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Group photo of GCC leaders with US President Donald Trump during the Gulf-US Summit in Riyadh.

Saudi Foreign Ministry photo

Kuwait Amir seeks enhanced GCC-US investment ventures



Saudi Foreign Ministry photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a keynote speech at the Gulf-US Summit in Riyadh on Wednesday.

- Riyadh summit hailed as gateway for progress
- Amir lauds US role in global conflict resolution
- Gulf partnership anchored in shared values
- Kuwait supports stability in Syria, Yemen
- Two-state solution for Palestine reaffirmed

RIYADH, May 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday expressed desire to enhance GCC states' investments with the United States, hoped the GCC-US Summit would constitute a gateway to tackle regional issues and proposed a GCC-US forum for cultural and educational dialogue.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal, at start of his speech to the US-Gulf Summit, said he was deeply elated with holding the summit, addressing gratitude to Saudi King

Continued on Page 5

Opinion

■ Ahmed Al-Jarallah Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

King Salman of the Arabs ... May Allah delight Mohammed bin Salman, and may He bless you, Mr. Trump

IN Riyadh, American President Donald Trump declared, "The future of the Middle East begins here," clearly referring to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Since 2015, this nation has consistently demonstrated its capability as a soft power; influencing developments in line with its strategic priorities -- Saudi Arabia's interests first, followed by the Gulf, Arab and Islamic spheres respectively.

This is the reason why the era of change and achievement began 10 years ago. King Salman bin Abdulaziz deserves to be the King of the Arabs at a moment in history that is unlike anything the Arabs had known for decades. This is due to the efforts of his Crown Prince, Prince Mohammed bin Salman -- a man who never sleeps, busy developing and advancing his country.

Therefore, this young man, full of vitality and energy, deserves to be told, "May Allah bless and delight you, O Prince." The Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), which

states "We should be optimistic when we see the foreheads and feet of horses..." applies to Your Highness.

It is always great to see achievements that are beneficial for the Kingdom, the Gulf and the broader Arab world. The steps taken to lift sanctions on Syria, which have really hurt a nation we care about, are very important; given the recent war, displacement, poverty and hardship they faced. It is good to see that the US presidency has been receptive to these calls.

Thus, we also say to His Excellency the US President: You will soon find that Syria has truly returned to the pounding heart of the Arab world. Today, it is at home.

Despite being wronged, a man extends an olive branch; believing his country has the chance to unite various groups. He aims to build up, not tear down.

Mr. Donald Trump, we also say, may Allah bless your efforts in making the Middle East an oasis of peace, after its people were burdened by wars and cri-

ses for 77 years and continue to suffer up to this day.

So when you say, "The future begins here," you are fully aware that there will be no stability in the world as long as there is no peace in this region.

President Trump's visit and the immediate actions taken afterward really mark a turning point for the Middle East, different from what we have seen for years.

It basically shuts down the plans of those who wanted to turn the area into a war zone, stir up trouble between different groups, and keep things stuck in the past.

Continued on Page 5

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Kuwait salutes 62 years in UN Kuwait population hits 5 million, 70% expats

KUWAIT CITY, May 14, (KUNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed on Wednesday pride in the strong ties and cooperation with UN on the 62nd anniversary marking the State of Kuwait's membership in the organization on May 14, 1963.

In a statement, the ministry lauded over six decades of cooperation in numerous domains especially within the humanitarian, mediation, peace-building, and development domains.

Continued on Page 5

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: With a population of over 5 million, Kuwait now ranks as the 128th largest country in the world.

According to a report published by the World Population Review, Kuwait's population stands at 5,006,055,

with 70 percent of the residents being expatriates.

Despite its small geographical size of 17,820 square kilometers, Kuwait's population continues to grow steadily, with a birth occurring every 10.8 minutes, a death every 57.6 minutes, and

an immigrant arriving every 12.3 minutes as well as due to significant demographic shifts driven by immigration and the country's expanding financial sector.

The country's population is heavily Continued on Page 5

Kuwaiti, expat staff set for higher exit payouts

By Mohammed Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The report on the public budget for the 2025/2026 fiscal year revealed an increase in the estimated end-of-service compensation for employees in ministries and government departments by KD 33.905 million, compared to KD 219.794 million for the current fiscal year and KD 185.889 million for the previous fiscal year

of 2024/2025.

The report highlighted that the estimated amount for end-of-service compensation falls under the "social allowances" category in the budget's appropriations and expenditures.

It stated that the estimated amount is divided into KD 187.178 million for end-of-service compensation for Kuwaiti employees and KD 32.624 million for non-Kuwaiti employees.



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Al-Rashid thus proved to his wife who was more worthy of ruling

Zubaydah: Al-Amin is intelligent and capable of bearing responsibility.

A mother openly praises one son while denying the other his rights.

The liar is the one who praises himself. People always praise their own goods.

Harun Al-Rashid to Zubaydah: Intelligence and courage are among Al-Ma'mun's qualities.

Harun Al-Rashid to Al-Ma'mun: Why do you come to my council in war clothes?

Al-Ma'mun: It is easy to change out of my war clothes and take off my weapons.

Don't be sad if you are forced to coexist with what hurts.

Be sure, God will never let you down despite your great mistakes.

Peace be upon those who believe in God's decision, justice, and power.

Anything you have lost was never truly yours.

To believe in God's wisdom, even if you don't see it, is a sign of complete faith in Him.

God's criteria is fear of Him, not power.

NewsWatch

RIYADH: Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa expressed his gratitude Wednesday to US President Donald Trump for announcing the lifting of sanctions on Syria, and to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the continued support of Syria.

According to a statement from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Al-Sharaa's remarks came during a meeting held in Riyadh with President Trump and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, with President Erdogan via a phone call. (KUNA)



KUNA photo

Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait and Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez held a meeting on Wednesday to discuss ways to bolster cooperation. A statement by the Ministry of Justice on X revealed that the two focused on cooperation with the judiciary domain in addition to other topics of common interest.



9 Bader Al-Kharafi: We are committed to implementing the directives of HH the Amir to transform Kuwait into a regional hub for the digital economy



10 National Investments Company achieves distributable profits of KD 23.8 million, equivalent to 30 fils

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:28	Asr	15:20
Sunrise ..	04:57	Maghrib ..	18:32
Zohr	11:44	Isha	19:59

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate freshening later on southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for rising dust.
By Night: Rather hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-50 km/h with a chance for airborne dust and some scattered clouds will appear.

Weather

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	41	28
Kuwait Airport	42	29
Abdaly	44	26
Jahra	45	31
Salmiyah	30	28
Nuwaib	43	26
Wafra	43	25



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the IOMS chairman.



Crown Prince photos of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in talks with Google official.

Kuwait Deputy Amir receives IOMS head, Google official

KUWAIT CITY, May 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Wednesday President and Chief Investment Officer of Alphabet and Google Ruth Porat and the accompanying delegation.

Present at the meeting were Minister of State for Communication Affairs Omar Al-Omar, Assistant Director at the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Humoud Al-Sabah, and undersecretary for foreign affairs at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown

Prince Mazen Al-Issa .

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received at Bayan Palace head and board of trustees of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences’ (IOMS) on the occasion of their visit to the country to partake in

the 14 IOMS conference on May 14-17. The conference will be held under the auspices of His Highness the Crown Prince.

Present at the meeting were Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, and undersecretary for foreign affairs Mazen Al-Issa.

Kuwait eyes smart electric meters in various sectors

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has reaffirmed its ongoing efforts to install smart electric meters in agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors; in coordination with the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), Public Authority for Industry (PAI), and Ministry of Commerce and Industry, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting ministry sources.

Sources explained this step aims to promote energy conservation and enhance the efficient use of resources.

Sources disclosed that teams are currently working at the farms in Wafra in collaboration with PAAAFR to replace outdated mechanical meters with the advanced ones, enabling more accurate and effective monitoring of electricity consumption.

So far, 182,000 smart electric meters have been installed nationwide in various sectors, marking a significant step toward digital transformation and reduction of electricity waste, sources added.

Sources affirmed there have been certain challenges during implementation, including instances where guard dogs or individuals obstructed access to meter sites. “These issues required coordination with relevant authorities and farm owners to facilitate smooth and safe installation,” sources said.

The ministry stressed that it is committed to complete the smart meter installation in all sectors to optimize energy use, reduce excessive loads -- particularly during peak hours, and ensure the sustainability of electricity services while alleviating pressure on the national grid.

PAHW signs deal to prepare Mirghab plot for investment

Project to stimulate economy, create jobs

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

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has signed a consulting services contract for preparing detailed plans and studying and presenting investment opportunities in Mirghab covering an area of 430,000 square meters.

In his statement on the sidelines of the contract signing ceremony at the PAHW headquarters on Wednesday, Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari affirmed his commitment to ensure that the signing of contracts -- whether for city projects or with contractors or consultants -- takes place at the lobby of the authority. He explained this gives all categories of employees, clients and others a chance to participate and learn about the details of such an important event. He then praised the efforts of the PAHW staff.

Meanwhile, Deputy Director General for Investment and Private Sector Projects at the authority Eng. Anwar Al-Hulaila revealed that the 430,000-square meter plot will be



Photo by Samer Shaqair
Handshakes after signing the contract

developed in partnership with the Public Institution of Social Security (PIFSS).

He said the project will be implemented in cooperation with a consulting consortium led by Strategy & Middle East Limited in two phases. He indicated that the first phase begins with comprehensive economic and technical studies; culminating in the development of an integrated master plan that defines the main uses and components of the area, in addition to preparing investment packages that can be offered to and financed by the private sector. He added the second phase includes qualifying developers in preparation

for the project launch.

Asked if there is a comprehensive economic schedule within the consulting services, he explained that “the economic studies will be based on accurate statistics and data, and will be built on an analysis of supply and demand through a market study to be conducted by the consulting consortium. There is an initial economic feasibility study, but the results cannot be predicted unless a comprehensive analysis is completed.”

He added the study will be conducted out within 36 months, during which all project details will be carefully prepared. He affirmed that the Murghab project site is strategically

located in the heart of Kuwait City and constitutes a large area qualified to attract viable and sustainable investments.

Director of the Investment Department at PAHW Eng. Ahmed Al-Ansari stated that this project is a strategic initiative in line with the orientations of the State and the authority toward developing unused urban plots and activating the role of the private sector, which contributes to urban and economic development in the heart of Kuwait’s capital.

Al-Ansari continued “the project land area is about 377,000 square meters, in addition to an adjacent plot allocated to PIFSS measuring around 51,000 square meters.” He added that coordination has been made with the owners and developers of the adjacent plots to form a joint team, comprising of representatives from the concerned entities in order to guarantee urban and investment integration between projects, resulting in a qualitative addition to the national economy.

Karim Abdullah, a representative of Strategy & Middle East Limited, stated that the project aims to stimulate the economy, create job opportunities, and generate sustainable value for Kuwait.

He said the company will design an economic and financial model that realizes the objectives of the authority and the State, and provides great investment opportunities for the private sector.



PM Diwan photos
Top and above: Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, John Lee Ka-chiu and his delegation meet Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) officials.

HK Chief Executive visits KDIPA

KUWAIT CITY, May 14, (KUNA): Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, John Lee Ka-chiu, and his accompanying delegation visited Wednesday the headquarters of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), meeting with a number of officials there.

The official met with KDIPA Assistant

Director General for Investment Operations Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Humoud Al Sabah, Assistant Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs Barjas Al-Hajri, and other senior officials.

Attending the meeting was Advisor at His Highness the Prime Minister’s Diwan and head of the honorary delegation Sheikh Dr. Basel Humoud Al-Sabah.

Other Voices

Epitome of Bahraini culture

By Ahmad alsarraf

I received an invitation from Sheikhha Mai Al-Khalifa to deliver a lecture titled “On Doctrine and Journalism” at the Ebrahim bin Mohammad Al-Khalifa Center in Bahrain.

At first, I assumed it was a routine invitation to a familiar neighboring country I hadn’t visited often, despite its proximity in distance, culture, and affection. However, less than an hour after our arrival, my perception completely shifted.

During a visit that lasted just three days, I came to realize how the vision and dedication of one remarkable woman could reshape not only my impression, but also that of my wife, of an entire nation. We witnessed firsthand how a dedicated and talented woman can contribute and accomplish so much for her country.

Sheikha Mai Mohammad Al-Khalifa is, without a doubt, the princess of culture and the conscience of Bahraini heritage. This remarkable woman is known for her humility, calm voice, and unwavering sincerity.

During our visit, I had the honor of meeting Sheikhha Mai and her exceptional team including Aisha Matar, Hassan Kamal, Ghassan Al-Shehawi, and Esmeralda Kabbani Al-Din. They welcomed us with genuine warmth and care, showing how a single visit could transform our perspectives and broaden our understanding on many levels.

