday, Trump said he had sent a letter to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urging negotiations and warning of possible military action if Iran refuses. Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi said on Wednesday the letter was expected to be delivered "soon" by an Arab country. "Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the UAE president, is carrying the letter," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei told Iranian media on Wednesday.

Observers say Tehran's stance remains focused on its atomic program. "It seems that Iran is ready for limited negotiations — in the sense that they will not extend beyond the nuclear issue," said foreign policy analyst Rahman Ghahremanpour. Trump appeared to be seeking a "comprehensive agreement" covering Iran's nuclear program, missile capabilities — long criticized by Western governments — and its "axis of resistance", a network of groups opposed to the Zionist entity. On Sunday, Iran's mission to the United Nations said Tehran might consider talks only on "the potential militarization" of its nuclear program. "Should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program ... such negotiations will never take place," it said in a statement. — AFP



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International

Amid Trump's interest, Greenland's independence gradualists win vote

Independence the key campaign theme as Trump says Greenland vital to US security

NUUK, Greenland: Greenland's pro-business opposition Demokraatit party, which favors a slow approach to independence from Denmark, won Tuesday's parliamentary election that was dominated by US President Donald Trump's pledge to take control of the island. Demokraatit secured 29.9 percent of the votes with all ballots counted, up from 9.1 percent in 2021, ahead of the opposition Naleraq party, which favors rapid independence, at 24.5 percent.

Since taking office in January, Donald Trump has vowed to make Greenland - a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark - part of the United States, saying it is vital to US security interests, an idea rejected by most Greenlanders. The vast island, with a population of just 57,000, has been caught up in a geopolitical race for dominance in the Arctic, where melting ice caps are making its resources more accessible and opening new shipping routes. Both Russia and China have intensified military activity in the region.

"People want change ... We want more business to finance our welfare," said Jens-Frederik Nielsen, Demokraatit's leader and a former minister of industry and minerals. "We don't want independence tomorrow, we want a good foundation," Nielsen told reporters in Nuuk. He will now hold talks with other parties to try and form a governing coalition.

The ruling Inuit Ataqatigiit party and its partner Siumut, which also seek a slow path towards independence, won a combined 36 percent of votes, down from 66.1 percent in 2021. "We respect the election outcome," Prime Minister Mute Egede of the Inuit Ataqatigiit said in a Facebook post, adding that he would listen to any proposals in upcoming coalition talks.

Greenland is a former Danish colony and has been a territory since 1953. It gained some autonomy in 1979 when its first parliament was formed, but Copenhagen still controls foreign affairs, defense and monetary policy and provides just under \$1 billion

a year to the economy. In 2009, it won the right to declare full independence through a referendum, even though it has not done so out of concern living standards would drop without Denmark's economic support. "I strongly believe that we will very soon start to live a life more based on who we are, based on our culture, based on our own language, and start to make regulations based on us, not based on Denmark," said Qupanuk Olsen, candidate for the main pro-independence party Naleraq.

Inge Olsvig Brandt, a candidate for the ruling Inuit Ataqatigiit party, said: "We don't need the independence right now. We have too many things to work on. I think we have to work with ourselves, our history, and we are going to have a lot of healing work with us before we can take the next step." Voting had been extended by half an hour at some of the 72 polling stations across the Arctic island, where some 40,500 people were eligible to cast their ballot, although the final turnout was not immediately available.

Inuit pride

Trump's vocal interest has shaken up the status quo, and coupled with the growing pride of the Indigenous people in their Inuit culture, put independence front and center in the election. In the final debate on Greenland's state broadcaster KNR late on Monday, leaders of the five parties currently in parliament unanimously said they did not trust Trump. "He is trying to influence us. I can understand if citizens feel insecure," said Erik Jensen, leader of government coalition partner Siumut.

A January poll suggested a majority of Greenland's inhabitants support independence, but are divided on timing. Early on, the election campaign focused on the anger and frustration aimed at historical wrongdoings by Denmark, according to Julie Rademacher, a consultant and former adviser to Greenland's government. "But I think the fear of the



NUUK: Election workers carry ballot boxes to start counting the votes after the polls closed in Nuuk, Greenland, on March 11, 2025, on the day of the autonomous Danish territory's legislative elections. — AFP

US imperialist approach has lately become bigger than the anger towards Denmark," said Rademacher.

Reuters spoke to more than a dozen Greenlanders in Nuuk, all of whom said they favored independence, although many expressed concern that a swift transition could damage the economy and eliminate Nordic welfare services like universal healthcare and free schooling. "We don't want to be part of the US for obvious reasons: healthcare and Trump," said Tuuta Lynge-Larsen, a bank employee and Nuuk

resident, adding that this election was especially important. "We don't like the attention, to put it short."

The island holds substantial natural resources, including critical minerals such as rare earths used in high-tech industries, ranging from electric vehicles to missile systems. However, Greenland has been slow to extract them due to environmental concerns, severe weather, and China's near-total control of the sector, which has made it difficult for companies elsewhere to make a profit or secure buyers. — Reuters

Captain of cargo ship in North Sea crash is Russian

GRIMSBY: The detained captain of a cargo ship which struck a tanker chartered by the US military is a Russian national, the owners of the container vessel said Wednesday, as questions lingered over the cause of the rare North Sea crash. Monday's collision triggered huge fires aboard the two ships, which were still burning two days later although they had been greatly reduced by a huge fire-fighting effort. Investigations are continuing into how the Portuguese-flagged Solong cargo ship ran into the US-flagged Stena Immaculate which was anchored about 13 miles (20 kilometers) off the coast of the northeastern UK port of Hull. UK police on Tuesday

arrested the captain of the Solong, owned by German company Ernst Russ, on suspicion of manslaughter after the crash left one crew member missing, presumed dead. "Ernst Russ confirms that the master is a Russian national," the Germany-based company said in a statement to AFP. "The rest of the crew are a mix of Russian and Filipino nationals."

The detained 59-year-old "remains in our custody having been arrested on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter", Humber-side police said Wednesday. The Daily Telegraph reported Wednesday that Irish officials had found the Solong's emergency steering compass was deficient during a routine safety check last year. It was one of 10 deficiencies noted in the inspection carried out when the ship visited Dublin in July 2024.

Something went "terribly wrong" for the crash to happen but that there was "no evidence" of foul play, UK under-secretary for transport Mike Kane told MPs on Tuesday. At least one tank containing some of the 220,000 barrels of jet fuel on board the

Stena Immaculate was "ruptured", according to the tanker's US-based operator Crowley. That sparked concerns for the surrounding environment and wildlife. But there were "no further reports of pollution to the sea" following the "initial incident", Virginia McVea, Chief Executive of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency said Wednesday.

'Narrowly averted'

Environmental campaign group Greenpeace, which had raised the alarm at the potential fallout in the wildlife rich Humber estuary, said an "environmental disaster may have been narrowly averted". "Though an incident of this scale is rare, any such accident has the potential to become an environmental disaster," said Paul Johnston from the Greenpeace Research Laboratories.

Aerial AFP images on Tuesday showed a gaping gash in the middle of the 140-metre-long (460 foot) tanker, and smoke billowing from the Solong, which was reduced to an almost burnt-out wreck. There

were "no visible flames on board" the tanker as of Wednesday morning, according to the Coastguard.

The Solong, which had been drifting southwards was "being held in a safe position off shore", McVea said, adding the fires on the cargo ship had "greatly reduced". Maritime expert Abdul Khaliq told AFP such a collision between an anchored ship and another on a "routine" journey was "very rare". "It's still not known why was MV Solong unable to take action to avoid collision," said Khaliq, head of the Maritime Centre at Liverpool John Moores University.

The vessel missed "multiple opportunities" to change course, he said, adding the full reasons for the crash would only emerge after the investigation. The Stena Immaculate was on a short-term US military charter with Military Sealift Command, according to a spokesperson for the command, which operates civilian-crewed ships for the US Defense Department. According to data collected by website Vesselfinder, the impact of the crash displaced the tanker by "more than 400 meters". — AFP

Amir calls to safeguard Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

He was received by Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah and Kuwait Fire Force Chief Maj Gen Talal Al-Roumi. Expressing his pride in the force's service and sacrifice, HH the Amir reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing its efficiency and readiness through strategic planning and technological advancements.

HH the Amir highlighted the KFF's participation in the Sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Re-

duction, where Kuwait advocated for global adoption of the Sendai Framework. He directed the force to enhance vigilance, modernize its systems, leverage advanced technology for prevention and awareness, update equipment and strengthen cooperation with military, security and civil sectors to improve disaster and crisis management.

Maj Gen Al-Roumi echoed HH the Amir's sentiments, thanking him for his continuous support. He outlined recent achievements, including digital transformation, extensive preventative inspections, security system upgrades, new fire station establishments, training programs and public awareness campaigns. The visit concluded with a poetry recitation by Lt Col Dr Ali Al-Mutairi and the presentation of a commemorative gift to HH the Amir. — KUNA

said what can be translated as: "Do not envy one another; do not hate one another; do not inflate prices by overbidding against one another; do not harbor malice against one another, and do not enter into commercial transactions when others have already entered into them, but rather be you, O servants of Allah, as brothers. A Muslim is a brother to another Muslim; he neither oppresses him nor does he humiliate him, nor does he look down upon him. Piety is here (and he pointed to his chest three times). It is enough evil for a Muslim to hold his Muslim brother in contempt. All possessions of a Muslim are inviolable for his brother (in faith); his blood, property, and his honor." (Muslim)

Therefore, hearken to the following piece of advice, O Muslims: "Do not hate each other, do not create reasons that lead to hatred and enmity." A Muslim is encouraged to contemplate the following hadith (prophetic narration), translated as: "You will not enter Paradise until you truly believe, and you will not truly believe until you love one another." (Muslim)

A true believer is a brother to a believer; he loves for him what he loves for himself, and what saddens him, saddens his Muslim brother, as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of its limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with fever and wakefulness." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The best path to Paradise is a sound and clean heart. Almighty Allah says what can be translated as: "(All will be raised up for judgment on) the Day when wealth or children will not benefit anyone (in any way). But only those who come to Allah with a sound (and pure) heart (will be saved)." (Ash-Shuara'a 26:88-89) — Courtesy of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue

Palestinian victims of Zionist sexual...

Continued from Page 1

This week's hearings, harshly criticized by the Zionist entity, are specifically focused on allegations of "sexual and reproductive violence" committed by Zionist security forces and settlers. "It's important," COI member Chris Sidoti, who hosted the meeting, told AFP. Victims of such abuse are "entitled to be heard", he said. Experts and advocates who testified Tuesday spoke of a "systematic" trend of sexual violence against Palestinians in detention, but also at checkpoints and other settings since Oct 7, 2023.

Ahead of the hearings Daniel Meron, the Zionist ambassador to the UN in Geneva dismissed them as a waste of time, claiming the Zionist entity investigated and prosecuted any allegations of wrongdoing by its forces. But Palestinian lawyer Sahar Francis decried a glaring lack of accountability, alleging that abuse had become "a widespread policy".

All those arrested from Gaza were strip-searched, she said, with the soldiers in some cases "pushing the sticks" into the prisoner's anus. Sexual abuse happened "in a very massive way" especially in the first months of the war, she said. "I think you can say that most of those who were arrested in these

months were subjected to such practice."

The allegations of abuse are not limited to detention centers. Mohamed Matar, a West Bank resident, said he suffered hours of torture at the hands of security agents and settlers, even as Zionist police refused to intervene. Just days after the Oct 7 attack, he and other Palestinian activists went to help protect a Bedouin community facing settler attacks.

As they were leaving the compound, they were chased and caught by a group of settlers, who he said were joined by members of the Zionist entity's Shabak security agency. He and two other men were blindfolded, stripped to their underwear and, had their hands tied before being taken into a nearby stable. The leader stood "on my head and ordered me to eat ... the feces of the sheep", said Matar. With dozens of settlers around, the man urinated on the three, and beat them so badly during the nearly 12 hours of abuse that Matar said he cried: "just shoot me in the head". The man, he said, jumped on his back and repeatedly "tried to introduce a stick into my anus".

Blinking back tears, Matar showed Sidoti a photograph taken by the settlers showing the three blindfolded men lying in the dirt in their underwear. Other pictures taken after the ordeal showed him with massive bruises all over his body. Speaking to journalists after his testimony, he said he had spent months "in a state of psychological shock". "I didn't think there were people on Earth with such a level of ugliness, sadism and cruelty." —AFP

Pak forces free 190 hostages...

Continued from Page 1

Muhammad Kashif, a senior railway government official in the provincial capital Quetta, told AFP on Tuesday afternoon that the 450 passengers on board had been taken hostage. Passengers who walked for hours through rugged mountains to reach safety described being set free by the militants. "Our women pleaded with them, and they spared us," Babar Masih, a 38-year-old Christian laborer, told AFP on Wednesday. "They told us to

get out and not look back. As we ran, I noticed many others running alongside us."

At a railway station in Quetta, paramilitary troops brought empty coffins that will be sent to the site of the incident. "I can't find the words to describe how we managed to escape. It was terrifying," Muhammad Bilal, who had been travelling with his mother on the Jaffar Express train, told AFP.

The BLA has staged a series of recent attacks against security forces and ethnic groups from outside the province they accuse of benefiting from the region's wealth. The group has demanded an exchange with security forces for its imprisoned members. The train driver, a police officer and a soldier were killed in the assault, according to paramedic Nazim Farooq and railway official Muhammad Aslam. — AFP

Trump talks up Tesla in show of...

Continued from Page 1

he shouldn't be penalized because he's a patriot," Trump continued. On returning to the White House in January, Trump gave Musk the task of slashing government spending and headcounts running the Depart-

ment of Government Efficiency (DOGE). But DOGE's cost-cutting has hit increasing resistance, including protests, court rulings and some pressure from lawmakers. The turmoil has tarnished the Tesla brand, with sales plummeting in Europe, its share price tumbling and multiple reports of cars being vandalized. Unhappy Tesla owners have even slapped bumper stickers on their vehicles saying they purchased them "before Elon went crazy". Trump warned of a crackdown on protesters. Asked by a reporter if protesters should be "labeled domestic terrorists," Trump said "I'll do it." —AFP

International

Duterte's arrest revives victims' hopes for justice

Families of victims want accountability for others involved in campaign

MANILA: The moment Jerica Ann Pico, the widow of a man who was killed during the war on drugs in the Philippines, heard the news of former President Rodrigo Duterte's arrest, she said it felt like a fresh breath of life had rushed back into her. She said she never thought she would live to see the day when justice no longer seemed out of reach for her husband, one of the thousands killed during Duterte's brutal anti-narcotics campaign.

"I was surprised and felt as if I had been brought back to life because what we have been fighting for is finally coming to fruition - we are finally getting justice for our loved ones who were taken from us," said Pico after attending a Mass in the Quezon City region of Manila with families of other victims.

At the church, stark reminders of the drugs war lined the steps of the altar - photos of those who lost their lives under Duterte's six-year campaign. Many of their families, like Pico, now hope to see the former president behind bars. In a dramatic turn of events, Duterte was arrested in Manila on Tuesday at the request of the International Criminal Court and flown to The Hague hours later, marking the biggest step yet in the court of last resort's probe into his bloody "war on drugs."

The 79-year old Duterte could become the first Asian former head of state to go on trial at the ICC. "For families of extra-judicial killing victims, this is our only wish-that those responsible be held accountable," said Pico, the 30-year-old mother of one. Although Duterte withdrew the Philippines

from the ICC's founding treaty in 2019 to block its drugs war probe, the court says it has jurisdiction to investigate alleged crimes that took place while a country was a member.

Victims and human rights groups said that Duterte should not be the only one held accountable. They also demand justice against others involved, including his former police chief, now Senator Ronald dela Rosa, who oversaw the bloody crackdown and is under ICC investigation. "They should be with Duterte and not just Duterte being the only one held accountable," Emily Soriano, whose son was killed in the anti-drugs campaign, said at a press conference attended by families of other victims.

Dela Rosa's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But he and Duterte petitioned the Supreme Court on Tuesday to compel the government to stop cooperating with the ICC. During Duterte's six-year presidency, 6,200 suspects were killed during anti-drug operations, by police count. But activists say the real toll was far higher, with thousands of urban and poor drug users, many placed on official "watch lists", killed in mysterious circumstances.

Pico said her husband, Mark Anthony Ruivivar, was added to such a list in 2018. The following year, she said, he was dead, shot and killed by police outside his home in Quezon City. At the time, police said he had fired at officers first. "At least Duterte will only be imprisoned. His family will still get to see him, visit him," Pico said, holding back tears. "Unlike us who lost our loved ones, we will never see them again." — Reuters



MANILA: Catholic priest Father Flavie Villanueva (left) consoles a grieving relative clutching an urn containing the ashes of a loved one during a funeral ceremony at a cemetery in Manila on March 12, 2025, the day after former President Rodrigo Duterte's arrest. — AFP

Morocco battles measles outbreak amid misinformation

RABAT: Authorities in Morocco have been scrambling to contain an outbreak of measles, a contagious and potentially fatal disease that had nearly been eradicated in the kingdom but has rebounded as vaccination rates have fallen. In Harhoura, a small coastal town near Rabat, 13-year-old Salma and her nine-year-old brother, Souhail, sit quietly in a public clinic, waiting for their second shot of measles vaccine. Their grandmother, Rabia Maknoui, said it was after a campaign at school that the family realized they had been missing doses of the vaccine. "We didn't know they hadn't completed their vaccination," she said. "Their parents panicked when they heard about the outbreak."

Measles is highly contagious, spreading through respiratory droplets and lingering in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area. The disease causes fever, respiratory symptoms and a rash. In some cases, it also leads to severe complications, including pneumonia, brain inflammation and death. Even though vaccination remains the best protection against the disease, immunization rates have fallen in recent years. The vaccine hesitancy is driven by misinformation, which has lingered since the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Fear of vaccines'

In Morocco, authorities have scaled up vaccination against measles in recent months in a bid to control the outbreak. More than 10 million schoolchildren have had their immunization status checked since October last year, said Mourad Mrabet, an official at the National Centre for Public Health Emergencies. Since late 2023, authorities in the North African country have reported more than 25,000 measles cases and 120 deaths, Mrabet said.

The outbreak has raised concerns in France, Morocco's former colonial ruler and leading foreign investor and trade partner. The French public health agency has described the epidemic as reaching "historic levels" and urged travelers to check their vaccination status before visiting the kingdom. Mo-



TEMARA, Morocco: A nurse examines a child before giving her a dose of measles vaccine at a hospital in the Moroccan coastal city of Temara on February 27, 2025. — AFP

roccan authorities say the number of new infections has been steadily declining in recent weeks.

They have promised to continue their vaccination program until late March with the aim of achieving 95-percent cover, sufficient for herd immunity. But they acknowledge they still have some way to go. The health ministry said only about half of those requiring a booster had received one by early March.

In January, government spokesman Mustapha Baitas blamed "false information that fuels public fear of vaccines". Mrabet attributed it to "the influence of the global anti-vax movement". In the United States, growing distrust of public health policy and pharmaceutical companies has contributed to falling vaccination rates. In February, an unvaccinated child died of measles in Texas, where an outbreak has been spreading. And last week, an adult from New Mexico — which neighbors Texas — also died from the disease.

'Deceptive allegations'

To tackle misinformation, Moroccan health officials have launched awareness campaigns, including in schools, to explaining the importance of vaccination. The education ministry's head of health programs, Imane El-Kohen, said one of the "deceptive allegations" was the claim that the measles vaccine is a fourth dose of the COVID vaccine. Hasna Anouar, a nurse in Harhoura, has been involved in vaccination status check programs for years.

She said that before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was little resistance to routine childhood immunizations. But now, some parents have developed a "fear of vaccines," she said. "We have to sit down with them and explain why these shots are necessary." Health rights activist Ali Lotfi put the decline in the vaccination rate down to "lockdown and the fear of being contaminated in hospitals". "Afterwards, the health ministry didn't do enough to address the backlog," he said. — AFP

Who was behind mass killings on Syria's coast?

BEIRUT: For several days, Syria's Mediterranean coast has been gripped by extreme violence that has seen mass killings mainly targeting members of the Alawite minority. Authorities have not provided a toll, but the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor put the number of dead at 1,383 civilians, mostly Alawites. Human Rights Watch said "hundreds" were killed. Since former president Bashar Al-Assad was toppled in December, many Alawites — his sect — have feared reprisals for his brutal rule. Interim President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, who led the Sunni group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) that toppled Assad, has vowed to prosecute those behind the "bloodshed of civilians" and set up a fact-finding committee.

What happened?

Survivors, witnesses and rights groups described a wave of violence since last Thursday targeting Alawite civilians in their coastal heartland. "In a number of extremely disturbing instances, entire families — including women, children and individuals 'hors de combat' (non-combatants) — were killed, with predominantly Alawite cities and villages targeted in particular," UN human rights office spokesman Thameen Al-Kheetan said Tuesday. "According to many testimonies collected by our office, perpetrators raided houses, asking residents whether they were Alawite or Sunni before proceeding to either kill or spare them accordingly. "Some survivors told us that many men were shot dead in front of their families," he added.

A witness who requested anonymity told AFP he had seen a man, his wife and their two children being forced from their home in an Alawite village in Latakia province and executed against a wall. In Jableh, also in Latakia, a resident said armed groups had terrorized his town. "More



QAMISHLI: People march with pictures of victims of a recent wave of sectarian violence targeting Syria's Alawite minority in the west of the country along the Mediterranean sea coast, during a protest condemning the attacks in Syria's northeastern city of Qamishli on March 11, 2025. — AFP

than 50 people from among my family and friends have been killed," he said, speaking anonymously for his safety. "They gathered bodies with bulldozers and buried them in mass graves." The Observatory and social media users shared footage showing bodies piled outside a house, and men in military garb shooting people at close range. AFP could not verify the images.

Who was involved?

No group can be singled out as having been behind the killings. "Unidentified armed groups and individuals — many entering Tartus and Latakia governorates from other parts of Syria following official calls for general mobilization — joined these operations," said Human Rights Watch. Fighters came from Idlib in the northwest, HTS's stronghold before it seized power, but also from areas further east controlled by Turkey-backed groups.

HTS, an offshoot of the former Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda, and forces allied to it have been disbanded and integrated into the new security forces.

Syria researcher Cedric Labrousse said at least three armed factions were involved. Thousands of fighters from those groups flooded into the region, he said, many of them following calls for mobilization. These are namely Syrian groups that reject the new authorities in Damascus, "warlords who have rallied their troops behind the new Syrian army" that notably include pro-Turkey factions, and finally "groups of foreign jihadists". He noted that these foreign jihadists, including "Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Chechens ... were expelled from the region in early January 2025 by the new authorities in order to calm the situation on the coast". Human Rights Watch said that "accountability for atrocities must include all parties", including groups such as the HTS that "now constitute Syria's new security forces". — AFP

Zionist entity kills senior Hezbollah militant

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity said Tuesday it killed a senior Hezbollah militant responsible for drones and missiles, even as it freed Lebanese prisoners as a "goodwill" gesture to the country's new president. Despite a ceasefire between the entity and Hezbollah, the entity has continued to carry out air strikes in Lebanon, claiming they are necessary to prevent the Iran-backed militant group from rearming or re-establishing a presence along its northern border. "Earlier today, the IAF (air force) conducted a precise intelligence-based strike in the area of Nabatieh in southern Lebanon, eliminating Hassan Abbas Ezzedine, the head of Hezbollah's aerial array in the Bader regional unit," the military said in a statement.

It said it carried out a second strike on Tuesday in the Froun area, targeting several militants. "Several terrorists were identified in a site used by Hezbollah in the area of Froun in southern Lebanon," the military said. "An IAF aircraft struck the suspects." Lebanon's official National News Agency reported that two people were killed in the Zionist entity strikes. "An enemy (Zionist) drone strike targeting a car on the Deir El-Zahrani road resulted in one fatality," the news agency said, citing the health ministry. It later reported that a second person was killed in a Zionist air strike on a vehicle in the Froun area.

Although a truce reached on November 27 largely ended more than a year of hostilities — including two months of full-scale war in which Zionist ground troops crossed the border — the Zionist entity has continued to launch periodic strikes in Lebanese territory. The entity was initially expected to withdraw from Lebanon by February 18, after missing a January deadline, but it has maintained a presence in five strategic locations. The ceasefire also required Hezbollah to pull back north of the Litani River, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border, and to dismantle any remaining military infrastructure in southern Lebanon.

Border disputes

In a separate development on Tuesday, the entity announced it had agreed to release five Lebanese citizens detained during its war with Hezbollah. "In coordination with the United States and as a gesture to Lebanon's new president, (the Zionist entity) has agreed to release five Lebanese detainees," a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's office said four of the prisoners had been freed on Tuesday and the fifth would follow on Wednesday. Their release followed a meeting earlier Tuesday in the Lebanese border town of Naqoura, attended by representatives of the Zionist entity, Lebanon and mediators France and the United States. "During the meeting, it was agreed to establish three joint working groups aimed at stabilizing the region," the prime minister's statement said. "These groups will focus on the five points controlled by (the Zionist entity) in southern Lebanon, discussions on the Blue Line and remaining disputed areas, and the issue of Lebanese detainees held by (the Zionist entity)."

The Blue Line is the UN-patrolled demarcation line that has served as de facto border since 2000. In an interview with Lebanese news channel Al Jadeed, US Deputy Special Envoy for the Middle East Morgan Ortagus emphasized Washington's efforts to resolve the border issue. "We want to get a political resolution, finally, to the border disputes," Ortagus said. "When it comes to the border agreement, the land border agreement, there are 13 points — I think that six are still problematic," she said. "I feel fairly confident that ... we can have final resolution on the five points and ultimately on the remaining issues related to the Blue Line". — AFP

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

China, EU strike back against US tariffs

Britain unlikely to retaliate against new US tariffs

BEIJING/LONDON: China and the EU vowed Wednesday to strike back and defend their economic interests against sweeping new US steel and aluminum tariffs, moving Washington closer to an all-out trade war with two major partners. The levies took effect just after midnight on Wednesday "with no exceptions or exemptions", as promised by the White House — despite countries' efforts to avert them.

The EU put on a quick show of force Wednesday against sweeping new US steel and aluminum tariffs, striking back with countermeasures that seek to hurt the United States and force it to the negotiating table. The European Commission, which leads the EU's trade policy, responded swiftly by saying it would impose "countermeasures" from April 1.

"We deeply regret this measure," European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement, adding that "the countermeasures we take today are strong but proportionate".

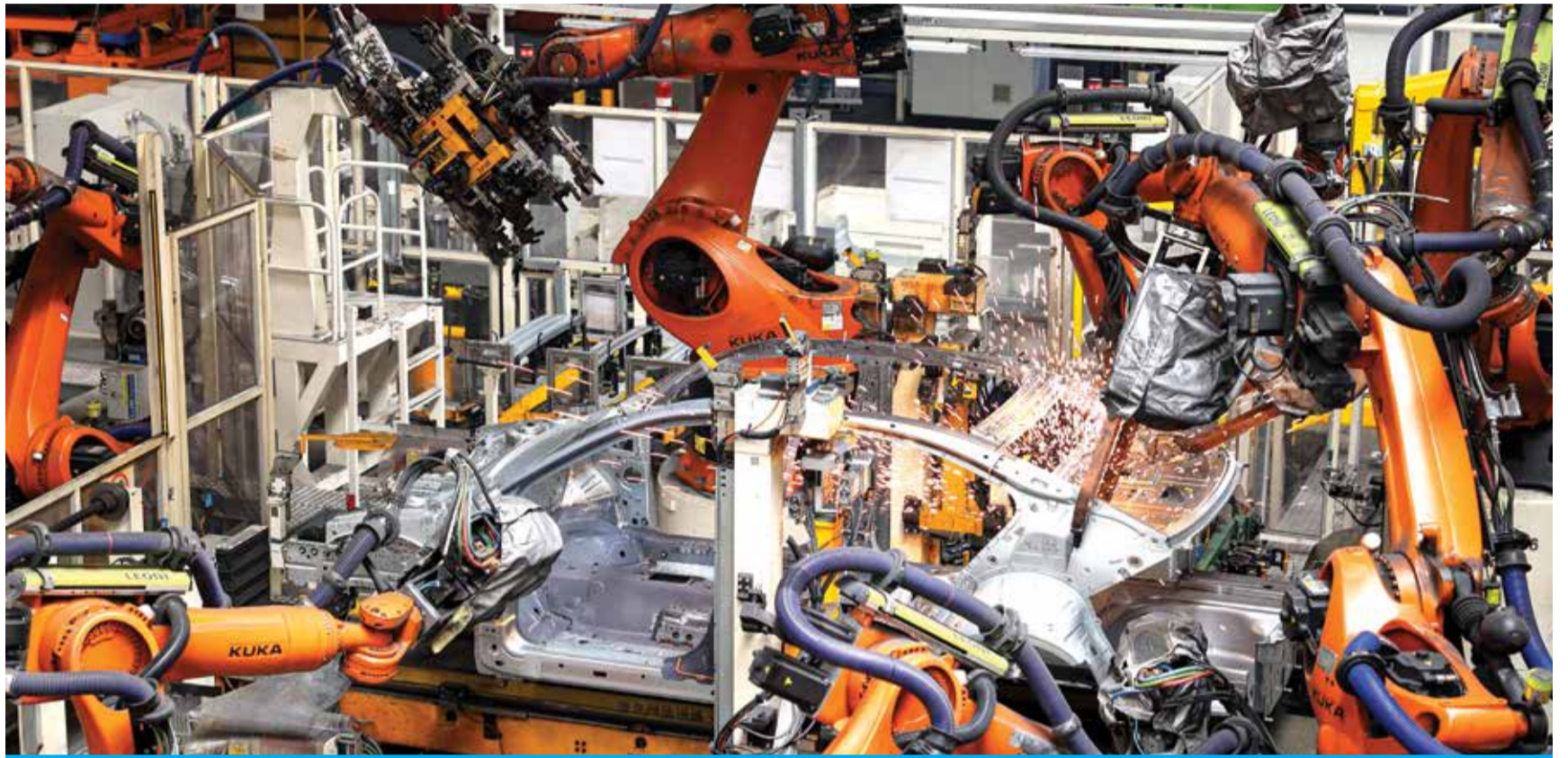
"As the US is applying tariffs worth \$28 billion, we are responding with countermeasures worth the equivalent in euros, she said. And China, the world's leading steel manufacturer — though not a major exporter of the product to the United States — vowed "all necessary measures" in response.