Sheikha Mai Al-Khalifa is widely re-

spected among those passionate about heritage, culture, and tourism. Through her tireless efforts, and the dedication of her outstanding team of volunteers, she has successfully placed Bahrain on the global cultural map and etched its presence into the memory of excellence.

For nearly a quarter of a century, Sheikhha Mai has worked tirelessly to protect the identity of her ancient homeland, ensuring it remains alive in the memory of current and future generations by preserving a significant part of Bahrain’s rich heritage.

Reclaiming the sea was vital to transforming Bahrain into a regional financial hub. Equally vital, however, was the presence of individuals like Sheikhha Mai Al Khalifa whose passion and dedication have helped preserve the character and history of her homeland.

Sheikha Mai Al-Khalifa’s remarkable efforts deserve deep appreciation and recognition. I know I will return to Bahrain many times, and stay in one of its beautifully restored boutique heritage hotels.

Three days were simply not enough to absorb the beauty and brilliance of the countless restoration projects and historic homes that Sheikhha Mai has brought back to life, each a reflection of Bahrain’s rich cultural legacy.

Sheikha Mai Al-Khalifa’s accomplishments mirror her character - respectful, elegant, calm, and meaningful.

It is my hope that the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters will connect with Sheikhha Mai Al-Khalifa. There is much to be gained from her extensive experience in various fields related to the core of the council’s work.

□ □ □

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

Call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza, aid entry

Baghdad Summit to focus on Arab security initiatives

BAGHDAD, May 14, (KUNA) : Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said the Baghdad Summit, scheduled for next Saturday, would propose several joint Arab political and security initiatives, and call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

In a press conference held Wednesday, the Iraqi Foreign Minister said that the initiatives would include a call to establish an Arab Center for Combating Terrorism, Organized Crime, Drugs, in addition to an Arab Fund initiative to support reconstruction efforts.

He explained that the summit would conclude with Baghdad Declaration, which includes the positions of Arab leaders on issues that concern political, economic, social, and development interests of member states of the Arab League.

The Minister explained that the declaration would also include a call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and opening of crossings for the entry of humanitarian aid.

Hussein affirmed that the summit would be effective and qualitative, and that the discussions would be realistic and address the challenges facing the region.

Regarding the GCC-US Summit, he said that what is happening in Riyadh today and what will happen in Baghdad next Saturday is an integrative



Talal Al-Mutairi



Fuad Hussein

step, and that both events are in the interest of the region and the Arab countries.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister expressed his happiness with the understandings reached by the GCC leaders with the US President and with the decision to lift sanctions on the Syrian people.

Iraq’s permanent representative to the Arab League Ambassador Qahtan Al-Janabi affirmed that his country believed dialogue and consultation among Arab leaders was way to achieve security, stability and development in the region.

This came in a speech he delivered after assuming the chairmanship of the meeting of delegates

and senior officials of Arab foreign ministries to prepare for the preparatory meeting of foreign ministers for the 34th Arab Summit.

Al-Janabi said that Arab solidarity should not be a slogan, but rather a tangible reality reflected Iraq’s respect the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs, and called for preserving Arab unity, and elevating the interests of the nation above all other considerations.

The meeting of delegates comes at a sensitive time for the Arab nation, requiring unified positions, concerted efforts, and strengthened cooperation to enhance coordination and consultation mechanisms as well as defending Palestinian cause, which deserves unwavering support and a unified stance, he added.

In addition, Arab solidarity is the true way to confront political, economic and security crises and is the cornerstone of achieving stable and secure future.

Meanwhile, Baghdad hosted a meeting of delegates and senior officials from Arab foreign ministries to prepare for the preparatory meeting of foreign ministers for the 34th Arab summit with participation of Kuwait’s Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi and Kuwait’s permanent representative to the Arab League.

Nursery licensing fees will increase to KD5,000: MoSA

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently reviewing a proposal to increase the licensing fees for nurseries from KD2,000 -- payable for five years -- to KD5,000 at a new rate of KD1,000 annually, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources.

According to sources, the ministry is conducting a comprehensive review of all its services to identify those requiring price adjustments to better reflect actual costs.

This move is in compliance with the directives

of the Council of Ministers and based on the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee for Economic Affairs, which instructed government agencies to coordinate with the Ministry of Finance to reassess the pricing of their services.

Sources said the ministry, through its relevant sectors, is evaluating the financial criteria for issuing operating licenses for around 400 nurseries in the country. They revealed that the proposed changes will lead to the licensing fee rise to KD 5,000 distributed evenly over five years.

Sources also confirmed that this review is in line with the efforts of the ministry to transform from being solely a provider of financial aid to a revenue-generating entity. “The goal is to alleviate pressure on the State budget by rationalizing expenditures and boosting income,” sources explained.

Sources added Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah is committed to implementing Decree-Law No. 1/2025 on fees and costs for the use of public facilities and services.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Al-Rashid thus proved to his wife who was more worthy of ruling

ACCORDING to the well-known rule, a liar is someone who praises himself.

It is common for people to praise their own qualities while hiding their flaws.

Mothers often praise their children, wishing them to be the best among others.

Only experience reveals the truth, showing who is truly worthy and who is unreliable.

The following lines reveal the truth about those who can be relied upon to bear responsibility, who possess intelligence and insight, and how they make sound judgments without needing guidance. Leaders are made from such individuals. The heroes of our story today are Caliph Harun Al-Rashid and his wife Zubaydah.

One day, Harun Al-Rashid sat on the balcony of his palace, engaging in a conversation with his wife Zubaydah about their two sons Al-Amin and Al-Ma'mun.

Zubaydah began to praise her son Al-Amin, highlighting his intelligence, courage, and high spirits.

Harun Al-Rashid responded, "The qualities you mention belong to Al-Ma'mun, not Al-Amin."

An argument ensued between them, with Zubaydah insisting that these qualities belonged to Al-Amin, while Harun Al-Rashid insisted they were the qualities of Al-Ma'mun. He then vowed to prove that his opinion was correct.

The following night, Al-Rashid invited his two sons Al-Amin and Al-Ma'mun to his council and conversed with them until midnight.

Al-Rashid asked the council to adjourn, and both sons went their separate ways. Less than

● Zubaydah: Al-Amin is intelligent and capable of bearing responsibility.

● A mother openly praises one son while denying the other his rights.

● The liar is the one who praises himself. People always praise their own goods.

● Harun Al-Rashid to Zubaydah: Intelligence and courage are among Al-Ma'mun's qualities.

● Harun Al-Rashid to Al-Ma'mun: Why do you come to my council in war clothes?

● Al-Ma'mun: It is easy to change out of my war clothes and take off my weapons.

● Don't be sad if you are forced to coexist with what hurts.

● Be sure, God will never let you down despite your great mistakes.

● Peace be upon those who believe in God's decision, justice, and power.

● Anything you have lost was never truly yours.

● To believe in God's wisdom, even if you don't see it, is a sign of complete faith in Him.

● God's criteria is fear of Him, not power.

an hour later, Al-Rashid summoned Zubaydah. When she arrived, he instructed his chamberlain to summon Al-Amin and Al-Ma'mun. Shortly after, Al-Amin entered, dressed in his finest and most luxurious clothes, carrying the scent of perfume. A moment later, Al-

Ma'mun entered in his battle dress, with a sword slung around his waist and leaning on his spear.

Al-Rashid asked, "What made you come to my meeting in your battle dress?"

Al-Ma'mun replied, "Father, I left your meeting only a short time ago. If you had wanted something, you would have informed me. Your summoning me at night, so soon after I left, made me think something important had occurred. I wanted to be prepared. Perhaps you needed me for an urgent matter, and I couldn't afford to waste time. However, if this is for a regular matter, taking off my weapons is one of the easiest things."

Al-Rashid looked at Zubaydah and smiled.

Nothing happens to a person except by God's will and He grants them the strength to endure it. This is what God affirms in the Holy Quran: "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear." (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 286)

So don't be saddened if you are forced to coexist with something that pains you. Smile, for the Most Merciful says: "But perhaps you dislike a thing that is good for you."

You may go through moments that feel like the hardest in your life, until, suddenly, God's mercy reaches you through someone who heals your wound, eases your burden, and fulfills your need. In that moment, it is as if you had never suffered at all. Truly, God is kind to His servants.

Rest assured, God will never abandon you, no matter how great your mistakes, how heavy your pain, or how complex your struggles. He is fully aware of everything you face. God is always with you, never against you.

Peace be upon those who trust in God's justice and wisdom, even when they lose everything. Whatever you lose was never truly yours. There is mercy in what God gives, and wisdom in what He withholds. A true believer trusts in God's unseen wisdom just as they believe in His visible mercy.

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God set the standard in His words: "The most honorable of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Focus on elevating your status in God's eyes, and leave creation to its Creator. The true standard in God's eyes is reverence for Him, not strength or power.

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Dear Minister of Social Affairs, why do hundreds of charitable and zakat committees direct their funds abroad while many citizens at home are drowning in debt and facing life-crippling penalties? Our religion clearly affirms that the closest relatives are most deserving of charity. Yet, some charitable committees operate under a veil of fraud and deceit.

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It seems that we in Kuwait are in need of a "Ritz Hotel" like that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The stench of corruption has become overwhelming. Why have those who manipulated the nation's wealth through variation orders in development projects not been held accountable? Billions of dinars have been squandered with no real benefit, along with repeated delays in the completion of vital development projects.

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Dear government, allow expatriates and residents to own real estate... What's stopping it? They will invest their money in homes, and not take it back to their home countries. In the end, the resident will either pass away in Kuwait or leave; in either case, the property will remain. It is time to stop viewing things through a narrow lens.

Iranian gang sentenced to die for smuggling 176kg 'hashish'

Ex-MP acquitted in vote-buying case

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

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The Criminal Court sentenced five Iranians to death for smuggling 176 kilograms of hashish by sea.

Officers from the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) and the Coast Guard at the Interior Ministry arrested the Iranians. They were then referred to the Public Prosecution, where they confessed during interrogation that they smuggled the drugs for the purpose of trafficking.

Case files indicate that the DCGD officers apprehended the defendants as they entered Kuwaiti territorial waters on a 'Duba' boat carrying 13 bags containing the seized drugs.

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Ex-MP acquitted: The Criminal Court acquitted former MP Saad Al-Khanfour and his son of vote-buying, and sentenced a sports referee to five years in prison and fined him KD3,000 in the same case.

The court also sentenced three defendants to three years in prison with hard labor and a fine of KD2,000 for the first and second charges of association; while two other defendants were fined KD3,000.

The court abstained from punishing one of the defendants for the possession of hashish. It ordered a KD1,000 bail for good conduct and confiscation of the items. The remaining defendants were acquitted.

The Public Prosecution charged nine defendants from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) with covertly engaging in fraud through intermediaries -- six other defendants -- to buy votes in the first and second constituencies by enticing them with money. The interme-

diaries, except one, agreed to mediate in buying votes in exchange for receiving a percentage of the value of buying and selling votes. Pursuant to this agreement, the aforementioned defendants offered money -- as detailed in the investigations -- to two defendant voters in order to persuade them to vote for the then-candidates Bader Nashmi Al-Enezi and Farz Mohammad Al-Daihani in the Second Constituency and Issa Ahmad Al-Kandari in the First Constituency during the 2023 National Assembly elections.

Five of the defendants were also charged with accepting and requesting cash as specified in the prosecution's investigations for the purpose of engaging in mediation to entice voters in the first and second constituencies to vote for the mentioned candidates. One defendant was previously convicted in a drug-related case.

The prosecution further stated that three other defendants also obtained money to mediate in the vote-buying process through two defendants.



Damage caused by fire in one of the apartments.

KFF photo

Install gas leak detectors in all kitchens, says Fire Dept

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has recommended the installation of gas leak detectors in all kitchens, stressing these devices can detect gas cylinder leaks and prevent fires, reports Al-Anba daily.

New regulations regarding gas cylinder safety have also been issued, including the following guidelines:

- Ensure cylinders are placed correctly and securely.
- Never operate electrical switches or create sparks if you smell gas.

- Always close the gas valve tightly after each use.
- Conduct regular maintenance checks.
- Check the reliability of connections between gas cylinders and cooking appliances.

In the event of a gas odor, immediately open windows and doors to ventilate the area and evacuate all occupants.

Meanwhile, fire broke out in an apartment in Khaitan on Tuesday evening. Fortunately, no significant injuries were reported as a result of the incident.

PART meeting focuses on obstacles in railway plans

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) announced that Director General of PART Khaled Al-Osaimi, based on the directives of Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, held a meeting on Tuesday with the acting director of the Consulting Agreement for the Railway Project to follow up on the detailed study of the project's design.

It stated that the discussions during the meeting focused on technical aspects related to the route details, in preparation for the commencement of project work.

The consulting agreement includes the preparation of the necessary detailed studies and designs for the railway project.

The meeting also covered the first phase of the railway project, which spans 111 kilometers and forms part of the Gulf Railway Network.