"There are no winners in trade wars," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

Washington's tariffs would "seriously damage the rules-based multilateral trading system", she warned. US President Donald Trump's 25 percent duties on both metals will likely add to the cost of producing various goods from home appliances to automobiles and cans used for drinks, threatening to raise consumer prices down the road, experts say.

"It wouldn't surprise me to see the tariffs pretty quickly show up in prices," Cato Institute research fellow Clark Packard told AFP. He added that auto manufacturing and construction — spanning both residential and commercial buildings — are among the biggest users of steel in the country.

Trump has imposed steep tariffs on major US trading partners Canada, Mexico and China since returning to office, allowing only a partial rollback for his country's neighbors while vowing fresh levies from April 2. The latest duties will again impact Canada heavily, with the country supplying about half of US aluminum imports and 20 percent of its steel imports, according to a recent note by EY chief econ-



QINGDAO: Robot arms are seen at work on a car production line at a factory of FAW-Volkswagen company in Qingdao, in eastern China's Shandong province on March 12, 2025. — AFP

omist Gregory Daco. Besides Canada, Brazil and Mexico are also key US suppliers of steel, while the United Arab Emirates and South Korea are among the major providers of aluminum.

Wednesday's levies stack atop earlier ones. This means some Canada and Mexico steel and aluminum products likely face a 50 percent tariff rate unless they are compliant with the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Uncertainty over Trump's trade plans and worries that they could tip the world's biggest economy into a recession have roiled financial markets, with Wall Street indexes tumbling for a second straight day on Tuesday.

Washington has framed the tariff moves as a bid to

protect US steel and American workers as the sector declines and faces fierce overseas competition, especially from Asia. And it's not the first time Trump has slapped tariffs on the metals. During his first presidency, he imposed duties on steel and aluminum exports in 2018 — forcing the EU to respond with its own higher duties that are frozen until the end of March.

As part of the EU's two-pronged approach to Trump's actions, von der Leyen said Brussels will also allow those previous higher levies to be reinstated. The EU's countermeasures would be fully in place by mid-April unless Trump reverses course.

Meanwhile, Britain's government said on Wednesday it was disappointed with President Donald

Trump's imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum imports but did not follow the European Union in retaliating. Britain had hoped to avoid tariffs on its steel sector, which is small but produces specialist products for defense and other industries. Trump said last month the two countries might reach a bilateral trade deal that would avert duties.

"It's disappointing the US has today imposed global tariffs on steel and aluminum," Britain's business minister Jonathan Reynolds said. "We are focused on a pragmatic approach and are rapidly negotiating a wider economic agreement with the US to eliminate additional tariffs and to benefit UK businesses and our economy." — Agencies

Honeymoon ends for Trump on US financial markets

WASHINGTON: The euphoria that Donald Trump's election triggered for financial markets seems to be a thing of the past as investors now fret over the prospect of the president's trade wars sparking a US recession.

On Monday the S&P 500 stock index dropped sharply, erasing all the gains it had posted since Trump won the election last November. It kept falling Tuesday, a far cry from the 6.5 percent it had risen in the first month of the second Trump administration.

"The Trump trade really started post-election in a real sense on the heels of what appeared to be a pro-growth, pro-business administration taking over," Art Hogan of B. Riley Wealth Management told AFP. The "Trump trade" is a term describing a rally in certain sectors in the hope that having Trump in power will make them better off, thanks to deregulation or tax cuts, for example.

But "the positive results of a pro-growth, pro-business administration have yet to show themselves," Hogan said, while "the negative aspects of a protectionist administration are what show up first."

Tesla in free fall

Sam Burns of Mill Street Research said that after the election the stock market rose in a sort of "mini-bubble" because of excitement over another



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump, accompanied by White House Senior Advisor, Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, speaks as they look at a Tesla Cyber Truck and a Model S on the South Lawn of the White House on March 11, 2025 in Washington, DC. — AFP

Trump term, not because of economic fundamentals. He cited the case of Elon Musk's electric car company, Tesla.

At first investors thought it would benefit greatly from the Trump win but Musk's very close relationship with Trump — he is leading the administration's brutal cost-cutting, staff-slashing drive — "can cut both ways," said Burns. It is hard to say how much Musk's aggressive hard-right public comments, including his support for far-right parties in Europe, may have scared away potential Tesla buyers. But the company's sales have dropped sharply in several markets, mainly in China and Europe.

And its share price has fallen by half since its peak

"No reasonable auto executive can make such investments if the expected returns can be wiped out at the stroke of a pen," Dover said. Germany's Porsche said on Wednesday it was assessing how it could pass on to consumers the cost of possible tariffs — expected to be 25 percent for US imports from Europe — without pressuring its margins. That implies prices could be hiked to offset any drop in unit sales.

Even without higher tariffs, lower sales, high costs and trade concerns would hurt 2025 earnings, the luxury carmaker warned. Its shares were down 4.5 percent. "For now, we are hoping there are solutions that will lead to a sensible tariff regime between regions," Porsche CFO Jochen Breckner said on a press call after its annual results.

Two major South Korean steelmakers said they were considering options including possible investment in operations in the United States as the metals tariffs came into force.

JP Morgan's chief economist Bruce Kasman said he saw a 40 percent chance of a US recession this year, which would rise to 50 percent if Trump follows through on threats to impose reciprocal tariffs from April. He also warned of lasting damage to the United States as an investment destination if the administration undermines trust in governance. Asked about a recession resulting from his trade policies, Trump said on Tuesday: "I don't see it at all." On Monday, he had declined to rule one out.

But earnings from Puma and Zara-owner Inditex underscored concerns about how uncertainties over trade are starting to hurt Main Street, curbing Americans' spending on everything from detergent and

in mid-December, causing \$750 billion in market value to vanish.

During the election campaign Trump came out as a fierce cryptocurrency defender, an about-face for someone who had long opposed the industry. On Friday he said he wanted the United States to be a pioneer in digital assets. But crypto so far seems unimpressed with Trump's economic policies. Bitcoin on Tuesday was trading at about \$80,000 per unit, roughly its level from November.

That is more than 25 percent below the level it had reached just hours before Trump's inauguration on January 20. US regulators have dropped proceedings against big names in crypto like trading platforms Coinbase and Kraken that were launched under Joe Biden. But this has not halted the decline in cryptocurrency prices.

Investors are unhappy because the Trump administration has not announced a policy of government purchase of crypto, even though last week it announced the creation of a cryptocurrency "strategic reserve," founded with digital assets seized by US law enforcement authorities.

US banks counting on deregulation under the Trump administration had for the most part retained the gains they posted since the election, at least until late February, said Patrick Donlon of Fiduciary Trust. But now, recession fears have turned things upside down. In a matter of days, big banks like JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America and Goldman Sachs have seen all the gains they posted since November 5 simply evaporate.

"The market is starting to take a more discerning approach in identifying the real winners under the new administration," said Donlon. — AFP



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on March 11, 2025 in New York City. — AFP

clothing to travel. Shares in Puma lost almost a quarter of their value and hit a nine-year low after the German sportswear company forecast slower sales growth this year due to soft demand in the United States and China. It highlighted trade disputes and currency volatility as challenges.

Spain's Inditex reported a slower start to its first-quarter starting February 1, raising questions about weakening consumer demand, particularly in the United States, its second-biggest market.

Its shares fell more than 8 percent, to their lowest since August. Tariffs are already driving prices for aluminum users in the United States to record highs. US inflation data for February is due later on Wednesday, though it may be too early to show much impact from the tariffs. — Reuters

India's Ambani strikes SpaceX deal for Starlink

MUMBAI: Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio Platforms said Wednesday it had signed a deal with Elon Musk's SpaceX to offer Starlink's satellite Internet service to its customers.

The announcement comes a day after rival telecom operator Bharti Airtel signed a similar pact and months after Musk and Ambani's companies clashed over how satellite spectrum should be awarded. The potential launch of Starlink, which provides high-speed Internet access to remote locations by low Earth orbit satellites, has seen fierce debate in India over issues ranging from predatory pricing to spectrum allocation. But as the world's most populous country prepares for the launch of mass satellite broadband services, SpaceX and India's telecoms appear to have joined hands to help boost adoption. The potential launch of Starlink, which provides high-speed Internet access to remote locations by low Earth orbit satellites, has been accompanied by fierce political debate in India.

Musk has butted heads with Asia's richest man, Mukesh Ambani, over how the satellite spectrum should be awarded but also met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington last month.

Indian media reports also said last month Starlink's license application was nearing initial regulatory approval. Airtel said on Tuesday its deal would be subject to SpaceX "receiving its own authorizations to sell Starlink in India".

Bharti Airtel had said on Tuesday it had signed an agreement with Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring Starlink's satellite Internet service to the country. "This is the first agreement to be signed in India," the company said in a statement. "Airtel and SpaceX will explore offering Starlink equipment in Airtel's retail stores, Starlink services via Airtel to business customers, opportunities to connect communities, schools, and health centers, among many others, in even the most rural parts of India," it said.

SpaceX chief operating officer Gwynne Shotwell said in the same statement the company was "excited" to work with Airtel "... and unlock the transformative impact Starlink can bring to the people of India". While the deal with SpaceX will see Jio offer "Starlink equipment in its retail outlets", a statement said, it will also see the Indian firm help "support customer service installation and activation".

"The parties will leverage Jio's position as the world's largest mobile operator in terms of data traffic... to deliver reliable broadband services across the country, including the most rural and remote regions of India," the statement said. Jio added that the agreement was contingent on "SpaceX receiving its own authorizations to sell Starlink in India". — AFP

Corporate gloom deepens as US tariffs take effect

LONDON: Makers of goods from sportswear to luxury cars and chemicals painted a gloomy picture on Wednesday of consumer and industrial health, adding to concerns about the damage from US President Donald Trump's trade wars and hitting share prices again.

Increased tariffs on all US steel and aluminum imports took effect on Wednesday, as Trump steps up his campaign to reorder global trade in favor of the United States. Europe swiftly retaliated.

Trump's plans for tariffs — and their back-and-forth implementation since he took office in January — have upended industries from cars to energy and unnerved businesses and investors. Worries that rising costs will reignite inflation, and that souring consumer sentiment could herald a US recession have caused stock markets to plunge. "Nearly everyone in the economy is struggling to comprehend wild swings in Washington policies, and their implications for everyday decisions," said Stephen Dover, chief market strategist at asset manager Franklin Templeton.

The constant flip-flopping over tariffs is paralyzing industries from healthcare and retailing to agriculture, mining, energy, he said. Automakers, for example, are unable to plan while there is a threat of 25 percent tariffs on components made in Canada or Mexico.

Business

Oil companies greet Trump return, but muted on tariffs

Aramco CEO Nasser sees continuous demand growth

HOUSTON: Oil executives said Tuesday they are bullish on US petroleum investments in the emerging Trump era as some giants back away from renewable energy and beef up fossil fuel developments.

While there is still talk about decarbonization and climate change mitigation, speakers at this year's CERAWEEK conference in Texas have welcomed the more "realistic" approach gaining favor in

continue to heavily invest to boost its US liquefied natural gas business. He told an event panel that "maybe it's the time to go back to exploring the Gulf of America," employing the Trump administration's term for the Gulf of Mexico.

ConocoPhillips CEO Ryan Lance praised the Trump administration's early moves to streamline permitting of new petroleum projects, pointing to a much-delayed Alaska oil project that was hindered by environmental challenges. "We have to fix the system that we have here in the US," Lance said. "That's probably the biggest impediment to growing the energy system in the United States."

The comments highlighted the optimism in oil industry circles generated by President Donald Trump, who has reset the tone from Washington after predecessor Joe Biden lambasted the industry for spending billions of dollars on share repurchases. Tariffs are "getting talked about in back rooms and private conversations," said Chris Treanor, executive director of the Partnership to Address Global Emissions, who described the industry as having "enough good will" to give Trump the benefit of the doubt.

"The US industry doesn't feel like it's being targeted by this administration, whereas it felt like it was targeted by the previous administration," he said. But tariff talk has dominated some public panels at CERA Week, including one Tuesday in which Canadian officials from across the region expressed incredulity at Trump's latest tariff actions. Potential US tariffs on Canadian crude would "very negatively" affect many consumers, said Brian Jean, energy and minerals minister of the oil-rich Alberta Province, who described widespread anger in Canada at Trump's talk of annexing the country. "People are very shocked and surprised, and it's going to change people's attitude about the United States," Jean said.

Begun in 1983 by Daniel Yergin, author of The Prize, a Pulitzer Prize-winning history of the oil industry, CERAWEEK is an annual Houston gathering that has ex-



HOUSTON: Demonstrators protest against the CeraweeK by S&P Global energy conference, near the hotel where the conference is being attended, in Houston, Texas.

panded beyond its petroleum roots to include the power and renewable sectors. Trump's Secretary of Energy Chris Wright opened the conference on Monday, vowing to take steps to ease the path for fossil fuels to boost supplies of affordable energy and sharply criticizing the Biden administration's focus on climate change.

One of the most dramatic shifts in orientation has been from BP, which announced last month that it was trimming its renewable energy efforts and retreating from carbon emissions targets as it ramps up investment in fossil fuels. "We're back to our roots," BP Chief Executive Murray Auchincloss told the conference Tuesday, describing ramped up investments in exploration and production in the United States and the Middle East.

Biden's administration enacted aggressive fuel economy standards designed to boost electric vehicles and generous tax credits to encourage EV battery projects and greater use of solar and wind power.

A couple of years ago, CERA Week was dominated by talk of "net zero" emission by the mid-century in line with the Paris Climate Agreement that challenges the future viability of crude oil and natural gas. But at this year's CERA, Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser expressed confidence in oil, saying "we see continuous growth" of demand.

TotalEnergies' Pouyanne shrugged off talk in Europe of phasing out natural gas, pointing to Germany's needs after phasing out nuclear power, saying "this is a message, and then you have the reality." — AFP

China holds talks with Walmart on impact of US tariffs

BEIJING: Chinese authorities have held discussions with Walmart after the US retail giant demanded local suppliers cut their prices, reports said Wednesday, as the wide-ranging impacts of President Donald Trump's tariff hikes begin to sink in.

"A source revealed to us that on March 11, the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant departments held talks with Walmart," Yuyuan Tiantian, a social media account under state broadcaster CCTV, reported. "The reason for the talks was Walmart's demand for significant price reductions from some Chinese suppliers, attempting to shift the burden of US tariffs on China onto Chinese suppliers and consumers," the report said.

Earlier this month, Trump raised the 10 percent blanket tariff he previously imposed on Chinese products to 20 percent, citing Beijing's continued failure to stem the flow of deadly fentanyl precursors. China responded by slapping its own tariffs of up to 15 percent on a range of US agricultural goods including soybeans, chicken and pork.

The CCTV-affiliated account said it "believes that there are several key points worth noting from this discussion", including that Walmart's demand for price cuts "may violate commercial contracts".

"If Walmart insists on this course of action, the consequences for the company will go beyond just a discussion," it added. China's commerce ministry did not immediately confirm the talks with Walmart. — AFP



Guyanese President Irfaan Ali delivers a speech in Houston. —AFP photos



Stephen Lecce, Minister of energy and electrification of the Canadian province of Ontario, delivers a speech in Houston.

industry and policy circles that includes a hefty emphasis on energy affordability and economic development. The Trump administration's unpredictable tariff announcements have pressured markets, but the lack of open criticism of the moves this week highlights an underlying affinity for the Trump White House after the Biden years.

TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Pouyanne said the French company would

Invitation Reminder

Gulf Bank K.P.S.C. is pleased to invite its esteemed shareholders to its sixty-six meeting of the Ordinary General Assembly, to be held at the Bank's Head Office located in Sharq, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street, at 2:00 pm on Saturday, 22 March 2025, to discuss the items listed on the below agenda.

Agenda of the Ordinary Annual General Assembly Meeting No. 66 of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders:

- Presenting & ratifying the Board of Directors Report for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Presenting & ratifying the Auditors Report for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Presenting the violations report and penalties imposed by regulatory authorities on Gulf Bank during the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Discussing & approving the Financial Statements for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Approving the deduction of 10% to be transferred to the Statutory Reserve in the total amount of KD 6,324,000 (Six Million, Three Hundred and Twenty-Four Thousand Kuwaiti Dinars).
- Discussing the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute dividends for the FY ended on 31/12/2024 as follows:
 - Cash dividends at 10% (Ten percent) i.e., 10 (Ten Fils) per share after excluding the treasury shares. The shareholders registered in the company's records as of the end of the record day, set as 10/04/2025 are entitled to these cash dividends.
 - 5% free bonus shares (five percent) of issued and paid-up capital, by issuing 190,125,104 new shares to be distributed as bonus shares to the shareholders registered in the company's records as of the end of the record day, set as 10/04/2025, each according to their percentage of ownership (by five shares per each 100 shares). This is based on the Board of Directors' resolution dated 14/01/2025 to increase the bank's issued and paid-up capital from KD 380,250,209.900 (Three Hundred and Eighty Million, Two Hundred Fifty Thousand, Two Hundred and Nine Kuwaiti Dinars and 900 Fils), to KD 399,262,720.300 (Three Hundred and Ninety-Nine Million, Two Hundred Sixty-Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and Twenty Kuwaiti Dinars and 300 Fils) and cover the amount of increase resulting from the issued and paid-up capital amounting to KD 19,012,510.400 (Nineteen Million and Twelve Thousand and Five Hundred and Ten Kuwaiti Dinars and 400 Fils) from the retained earnings account as of 31/12/2024, then registering the increase in the issued and paid-up capital in the commercial registry and completing the registration procedures by amending article (4) of the Memorandum of Association (MOA) and Article (5) of the Articles of Association (AOA) of the Bank, and authorizing the Board of Directors to dispose of the remaining fractional shares after distribution as well as to dispose of any fractional shares and/or fractional earnings which could have been distributed in previous financial years to the favor of the Bank.

Cash dividends to be distributed and bonus shares distribution to be included in the bank's shareholders records based on the following timetable:

Cum Date (The final trading day of a stock loaded with dues)	07/04/2025
Ex Date	08/04/2025
Record Date	10/04/2025
Distribution Date	15/04/2025

Authorizing the Board of Directors to amend these foregoing dates in case they are not confirmed at least eight working days prior to the record date.

- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors to distribute Semi-Annual dividends for the FY ending 31/12/2025, according to the same applicable standards in the annual dividend distributions, determining their amount and percentage, carrying out all procedures and obtaining all other necessary approvals from regulatory authorities or others, and determining the timetable for this distribution whenever it deems appropriate, provided that this distribution is based on real profits and in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles, and that it has no effect on the company's paid-up capital. Authorizing the Board of Directors to amend this timetable if not confirmed at least eight working days prior to the record date.
- Discussing the disbursement of the Board Members' remuneration (Independent and Non- Independent) of KD 240,000 (Two Hundred and Forty Thousand Kuwaiti Dinars Only) for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors, for a period of 18 months, to buy, sell or dispose of a maximum of 10% (ten percent) of the Bank's total shares, in accordance with the controls and terms stipulated by the relevant law, regulations, resolutions and instructions of regulators in this respect.

Invitation to the 66th Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders

- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors to: a) issue bonds of all types (whether directly, or indirectly via a special purpose vehicle(s) established inside or outside Kuwait) in Kuwaiti Dinars or any other foreign currency as they deem appropriate, including without limitation, the issuance of perpetual bonds, in and/or outside the State of Kuwait, without exceeding the maximum limit permitted by law, or the equivalent in foreign currencies, in accordance with all applicable instructions, directives and/or regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait, b) enter into any relevant transaction documentation related to the issuance of the bonds (including, where applicable, the granting of guarantees to support issuance of the bonds or assume any obligations thereunder), c) determine the type of those bonds to be issued, their currency, duration, nominal value, rate of interest thereon, repayment maturity, means of coverage, rules of offering and depreciation, and all terms and conditions thereof, d) obtain any and all relevant approvals from the competent regulators (whether located in or outside of Kuwait, as applicable), and e) agree to the choice of arbitration as a method of dispute resolution in any of the transaction documentation in relation to the issuance of the bonds and any other documents ancillary thereto. The Board of Directors may delegate their authority to any third party, as they deem appropriate, to implement all the above or part thereof.
- Discussing the authorization to grant loans or advances in the current account, or providing facilities, letters of guarantee and all banking transactions to the Board Members – in accordance with the same terms and conditions applied by the Bank for others/its customers - subject to the provisions of Article (69) of Law No. 32 of 1968 concerning Currency, the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Organization of the Banking Business as amended by Decree Law No. 130 of 1977.
- Reviewing the transactions concluded with the related parties during the FY ended on 31/12/2024 and authorize the Board of Directors to deal with related parties during the FY ending 31/12/2025, up to the date of convening the annual ordinary general assembly of the Bank's shareholders that will review the ordinary agenda for the FY ending on 31/12/2025.
- Discussing the release of the Board of Directors with respect to their financial, legal, and administrative actions during the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Appoint/re-appoint the auditors of the Bank for the FY ending 31/12/2025 and authorize the Board to determine their fees.
- Elect the Independent and Non- Independent Members of the Bank's new Board of Directors for three- year period.

Esteemed shareholders wishing to attend are kindly requested to contact the Shares Unit - Head Office on the following numbers: 22082246 – 99509132, to receive their invitation cards, Powers of Attorney, a copy of the Bank's financial statements for the financial year ending 31 December 2024 and the meeting's agenda during the official working hours. Based on the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the invitation cards delivered by hand will be given only to the shareholder in person or his representative by means of a written letter from the respective shareholder. In the event that the shareholder is a company, the invitation shall be delivered to the company's representative by means of an official letter signed by one of the company's authorized signatories and stamped with the company's seal.

Esteemed shareholders wishing to participate through the electronic system - as per policies and procedures manual of the eAGM Platform - are kindly requested to visit the website of Kuwait Clearing Company (www.maqasa.com) and carry out the necessary actions to subscribe to the eAGM in preparation for their participation and electronic voting on the two agendas' items.

AGM Right of Attendance Schedule

Attendees' Cum Date	Sunday 09 March 2025
Right of Attendance Date	Wednesday 12 March 2025
AGM Date	Saturday 22 March 2025

In the event where quorum for any of the ordinary general assembly meeting could not be achieved, the meeting shall be postponed for a period of one week whereby such postponed meeting is held on March 29, 2025 at the same place mentioned above at 2:00 pm and after. This Announcement shall be considered an invitation to the postponed meeting without the need for any new invitation, in accordance with Article (143) of Law No. (1) of 2016 promulgating the Companies Law.

Chairman of the Board



Trump defends tariff policies before corporate America

Companies try to size up Trump's economic impact

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump defended his use of tariffs and said they could multiply as he met on Tuesday with the CEOs of America's biggest companies, many of whom have watched their market value crater over recession and inflation fears. The Republican president spoke to about 100 CEOs at a regular meeting of the Business Roundtable, which includes the heads of Apple, JPMorgan Chase and Walmart. The event followed a private Trump meeting with technology company executives at the White House on Monday.

US stocks on Tuesday extended a selloff that has dragged the benchmark S&P 500 down 5.3 percent so far in 2025, with investors rattled over increased tariffs on imports and souring consumer sentiment. Monday's drop in the S&P 500 was its largest this year and followed an interview over the weekend in which Trump declined to rule out a recession resulting from his trade policies.

He clarified those comments on Tuesday, telling reporters, "I don't see it at all," regarding the possibility of a recession. Speaking to business leaders and reporters before the roundtable, Trump defiantly maintained his stance, dismissed market volatility and vowed that investors would see gains for putting money to work now. "The tariffs are going to be throwing off a lot of money for this country," he said to CEOs. "It may go up higher."

The executives in the room sat expressionless as Trump spoke during a brief part of the meeting that was open to the press. There was scattered chuckling when Trump said there were some people in the room he did not like. Later, in a part of the meeting that was closed to reporters, Trump vowed to speed up approvals in environmental agencies and cut tax rates to 15 percent for companies making products in the US, according to a person familiar with the remarks. Trump said markets may have been too high as of a few weeks ago, and described

Chinese President Xi Jinping as not thrilled about the new tariffs, the person said.

Trump's economic policies so far have centered on a blitz of tariff announcements. Some have taken effect and others have been delayed or are set to kick in later. He said they will correct unbalanced trade and stop the flow of illegal narcotics from abroad. Trump started Tuesday by ramping up a burgeoning trade war with Canada, vowing to double tariffs set to take effect within hours on all imported steel and aluminum products from America's northern neighbor to 50 percent. The White House later said the tariff would remain at 25 percent after Canadian officials agreed to talks.

Markets worry that tariffs could raise prices for businesses, boost inflation and undermine consumer confidence in a blow to economic growth. It has also raised investor speculation that Trump's ambition will not be bound by the preferences of big business. The White House has dismissed this thinking, which is shared by most economists, who view trade wars as a lose-lose proposition for the countries involved. Trump aides say the tariff threats will force companies to invest more in the United States.

"Markets are going to go up and they're going to go down, but you know what? We have to rebuild our country," Trump told reporters before he met the business leaders.

For much of his political career, Trump has talked up the importance of the stock market. During his first 2017-2021 term in office he regularly pointed to rallying stock prices as proof of his success and in both his 2020 and 2024 campaigns warned that markets could tumble if he lost. Trump had already imposed an additional 20 percent tariff on Chinese goods entering the United States, and 25 percent tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico, although he suspended most of the duties on US neighbors until April 2, when he plans to unveil a global regime



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump speaks at the Business Roundtable quarterly meeting with Business Roundtable Chair and Cisco Chair and CEO Chuck Robbins in Washington, DC, on March 11, 2025. — AFP

of reciprocal tariffs on all trading partners.

Until recently, investors had been optimistic that Trump's policies would stimulate growth, for instance through lower taxes. They also hoped he could ease inflationary pressures, for instance by loosening regulation on fossil fuel production. But tax cuts need congressional approval and energy producers are unlikely to dramatically scale up production, which could cut their profit margins. Meanwhile, some economists see plans to increase deportations of un-

documented immigrants increasing price pressures in the labor market. Cutting the federal workforce could raise unemployment.

"If we all are becoming a little more nationalistic ... it's going to have elevated inflation," said BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, a Business Roundtable member, at an industry conference on Monday. Last week, the Business Roundtable warned that if they are long-lasting, the tariffs "run the risk of creating serious economic impact." — Reuters

Japan: 'Regrettable' not exempt from US steel tariffs

TOKYO: Japan said on Wednesday it was "regrettable" that the country had not been granted an exemption from US President Donald Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs of 25 percent.

Asked if Japan was considering retaliatory measures, top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said the two nations would continue to discuss details of the duties, which came into force at midnight US time (0400 GMT Wednesday). "Widespread measures to limit trade risk having a significant impact on the Japan-US economic relationship as well as the world economy and multilateral trade system," Hayashi told reporters.