During the meeting, Al-Osaimi emphasized the importance of adhering to the project's timeline, stressing PART's commitment to overcoming any obstacles that may hinder progress through direct coordination with the relevant entities.

He revealed that he is in the process of arranging a coordination meeting with the relevant authorities to expedite procedures related to the project's implementation and ensure its smooth and efficient launch.

MoD launches 3 new services on Sahel

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The Ministry of Defense has launched three services on the Sahel app, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

- These three services are:
1. Obtaining a certificate of conscription status
 2. Obtaining a reserve conscription/reserve soldier certificate
 3. Obtaining a "To Whom It May

Concern" (Reserve) certificate

The ministry clarified that these certificates are related to national military service (conscription) and serve to clarify military status, document appointment to the reserve, or provide proof of completed military service to be submitted to the relevant official authorities.

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Hong Kong Chief Executive visits Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center



Pictures taken during Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, John Lee Ka-chiu visit to the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

PM Diwan photos

KUWAIT CITY, May 14, (KUNA): Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, John Lee Ka-chiu, and his accompanying

delegation visited on Tuesday the Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. The Advisor at the Prime Minister’s Office and Head of the accompany-

ing honorary mission, Sheikh Dr. Basil Humoud Al-Sabah accompanied the Chief Executive during the tour.

Minister announces start of Al-Soor Street maintenance

By **Mohammad Ghanim/Inaas Awadh**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan announced the commencement of maintenance work on Al-Soor Street behind the Public Institution for Social Security building.

The work is part of a comprehensive road rehabilitation plan encompassing 18 projects in various governorates, in line with the goals of the “New Kuwait 2035” vision.

Jamal Al-Otaibi, supervisor of the “Contract 8 - Second Scope” project in Kuwait City, explained that technical teams are currently executing the maintenance works on Al-Sour Street.

The process includes laying a Type 3 asphalt layer that adheres to approved technical specifications.

Al-Otaibi affirmed that this work is part of new contracts aimed at rehabili-

tating and developing Kuwait’s road network.

33 charities removed: The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality announced that the supervisory team from the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department in Farwaniya Governorate carried out its second field inspection campaign, as part of intensified efforts to ensure charitable committee owners in residential areas are compliant with regulations and committed to removing violations.

The campaign resulted in the issuance of 33 removal warnings.

The department affirmed that inspection teams will not hesitate to take legal action in accordance with Kuwait Municipality’s regulations.

It stressed that charitable committee owners responded promptly and cooperated in removing the violations after receiving the warnings.

‘UAE, Kuwait trade spiralling’

‘Proper business environment major catalyst’

By **Salem Al-Methen**

ABU DHABI, May 14, (KUNA): Trade and investment exchange between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait has risen considerably over the past few years, Kuwait’s ambassador to Abu Dhabi said on Tuesday, citing such growth as encompassing pivotal sectors.

Such tangible progress in bilateral trade between the two Gulf Arab states is a testament to an “earnest desire” to forge long-lasting economic partnerships, Jamal Al-Ghunaim told a seminar that delved into the intricacies of relations between Kuwait and the UAE.

Describing these ties as “long-standing,” the Kuwaiti diplomat underlined that the two Gulf Arab nations share an illustrious history of vigorous trade exchange and investment over sectors running the



Ambassador Al-Ghunaim

gamut from real estate and energy to technology, while Abu Dhabi and Kuwait major investment partners, he said. Kuwaiti investments in the Gulf Arab emirate’s market have been on a meteoric rise, the diplomat said, attributing such an increase to the success of their “economic partnership” that continues to yield one accomplishment after another, he added.

On the factors behind the success of economic

relations between Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, he said their ability to put in place a proper business environment that is conducive for investment was a major catalyst, in addition to the existence of simplified procedures for such activity, the diplomat explained.

Addressing the seminar, the chief of a Kuwaiti business council based in Dubai and the northern emirates Feras Al-Salem said that bilateral cooperation across both public and private sectors was instrumental in bringing development goals and strategies in both nations to fruition, in line with the directives of their respective political leaders.

He went on to say that the “geopolitical changes” in the global market represent a viable opportunity for Kuwait and other Gulf Arab nations to reshape their export and production strategies, thanks in part to the altered landscape these changes have produced.

According to government data, non-oil based trade between Kuwait and Abu Dhabi was worth more than 13.5 billion, which equates to an 8.8 percent growth rate as compared to the previous year.

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Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah holds meeting with other governors.

Farwaniya Gov discusses ways to strengthen bonds with governors

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah on Wednesday met with the other governors at his office in Farwaniya Governorate to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation among them.

Present at the coordination meeting were Hawally Governor Ali Al-Asfar, Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Jahra Governor Hamad Jassim Al-Habashi, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of the Administrative Affairs General Department Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Colonel Khaled Zaben Boudhair, Colonel Abdullah Al-Abbad, Colonel Salah Al-Muhaini and Lieutenant Colonel Fahad Al-Adwani.

During the meeting, they deliberated on ways to further strengthen joint cooperation, as well as the most important projects and developments of mutual interest. They agreed that this meeting contributes to ongoing efforts to reinforce the role of governors in the development of public services and facilities.

The governors reaffirmed the ongoing coordination among them, with the goal of unifying efforts and working as a team to realize the vision of the wise leadership, implement the general policy of the State in this regard, and have accomplishments that meet the aspirations of citizens.

At the end of the meeting, Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah stressed that the continuation of such meetings enhances integration and has a positive impact on the development of work in all governorates in the service of the country.

Drug addict stealing cars

House worker commits suicide

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The body of a domestic worker, who committed suicide by hanging in the house of his sponsor in Sabah Al-Nasser, was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department in the Interior Ministry, reports Al-Anba.

The Operations Unit at the ministry received information from a citizen, stating that he found the worker in his room. Security personnel and forensic evidence officers immediately went to the citizen’s home, where they found the expatriate who killed himself by tying a rope to the ceiling of his room and around his neck.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances that prompted the worker to take his own life.

Drug addict arrested: Officers from the Criminal Investigation Department at the Interior Ministry apprehended a citizen, in his 30s, who was involved in car theft and forcible robbery to fund his drug addiction, reports Al-Anba daily.

The citizen was referred to the Public Prosecution, following his arrest during a sting operation in Salwa, where he was caught in the act of stealing a vehicle.

According to a reliable source, the arrest came after a surge in car thefts and robberies in Salwa and Salmiya prompted an investigation.

Detectives identified the suspect, a known drug user with a criminal record. After 48 hours of intensive surveillance and information collection, an entrapment was arranged. The suspect was caught red-handed stealing a car in Salwa and several stolen items were found in his possession.

Drones smuggling drugs: The Local Anti-Narcotics Department of the Drug Control General Department arrested two illegal residents (Bedoun) in Fintas and Saad Al-Abdullah for their involvement in smuggling drugs into the Central Prison using drones in exchange for money, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The Ministry of Interior reiterated its commitment to combating all forms of crime, including drug smuggling and trafficking.

KCCI event builds awareness on dispute resolution tools

Seminar backs arbitration in business deals

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote a stable commercial environment and raise legal awareness among business professionals and practitioners, the Kuwait Commercial Arbitration Center – an affiliate of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) – organized a specialized legal seminar titled, “From Dispute to Resolution: Arbitration as a Strategic Option in Partnership and Merger Transactions.”

The event was held Monday at the KCCI headquarters; with a distinguished group of legal experts, arbitrators and business leaders in attendance.

Dr. Mustafa Alam El-Din, a prominent arbitrator and member of the New York State Bar Association, conducted the seminar.

Focusing on one of the most complex and high-stakes areas of commercial law, the seminar explored arbitration as an effective mechanism for resolving disputes arising from mergers, acquisitions and partnerships. These transactions are often marked by legal intricacies and commercial complexity.

The seminar started with a comprehensive overview of commercial arbitration, followed by a legal analysis of mergers, acquisitions and partnerships in terms of their structure, strategic objectives and the nature of disputes that arise from them.

A central question guided the discussion: Why is arbitration considered the most effective tool for resolving such disputes?



Photo during the seminar.

The seminar tackled the distinct advantages that arbitration offers over traditional litigation as follows:

- Expedited resolution in accordance with market dynamics;
- Flexible procedures tailored to the interests of the parties;
- Strict confidentiality, which protects the commercial reputation of those involved;
- Ability to select neutral, technically qualified arbitrators, particularly important in cross-border disputes.

The seminar also examined the core themes of disputes, which vary depending on the stages of the transaction completion:

- Pre-contractual: Issues such as inadequate or misleading disclosures during due diligence;
- Implementation: Breaches of warranties, delayed payments or fluctuating economic conditions;
- Post-implementation: Disputes over profit distribution, corporate control or partner conflicts of interest.

It also expounded on procedural

challenges in arbitration, especially those stemming from multi-party and multi-contract arrangements; and their impact on the composition and jurisdiction of the arbitration panel, as well as conflicting arbitration terms between different agreements in a single transaction.

El-Din presented real-life cases adjudicated internationally as follows:

- Dispute between three commercial entities regarding conflicting arbitration clauses in a share sale and brokerage agreement, and the resulting difficulties in identifying a competent panel;
- A high-profile case involving a joint-stock company in an Arab country, where a conflict over profit-sharing and corporate financing emerged due to ambiguities in ownership structure.

The seminar concluded with an engaging open forum, allowing attendees to share insights on best practices in drafting arbitration clauses and strategies for preempting disputes.

This discussion emphasized the vital role that arbitration plays in maintaining commercial stability and ensuring fairness in complex contractual relationships.

As part of its 2025 initiatives, the center also announced upcoming training programs focused on arbitration and alternative dispute resolution (ADR -- both locally and internationally). Full program details will be released in accordance with the official calendar of the center.

Qudsi Rasheed appointed new British Ambassador to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Qudsi Rasheed OBE has been appointed as the new British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, succeeding Belinda Lewis, who will be transferring to another diplomatic service position. He will assume his new role in September 2025, and will be accompanied by his wife Leen, who is expecting their first child this summer.

According to a press release issued by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Rasheed's previous roles include Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Cairo, Deputy Director of Multilateral Policy at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and Head of the UK Syria Office in Beirut.

Reflecting on her tenure, Ambassador Belinda Lewis stated: “As I near the end of my posting in Kuwait, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Kuwait's leadership, government, and people for more than four years of support, partnership, and collaboration in various fields.

The relationship between Kuwait and the UK is unique, grounded in a rich shared history and strong people-to-people connections.

Kuwait will always hold a special place in my heart, both personally and professionally. I look forward to continuing our efforts to strengthen this partnership in the coming months. I wish Qudsi every success when he assumes the role of His Majesty's Ambassador in September.”

In anticipation of his upcoming



Qudsi Rasheed

appointment, Rasheed said, “I am deeply honoured to be appointed as the new British Ambassador to Kuwait. It is a tremendous privilege to take on this role, and I look forward to arriving in Kuwait in September.

The UK and Kuwait share a rich history marked by deep cooperation in diplomacy, defence and security, trade and investment, and education and culture. Kuwait is of significant importance to the UK as a trusted partner in the region and a key contributor to our economic prosperity.

I look forward to further deepening this special relationship, building upon the excellent work of Ambassador Lewis and her team.”

Gov’t utility bill up by KD 7.7m

Kuwait strengthens space collaboration

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: The fiscal 2025/2026 report revealed an increase of KD7.708 million in the ‘Electricity and Water Expenditures’ item for 36 ministries and government departments; at a time the

Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy is keen on implementing the rationalization policy in government buildings and headquarters to address summer-related challenges and electricity production shortages.

According to the report, total expendi-

tures for the current fiscal year reached KD133.474 million and KD104.949 million of which was allocated for electricity and KD 28.525 million for water. This is an increase from the previous year's estimate of KD125.766 million, which included KD96.169 million for electricity and KD29.597 million for water.

Notably, the government sector accounts for 16.44 percent of total consumption by

sector. It also bears the highest electricity tariff, paying 25 fils per kilowatt-hour, compared to five fils in the investment and commercial sectors and three fils in industrial and agricultural sectors.

A similar structure applies to water tariffs, with the government rate at KD4 per thousand imperial gallons per month -- double the KD2 paid by the investment and commercial sectors, and remarkably higher than the 750 fils charged to the industrial and agricultural sectors.



KUNA photo

Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Vienna Ambassador Talal Al-Fassam with Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) Aarti Holla-Maini.

VIENNA, May 14, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait affirmed its commitment to enhancing international cooperation in the scientific and technical fields, especially in the space field.

This came in a meeting between Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Vienna Ambassador Talal Al-Fassam, and Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) Aarti Holla-Maini.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Fassam said on Tuesday that the meeting discussed ways to enhance cooperation between Kuwait and the UN Office in the field of peaceful use of outer space, and reviewed future opportunities to benefit from international space programs and initiatives.