"That Japan was not excluded from the imposition of additional tariffs is regrettable," he said.

Japan exported 31.4 million tons of steel in 2024, of which 1.1 million went to the United States — around four percent of the country's steel imports, according to Washington. "Imports of Japanese steel and aluminum products won't harm US national security, but rather, our high-quality products are difficult to replace and essential to strengthening the competitiveness of the US manufacturing industry," Hayashi added.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yoji Muto said in Washington this week he had asked US officials to exempt Japan from metal and upcoming vehicle tariffs. "During Minister Muto's US trip, Washington expressed its position that it considers its relationships with Japan a priority, and that Japan's investment in the United States as well as the role it plays in the US economy such as through employment are valued," Hayashi said.

Masakazu Tokura, chair of the Japan Business Federation, said earlier this week that "the proportion of Japanese exports of steel and aluminum to the United States... is very small, so the direct impact on Japanese companies will not be that great". However, "tariffs on automobiles will have a significant impact", especially since many Japanese companies have expanded into Mexico and Canada, and are exporting to the United States from there.

"The biggest problem of all is the decline in predictability for business," which may make companies "hesitant to invest", Tokura added. Japan is home to the world's top-selling carmaker Toyota, and the health of the auto industry impacts many sectors, from parts manufacturing to steel and microchips.

Of the country's 21.3 trillion yen (\$145 billion) of US-bound exports in 2024, cars and other vehicles accounted for roughly a third. — AFP

Ghana scraps IMF-linked 'nuisance' taxes

ACCRA, Ghana: Ghana's new government on Tuesday announced it was scrapping several COVID-era taxes introduced in an effort to secure IMF financing, citing the economic hardship placed on ordinary citizens. Five taxes deemed "nuisance levies" by the current government — including a one-percent levy on

Volkswagen to navigate another tricky year in 2025

WOLFSBURG: Volkswagen said Tuesday its profits nosedived in 2024 amid high costs and fierce Chinese competition as the German carmaker geared up for another tricky year navigating an industry transition and global trade tensions. At 12.4 billion euros (\$13.4 billion) in 2024, net profit for Europe's biggest automaker fell over 30 percent compared with the previous year, even as overall sales grew slightly to reach 324.7 billion euros.

The 10-brand group said its earnings last year were hit by high costs as it faces a stuttering shift to electric vehicles, weak demand in Europe and fierce competition from local rivals in key market China.

The manufacturer, whose models range from Audi to Seat and Skoda, had a particularly difficult 2024 marked by a long dispute with unions that ended with a deal in December to cut 35,000 jobs in Germany by 2030. The carmaker ultimately decided against closing factories at home for the first time ever, but its problems nevertheless highlighted a broader crisis buffeting Europe's ailing auto industry as it struggles to keep pace with rapid changes.

As it seeks to plot a way forward, finance chief Arno Antlitz vowed Volkswagen would focus on "consistently reducing costs and increasing profitability". "We need to build more cars with fewer



WOLFSBURG: A Volkswagen (VW) Passat R and a Golf GTI are pictured in the tower storage facility of German carmaker Volkswagen at the company's headquarters plant in Wolfsburg on March 11, 2025. — AFP

people," he added.

Highlighting Volkswagen's difficulties, its deliveries last year to China — its single biggest national market — fell almost 10 percent, even as they were flat or rose in the rest of the world. The weakness in China was behind an overall 3.5-percent drop in unit sales, with Volkswagen only shifting around nine million vehicles worldwide last year.

Antlitz nevertheless said he believed that recovery in China, where VW has been losing market share to local rivals like electric carmaker BYD, might be in sight. "We want to fight back in and start gaining market share in China by 2026 at the latest," he said.

For 2025, the group expects revenue to grow by up to five percent and is forecasting a profit margin of between 5.5 and 6.5 percent. At the upper end, this would be better than the figure

US House approves stopgap plan to avert shutdown

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives approved a stopgap plan Tuesday to avert a government shutdown that would pile more pain on the economic chaos marring President Donald Trump's early weeks in office.

The Republican-led chamber agreed in a largely party-line vote to keep the government funded through September 30 — giving Trump the summer months to steer his agenda of tax cuts, mass deportations and boosted energy production through Congress. The drama now moves to the Republican-led Senate, which needs to provide its own rubber stamp before Friday night's midnight shutdown deadline. But the bill needs Democratic votes and is on a knife edge.

"Now it's decision time for Senate Democrats: cast a vote to keep the government open or be responsible for shutting it down," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, laying down the gauntlet for the upper chamber minority. Passing the first hurdle marks a big win for Johnson, who had to sell the package to backbenchers skeptical of stopgaps — known as continuing resolutions (CRs) — which mostly freeze spending rather than making cuts.

The threat of a weekend shutdown comes with Wall Street reeling from Trump's trade war and radical cuts



WASHINGTON, DC: US Representative Thomas Massie, Republican of Kentucky, speaks to the press outside the US Capitol. — AFP

to federal spending that have seen tens of thousands of layoffs. Traders had initially reacted with optimism to the Republican billionaire's election, but growing fears that his tariffs will reignite inflation and spark a recession have led to a three-week market sell-off. If the Senate fails to follow the House, there will be more economic misery as the government grinds to a halt, potentially leading to tens of thousands of public employees being furloughed as federal agencies shutter.

Senate Democrats are mostly opposed to the 99-page CR, which would drop domestic spending by about \$13 billion while increasing defense spending by about \$6 billion.

Republicans call it a "clean" CR, but critics counter that it is full of partisan ideological add-ons that make

The other scrapped levies are a 10-percent tax on lottery winnings, an emission levy on industries and vehicles and a 1.5-percent tax on unprocessed gold from small-scale miners.

They were introduced as part of efforts by the previous government to reach a \$3-billion International Monetary Fund bailout, which was eventually secured in 2023. Forson assured parliament that the new government under President John Mahama, elected in December, had "stopped the bleeding".

Plans are in place to amend the Revenue Administration Act to improve tax revenue collection, which is expected to yield an additional 0.3 percent of GDP. Additionally, the government wants to enhance road toll collection this year as part of its infrastructure develop-

ment initiative, dubbed the "Big Push".

The tax cuts come as the economic crisis that pushed debt-laden Ghana towards the IMF in the first place continues apace. "We inherited an economy in deep crisis, hard hit with debt and beset by other fiscal challenges such as large accumulation of arrears, energy sector financing shortfalls and large fiscal risks from the cocoa and financial sectors," Forson said.

Praising the government's move, economist Daniel Amateye Anim-Prempeh told AFP that "the removal of these nuisance taxes will put money back into the pockets of citizens and help businesses recover". "However, the success of these measures will depend on the government's ability to boost revenue collection without increasing the fiscal deficit." — AFP

There are cuts totaling billions of dollars from a program for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and toxic burn pits, as well as from research into medical conditions from cancer and Alzheimer's to heart disease. There are also economies running to hundreds of millions of dollars in nuclear non-proliferation programs, rural broadband, food inspections, rent subsidies and election security funding. The latest funding fight comes with Trump pushing unprecedented federal firings as he begins unilaterally shrinking or shuttering agencies from USAID to the Department of Education.

The drive is being spearheaded by Trump aide Elon Musk, the world's richest person, who has enraged much of the country and Congress — including Republican lawmakers — with his seemingly haphazard approach. While Musk enjoys Trump's confidence, polling shows he is deeply unpopular with voters, and his cuts have sparked angry confrontations between Republicans and their constituents at town halls. "House Republicans are not trying to responsibly fund the government," said Patty Murray, the top Senate Democrat in the funding negotiations. "They are trying to turn it into a slush fund for Trump and Musk to wield as they see fit so they can shift their focus entirely to tax cuts for billionaires." — AFP

"The US automotive industry has very strong, deep integration in Canada in particular, but also in Mexico," he said. "We're counting on the strong investment footprint we have in the USA, including future plans," he added. He also welcomed a proposal last week by the European Commission to give carmakers more time to meet tough emissions reductions targets.

"People have carried out a reality check. The ramp-up of electromobility has not developed as quickly as was assumed years ago," he said. — AFP

It is a non-starter. Among the most contentious is a provision surrendering congressional authority to block any Trump tariffs imposed under emergency economic powers. That authority allows any member to force a vote to terminate the levies.

There are cuts totaling billions of dollars from a program for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and toxic burn pits, as well as from research into medical conditions from cancer and Alzheimer's to heart disease. There are also economies running to hundreds of millions of dollars in nuclear non-proliferation programs, rural broadband, food inspections, rent subsidies and election security funding. The latest funding fight comes with Trump pushing unprecedented federal firings as he begins unilaterally shrinking or shuttering agencies from USAID to the Department of Education.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025



Italian super model Vittoria Ceretti and models present creations by Chanel for the Womenswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2025/2026 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week, at the Grand Palais, in Paris.--AFP photos



British super model Naomi Campbell leaves after the presentation by Chanel.



Chanel plays with proportions as Paris Fashion Week wraps up

Chanel presented its Fall-Winter collection on the last day of Paris Women's Fashion Week on Tuesday, playing with proportions and layering in a show designed without incoming artistic director Matthieu Blazy. Staged in the Grand Palais exhibition hall in central Paris, the catwalk presentation featured a monumental black ribbon that spiraled up to the glass ceiling. Clothing highlights included a black tweed jacket with jewel buttons that transformed into a long coat-dress, while an oversize poplin shirt flowed down to the ankles.

A pink tailored short ensemble was layered with a sheer jacket and matching long transparent skirt. Proportions were also at play in the accessories, with bags resembling oversize pearl necklaces, massive pearl rings or large clutches. Miniature handbags made an appearance as well.

The discreet yet highly respected Blazy was appointed artistic director of Chanel in December, six months after the abrupt departure of Virginie Viard. His first collection will be at the Spring-Summer 2026 Fashion Week in September, with front-row places set to be in high demand. Celebrities attending on Tuesday included fashion icon Anna Wintour, supermodel Naomi Campbell, South African singer Tyla, and French actors Anna Mouglalis and Carole Bouquet.

Changes

This Fashion Week has seen several new creative directors make their debuts. Sarah Burton earned rave reviews for her first show as head of Givenchy, which drew inspiration from the house's

heritage. The first Dries Van Noten show by Belgian designer Julian Klausner and Haider Ackermann's debut at Tom Ford—the American label's first-ever Paris show—also drew scrutiny. Other labels that are either bedding in new de-

signers have suggested the Italian artistic director could be leaving, possibly for Gucci.

Recent departures—Sabato De Sarno from Gucci and Kim Jones from Dior Homme—have only fueled the buzz. In-

men's Fashion Weeks in Milan, Paris and London. In the latest shake-up, British designer Mark Thomas has taken the helm at Carven, succeeding Louise Trotter, who moved to Bottega Veneta in December. More announcements



This combination of pictures shows (from left) Italian super model Vittoria Ceretti and models presenting creations by Chanel for the Womenswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2025/2026 collection.

signers or looking for fresh talent include Dior menswear, Bottega Veneta, Celine, Martin Margiela and Gucci.

Speculation continues to swirl around Dior womenswear amid rumors that this may have been Maria Grazia Chiuri's final collection. For months, industry in-

dustry sources suggest LVMH may be looking to hand Dior men's and women's collections to Jonathan Anderson, currently at the helm of Loewe, another LVMH-owned brand.

The theory has gained traction given Anderson's absence from the recent

are expected, with Celine and Fendi still lacking artistic directors. Meanwhile, John Galliano, who left Maison Margiela in December after a decade, has yet to announce his next move. —AFP



Lifestyle

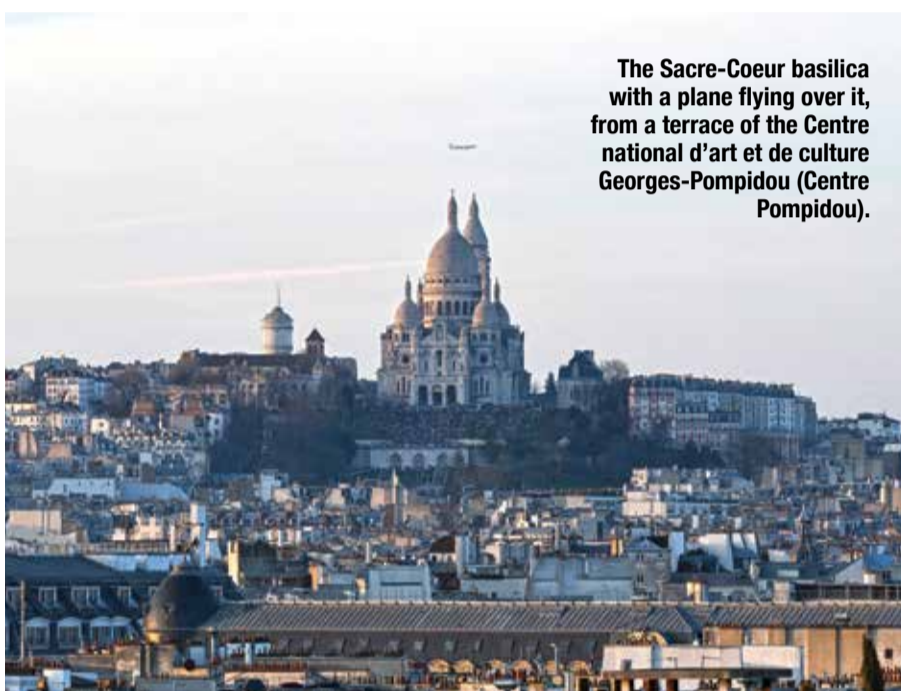


Visitors stroll through the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).



Visitors look at 'Für Velimir Chlebnikov: Schicksale der Volker' by German artist Anselm Kiefer inside the permanent collection of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).

ART LOVERS MOB PARIS' POMPIDOU CENTRE AHEAD OF FIVE-YEAR CLOSURE



The Sacre-Coeur basilica with a plane flying over it, from a terrace of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).



'Container Zero' by French artist Jean-Pierre Raynaud inside the permanent collection of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).



A visitor takes photographs of 'Dimanche', a work of art created by French painter March Chagall inside the permanent collection of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).

Tourists and French visitors alike filled Paris' landmark Pompidou museum on the weekend to catch a last glimpse of its prestigious art collection ahead of a five-year closure for a major renovation. "Five years - it's long!" exclaimed one guide, Elisa Hervelin, as people around her took photos of many of the museum's permanent works, among them paintings by Salvador Dali and Henri Matisse and sculptures by Marcel Duchamp. The 2,000-piece collection, on display on the fourth and fifth floors on the 48-year-old multicultural centre, are to start being taken away from Monday.