The two sides agreed on the importance of supporting dialogue and joint coordination to harness space science and technology to achieve sustainable development goals, he added, stressing Kuwait's aspiration to expand its partnership with the UN Office in this field.

Al-Fassam also reviewed Kuwait's most prominent achievements in the field of space, starting with the establishment of satellite communications station “um Al-Aish” in 1969, through the launch of the satellite “KuwaitSat-1” in 2023, and the establishment of the Kuwaiti National Space Research Center last September.

Furthermore, he stressed Kuwait's commitment to supporting international efforts to ensure that outer space is used for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all humankind.

The UNOOSA, based in Vienna, works to promote international cooperation in the peaceful use and exploration of space, establish the legal and regulatory frameworks for space activities, and in the utilization of space science and technology for sustainable economic and social development.

King Salman

These groups were pushing the region towards potential nuclear disaster, instead of progress and peace. Mr. Trump, you have brought a glimmer of hope, a bright spot in a situation where it seemed like there was no way out.

The achievements we are seeing are the direct result of the strong leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

They have really positioned Saudi Arabia as a leader in Arab advancement. Today, Riyadh stands as a thriving hub of peace and economic activity; drawing in key figures from the Gulf, the Arab world and across the globe.

Kuwait Amir

Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for the warm welcome, as well as the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad Bin Salman Al-Saud for the distinguished preparations for the event.

His Highness the Amir expressed identical sentiments to the GCC States' leaders for their support for the State of Kuwait's substantial efforts during its current chairmanship of the GCC and for their blessed efforts to boost the Gulf ranks and develop further the strategic relationship with the US.

“I address thanks to the President of the friendly United States (Donald Trump) for his renewed keenness and concern for meeting leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council to bolster the cooperation bonds within the mutual partnership and the joint vision for a future predominated with peace and stability and development.

“Throughout the past decades, the relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council has been boosted as a solid strategic partnership, exceeding security aspects to cover cooperation in various sectors,” His Highness the Amir stated.

He recalled the US historic stand of leading the coalition for the liberation of the State of Kuwait from the flagrant Iraqi aggression in 1990; a stance that would remain alive in the memories of the Kuwaiti people and peoples of the Arabian Gulf states.”

“While we view the economy as the basis for our partnership (with the US), we aspire to launch joint initiatives in investments in smart infrastructure, supporting innovation and business leadership, enhancing fair free trade and providing incentives for medium and small businesses,” His Highness the Amir said.

His Highness Sheikh Meshal praised the existing US-GCC cooperation, particularly with the State of Kuwait, in investments, expressed aspiration to increase the enterprises “with it (the US) as a strategic ally.”

His Highness Sheikh Meshal has affirmed that the summit is held amid critical international circumstances, with mounting crises, strife and non-conventional cross-border challenges, noting that the GCC states have jointly supported the region's stability and security and rejected any breach of their territories, maritime regions and resources.

“On this basis,” he added, the State of Kuwait affirms commitment to act within the GCC for attaining the joint GCC-US objec-

tives through understandings aimed at meeting the peoples' hopes and the aspirations.

At the humanitarian and development levels, His Highness the Amir affirmed the solid adherence to bolstering relief and humanitarian action in regions witnessing conflicts and catastrophes, “and we call for coordinating the US-Gulf development aid” for effective and sustainable response to the stricken communities' needs.”

“We also propose establishing a Gulf-American forum for educational and cultural dialogue to back programs of scientific and joint research, empower the youth, enhance the values of tolerance, openness and civic understanding,” he said.

Continuing in his speech at the US-Gulf Summit, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal turned to regional challenges hoping that the top-level meeting would constitute a gateway to tackle the region's issues and problems.

He alluded in part to the Middle East peace process that needs to be tackled with a just and comprehensive solution, according to resolutions of the international legitimacy and the Arab peace initiative to secure establishing an independent Palestinian state to the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On Syria, he called for boosting the international community's efforts to ensure the country's security and stability, safeguard its sovereignty, territorial unity, ending the people's plight and halting external intervention.

Also in this context, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal announced his appreciation of the US President's declaration of lifting the sanctions on Syria.

On another regional issue, His Highness the Amir applauded the diplomatic efforts by Oman, reaching a cease-fire between the US and the illegitimate authorities in Yemen, hoping that the move would ensure sea navigation freedom.

“We admire the United States of America's efforts for resolving international strife, ceasing the firing between India and Pakistan and acting to find a solution to the Russia-Ukraine war,” he stated.

In the last section of his speech, His Highness the Amir has affirmed that the GCC states advocate that regional stability is a joint responsibility and that the partnership with the United States “constitutes the basis for this path.”

“We aspire that our summit will be an advance step toward building a regional order that is more stable, balanced and integrated; based on the international law, mutual respect and joint interests,” His Highness Sheikh Meshal continued.

He sealed the statement with expressions of gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the warm hospitality and to President Trump for his constructive participation in the top-level gathering, hoping “that our summit will be successful and our Gulf-US partnership remains permanently strong.”

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was accompanied by a high-level Kuwaiti delegation that included the Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, and senior officials

At the conclusion of the summit, His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation departed Riyadh and was seen off at the airport by GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi and head of the honorary delegation and Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday addressed messages to the top Saudi leaders for hosting the Gulf-US Summit, an event that has affirmed the Kingdom's pivotal role at the regional and international levels.

In his message to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal marked his departure from the Kingdom after participating in the summit by expressing heartfelt sentiments of gratitude to the Monarch for the warm hospitality that depicted the cordial and brotherly relations, the historic and deep-rooted bonds between “our two countries and brotherly peoples.”

The holding of the Gulf-US Summit, complementary to the previous same-level summits, with attendance of the US President Donald Trump, has empowered the Kingdom's pivotal role at the regional and international levels, His Highness the Amir wrote to King Salman.

Moreover, this summit depicts Riyadh's keenness on strengthening the US-Gulf consensus in the shadow of global developments that compel “us to double efforts and unify the efforts and visions regarding all matters that reinforce security and stability in the region and the world,” His Highness Sheikh Meshal said in his address to the Saudi Monarch.

He also lauded Riyadh for the broad preparations for the summit hoping that its outcome and recommendations would contribute to pushing forward the mutual cooperation. In conclusion, he wished the King everlasting wellbeing to lead the Kingdom toward more promotion and prosperity.

In a separate message to the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, His Highness the Amir re-affirmed what he stated to the King -- upon conclusion of his visit to the Kingdom following the fifth edition of the GCC-US Summit.

Upon His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah return to Kuwait, His Highness the Amir was received at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Kuwait population

male-dominated, with a male-to-female ratio of 1.57:1. This is due to the huge number of migrant workers who come to Kuwait for job opportunities, primarily in business, construction, and service sectors. The median age in Kuwait is currently 29 years.

The largest expatriate communities in Kuwait come from India, Egypt, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, making up signifi-

cant portions of the population.

Indians make up the largest expatriate community in Kuwait, with many working in business and service sectors. Egyptians form the largest Arab community in Kuwait, with over 500,000 residents.

The non-Kuwaiti population in Kuwait is estimated as follows: Indians: 825,000; Egyptians: 517,973; Bangladeshis: 181,265; Syrians: 140,000; Pakistanis: 126,000; Filipinos: 185,788; Sri Lankans: 130,000; Ethiopians: 74,000; Jordanians and Palestinians: 10,000; Nepalese: 62,000; Iranians: 50,000; Lebanese: 42,000; Indonesians: 8,887; Iraqis: 16,000; Afghans: 15,000; Americans: 13,000 (30,000 including armed forces); Yemenis: 11,000.

The age distribution is as follows: 25.32 percent of Kuwait's population is under the age of 15,

15.21 percent between the ages of 15 and 24

52.32 percent fall between the ages of 25 and 54

4.82 percent are between 55 and 64

2.33 percent are 65 and older.

Regarding the rate of births and deaths in the country, it experiences an average of 133 births per day and 25 deaths per day. As of 2025, the population is expected to grow by 29,925 people, with a net daily increase of 225 individuals.

The country has a high life expectancy of 78.2 years and a relatively low infant and maternal mortality rate, which reflects its advanced healthcare system. However, with the growing population, maintaining social services and infrastructure while balancing the labor market will be challenging

Kuwait's immigration rate remains high, with 117 immigrants arriving daily. This is primarily due to the country's demand for foreign labor, especially in sectors like construction and services.

Kuwait's population is unevenly distributed across its cities, with the highest concentration in the city of Ahmadi with a population of 637,411, followed by Hawally with 164,212, Salmiya with 147,649, Sabah al-Salem with 139,163, Farwaniya with 86,525 and Kuwait City with 60,064.

Kuwait salutes

The statement also reiterated the State of Kuwait's commitment to the UN and its efforts to reinforce international peace and security. It expressed readiness to support the UN within the humanitarian domain help those affected by natural or man-made disasters.

The statement reaffirmed commitment to the UN and the multilateral global system, abiding by all agreements and accords including the UN charter and mechanisms for international cooperation and peace.

Representative of the UN Secretary General and UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Ta'her affirmed, Wednesday, the ties between Kuwait and the UN was a leading model of multilateral cooperation rooted in shared values, sustainable development, and humanitarian action

Speaking to KUNA on the 62nd anniversary of Kuwait admission to the UN, she noted that the occasion with the UN's 80 anniversary, emphasizing that the UN-Kuwait ties reflect diplomacy and solidarity.



Former US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg listens to a question from the audience during a VoteVets Town Hall on May 13, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. (AP)

‘Democrats make agenda clear’

Buttigieg gives strident anti-Trump message in Iowa

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa, May 14, (AP): Pete Buttigieg returned to Iowa on Tuesday with some subtle and not-so-subtle messages about what’s changed since he ran in the state’s 2020 Democratic presidential caucuses. His speech included mentions of his adopted twins, a boy and a girl, and how he explained to his daughter the different nicknames for the American flag. He talked of flying into the Cedar Rapids airport after visiting while transportation secretary to oversee the facility’s expansion. And having left the state in 2020 as a youthful, baby-faced candidate not quite 40 years old, Buttigieg on Tuesday was sporting a burgeoning beard. Above all, his speech sounded like he was preparing for a second White House bid. Buttigieg gave a strident critique of President Donald Trump’s administration while demanding Democrats make their agenda clear and reach out to people who disagree with them. “We are being tested on nothing

less than whether the United States of America is in fact the freedom-loving people that we believe and know ourselves to be,” Buttigieg told an audience of more than 1,000 in Cedar Rapids, his first public political appearance since leaving the Biden administration in January. It was a return to where Buttigieg emerged as a national political figure six years ago, when the millennial former South Bend mayor rose among a class of better-known Democrats to finish atop the Iowa Democratic Party’s 2020 presidential caucuses. Vermont Sen Bernie Sanders also finished near the top as well in a glitch-plagued contest, and The Associated Press did not call a winner, given remaining concerns about whether the results as reported by the party were fully accurate. “It feels really good to be back in Iowa,” Buttigieg said at the outset of the town hall-style meeting, with many in the audience sporting slightly worn Buttigieg 2020 campaign caps and T-shirts. “Anyone can come to Iowa

just before an election’s coming up. I wanted to make sure I got a chance to talk to the people I got to know five and six years ago, and the people I’m just getting to know.” The combination rally and policy chat toggled between questions about the future of the Democratic Party, both nationally and in Iowa, after three consecutive elections where Donald Trump has carried the once-competitive swing state. A man began by saying, “I caucused for you six years ago,” to which Buttigieg replied politely. “Thank you.” The man responded, “It’s a treat to hear someone speak in complete sentences,” prompting an explosion of applause and a standing ovation. “I do my best,” Buttigieg answered with a quick head nod. As much as an indictment of the first months of the second Trump administration, Buttigieg argued Democrats’ reemergence as a leading national party must come with a concise telling of what they support.