The artworks are to be given temporary homes in museums across France and in other countries while the lengthy overhaul of the building - famously designed with its pipes and ventilation shafts colorfully adorning its facade - is carried out. The full closure of the Pompidou Centre - which also comprises a vast library and a music research unit - will occur on September 22 this year. The 262-million-euro (\$284 million) renovations include removing asbestos from the structure.

With free entrance for its last weekend, visitors made the most of a last swing through the galleries, taking in the art as well as workshops, performances and DJ sets put on for the occasion. Some were regulars to the museum, while others were seeing its collection in person for the first time. Alyssa, an 11-year-old French girl taking it all in with her 62-year-old grandfather, said she wanted to "see for real" the abstract paintings of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian, which she had been shown in her school's art class.

Paula Goulart, a 25-year-old Brazilian, admitted she was there mainly



Visitors take an escalator at the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).

for the spectacular view of the Paris skyline from the centre's upper storeys. Her Portuguese friend Luisa Fraga, though, was a frequent visitor to the museum who "wanted to enjoy as much as possible the artworks before they are no longer here". A Chinese visitor, Yujie Zou, had made the Pompidou Centre a key stop on a trip through Europe. "I love Matisse. It was the first painter I studied at school," she said.

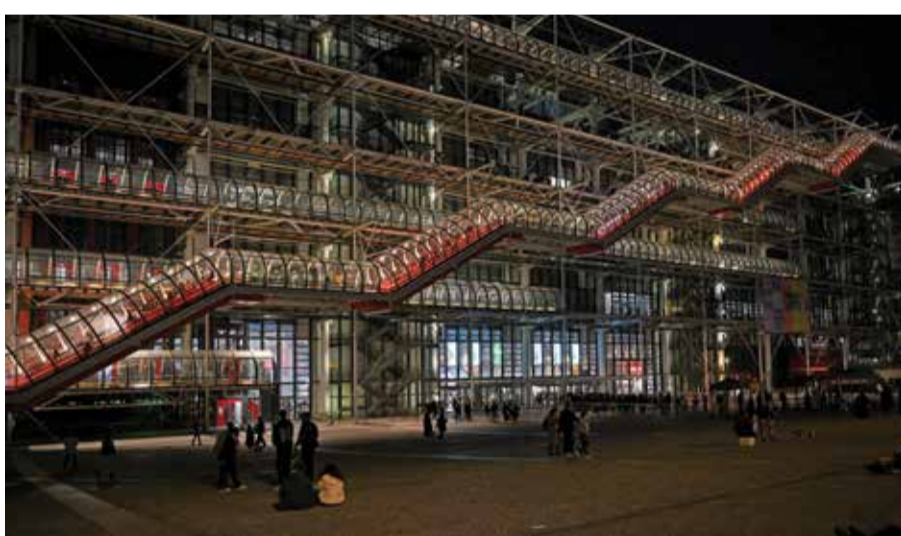
3.2 million visitors

With 3.2 million visitors last year, the Pompidou Centre is one of the most popular museums in Paris, ranking behind the Louvre and the Musee d'Orsay in terms of attendance. Opened in 1977, it is named after Georges Pompidou, France's president between 1969 and 1974. The renovation work will run through to 2030. "I'm sad," said Hervelin, the guide who has been taking vis-

itors through the museum for the past 14 years and on Saturday was giving one of her last tours before the hiatus.

"Putting the artworks elsewhere... There will never be collections in their current form," the art historian lamented. She added that it would be "the public - curious and open - I will miss the most". Amelie Bernard, a 21-year-old art student, shared the sense of impending loss.

"For two years now I've been coming here around twice a month. It's been great for me. I've been able to develop an eye for contemporary art and broaden my knowledge for my studies," she said. "I think I made the most of it - but, even so, it's a bit of a shame," she said, before adding optimistically: "It will force me to go see other museums - I really need that!" — AFP



A general view of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).



Visitors look at "Foret" by French artist Eva Jospin inside the permanent collection of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).



The Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou (Centre Pompidou).

Trove of dinosaur footprints found at Australian school

A trove of fossilized dinosaur footprints has been found on a slab of rock gathering dust inside an Australian school, scientists said on Wednesday. The rock went largely unnoticed for 20 years until the school, in Queensland's rural Banana shire, asked paleontologist Anthony Romilio to examine a cluster of three-toed track marks. Romilio said the slab was stamped with dozens of fossilized footprints dating to the early Jurassic period some 200 million years ago.

It showed "one of the highest concentrations of dinosaur footprints" ever documented in Australia, he said. "It's an unprecedented snapshot of dinosaur abundance, movement and behavior from a time when no fossilized dinosaur bones have been found in Australia," said Romilio, from the University of Queensland. "Significant fossils like this can sit unnoticed for years, even in plain sight. "It's incredible to think that a

piece of history this rich was resting in a schoolyard all this time."

Coal miners dug up the slab in 2002 and, noticing the unusual footprints, gifted it to a school in the small town of Biloela, where it was eventually displayed in the foyer. The rock sat there until re-



This undated handout photo shows an image of a boulder using 3D imaging and light filters which contains dinosaur footprints, in the town of Biloela, in central Queensland.

searchers started asking around for any dinosaur fossils discovered in the area. "Some of the teachers thought this was a replica rather than the real thing," Romilio said. "Everyone didn't quite realize what they actually have. "They definitely knew it was a dinosaur footprint. But not the level of detail that a researcher like myself would go into."

'My jaw dropped'

Romilio said 66 separate track impressions were found on the slab, which had a surface area of less than one square meter. They belonged to a dinosaur called Anomoepus scambus - a small and chunky plant eater that walked on two legs, he said. "Fossilized footprints, even though they are the most abundant of dinosaur fossils, tend to be cast aside by a lot of researchers.

"They don't have the sex appeal of a fossilized bone. "The vast majority of dinosaur fossils, they're not found by paleontologists. They're actually found by people on the ground." Romilio's hunt for fossils in the region also unearthed a two-ton boulder marking the entrance to a coal mine car park.

"As I'm driving into the car park, I see

one of those car park boulders to stop cars from driving on the lawn. "And it's got this clear-as-day dinosaur fossil. My jaw dropped when I saw that." Romilio

and a team of researchers published their findings in peer-reviewed journal Historical Biology. — AFP

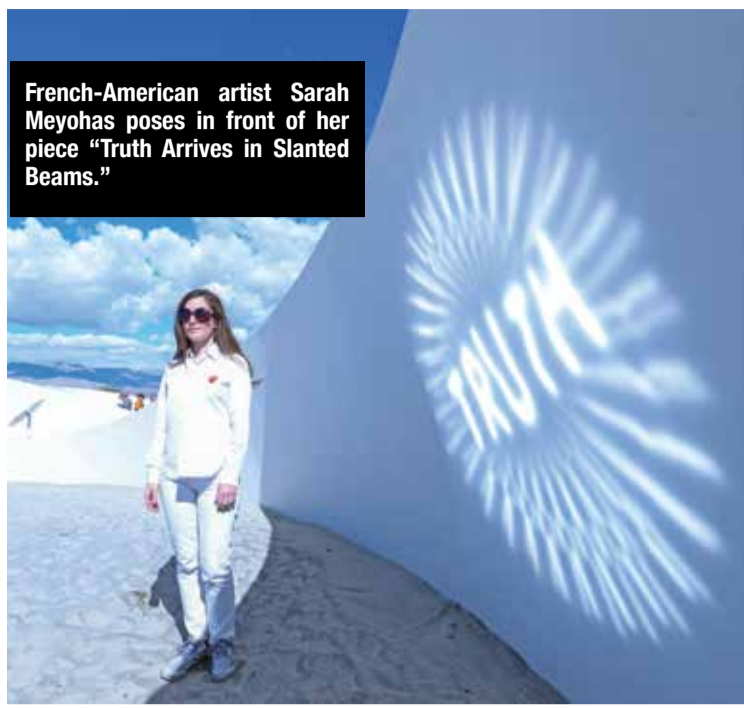


This undated handout photo shows palaeontologist Anthony Romilio inspecting a boulder sitting outside a school which contains dinosaur footprints, in the town of Biloela, in central Queensland. - AFP photos

Lifestyle



Visitors take photos at French-American artist Sarah Meyohas' piece "Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams," which uses curved metallic mirrors to reflect and refract sunlight, beaming the words across the sides of a meandering wall during the media preview day of the Desert X exhibit, in the Coachella Valley near Desert Hot Springs, California.--AFP photos



French-American artist Sarah Meyohas poses in front of her piece "Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams."



A visitor walks through Ronald Rael's piece "Adobe Oasis," which used a robotic arm to 3D print walls made of clay and straw, in the traditional local adobe.



Aerial view of French-American artist Sarah Meyohas' piece "Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams," which uses curved metallic mirrors to reflect and refract sunlight, beaming the words across the sides of a meandering wall.

Mirrors, marble
and mud:
Desert X
returns to
California



Visitors look at artist Sanford Bigger's "Unsui (Mirror)," during the media preview day.



Views of artists Alison Saar's and Kaitlin Garcia-Maestas' "Soul Service Station" during the media preview day of the Desert X exhibit.



Mysterious metallic mirrors, stacks of imported marble boulders and a 3D-printed mud hut appeared in the California desert Saturday, as the biennial outdoor art festival Desert X returned. The free event, which drew 600,000 visitors in its last edition, sends contemporary art-lovers on a treasure hunt to find works scattered across the Coachella Valley, some 100 miles (160 kilometers) east of Los Angeles. French-American artist Sarah Meyohas used intricately curved metallic mirrors to reflect and refract the bright desert sunlight, beaming the words "Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams" across the sides of a meandering 400-foot (120-meter) stucco ribbon.

"Truth is definitely something that's at stake in today's world," she explained. "And I try to make art that is not tricking anybody. This isn't a trick. This is the light. And this is true." Using "caustic" technology based on the way light "plays at the bottom of a swimming pool" to turn sun beams into text, the work speaks to "a world in which we are so politically divided," she told AFP.

'Here to stay'

Twenty miles across the desert, Mexican artist Jose Davila has stacked colossal 16-ton marble boulders that were quarried in the Chihuahua Desert of his nearby home country. The work is titled "The act of being together." Arranged to invoke megalithic structures like Britain's Stonehenge, the giant hewn marble lumps also speak to the "current climate of events" in which

tariffs have recently been hiked at the US-Mexican border. "Rocks like these remind us that things are here to stay, and these inconveniences come and go," said Davila.

Still, Desert X artistic director Neville Wakefield conceded that President

Oasis," which used an enormous robotic arm to 3D-print walls made of clay and straw, in the adobe style traditional in this region.

Rael suggested the ancient building material, which is fireproof, should be reappraised in the wake of the deadly



Visitors look at French-American artist Sarah Meyohas' piece "Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams."

Donald Trump's tariffs, and Mexican reciprocal measures, had made organizing an art event a two-hour drive from the border "very complicated." The show brings artists from around the world to make installations specific to the North American desert landscape, sourcing and fabricating many materials from Mexico. Other installations include Ronald Rael's "Adobe

Los Angeles fires that killed 29 people in January. "This is mankind's oldest building material," modified only by "the introduction of one tool, a robot," he told AFP. The recent fires "burned buildings that are made of plastics -- toxic materials -- and people in LA still can't drink their own water," Rael added. Desert X runs until May 11.--AFP



View of Mexican artist Jose Davila's "The Act of Being Together," composed of stacked 16-ton marble boulders that were quarried in the Chihuahua Northern Desert, during the media preview day.



Visitors view Agnes Denes' "The Living Pyramid" during the media preview day.



Agnes Denes' "The Living Pyramid" is displayed during the media preview day.

Sports

Garland stars as comeback Cavs bag 15th straight with defeat of Nets

Cunningham's 27-pt performance helps Pistons with 123-103 victory over Wizards

LOS ANGELES: Darius Garland scored 30 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers staged a double-digit comeback to bag their 15th straight victory with a 109-104 defeat of the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday. Cleveland looked to be heading for a shock loss after lowly Brooklyn raced into an 18-point lead in the third quarter against a Cavs line-up missing the rested Donovan Mitchell.

But Garland produced an explosive late burst of scoring to haul Cleveland back into the contest and extend the Cavaliers' lead at the top of the Eastern Conference to 55-10. Eighteen of Garland's points came in the fourth quarter after the Cavs had cut the Nets lead to eight points at the end of the third thanks to a remarkable 49-foot three-pointer from Craig Porter Jr.

Porter's buzzer-beating heave from half-court left Cleveland trailing 86-78, and Garland then took over with a dazzling fourth-quarter display to see the Cavs home to the delight of the Rocket Arena crowd. The victory was the fifth time this season Cleveland have overturned a deficit of 15 points or more to win.

A weary Garland admitted though he would have preferred an easier path to victory. "I'm sick and tired of comebacks," Garland joked after the win. "But we play hard for 48 minutes. We weren't shooting the ball the best so our defense took a stand. "This team is a really good unit—we stick together through the good times and the bad times. We were all locked in through the fourth quarter. That's when we put our hard hats on and go to work."

'Clutch player'

Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson saluted Garland's game-winning late charge. "He's the clutch player of the year," Atkinson said. "He just does it for us in the fourth quarter. He's done it for us all year." Garland received scoring support from Jarrett Allen, who had 13 rebounds and three blocks as well as scoring 23 points, and Evan Mobley who added 21 points. The loss was hard on Brooklyn, who went into the game fresh from Monday's upset win over the Los Angeles Lakers. Cam Thomas led Brooklyn's scoring with 27 points while Cameron Johnson added 17 as the Nets fell to 22-44 for the season. "I'm proud of the guys because the first half was impressive," Nets coach Jordi Fernandez said. "I just wish we would have been rewarded with a win."

Elsewhere, Cade Cunningham's 27-point performance helped the Detroit Pistons stay firmly in the Eastern Conference playoff hunt with a 123-103 victory over the Washington Wizards. The Pistons improved to 37-29 and are in sixth place in the East, just behind Indiana, who snatched a sensational last-gasp 115-114 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

In a pulsating game that saw the lead change hands 21 times, the Bucks looked to have done enough to secure the win after two free throws from Damian Lillard put Milwaukee 114-111 ahead with four seconds remaining.