‘If we get that, that will be like a rocket ship for our country: Trump

US House works into the night as Republicans push ahead on Trump’s big bill

WASHINGTON, May 14, (AP): Tax breaks tallying more than \$5 trillion - but also sizable reductions in Medicaid health care, food stamps and green energy strategies to fight climate change - faced sharp debate as House lawmakers slogged through marathon overnight hearings on Republicans’ “big, beautiful bill.” Tensions rose and emotions flared as the hours dragged on into early Wednesday morning. House Republicans are working to push President Donald Trump’s signature legislative package through a gauntlet of committees and mounting opposition from Democrats, advocacy groups and even some wary Republicans themselves. Right from the start, one meeting was immediately disrupted by protesters shouting down what the panel’s top Democrat called “cruel” cuts to Medicaid. “People feel very strong because they know they’re losing their health care,” said Rep Frank Pallone, D-N.J., on the Energy & Commerce Committee, Tuesday afternoon. And on it went. As midnight passed, two panels were still going, processing more than 100 amendments from Democrats that were largely failing, as Republicans marched ahead with their plan. It’s the biggest political and legislative debate for the Republicans leading Congress since Trump’s first term, setting up a career-defining clash over the nation’s priorities, all coming at a time of economic unease with Trump’s trade war and other uncertainties. Trump, speaking at a forum in the

Middle East, struck an ambitious chord, saying Congress was “on the verge of passing the largest tax cut and regulation cut in American history.” “If we get that, that will be like a rocket ship for our country,” Trump said in Saudi Arabia. But to be sure, there are many more steps before the package becomes law. At its core, the goal for GOP lawmakers is to extend - and enhance - tax cuts approved in 2017, adding the president’s 2024 campaign promises for no taxes on tips, Social Security income and car loan interest. There’s also larger standard deduction, \$32,000 for couples, a boost to the Child Tax Credit and a potentially higher cap of \$30,000 on state and local tax deductions, known as SALT, that’s still being negotiated. That’s offset by \$1.9 trillion in savings largely from the rollback of green energy tax credits, for a net tally of \$3.7 trillion in costs over the decade, according to the most recent estimates - along with billions more in savings from the safety net cuts. Additionally, the Republicans are boosting spending on their GOP priorities, with \$350 billion for Trump’s mass deportation plans and funding for the Pentagon. At the same time, the Republicans are seeking to defray the lost tax revenue and avoid skyrocketing national deficits by with another GOP goal, which is scaling back federal spending. The Republicans are proposing cuts of nearly \$800 billion over the decade to the Medicaid health care program,



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., speaks during a news conference at the Capitol on May 6, in Washington. (AP)

which is used by 70 million Americans; \$290 billion to food aid in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP; and others. Tucked into the package is a smattering of other provisions important to the White House - including one that would allow the Trump administration to yank the tax exempt status of groups it says support terrorists, sending a chill through civil society organizations who warn it’s a way to punish opponents. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries accused Republicans of “jamming another GOP tax scam” that benefits the wealthy at the expense of

programs and services used by many Americans. Speaker Mike Johnson is determined to push the package through the House by Memorial Day, sending it to the Senate, where Republicans are working on their own version. Johnson and his leadership team have been conferring constantly with Trump at every step. Rep. Jason Smith, the Republican chairman of the Ways & Means tax writing committee said he met with Trump on Friday and went over the tax provisions “line by line.” “He was very happy with what we’re delivering,” Smith said.

On Tuesday, the final three of 11 House committees working on the package launched what would become lengthy meetings drilling down on some of the largest components. Early on, Rep. Brett Guthrie, the Republican chairman of the Energy & Commerce Committee, banned lawmakers from accusing colleagues of “lying.” As the minority party in Congress, Democrats are unable to stop the bill on their own, but used the procedural tools to slow down the process. Democrats put up posters of constituents with the words “Medicaid Matters.” One, Rep. Marc Veasey of Texas, put one on speakerphone to share her story - until her testimony was ruled out of order. The US Capitol Police said 26 people were arrested in the Rayburn House Office Building where the panel was meeting. Estimates from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office show that at least 7.6 million people could lose health insurance with the Medicaid cuts, and potentially more with the changes to the Affordable Care Act. Mostly, the health care changes involve imposing new work requirements for aid recipients, starting Jan. 1, 2029. But Republican Rep Gary Palmer of Alabama said his side is trying to make the health care program work better by rooting out waste and inefficiencies. “We’re trying to save Medicaid,” he said. At the Ways & Means committee Democrats offered amendments into the night - to provide taxpayers relief

from Trump’s tariff policies, enhance a child tax credit, and others that were all being turned back by Republicans. As the Agriculture Committee began its work, CBO also told lawmakers the work requirements for SNAP would reduce participation by roughly 3 million people in an average month. Republicans are working to resolve dissent within their own ranks, which shows the pressure points ahead. Smith suggested that some changes could be made to the bill to win over those high-tax state lawmakers from New York and California who believe the proposed SALT cap is inadequate. “There’s a little bit of wiggle room there to try to deliver additional priorities,” Smith said. But Rep. Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., said after an hourlong meeting with the speaker and staff that they were “still far from a deal.” With the slimmest majority in the House, Johnson has just a few votes to spare, and is running into resistance from his party, including lawmakers in the Senate, which also has thin GOP margins. The lawmakers are racing for a July 4 deadline to have the whole package sent to Trump’s desk in time to also avoid a dangerous debt default. The Treasury Secretary has said federal tax revenues are running short and Congress needs to raise the spending limit to keep paying the bills. The package includes a \$4 trillion boost to the nation’s now \$36 trillion debt limit, enough to fund operations past the 2026 midterm election.

Serbia’s leader vowed to stay on EU path despite Russia trip: Costa

BELGRADE, Serbia, May 14, (AP): European Council President António Costa on Tuesday criticized Serbia populist president’s trip to Russia’s Victory Day ceremonies last week, but said that he received assurances that the troubled Balkan nation nonetheless will remain on the path toward European Union accession. Costa said in Belgrade - at the start of his tour of six Western Balkan membership hopefuls - that “a lot of people asked me not to come” to Serbia. But he said that he decided to come, and that he wanted to “clarify” President Aleksandar Vucic’s visit to Moscow last week. Vucic, Costa said, “explained to me it was a moment to celebrate an event from the past.” “We cannot rewrite the history, and (we) fully understand that Serbia celebrates (its) liberation” by Soviet troops, Costa said, before referring to the Russia-Ukraine war. “But we cannot celebrate the liberation 80 years ago and don’t condemn an invasion of another country today.” Now, Costa said, “we can reaffirm, and it’s important to hear from him (Vucic) to publicly reaffirm, that he is fully committed with the European Union and with the accession path.” Vucic, a former extreme nationalist criticized at home and abroad over alleged increasingly authoritarian ways, has maintained close relations with both Russia and China while formally saying that he wants Serbia to join the EU. Vucic has said his decision to attend



European Council President Antonio Costa, (left), reviews an honor guard with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic during a welcome ceremony at the Serbia Palace in Belgrade, Serbia on May 13. (AP)

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s military parade marking the World War II victory over Nazi Germany, was part of efforts to maintain “traditional friendships” - Russia is a fellow Slavic and Orthodox Christian nation -while seeking EU entry. Serbia, which relies almost fully on Russia for energy, has refused to join Western sanctions on Russia over the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and hasn’t supported most EU statements condemning the aggression. Belgrade instead has backed a UN resolution criticizing Russia’s attack.

Costa warned that “a clear condemnation of the Russian brutal invasion of Ukraine” is a key element of EU’s security and foreign policy, and that Serbia must fully align in order to join the bloc. Vucic said that he expected “reaction and attacks” over the Moscow trip at an upcoming European Political Community summit in Albania. He pledged that Serbia will soon pass media and anti-corruption laws needed to move forward in the accession process. Serbia, he said, “sees itself now and in the future as on the EU path and as a member of the European Union.”

Hungary targets critics with bill that would blacklist critical media and NGOs

BUDAPEST, Hungary, May 14, (AP): The nationalist party of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán introduced a bill late Tuesday that would allow the government to monitor, restrict, penalize and potentially ban organizations it deems a threat to national sovereignty, marking a significant escalation of the government’s long-running crackdown on critical media and non-governmental organizations. The bill, submitted by a lawmaker in Orbán’s Fidesz party, would expand the authority of Hungary’s controversial Sovereignty Protection Office, allowing it to identify organizations that influence public debate or voter sentiment in ways it considers detrimental to Hungary’s interests. Under the proposed legislation, such organizations could be placed on a list by governmental decree, stripped of key funding and subjected to severe financial penalties if they are found to “endanger the sovereignty of Hungary by carrying out activities aimed at influencing public life with foreign support.” The bill would also allow the bank accounts of affected organizations to be monitored, and access to the accounts and transactions deemed to violate the new provisions could be blocked. The measure is the latest in an escalating effort by Orbán’s government to tighten its control over political expression and civic engagement in Hungary as the Eu-



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban responds to speeches at the start of the spring session of the National Assembly in Budapest, Hungary, on Feb 24. (AP)

ropean Union’s longest-serving leader faces a major challenge to his 15-year grip on power in elections scheduled for next year. Parliament will likely vote on the bill in the coming days and it is expected to pass since Fidesz has a two-thirds majority. Facing mounting legal and financial pressure from the government, many of Hungary’s independent media outlets and NGOs have increasingly depended on international grants and assistance to sustain their operations. But in a February speech laced with conspiracy rhetoric, Orbán said that organizations that receive any funding from outside Hun-

gary’s borders “have to be taken down, they have to be swept away ... It is necessary to make their existence legally impossible.” Orbán has for years enacted crackdowns on NGOs and independent media, passing laws that critics say seek to stigmatize and obstruct groups that provide protection for women and minorities, offer legal and human rights assistance and expose official corruption. Those efforts ramped up in 2023 when Orbán’s right-wing populist government launched the Sovereignty Protection Office, an authority tasked with investigating organizations and media outlets it deems to be exerting foreign influence.

3 Ukrainians held over alleged Russia parcel bomb plot

BERLIN, May 14, (AP): Three Ukrainian nationals have been arrested in Germany and Switzerland on suspicion of agreeing to send parcels containing explosive or incendiary devices from Germany to Ukraine, apparently at the behest of people acting for Russia, German prosecutors said Wednesday. The men are suspected of acting as secret agents for the purpose of sabotage, as well as agreeing to commit arson and bring about an explosion, federal prosecutors said in a statement. The alleged plans fit a pattern in which Western officials have accused Russia and its proxies of staging dozens of attacks and other incidents across Europe since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago. Two of the men - identified only as Vladyslav T. and Daniil B. in line with German privacy rules - were arrested in different parts of Germany on Friday and Saturday respectively. The third,



A rescue worker rests near university building destroyed by a Russian missile strike on Sumy, Ukraine, April 13. (AP)

identified as Yevhen B., was arrested in Tuesday in the northern Thurgau region

of neighboring Switzerland. The suspects are accused of telling “one or more people suspected to be acting on behalf of Russian state agencies” around March that they were prepared to carry out attacks on freight transport in Germany, prosecutors said. The alleged plan was for the men to send packages that would explode or catch fire while being transported to Ukraine. One of the suspects, Vladyslav T., dispatched two “test packages” in Cologne at the end of March that contained GPS trackers to scope out possible means of transport, according to prosecutors. He was allegedly tasked with doing so by Yevhen B., who is accused of providing the contents of the packages via Daniil B. German prosecutors did not elaborate further on what was in the packages or on how and where they were dispatched.

America

Martin to scrutinize pardons that Biden issued: Ed Martin Jr., who will be the Justice Department’s new pardon attorney after President Donald Trump pulled his nomination to be the top federal prosecutor for Washington, said Tuesday that he plans to scrutinize pardons that former President Joe Biden issued on his way out of the White House. “These are big moments, and so they have to be able to withstand scrutiny,” Martin told reporters on Tuesday, his last full day as acting US Attorney for the District of Columbia. Biden pardoned his siblings and their spouses in January on his last day in office. He also pardoned Dr. Anthony Fauci, retired Gen. Mark Milley and members of the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.



Martin

None of them had been charged with any crime. The pardons were designed to guard against possible retribution by President Donald Trump. Trump pulled Martin’s nomination last week amid bipartisan opposition and replaced him with Fox News host Jeanine Pirro, who is expected to be sworn into office on Wednesday. (AP)

Senate confirms Meink as Air Force secretary: The Senate on Tuesday easily confirmed Troy Meink as the secretary of the Air Force, putting a former KC-135 tanker aircraft navigator and space expert in charge of the service. The vote was 74-25. Meink has almost four decades of experience in the military and in government, including managing some of the nation’s most sensitive satellite intelligence capabilities and the military’s space portfolio. He previously served as a deputy of the National Reconnaissance Office. While he is the last of the military’s three service secretaries to get confirmed, Meink is the one with the most extensive national security and military experience. (AP)

Asia

Military training plane crashes in Japan: A search was launched on Wednesday for two crew members reported missing after a Japanese air force training plane crashed minutes after take off.

The T-4 training plane belonging to the Japan Air Self-Defense Force took off from Komaki Air Base, in the central Japanese prefecture of Aichi, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said.

The force said the plane was lost from radar two minutes after taking off. The authorities are searching for the missing aircraft and its crew in an area near a reservoir known as the Iruka pond, officials said. The reservoir is about 10 kilometers (6 miles) northeast of the air base, near the city of Inuyama.

Defense Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters that parts of the aircraft have been found at the crash site. He said the cause of the crash is under investigation. Officials were also preparing to collect fuel apparently leaked from the aircraft and floating in the reservoir, Nakatani said. (AP)

Families of victims in S.Korea crash file complaint: Families of victims of December's devastating plane crash in South Korea have filed a complaint against 15 people including the transport minister and the airline chief who they believe are responsible for the disaster that killed all but two of the 181 people on board.

Police and government officials have already been investigating the Jeju Air crash, so the complaint is largely seen as a symbolic step calling for a swifter and more thorough probe. Many bereaved families complain of what they see as a lack of meaningful progress in efforts to determine what caused the disaster and who is responsible.

On Tuesday, 72 bereaved relatives submitted the complaint to the Jeonnam Provincial Police agency in southern South Korea, according to their lawyers and police.

The 15 people cited in the complaint include the transport minister, Jeju Air's president and airline officials handling maintenance and safety issues, along with officials at Muan International Airport who are responsible for preventing bird strikes, air traffic control and facility management, according to a statement from a lawyers' group supporting the relatives.

"Four months after the disaster, we can't help feeling deep anger and despair over the fact that there has been little progress" in the investigation, Kim Dae-hye, a bereaved family member, said in the statement. (AP)

Bangkok officials end search operation: Thai authorities on Tuesday officially ended the search operation at the building under construction in the capital, Bangkok, that collapsed following an earthquake that killed dozens over a month ago.

The 7.7 magnitude quake on March 28 centered in Myanmar, more than 800 miles (1,200 kilometers) away, killed at least 96 people in Bangkok, mostly at the



Firefighters gather for a search operation as a Japanese air force plane crashed after taking off for a training flight, at a pond in Inuyama, central Japan on May 14. (AP)

collapsed site. More than 3,000 were killed in Myanmar.

Eighty-nine bodies have been retrieved from the rubble while seven people remain unaccounted for at the site, officials said. They said they would continue to test hundreds of pieces of human remains to identify those still missing.

The collapse sparked questions about the enforcement of construction safety and corruption. The high-rise building, meant to be the new office of the State Audit Office, was the only building that suffered a total collapse that day.

The police on Tuesday said they are still investigating and will continue to collect evidence from the collapse site until the end of this month.

Authorities are probing several companies and individuals for any wrongdoing in relation to the collapse, including the state-run Chinese contractor, China Railway No. 10 Engineering Group. The investigation has led to the arrest of its Chinese executive in Thailand, identified as Zhang, and three Thai shareholders on suspicion of operating the business through the use of nominees.

Foreigners can operate a business in Thailand, but it must be a joint venture with a Thai partner, and they cannot own more than 49% to protect local competitiveness. (AP)

Fox News can get Smartmatic records on Manila case: Fox News can get

access to some internal documents at the voting-technology company Smartmatic as part of its effort to defend itself against a \$2.7 billion civil defamation lawsuit over its coverage of claims of voting fraud during the 2020 presidential election, a New York appeals court ruled Tuesday. The documents concern a US corruption case about Smartmatic's dealings in the Philippines.

The opinion reversed a lower-court judge's repeated denials of Fox requests to peer into the company's records about the federal inquiry, which led to criminal charges against Smartmatic co-founder Roger Piñate and two other executives.

Smartmatic says the suit is a world away from the criminal case, which alleges the executives conspired to pay over \$1 million in bribes to a Filipino official between 2015 and 2018 to secure business there.

Piñate and at least one co-defendant have pleaded not guilty. It's unclear from court records whether the third executive has entered a plea or has an attorney who can comment on the charges. Smartmatic itself isn't charged and put the defendants on leave.

Florida-based Smartmatic says its business was decimated when Fox aired false claims that the election-tech company helped rig the 2020 voting. Under pressure from Smartmatic, Fox eventually interviewed an election technology expert who refuted the allegations.

The network says it simply reported on newsworthy allegations made by President Donald Trump and his allies, and that Smartmatic is vastly overstating its purported losses. (AP)

Cambodia hosts China for latest military exercise: Cambodia's armed forces on Wednesday launched their latest - and largest - Golden Dragon joint military exercise with China, with land, sea and air operations planned over the next two weeks.

The initial exercise was in 2016, marking deepening relations between Cambodia and China while Cambodia canceled similar exercises with the United States. Cambodian officials recently proposed reviving exercises with US forces, after Washington in the past year has sent several high-ranking military and civilian officials in an effort to increase its influence.

Cambodia is China's closest ally in Southeast Asia, while Beijing is Cambodia's most important ally and benefactor, whose aid and investment have fueled Cambodia's rapid growth in recent decades. Chinese President Xi Jinping made a state visit to Cambodia in April.

Beijing has helped fund an expansion of the Ream Naval Base on Cambodia's southern coast, raising worries it could become a strategic outpost for the Chinese navy in the Gulf of Thailand. Cambodia has repeatedly denied any agreement granting China special privileges or the establishment of a foreign military base.

Cambodian leaders have said warships from all friendly countries are welcome to dock at its new pier, provided they comply with certain conditions. Two Japanese naval ships and one from Vietnam docked last month at the base, and a Chinese vessel arrived at Ream on Monday to take part in the exercises. (AP)

India disputes Trump's claim that trade incentives led to India-Pakistan ceasefire

NEW DELHI, May 14, (Agencies): The Indian government on Tuesday disputed US President Donald Trump's claim that the U.S.-mediated ceasefire between India and Pakistan came about in part because he had offered possible trade concessions.

Addressing a weekly news conference, Randhir Jaiswal, the spokesman for India's foreign ministry, said top leaders in New Delhi and Washington were in touch last week following the Indian military's intense standoff with Pakistan, but that there was no conversation on trade.

"The issue of trade didn't come up in any of these discussions," Jaiswal said, referring to the conversations held between U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as well as between U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar.

Following Saturday's understanding between India and Pakistan to stop military action on land, in the air and at sea, Trump told reporters on Monday that he had offered to help both nations with trade if they agreed to de-escalate.

"I said, come on, we're going to do a lot of trade with you guys. Let's stop

it. Let's stop it. If you stop it, we'll do a trade. If you don't stop it, we're not going to do any trade," Trump said.

"And all of a sudden, they said, I think we're going to stop," Trump said, crediting trade leverage for influencing both the nations' decision. "For a lot of reasons, but trade is a big one," he said.

The militaries of India and Pakistan had been engaged in one of their most serious confrontations in decades since last Wednesday, when India struck targets inside Pakistan it said were affiliated with militants responsible for the massacre of 26 tourists last month in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

After India's strikes in Pakistan, the two sides exchanged heavy fire along their de facto borders, followed by missile and drone strikes into each other's territories, mainly targeting military installations and airbases.

The escalating hostilities between the nuclear-armed rivals threatened regional peace, leading to calls by world leaders to cool down tensions.

Trump said he not only helped mediate the ceasefire, but also offered mediation over the simmering dispute in Kashmir, a Himalayan region that both

India and Pakistan claim in entirety but administer in parts. The two nations have fought two wars over Kashmir, which has long been described as the regional nuclear flashpoint.

Meanwhile, Pakistan and India each announced on Tuesday the expulsion of one diplomat from the other country, with both sides accusing the respective officials of engaging in espionage activities.

Pakistan declared a staff member of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad as persona non grata. The official has been ordered to leave the country within 24 hours, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Indian Charge d'Affaires was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where a formal démarche was issued conveying the decision, the foreign office said, adding that it called on the Indian mission to ensure that its personnel refrain from actions inconsistent with their diplomatic responsibilities. According to Indian media, the Indian government announced earlier it had expelled an official working at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi and asked him to leave the country within 24 hours.



In this photo released by Indian Prime Minister's Office on X, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, left, greets Indian Air Force officers during a visit to air force station Adampur, India on May 13. (AP)



Bolivian President Luis Arce gives a press conference at the presidential palace in La Paz, Bolivia, April 7. (AP)

Bolivia President Luis Arce, polls slipping, quits presidential race

LA PAZ, Bolivia, May 14, (AP): Facing the prospect of a humiliating defeat in Bolivia's presidential election in August, President Luis Arce, who assumed office in 2020 and was expected to seek a second term, said Tuesday he would withdraw from the race.

The decision, announced in a lengthy late-night televised address, comes as a rift deepens at the top of Bolivia's governing party, where Arce and his erstwhile ally, former President Evo Morales, struggle for control of their leftist bloc.

"I will not be a factor in dividing the popular vote," Arce said in his speech, warning that a fragmented base would give Bolivia's right-wing and centrist parties a shot at power after nearly two decades of socialist rule. "Much less will I facilitate the realization of a fascist right-wing project ... that seeks to destroy the productive social economic model."

The yearslong rivalry between Arce and Morales has been accelerating a slow-burning economic crisis that has working-class voters, who are the core constituency of MAS, up in arms.

Bolivia has gone from exporting natural gas to importing fuel and from boasting one of the region's lowest inflation rates to struggling with one of its highest. The value of Bolivia's local currency on the black market is now half the official exchange rate. Fuel shortages paralyze the country. The central bank has effectively run out of dollars.

Many of these problems took root under Arce's iconic predecessor, Morales, but the majority of voters blame Arce for the economic chaos. Polls indicate that the embattled president has been falling further and further behind his left-wing rivals - Morales and Senate President Andronico Rodríguez.

With the MAS under Arce's con-

trol, Morales was forced to break away and create his own party to host his candidacy.

It's still unclear whether Rodríguez, a politically savvy 36-year-old from Morales' rural coca-growing stronghold, will join the MAS ticket or register with another party. The registration deadline is May 19.

Arce's decision to drop out Tuesday was also seen as a new chapter in his increasingly bitter enmity with Morales, whose renewed campaign pitch plays on nostalgia for the commodities-fueled public investment and falling poverty that characterized much of his almost 14-year tenure, from 2006 to 2019.

"I challenge former President Evo Morales not to insist on running," Arce said, "because constitutionally he cannot do so and because the dispersion and fragmentation of the vote would favor the right."

Morales, Bolivia's first Indigenous president, faces numerous obstacles on the road back to his country's highest office, six years after his bid for an unconstitutional fourth term led to mass protests and self-exile under pressure from the military.

Arce's government insists that a 2023 constitutional court ruling bars Morales from seeking another term. Ever since a judge ordered Morales' arrest on charges linked to a sexual relationship with a 15-year-old girl - allegations that he says are politically motivated - the ex-leader has been hunkered down in a remote tropical corner of Bolivia, protected by legions of fiercely loyal supporters.

Arce appealed to Rodríguez to rally their fractured socialist base against the opposition, leading some analysts to suggest the young, previously little-known politician may emerge as the most likely left-wing candidate.

Thank you for everything you gave us: Orsi

Jose Mujica, Uruguay's humble president, dies at 89

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, May 14, (AP): Former Uruguayan president José Mujica, a onetime Marxist guerrilla and flower farmer whose radical brand of democracy, plain-spoken philosophy and simple lifestyle fascinated people around the world, has died. He was 89.

Uruguay's left-wing president, Yamandú Orsi, announced his death, which came four months after Mujica decided to forgo further medical treatment for esophageal cancer and enter hospice care at his three-room ranch house on the outskirts of Montevideo, Uruguay's capital.

"President, activist, guide and leader," Orsi wrote of his longtime political mentor before heading to Mujica's home to pay his respects. "Thank you for everything you gave us."

Mujica had been under treatment for cancer of the esophagus since his diagnosis last spring. Radiation eliminated much of the tumor but soon Mujica's autoimmune disease complicated his recovery.

In January, Mujica's doctor announced that the cancer in his esophagus had returned and spread to his liver. In recent days, "he knew that he was in his final hours," said Fernando Pereira, the president of Mujica's left-wing Broad Front party who visited the ailing ex-leader last week.

As leader of a violent leftist guerrilla group in the 1960s known as the Tupamaros, Mujica robbed banks, planted bombs and abducted businessmen and politicians on Montevideo's streets in hopes of provoking a popular uprising that would lead to a Cuban-style socialist Uruguay.

A brutal counterinsurgency and ensuing right-wing military dictatorship that ruled Uruguay between 1973 and 1985 sent him to prison for nearly 15 years, 10 of which he spent in solitary confinement.

During his 2010-2015 presidency,



File photo taken on Oct 19, 2024 shows Jose Mujica delivering a speech during an event in Montevideo, Uruguay. Former Uruguayan President Jose 'Pepe' Mujica died on May 13, 2025, at the age of 89 in Montevideo, President Yamandu Orsi confirmed. (Xinhua)

Mujica, widely known as "Pepe," oversaw the transformation of his small South American nation into one of the world's healthiest and most socially liberal democracies.

Rejecting the pomp and circumstance of the presidency, he drove a light blue beat-up 1987 Volkswagen Beetle, wore rumpled cardigan sweaters and sandals with socks and lived in a tin-roof house outside Montevideo, where for decades he tended to chrysanthemums for sale in local markets.

"This is the tragedy of life, on the one hand it's beautiful, but it ends," Mujica told The Associated Press in a wide-ranging Oct. 2023 interview from his farmhouse. "Therefore, paradise is here. As is hell."