But Tyrese Haliburton conjured a jaw-dropping three-pointer on the run and drew a foul from Giannis Antetokounmpo in the process to earn a free



CLEVELAND: Trendon Watford #9 of the Brooklyn Nets dribbles the ball during the game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on March 11, 2025 at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

throw which he duly drained to win the game. The Pacers improved to 36-28 with the win and have an identical record to the fourth-placed Bucks. The

New Orleans Pelicans snapped the Los Angeles Clippers' three-game winning streak with a 127-120 victory. — AFP

Medvedev tops Paul to reach quarters at rainy Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS: Russia's Daniil Medvedev shook off a day of rain delays to beat Tommy Paul 6-4, 6-0 on Tuesday and reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells, where he's vying to improve on runner-up finishes the past two years. Taking the court around 10:00 pm, four hours after he was slated to open the night session on Stadium Court, Medvedev took full advantage of Paul's 31 unforced errors.

"It wasn't an easy preparation," Medvedev said. "We both were here early and then rain, rain, rain. I think we both went in rusty, he a little bit more than I did." Paul had his opportunities, rallying after Medvedev jumped to a 4-0 lead to win four straight games. But Medvedev won the next eight—pocketing the first set on a pair of Paul forehand errors then racing through the second to seal it with one final break of the American's serve. "Pretty strange score," Medvedev said. "Whoever won some games won them in a row." Medvedev, who fell to Carlos Alcaraz in each of the last two finals, next faces France's Arthur Fils, a 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 winner over American Marcos Giron in a match halted for more than three hours by rain in the first set.

Women's defending champion Iga Swiatek had to wait out a near-hour delay before getting started, but once she did she produced another brutally efficient 6-1, 6-1 victory over Karolina Muchova, beating

the worst of the weather.

The world number two from Poland needed just 57 minutes to put away Muchova, who took her to three sets in the 2023 French Open final. Swiatek, the 2022 and 2024 winner, didn't face a break point as she continued her bid to become the first woman to win three titles in the California desert.

She said the weather was an extra spur to finish it quickly, especially after the rain came again near the end of the contest. "On last two games it was a bit slippery already, but I really wanted to finish. So I kind of played more risky, but the shots were still in," said Swiatek, who will face China's Zheng Qinwen for a place in the semi-finals. Zheng rolled past Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-2. The off-and-on showers caused multiple delays.

Stop and start

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, ranked 23rd, shrugged off the three-hour stoppage at the start of her third set to upset world number four Jessica Pegula 5-7, 6-1, 6-2. "Definitely not easy with all the conditions and the rain, stop and start," Svitolina said. "Warmed up maybe like 10 times today."

Svitolina booked a meeting with 17-year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva, who beat 2023 Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan 6-1, 6-2. Andreeva has now won two matches in three weeks against world number seven Rybakina—a former Wimbledon champion. She beat Rybakina in the semi-finals in Dubai on the way to becoming the youngest ever WTA 1000 champion.

In other men's matches, Denmark's Holger Rune beat in-form Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-4. Greece's Tsitsipas was coming off his first title in nearly a year



INDIAN WELLS: Daniil Medvedev plays a backhand against Tommy Paul of the United States in their fourth round match during the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

in Dubai last month, but Rune, ranked 13th, snapped the world number nine's seven-match ATP win streak with an aggressive game that included 22 winners.

Up 4-3 in the second set, Rune saved a break point with a dazzling between-the-legs shot, racing back to the baseline after a Tsitsipas lob and batting the twener that dropped perfectly to deny the Greek. "Mentally, I was very, very good," Rune said. "I think that's what made the difference—how composed I was able to stay." Rune next faces 43rd-ranked Tallon Griekspoor, who upset top seed Alexander Zverev in the second round. Griekspoor also made a belated start and waited out a second-set delay in his 7-6 (7/4) 6-1 victory over Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki. — AFP



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud and Duajj Al-Otaibi

Sheikh Salman heritage shooting championship

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Shooting Sport Club announced the organization of Sheikh Salman Hamoud Al-Salman Al-Sabah Heritage Shooting Championship for the members of the General Assembly of the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club on Thursday evening, at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, and will be followed by the club's annual Ramadan Ghabga, which comes at the kind invitation of the club president, Duajj Al-Otaibi and his brother members of the Board of Directors.

On this occasion, Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi - President of the Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations - expressed his happiness to hold the Ramadan tournament and the annual dinner ceremony of the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club in the presence of the members of the General Assembly of the club and lovers of the sport of shooting and will precede the organization of the tournament of Sheikh Salman Humoud Al-Salman Al-Sabah for heritage shooting for members of the General Assembly, which is a good opportunity to meet with Kuwait shooting sport members in this holy month.

Al-Otaibi expressed his pleasure in organizing this year's heritage shooting tournament, which bears the name of Sheikh Salman Humoud Al-Salman Al-Sabah, one of the founders of Kuwaiti shooting and former president of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, on the sidelines of the club's annual Ramadan celebration.

Duajj Al-Otaibi extended great thanks and gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for their generous support and continuous encouragement to their sons and daughters of the club to continue the process of giving and achieving sports achievements, competition and raising the flag of our dear country in international tournaments.

Hamilton eyes dream Ferrari start as F1 revs up in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: Lewis Hamilton will look to lay down an immediate marker against world champion Max Verstappen when the Briton makes his highly anticipated Ferrari debut at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix this week.

The former Mercedes ace Hamilton is bidding for a record eighth world title and his first since 2020 after being outshone by the Dutchman and his imperious Red Bull team over the intervening years. A bombshell move to Ferrari after a glorious 12-year spell at Mercedes has rejuvenated the 40-year-old, who is eager to apply the lessons learned from 162 laps of testing at Bahrain last month to race conditions.

"I'm so excited to get to the first race in Melbourne. I can't wait to go racing with them," Hamilton said of Ferrari. "The passion here is like nothing you've ever seen. They've got absolutely every ingredient they need to win a world championship and it's just about putting all the pieces together."

Hamilton has tasted victory twice before at the fast and bumpy Albert Park circuit with McLaren and Mercedes, but not since 2015. Ferrari have fared better, winning four of the last six Australian races including in 2024 when Carlos Sainz, the man Hamilton replaced, took the chequered flag ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc.

Verstappen started from pole but failed to finish in Melbourne last year, limping out with smoke billowing from a brake fire. It was a minor aberration for the Dutchman, who went on to clinch a fourth world title with two races to spare ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris.

The 27-year-old Verstappen is now bidding to become only the second driver behind Michael Schumacher to win five championships in a row. Verstappen has been keen to play down expectations, telling Dutch media: "I don't think we can fight for the win already in Melbourne. If you look at the lap times, then I think McLaren is the favourite," Verstappen added, referring to Bahrain testing. "On our side, not everything went completely smoothly, but on the other hand we have some ideas on how to improve."

New faces

He is now partnered at Red Bull by Liam Law-



MILAN: (FILES) British F1 driver Lewis Hamilton signs autographs during the Scuderia Ferrari HP Drivers' presentation event by Unicredit, in Piazza Castello in Milan. — AFP

sonafter the under-performing Sergio Perez was axed, with the New Zealander one of six drivers making their full season debut in Australia. Australian eyes will be on Jack Doohan, the son of five-time MotoGP world champion Mick, who makes his home bow with Alpine. The other four are Italian teenager Andrea Kimi Antonelli, who took Hamilton's Mercedes seat, Briton Oliver Bearman (Haas), Brazil's Gabriel Bortoleto (Saubert) and France's Isack Hadjar (Racing Bulls).

Verstappen's caution follows Norris throwing down the gauntlet last year when he led McLaren to their first team title since 1998. As expected, McLaren were rapid in Bahrain with Norris and Australian teammate Oscar Piastri keen for statement drives this week.

"This circuit has been good to us in the past and hopefully we've carried our momentum from 2024 into this year," said Britain's Norris. "We had a productive test but we won't know where we stand until qualifying on Saturday."

Norris cautioned that he expects teams other than McLaren, Red Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes to be more competitive this season. "I think this should be a very exciting season with a lot of close racing. There's going to be a lot of competition."

Melbourne is back in its traditional position as the opening race of the season for the first time in five years, with organisers expecting more than 450,000 fans through the Albert Park turnstiles. The city had held the first grand prix almost every year since the Australian race moved from Adelaide in 1996, but has not done so since 2019 after the COVID pandemic led to Bahrain taking over. — AFP

Eubank Jr fined for hitting boxing rival Benn

LONDON: Chris Eubank Jr has been fined £100,000 (\$129,000) after hitting fellow British boxer Conor Benn in the face with an egg during a heated exchange in the build-up to next month's grudge match. Eubank had already made a reference at last month's Manchester press conference to two drugs tests Benn failed in 2022, which led to a two-year battle with anti-doping authorities.

The World Boxing Council cleared Benn in 2023 of a doping offence after it ruled a "highly elevated consumption of eggs" constituted a "reasonable explanation" for his positive finding. As the fighters faced off on stage in Manchester in February, Eubank pulled an egg from his pocket and smashed it against Benn's face, sparking a brawl as promoter Eddie Hearn and Benn's father Nigel tried to get at Eubank and his team.

The British Boxing Board of Control said in a statement: "Following a hearing before the stewards of the British Boxing Board of Control, Chris Eubank Jnr was found to be in breach of regulation 25 (misconduct) for his conduct at the press conference in Manchester for the Chris Eubank Jnr v Conor Benn contest on 26th April, 2025. "As such, the stewards of the board fined Chris Eubank Jnr the sum of £100,000." Eubank and Benn will fight at London's Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on April 26, having originally been due to face off in October 2022 before Benn's failed tests. Benn originally tested positive for the female fertility drug clomifene.

The 28-year-old, who has a 23-0 record, was cleared to fight in Britain in November last year after the UK Anti-Doping Agency announced it would not appeal against a decision from the National Anti-Doping Panel to lift his ban, with the British Boxing Board of Control also declining to appeal.

Eubank, 35, who has a 34-3 record, defended his actions two days later at a second media event. He said: "Did I cross the line? During this whole process I think many lines have been crossed. So me throwing an egg at somebody who absurdly claims that was the reason why he failed two drugs tests, I think that's light, I think he deserved the embarrassment of what happened. If I had an opportunity to do it again then I would. Unfortunately I come unarmed today, I've been searched multiple times and I couldn't sneak any in." The middleweight bout is a battle of second-generation contenders, reviving the Benn v Eubank feud in which the rivals' fathers—Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank Sr—battled it out in two ferocious contests in the early 1990s. — AFP

Sports

Inter cruise into Champions League quarters and titanic Bayern clash

Feyenoord's deepest run in Europe's top club competition in decades end

MILAN: Inter Milan will face Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals of the Champions League after seeing off Feyenoord 2-1 on Tuesday to complete a comfortable 4-1 aggregate victory. A thumping early strike from Marcus Thuram and Hakan Calhanoglu's penalty at the San Siro gave Inter comfortable passage to the last eight, where the Italian champions will face a blockbuster clash with Bayern Munich.

Inter lead Serie A and there is talk in Italy that Simone Inzaghi's team have a chance at repeating the league, Italian Cup and Champions League treble won by Jose Mourinho 15 years ago. "It's not about believing or not believing (in the treble), when you're at Inter you play every game to win. If you win every match you'll do great things," said Thuram.

Standing in Inter's way next month will be Bayern after they swept aside Bayer Leverkusen, who beat Inter during the league phase. Inzaghi is hoping that he will have his first XI available for what will be the biggest matches of the season for Inter who are keen to go one better than 2023 when they lost the Champions League final to Manchester City.

"It will be a complicated match. They're solid and very well coached but we'll go for it just as we have against everyone, playing against other top teams," said Inzaghi. "I hope we'll have everyone available for the tie... We brought on two players from the youth team near the end and I told them that they'll need to give us a hand because we're a bit short at the moment."

Feyenoord's deepest run in Europe's top club competition in decades ended with a whimper although the away side did briefly look like making a game of it when Jakub Moder rattled in a penalty three minutes before the break. Inter could have easily won by more after missing a clutch of good

chances, with Thuram drilling a great opportunity against the bar moments before being substituted to rapturous applause with 19 minutes remaining.

No surprises

The hosts were already comfortably ahead from their dominant first-leg display in Rotterdam but Thuram made sure there would be no nasty surprises in the eighth minute. The France forward received a ball from Carlos Augusto on the left flank and then charged towards goal, cutting inside onto his right foot and unleashing a ferocious shot against which Timon Wellenreuther could do nothing to stop.

That goal made it near impossible for Feyenoord, now led by former Netherlands striker Robin van Persie whose team showed willing even with 11 players out of action through injury or suspension. Up to Thuram's opener, Simone Inzaghi's 200th game as Inter coach had been played in near silence bar sporadic chanting from the 5,000 away supporters, as home fans stayed silent for the first 20 minutes in protest at the increasing cost of tickets for home matches.

Inzaghi, himself hit with a series of important absences including Italy wing-back Federico Dimarco, also rested star striker Lautaro Martinez, Nicolo Barella, Francesco Acerbi and Alessandro Bastoni with a huge match at Serie A title rivals Atalanta coming up at the weekend.

It was one of Inzaghi's regulars in Calhanoglu who gave Feyenoord a lifeline in the 38th minute when he bundled into Moder to hand the Poland midfielder a chance to level the scores on the night. However Calhanoglu redeemed himself and sent Inter through to meet Bayern five minutes after the break by confidently stroking home from the spot after what looked like a soft foul on Mehdi Taremi by Thomas Beelen.

calling for "justice." Veronica Ojeda, Maradona's former partner and mother of one of his sons, 12-year-old Dieguito, tearfully thanked them for their support before entering the courthouse.

'Totally deficient'

Maradona was found dead two weeks after going under the knife, in a rented house in an exclusive Buenos Aires neighborhood where he was brought after being discharged from hospital. It was determined he died of heart failure and acute pulmonary edema, a condition where fluid accumulates in the lungs.

The passing of the 1986 World Cup star plunged Argentina, and football fans worldwide, into mourning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tens of thousands of people queued to bid farewell to the former Boca Juniors and Napoli striker as his body lay in state at the presidential palace.

Nearly 120 witnesses, including members of Maradona's family and doctors who previously tended to him, are expected to testify in the long-delayed trial in the Buenos Aires suburb of San Isidro. The hearings, adjourned until Thursday, are expected to run until July.