As the Uruguayan government declared three days of national mourning, tributes poured in from presidents and ordinary people around the world. The first to share remembrances were allied

leaders who recalled not only Mujica's accomplishments but also his hallowed status as one of the last surviving lions of the now-receding Latin American left that peaked two decades ago.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro praised Mujica as a "great revolutionary." Bolivia's former socialist president, Evo Morales said that he "and all of Latin America" are in mourning. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum called Mujica "an example for Latin America and the entire world." Brazil's Foreign Ministry described him as "one of the most important humanists of our time."

Chile's leftist President Gabriel Boric paid tribute to Mujica's efforts to combat social inequality.

"If you left us anything, it was the unquenchable hope that things can be done better," he wrote. "The unwavering conviction that as long as our hearts beat and there is injustice in the world, it's worth continuing to fight."

Africa

Traore celebrated by some, criticized by others: As news emerged this week about hundreds of Burkina Faso citizens killed separately by both jihadist groups and government forces, images of Burkina Faso's junta leader Capt. **Ibrahim Traore** were plastered over Russian state media speaking about pan-Africanism and liberating the minds of the continent's youths.

Traore, who was in Moscow for the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, is Africa's youngest leader at 37, a strong appeal for the continent's young population that is used to much older leaders.

Since coming to power in September 2022 after the country's second coup that year, he has dwelt on a rhetoric of self-reliance and independence from the West, particularly former colonial ruler France - a message that often resonates with young Africans and the diaspora.

The latest Traore frenzy reached a new peak late April with a solidarity march in the country's capital, Ouagadougou, following an alleged



Traore

coup attempt and comments by Gen. Michael Langley, the head of US military in Africa, accusing the Burkina Faso leader of misusing the country's gold reserves.

Following the 2022 coup that brought him to power, Traore promised to end the country's decadeslong deadly security crisis and leverage its rich mineral resources for the benefit of its 24 million citizens. (AP)

Mali's leader dissolves political parties: The president of Mali's transitional government signed a decree Tuesday dissolving political parties amid a backdrop of pro-democracy opposition, a minister in the government announced.

The decision by Gen. Assimi Goita comes amid a surge in kidnappings of pro-democracy activists in the capital Bamako and just days after a demonstration by several hundred pro-democracy activists.

"Political parties and organizations of a political nature are dissolved throughout the national territory," announced Mamani Nassire, the minister delegate to the prime minister in charge of political reforms and support for the electoral process.

Nassire was reading from a decree signed by Goita on national TV. The decree was announced after an extraordinary council of ministers meeting Tuesday.

The decree reads: "It is forbidden for members of dissolved political parties and political organizations to hold any meetings." (AP)

Kuwait oil price up \$1.16 to \$65.69 pb

KUWAIT CITY, May 14, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 1.16 to USD 65.69 per barrel on Tuesday as opposed to USD 64.53 pb last Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday.

At the global level, the price of the Brent crude went up by USD 1.67 to USD 66.63 per barrel, the same occurred to the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by USD 1.72 to USD 63.67 pb.

Business

As part of the Bank’s commitment to strengthening collaboration and team spirit among employees

National Bank of Kuwait’s Foreign Corporate, Oil & Trade Finance Group hosts Open Day to Foster Team Cohesion



Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij in the middle of the Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group.

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: As part of its ongoing commitment to fostering collaboration and reinforcing a strong sense of team spirit among its employees, the Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group at National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a special Open Day, bringing together management and staff in a dynamic and celebratory setting. The event was held in the presence of Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, Chief Executive Officer of NBK – Kuwait, and Mr. Pradeep Handa, Head of Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group. The Open Day featured a comprehensive and engaging program, it emphasized the important role each team member plays in driving the Group’s success and further strengthened their sense of responsibility and belonging. Furthermore, the Open Day was filled with a series of engaging, interactive activities designed to promote team bonding in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Employees participated in various competitions and events aimed

Handa:

- The Open Day reinforced both personal and professional connections among team members, strengthening their sense of belonging
- It underscored the Bank’s commitment to fostering a positive and engaging work environment that recognizes the human element as a core pillar of success and growth

at enhancing communication and collaboration. Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Pradeep Handa said: “At NBK, we firmly believe in promoting employee well-being—not only to support their mental,

physical, and financial health, but also to cultivate a motivated, engaged, and high-performing workforce. This approach reflects an organizational culture that promotes work-life balance, aligning with the Bank’s broader objectives to enhance employee satisfaction and overall well-being.” “Events like these offer a meaningful platform for colleagues from different departments to connect outside the formal work environment. They foster stronger personal and professional ties and contribute significantly to building a cohesive team culture,” he added. Mr. Handa emphasized that organizing such initiatives reflects NBK’s strategic focus on creating a positive and inspiring workplace—one that values people as a core pillar of success and growth. He reaffirmed the Bank’s intention to continue hosting similar events that reinforce internal bonds and contribute to cultivating a resilient, united corporate culture capable of meeting challenges and sustaining leadership in the banking sector.

Under its CSR initiative

stc collaborates Al-Amiri Hospital to strengthen visitors’ experience

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its collaboration with Al-Amiri Hospital to enhance the experience for hospital visitors. The collaboration comes as part of stc’s extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, particularly focusing on healthcare, one of the program’s strategic pillars. As part of the initiative, stc will provide a range of televisions, display screens, and comfortable seating in patient rooms and wings at Al-Amiri Hospital. With a strategic focus set on supporting the healthcare sector in Kuwait, stc embarked on this initiative with its primary objective of elevating the visitors experience through modern devices and a welcoming ambiance that puts hospital visitors more at ease as they seek treatment. The collaboration is part of stc’s broader approach to sustainable community engagement and its commitment to playing an active role in supporting national priorities. As part of this initiative, stc’s Public Relations team scheduled a visit to the hospital, where they were introduced to Dr. Mohammad Al Jarallah, Chief Medical Officer and Mr. Jassim Al Baroun, Head of the Public Relations at Al-Amiri Hospital, and several members of the hospital’s administration. During the visit, the team managed to view the current waiting rooms and various wings at the hospital to plan for the new items that will be added to each location. Commenting on the initiative, Ahmed Al Nowaibet, Director of Public Relations and Social Media at stc, said, “At stc, we actively seek opportunities to support the community through collaborative partnerships with government entities, particularly in areas that directly impact people’s well-being. Creating an environment where hospital visitors feel at ease is a fundamental part of delivering quality healthcare. Comfort plays a crucial role in the healing process and ensuring that hospital visitors are supported both physically and emotionally contributes to better outcomes and an overall improved experience during treatment.” He added, “Our collaboration with Al-Amiri Hospital reflects our commitment to support the healthcare sector in Kuwait, in addition to the various initiatives that we have launched in the past. Having said that, healthcare remains a strategic priority within our CSR program, and we take pride in contributing to national efforts that align with Kuwait’s vision for improved and accessible public services. As a pioneer in the private sector, stc will continue to participate in or introduce initiatives that serve the broader community and support sustainable development.”



Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Mohammad Al Jarallah, with members of the stc team.

Al-Fagaan: Boosting aircraft efficiency to match global aviation advancements

Kuwait Airways & Rolls-Royce to develop the operating system in aircraft engines

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Fagaan, held a meeting with Rolls-Royce during a delegation visit to Derby, United Kingdom. The discussion focused on enhancing the operational systems and mechanisms of Kuwait Airways’ aircraft engines, as well as the latest developments regarding the rapid availability of engine spare parts. The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United Kingdom, H.E. Bader Abdullah Almunayek, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Belinda Lewis, Chief Customer Officer- Civil Aerospace at Rolls-Royce, Ewen McDonald, Airbus President for Africa & Middle East, Gabriel Semelas, and numerous officials from the participating companies. Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Fagaan stated that Kuwait Airways’ participation at the meeting reflects the company’s ongoing efforts to discuss enhancing the operational efficiency and performance of its aircraft. This initiative aims to keep pace with the advancements in the global air transport market and to reinforce the company’s role as a leading national carrier among other carriers in the region.

Al-Fagaan added, “The meeting included an agreement to support Kuwait Airways’ strategic objectives, including improving engine operations, increasing fuel efficiency, enhancing the maintenance plan, and ensuring optimal engine performance, reliability, and overall efficiency.” Al-Fagaan pointed out that this initiative comes within the framework of the support of the political leadership for the national carrier and the pursuit of its development, which contributes to strengthening the commercial aspects between Kuwait Airways, the national carrier and Rolls-Royce. Al-Fagaan concluded his statement by reaffirming Kuwait Airways’ commitment to enhancing and developing its fleet to meet the needs of its valued passengers. He also expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to all partners for their continued support of Kuwait’s national carrier. On his part, Ewen McDonald, Chief Customer Officer - Civil Aerospace at Rolls-Royce, stated, “Rolls-Royce relationship with Kuwait Airways is marked by a spirit of collaboration and innovation. Kuwait Airways is a significant investor in the Rolls-Royce Trent 7000 engines, which has enhanced the durability and power of the engines.”

McDonald added, “Our shared objective of continuously improving performance is being delivered by partnership working and we were honoured to host our esteemed guests in Derby to discuss operational excellence, tour our facilities and introduce them to the people behind the scenes who help make it all happen.” It is worth noting that Kuwait Airways established in 1954, operates a modern and diverse fleet comprising the latest type of aircraft from the world’s leading manufacturers – Airbus and Boeing. The fleet is equipped with cutting-edge technology and advanced features that align with the best international aviation standards, including state-of-the-art inflight entertainment systems and designed seating specifications to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable travel experience. Kuwait Airways takes pride in employing some of the region’s most skilled and experienced professionals across various technical specializations, reflecting the airline’s commitment to operational excellence. In addition, Kuwait Airways strives to attain the highest levels of quality by assisting its valued customers and to develop the company’s operational system in line with the latest developments in the commercial air transport sector.

From Global Finance magazine

KFH Capital wins awards for Best Investment Bank in Frontier Markets & Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: KFH Capital, the investment arm of Kuwait Finance House Group, received the “Best Investment Bank in Frontier Markets” and “Best Investment Bank in Kuwait” awards from Global Finance magazine, acknowledging its strong standing, successes, and achievements. Global Finance, with input from industry experts, used a series of criteria to score and select winners. These criteria include market share, number and size of deals, service and advice,



Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzouq

structuring capabilities, efforts to address market conditions, innovation,

pricing, after-market performance of underwriting and market reputation. Vice President Investment Banking at KFH Capital, Khalid Alshami, received the awards at a special ceremony organized by Global Finance in London. These recent prestigious awards are an addition to KFH Capital’s established record of recognition. They also highlight the company’s success in upholding its esteemed position through its commitment to providing a comprehensive suite of best-in-class invest-

ment offerings, with strength in the arrangement and issuance of Sukuk. Meanwhile, the CEO of KFH Capital, Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzouq conveyed his gratitude to the KFH Capital team, underscoring that the awards are an impetus for further accomplishments. It serves to note that Global Finance, founded in 1987 and headquartered in New York, is recognized as an authoritative source in the realms of finance and business across more than 188 countries globally.



Khalid Alshami receiving the awards.



Bader Al-Kharafi and Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive John Lee.



Right-left: Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Dr. Peter Lam, Bader Al-Kharafi, John Lee, Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah.



Al-Kharafi presenting Zain's strategy during the meeting.

Bader Al-Kharafi: We are committed to implementing the directives of HH the Amir to transform Kuwait into a regional hub for the digital economy

During his reception of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR at Zain's Headquarters



Al-Kharafi addressing the delegation.



Al-Kharafi and John Lee exchange commemorative gifts.



Al-Kharafi and John Lee with the delegation and Zain's leadership at the company's HQ.

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO, welcomed Mr. John Lee Ka-chiu, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, to Zain's headquarters as part of his official visit to Kuwait.

Mr. John Lee was accompanied by a high-level delegation from Hong Kong and China during his visit to Zain, which came as part of his wider visit to Kuwait from May 13-14. His visit included meetings with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Youssef Al-Sabah, and other senior government officials.

Also in attendance were Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah, Advisor in the Diwan of His Highness the Prime Minister; Dr. Peter Lam, Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council; Nawaf Al-Gharabally, CEO of Zain Kuwait; and senior officials from both sides.

Bader Al-Kharafi stated: "We are committed to implementing the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to advance Kuwait's transformation into a regional hub for the digital economy and create an attractive environment for investment led by the private sector. This visit aligns with that wise vision, as Kuwait and Hong Kong enjoy longstanding friendly relations."

Al-Kharafi welcomed the Chief Executive and his accompanying delegation, adding: "The two regions collaborate across various investment, trade, and economic fields at both governmental and private sector levels. This visit presents an opportunity to expand those horizons."

He continued: "Hong Kong has long been recognized as one of the world's most important international financial centers. Thanks to its strategic location, advanced infrastructure, and favorable business environment, it stands as an ideal business hub. Moreover, it is a leader in innovation and among the top global centers for asset and cross-border wealth management."