A day nurse who found Maradona dead is to be tried separately, by jury. Prosecutors accuse his medical team of pushing for Maradona to receive home care, which proved "reckless" and "totally deficient." They allege the footballer was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonizing period" before his death. Maradona's five children and his sisters have joined the case as plaintiffs.

'Justice for Diego'

A panel of 20 medical experts convened by Argentina's public prosecutor concluded in 2021 that Maradona "would have had a better chance of survival" with adequate treatment in an appropriate medical facility.

However, only once in the past 35 years have they missed out on European football entirely. That fate looks almost certain this season unless United lift the Europa League in Bilbao on May 21. "It's massive," said United midfielder Christian Eriksen of the Sociedad game.

"We know there's a lot of pressure on that game, but it also comes with being at this club. You play for trophies so we have to play well to go through." Sociedad are also dreaming of making the short trip to Bilbao for the final to salvage a disappointing campaign. Imanol Alguacil's men sit 11th in La Liga and lost the first leg of their Copa del Rey semi-final 1-0 at home to Real Madrid.

Postecoglou on the brink

Tottenham, 13th in the Premier League, also desperately need Europa League glory to save their season. Rumors suggest manager Ange Postecoglou's job depends on turning around a 1-0 first leg deficit against AZ Alkmaar in London.

Postecoglou has been hampered by a lengthy injury list for most of the campaign, but has few excuses with Spurs finally approaching full strength. First-choice center-backs Cristian Romero and Micky van de Ven made their return in Sunday's 2-2 draw against Bournemouth, while record signing Dominic Solanke played 90 minutes for the first time in nearly two months.

"We need everyone. From the supporters, players, staff, from the club, we need everybody with that game to turn it around," said Spurs captain Son Heung-min. "Quality doesn't bring the wins. The games always need a mentality and the care and the performance. Hard work always matters. We need to be focused, take it serious-

dez, with Atletico going on to lose 2-1 in the derby clash on Sunday.

Correa will miss one game for his dismissal and four more for what he said to the official afterwards. The Spanish football federation's disciplinary committee said Atletico's attempted mitigation of Correa's behavior, including that the player was "extremely nervous" and under high pressure "can never justify the series of severe expressions directed at the referee".

Correa apologized for his behavior after the game with a post on social media platform X. "I have to-



MILAN: Feyenoord's Slovakian defender #33 David Hancko (C) scissor kicks the ball on attempt to goal past Inter Milan's Brazilian defender #30 Carlos Augusto (R) during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second-leg football match between Inter Milan and Feyenoord Rotterdam at the San Siro Stadium in Milan. — AFP

"It was a dubious penalty in my opinion, maybe given too easily. It seemed to me that there wasn't much contact," Van Persie told reporters. "The players worked very hard, they defended well at times.

Maybe we could have done better in some situations but we were up against a really good team who play quality football. "The boys did everything, I couldn't have asked any more from them." — AFP

Maradona medical team on trial for 'horror theater' of his death

SAN ISIDRO: Seven Argentines went on trial Tuesday accused of homicide for their alleged role in what prosecutors called the "horror theater" of football legend Diego Maradona's death four years ago.

Maradona died on November 25, 2020, aged 60, while recovering at home from brain surgery for a blood clot, after decades battling cocaine and alcohol addictions. On trial are a neurosurgeon, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a medical coordinator, a nursing coordinator, a doctor and a night nurse accused of being criminally negligent in the care they provided to the footballer in his final days.

In an opening statement, the prosecution said it intended to submit "solid" evidence that no member of the medical team "did what they were supposed to do" in the "horror theater" that was Maradona's deathbed. "Look, that's how Maradona died!" prosecutor Patricio Ferrari exclaimed in the courtroom, holding up a posthumous photo of Maradona, lying on his back in bed, his body grotesquely swollen.

The gruesome picture brought Maradona's three daughters, Jana, Dalma and Gianinna, who attended the start of the trial, to the verge of tears. "They (the accused) are lying to you when they say they did not take part in murder," Ferrari charged.

Fernando Burlando, lawyer for Dalma and Gianinna, described Maradona's medical team as "diabolical." The defendants face prison terms of between eight and 25 years if convicted on charges of "homicide with possible intent"—pursuing a course of action despite knowing it can cause death.

Outside the court, dozens of fans waved banners

Cash-strapped Man Utd turn to Europa as season's savior

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's financial crisis, exposed by co-owner Jim Ratcliffe this week, has heaped more pressure on Ruben Amorim's men to deliver Europa League glory and a return to Champions League revenues next season.

United host Real Sociedad on Thursday with their last-16 tie finely poised after a 1-1 draw in Spain last week. The Red Devils sit 14th in the Premier League meaning their hopes of salvaging a miserable season depend on European glory.

Ahead of announcing plans for a new 100,000-seater stadium to replace Old Trafford on Tuesday, Ratcliffe defended the ruthless cost-cutting he has implemented throughout the club during his first year in charge.

United have not yet detailed how they plan to finance the reported £2 billion (\$2.6 billion) cost of the new stadium. Last month, the club announced that up to 200 further redundancies were anticipated after 250 jobs were cut last year. Ratcliffe claimed the club would have "run out of money at Christmas if we don't do those things" in a series of media interviews. The English giants have made cumulative losses of £410 million in the last seven years after a series of expensive mistakes in the transfer market and in managerial hires.

Angel Correa banned for five matches after ref outburst

MADRID: Atletico Madrid striker Angel Correa was banned for five matches on Wednesday after insulting the referee during his team's La Liga defeat by Getafe. The forward was sent off for a high tackle and then abused referee Guillermo Cuadra Fernan-



SAN ISIDRO: Jana Maradona, daughter of late Argentine football legend Diego Maradona, leaves the courtroom at the end of the first day of the Maradona death trial in San Isidro, Buenos Aires province, Argentina. — AFP

The house where he was being cared for notably had no defibrillator. Maradona's family also claim that leaked audio and text messages between medical team members show the star's health was in imminent danger.

The accused all insist on their innocence. Vadim Mischanchuk, lawyer of psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov told AFP he was "very optimistic" she would be acquitted, insisting she was in charge of Maradona's mental health only. Night nurse Ricardo Almiron's lawyer argued his client had had no say in the footballers' care and merely acted according to orders.

In Buenos Aires's La Paternal neighborhood where Maradona was revealed as a prodigious talent while playing for Argentinos Juniors in the 1970s, fans said they were still seeking closure over his death. "All society needs to know... what really happened, who abandoned him... and whoever is responsible must pay the price," pensioner Hilda Pereira said. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Portuguese head coach Ruben Amorim gestures on the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Arsenal at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England. — AFP

ly, respect our opponent and do everything we can to turn it around, especially at home." Rangers already have one foot in the last eight after a stunning 3-1 first leg win away to Fenerbahce.

"I don't think it's over," said Fenerbahce boss Jose Mourinho. "The only thing I tell them is, don't celebrate too much. Because there is a second match. It's my only advice." Athletic Bilbao must overturn a 2-1 first leg deficit against Roma to maintain their dream of playing the final in their home stadium. Lazio, Lyon and Eintracht Frankfurt are strong favorites to make the quarter-finals after away wins at Viktoria Plzen, FCSB and Ajax respectively last week. — AFP

tal respect for the referees and this reaction is not typical of me," he wrote. "I was very angry for leaving the team with ten men at such a delicate moment and I reacted in the worst way. I hope he accepts my most sincere apologies."

Atletico were leading when Correa was dismissed in the 88th minute but defeat left them third, one point behind Real Madrid and Barcelona. Correa will miss the second leg of his team's Copa del Rey semi-final against Barca, as well as league matches against Hansi Flick's side, Espanyol, Sevilla and Valladolid. — AFP

Al Hilal overturn deficit to reach ACL quarters

RIYADH: Al Hilal overturned a shock defeat in the first leg of their Asian Champions League last-16 tie with Pakhtakor to prevail 4-1 on aggregate and book a spot in the quarter-finals on Tuesday.

The Saudi Pro League club, record four-time winners of the competition, ran out 4-0 victors in the return match in Riyadh, where first-half goals from defender Hamad Al Yami and Brazilian forward Malcom set them on their way.

Captain Salem Al Dawsari then scored a penalty early in the second half, while namesake Nasser Al Dawsari wrapped up the result in stoppage time. Al Hilal had to make do without star striker Aleksandar Mitrovic, who missed the game after he was found to have an irregular heartbeat at the weekend having returned from a two-month injury lay-off.

The former Newcastle United and Fulham frontman had scored in the Saudi Pro League match at Al Fayha. However, Mitrovic was present in the Kingdom Arena stands as Al Hilal overturned their 1-0 loss in Uzbekistan last week—their first defeat in this season's rebranded Asian Champions League.

The hosts took the lead just after the half-hour mark, when midfielder Mohamed Kanno crossed from the left and Al Yami, deputizing for injured former Manchester City full-back Joao Cancelo, connected with a diving header at the back post.

Kanno got his second assist of the match three minutes before half-time, the Saudi Arabia international splitting the Pakhtakor defence to set free Malcom. He made no mistake, firing his shot past compatriot Jhonatan.

Al Hilal, who were also missing ex-Lazio midfielder Sergej Milinkovic-Savic through injury, made safe the result six minutes into the second half. Pakhtakor full-back Khojiakbar Alijonov tripped Al Dawsari in the penalty area and the Al Hilal captain dusted himself off to convert from the spot. In injury time, Nasser Al Dawsari tapped home his team's fourth.

Al Hilal will join Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr, who on Monday defeated Esteghlal of Iran 3-0 on aggregate, and fellow Saudi side Al Ahli in the last eight. Former Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez got both goals as the Jeddah club saw off Qatar's Al Rayyan 2-0 at home to triumph 5-1 on aggregate.

Mahrez, who scored twice in six minutes late on, now has eight goals and seven assists in this season's competition as Al Ahli remain unbeaten. Earlier on Tuesday, last year's runners-up Yokohama F-Marininos comfortably dispatched Shanghai Port 5-1 on aggregate following a thumping 4-1 victory in the second leg in Japan. Goals from Daiya Tono, Yan Matheus and a double from Anderson Lopes took Marininos through. Leonardo got the goal for the Chinese Super League champions.

Thai champions Buriram United advanced with a hard-fought 1-0 win in their second leg away to Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim. Suphanat Mueanta got the tie's only goal in the 58th minute after the first match in Thailand finished goalless. The draw for the last eight will take place in Kuala Lumpur next Monday. — AFP

PSG stun Liverpool on penalties to make Champions League quarters

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain held their nerve to beat Liverpool 4-1 on penalties and reach the Champions League quarter-finals on Tuesday after their tie finished one-apiece on aggregate, while Bayern Munich saw off Bayer Leverkusen to complete a 5-0 win over both legs.

Lamine Yamal and Raphinha fired Barcelona into the next round as the Catalans bested Benfica 3-1, and Inter Milan booked a last-eight meeting with Bayern by seeing off Feyenoord 2-1. At Anfield, Ousmane Dembele netted the only goal of the night as PSG bounced back from Liverpool's late winner last week to force the tie to extra-time and penalties.

Maligned for his weak attempted save at the Parc des Princes from Harvey Elliott's strike, Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma produced two excellent saves in the penalty shoot-out to send the French champions into the last eight.

Donnarumma plunged first to his left to deny Darwin Nunez, before going low the other side to deny Curtis Jones, with his team-mates dispatching all of their penalties. "It was a great performance. We really deserved to go through over the two legs, hands down," PSG captain Marquinhos told Canal Plus.

The hosts dominated the opening exchanges but could not make their chances count, much like PSG in last week's return fixture. Dembele poked home in the 12th minute after he reacted quickest to Ibrahima Konate's attempt to clear a PSG counter-attack in the Liverpool penalty box.

Jarell Quansah hit the post with a header in the second half, but PSG held firm under Liverpool pressure to claim the second leg 1-0. The tie rumbled inevitably towards penalties and after Donnarumma's heroics, Desire Doue slammed home the decisive penalty to spark wild celebrations in the visitors'



LIVERPOOL: Paris Saint-Germain's players celebrate at the end of the last 16 second leg UEFA Champions League football match between Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England. — AFP

end. "It was the best game of football I have ever been involved in," Arne Slot told Amazon Prime.

"It was an incredible performance, especially if you compare it with last week. We were creating chances and then we were 1-0 down. We ran out of luck after last week." PSG will play either Aston Villa or Club Brugge in the next stage. Harry Kane inspired Bayern to a 2-0 win at the home of German rivals Leverkusen. The England captain scored and assisted at the BayArena, adding to his two goals from the comprehensive 3-0 first-leg victory in Mu-

nich. "From the first minute we didn't want to be a team that dropped off and tried to defend the lead," Kane told Amazon Prime.

"In the second half we knew they had to come out and try something and we punished them." With the match scoreless at half-time, Bayer pushed to try and get a foothold in the tie in the final 45 minutes. But it was Kane who tapped in from a lofted Joshua Kimmich cross in the 52nd minute to kill off the tie.

Alphonso Davies made it a rout over both legs with 19 minutes remaining as he drove home a

chipped pass from Kane. "We didn't lose the tie today," said Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso. "We made it too difficult for ourselves in the return leg."

'Win everything'

Already a goal to the good following the first leg, a Raphinha brace and a Yamal wonder-goal secured Barca a 4-1 aggregate win on Tuesday. Hansi Flick's side will face Borussia Dortmund or Lille in the quarter-finals as they aim to win the competition for the first time since 2015. "We are candidates to win everything," Raphinha told Movistar, with the club in the hunt for a potential treble. Teenage sensation Yamal created the opener on 11 minutes with a mazy run before his mishit shot picked Raphinha out perfectly as the Brazilian ghosted in at the far post.

Nicolas Otamendi struck back instantly for Benfica when he forced a header past Wojciech Szczesny in the 13th minute. Yamal restored the home side's two-goal buffer 14 minutes later, cutting in from the right flank and arching an unstoppable effort into the far, top corner. Raphinha then put the tie to bed three minutes before the interval with a blistering left-footed finish following excellent work by Alejandro Balde.

The build-up to the match at the Olympic Stadium was overshadowed by the sudden death last Saturday of Barcelona club doctor Carles Minarro, and the players observed a silence in his honor before kick-off. "We won for us and Carles is always with us... he always has a place (here)," said Flick. Italian champions Inter also progressed through the last 16 with a 4-1 aggregate victory. Strikes by Marcus Thuram and Hakan Calhanoglu, either side of a Feyenoord consolation scored by Jakub Moder, gave them a 2-1 win at the San Siro. — AFP

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