- Discussions focused on strengthening technology partnerships and exploring new investment opportunities
- The visit included a high-level delegation of officials, business leaders, and tech executives from Hong Kong and China

Al-Kharafi added: "Our discussions with Chief Executive John Lee and his delegation explored ways to expand digital transformation initiatives, enhance telecom infrastructure, drive business growth, and explore opportunities for collaboration in 5G networks, the Internet of Things, and potential strategic partnerships."

He further explained: "We also explored cutting-edge applications in ICT, digital innovation, and emerging technologies, and their impact on supporting digital economies. Hong Kong is one of the world's most service-oriented economies and is deeply involved in R&D, particularly in AI."

He continued: "This visit was also an opportunity to present the highlights of our new five-year strategy, through which we aim to reinforce Zain's regional leadership and steer the Group's efforts toward building the largest tech conglomerate in the Middle East and Africa."

The visiting delegation was introduced to Zain's 40+ year journey of achievements in telecom and technology, and its decisive steps toward becoming a fully integrated digital service provider across the Middle East and Africa. They also explored Zain's efforts to support government and enterprise clients and its impactful initiatives in sustainability, inclusion, diversity, and equity – areas in

which Zain is recognized as a leader across its footprint.

The Group also presented its strategic roadmap amid major shifts in the tech sector, led by its bold five-year strategy "4WARD," which focuses on sustainability, capability building, and targeted growth.

Zain has built a strong legacy that positions it well for future market changes. It has launched major regional entities across several business areas, including: ZainTECH, the region's leading brand in digital services, cloud solutions, and cybersecurity; Zain Omantel International (ZOI), a game-changer in wholesale telecom; TASC Towers, the largest tower portfolio manager in the Middle East and Africa; Zain Ventures, the Group's investment arm; Tamam, the Group's micro-lending platform; Zain Cash, the digital wallet and money transfer service; BEDE, the fintech platform spearheading Zain's regional financial services expansion; Dizlee, the API platform, and Zain Esports.

The "4WARD" strategy is anchored in four pillars: Customer Delight, Digital Zain, Purpose and Action, and Collaborative Growth. It offers a roadmap to expand Zain's business footprint through sector diversification, synergy programs, and strategic partnerships – steps deemed crucial for long-term growth.

The accompanying Hong Kong and Chinese delegation included senior government officials such as the Deputy Financial Secretary, Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, the Commissioner for the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai.

Also present were prominent business leaders, including the Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, CEO of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Chairwoman of the Belt and Road General Chamber of Commerce (Hong Kong), Vice Chairperson of Bank of Communications (Hong Kong), Managing Partner and Head of Capital Markets at Gaw Capital, and senior executives from Bank of China (Hong Kong) and various leading technology, financial, and consulting firms.



Honoring ABK team at the exhibition.

Career fairs key to talent development, says Al Arbash

ABK participates as 'golden sponsor' at GUST career fair

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) reaffirmed its commitment to youth empowerment and employment by once again serving as the golden sponsor of the Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) annual career fair. This ongoing partnership reflects the Bank's dedication to fostering educational initiatives and opening pathways for promising Kuwaiti graduates.

As part of its active participation, ABK welcomed students and alumni to its booth, where representatives provided insights into career prospects across the Bank's divisions. The team also addressed questions about professional development, work culture, and employee benefits.

Afrah Al Arbash, General Manager of Human Resources at ABK, expressed her enthusiasm for the initiative, stating, "We are proud to maintain our support for GUST's career fair. It is a valuable platform to connect with aspiring professionals and showcase the career opportunities available within ABK."



Al Arbash

private sector. "Career fairs play a vital role in attracting future leaders and increasing awareness of the Bank's vision for growth and development," she added.

She also emphasized ABK's strategic approach to nurturing local talent through comprehensive training programs – both virtual and in-person – which promote continuous learning and career advancement.

Looking forward, Al Arbash reiterated ABK's intent to actively engage in similar university initiatives to keep pace with evolving employment trends and better understand the aspirations of Kuwait's youth. "These interactions help us adapt to the evolving needs of graduates and tailor our approach to recruitment accordingly," she said.

She concluded by commending GUST for creating an environment that encourages collaboration between students and private sector leaders, enhancing job prospects and building meaningful connections within the labor market.

Lulu Retail reports Q1 2025 revenue of \$2.1 billion, up 7.3% YoY

ABU DHABI, May 14: Lulu Retail Holdings PLC ("Lulu" or the "Company"), the largest and fastest growing pan GCC full line retailer, today announced its financial results for the three-month period ended 31 March 2025 ("Q1 2025").

Saifee Rupawala, Chief Executive Officer of Lulu, commented: "We are pleased to have demonstrated good growth in the first quarter of this year, with revenue up 7.3% YoY. This was underpinned by a combination of like-for-like sales growth, supported by strong trading during the Ramadan period, and our store rollout programme, which remains well on track with five stores opened in the quarter, in line with our plan to rollout a total of 20 stores in 2025. The first quarter also saw Lulu make good progress on delivering on our overall growth strategy, supported by robust sales in Private Label and e-commerce, which remain key components of our strategy."

"Looking ahead, we expect our growth momentum to continue as we remain focused on several initiatives under each of our four key pillars, including driving growth in existing store network, opening new stores, driving operational efficiencies and delivering further upside through our private label and e-commerce offerings. Overall,

we are pleased with the performance in the first quarter, marking a good start to 2025, and we look forward to continuing to deliver on our strategy throughout the rest of the year."

Financial summary

Revenue performance driven by LFL sales and new store expansion

Revenue grew a healthy 7.3% YoY to \$2.1 billion in Q1 2025 driven by LFL sales growth of 3.6%, supported by strong trading during the Ramadan period. The good revenue performance was also driven by new store openings and high-volume growth across certain product categories, particularly in fresh food and lifestyle products.

■ Fresh food category revenue grew 7.9% YoY in the first quarter, driven by the Ramadan period, improved consumption trends.

■ Electrical goods category witnessed revenue growth of 29.0% YoY, mainly due to an increase in sales across higher value items.

■ Lifestyle products grew 6.9% YoY despite pressure as customers opted for more value products.

■ Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) sales grew steadily at 1.4% YoY, with the sales increase mainly driven by strong volume growth, which was partly offset by some pricing pressure as a result of promotional campaigns.



Lulu Hypermarket Dajeej.

■ E-commerce remains an important component of Lulu's growth strategy, with sales +25.3% YoY and customer count +26.1% YoY.

Segment revenue performance driven by growth across all markets

Lulu delivered revenue growth across all segments in Q1 2025, with particularly strong performances in KSA and Oman.

■ The UAE, Lulu's largest market, recorded a mid-single digit revenue increase of 5.2% YoY, led by particularly strong performance in the fresh

food segment, which grew 15.6% YoY. This was further supported by strong e-commerce sales in the UAE which saw robust growth, rising 40.1% YoY, supported by an increase in sales through aggregators.

■ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, revenue rose by 10.3% YoY, primarily driven by new store openings in last 12 months and strong LFL growth.

Other key markets also delivered solid results in Q1 2025, with revenue in Oman increasing 7.8% YoY as a result of strong growth in the electrical goods product category, Qatar up 6.7%

YoY following a good trading period during festive season, and Kuwait up 4.8% YoY, with supermarket sales contributing c.50% of overall growth in the region, further supported by a strong uptick in e-commerce sales.

Profitability margins supported by cost efficiencies amidst promotional activity

Gross profit increased 4.0% YoY to \$464.5 million, with gross margins reaching 22.3% in the period, down 70 basis points compared to the prior year. This margin reduction was mainly due to promotional campaigns to drive higher footfall into Lulu stores during the festive period. EBITDA grew 6.4% YoY to \$214.1 million, supported by improved operational cost efficiencies, which helped offset the lower gross margin. As a result, Q1 2025 EBITDA margin remained broadly stable at 10.3% compared to 10.4% in Q1 2024. On a post-lease expense basis, EBITDA margin improved by approximately 8 bps, reflecting Lulu's continued operational discipline. Net profit increased by 15.8% to \$69.7 million, with net profit margins improving by 25 basis points as a result of stronger EBIT margin and lower interest expense, despite higher taxes in the period.

Robust balance sheet

During the quarter, net debt decreased to \$2.3 billion, with net debt/EBITDA

improved from 3.2x in December 2024 to 2.9x at the end of Q1 2025. Excluding lease liabilities, leverage improved from 1.3x to 0.9x over the same period.

Strategic progress

Lulu continues to make good progress on delivering on its growth strategy, having rolled out five new stores in the period, delivered good LFL growth within its existing stores and also benefiting from further upside opportunities across Private Label and e-commerce sales.

During Q1 2025, Lulu opened two hypermarkets and three express stores, adding 22,339sqm of retail space in the period, with the Company's total retail space up 2% to 1.34 million sqm, as at the end of Q1 2025. Within this, Lulu was pleased to open a 10k+sqm hypermarket in Makkah and an express store in Madinah, two uniquely located stores with high footfall given the proximity to religious landmark cities in KSA. In addition to the two stores in KSA, Lulu also opened two express stores in the UAE, alongside a Hypermarket in Bahrain. Lulu remains on track with its store roll out plans, with the Company expending to open a total of 20 stores in 2025, with the remaining 15 stores expected to open over the course of the year.



Khaled Waleed Al Falah: National Investments Company's AGM approves 22% cash dividend based on share nominal value

National Investments Company achieves distributable profits of KD 23.8 million, equivalent to 30 fils



National Investments Company AGM in progress.



Khaled Waleed Al Falah
Chairman of the Board

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: National Investments Company held its Ordinary AGM for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, and immediately following this, the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting was convened on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at the company's headquarters in Al Khaleejia Business Tower, with an attendance rate of 78.688%. Shareholders approved the hybrid meeting format, enabling participation both in person and online.

The Ordinary AGM approved all agenda items, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends at 22% of the company's capital – equivalent to 22 fils per share (excluding treasury shares) – for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024. These dividends will be distributed to shareholders registered in the company's records in accordance with applicable entitlement dates and regulatory guidelines.

Al Falah
National Investments Company has solidified its leadership in the financial sector, driven by strong financial fundamentals

The shareholders at the Extraordinary AGM approved amendments to the company's objectives, adding a new activity: securities-based crowdfunding platform services. Furthermore, updates were made to the naming of certain existing activities to align with the Unified Guide for Economic Activity Classification issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

During the meeting, Chairman of the Board, Khaled Waleed Al Falah, expressed pride in the company's exceptional achievements over the past year. He reaffirmed the company's commitment to reinforcing its leadership position in the financial and investment sectors, supported by a strong financial foundation and a clear strategic vision focused on delivering added value to shareholders, supporting economic growth, and enhancing the investment environment.

Khaled Waleed Al Falah:

The company reaffirms focus on sustainable growth, innovation, and delivering exceptional financial services and added value to clients and shareholders

Al Falah emphasized that National Investments Company continues to build on its legacy of success through a purpose-driven strategy centered on innovation and the adoption of best practices in financial and investment services. He highlighted the company's focus on achieving sustainable growth and maximizing shareholder returns, while developing a comprehensive range of financial solutions that meet evolving client needs and keep pace with dynamic regional and global markets.

He noted that 2024 represented a pivotal year for the company, as sustainability remained a key pillar of its long-term strategy. This approach supported strong financial results and attractive annual returns. The company achieved solid profitability metrics, including strong returns on average assets and shareholders' equity, along with a marked improvement in asset quality. It also maintained a balanced cost-to-revenue ratio, underscoring the resilience and efficiency of its business model. Al Falah emphasized that these positive indicators demonstrate the company's ability to deliver value-added services and enhance shareholder equity through sound planning and a clear vision for sustainable growth.

Reviewing the financial performance of National Investments Company for the year 2024, Al Falah noted that the company achieved a net profit of KD 12.1 million, along with an additional profit of KD 11.7 million that was reclassified from comprehensive income to retained earnings as a result of a partial exit from an investment. This brought the distributable profits to 30 fils for the financial year ended December 31, 2024, despite the challenges and negative performance of local and global markets and economies during 2024.

By the end of 2024, the company's total assets reached KD 283.6 million, while the total equity of the parent company stood at KD 197.4 million, with total revenues amounting to KD 31.3 million. Al Falah emphasized that these results demonstrate the company's commitment to achieving sustainable performance and maximizing returns on shareholders' equity, despite the market challenges.

Al Falah noted that NIC remains focused on exploring new opportu-

Al Falah
The company continues to advance steadily, building on its successful track record, supported by a clear strategy focused on innovation and adopting best practices

nities across local and international markets to expand its footprint and diversify its investment portfolio. The company continues to enhance its competitive advantage by leveraging innovative strategies, ongoing market analysis, and the identification of high-potential opportunities across a wide range of economic sectors.

A Year of Positive Achievements

Al Falah highlighted that National Investments Company achieved notable milestones in 2024, including being named 'Best Local Investment Bank in Kuwait for the year 2024' by one of the world's leading financial platforms, Euro-money. Additionally, the company received two prestigious awards 'Kuwait's Best for Family Office Services' and 'Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen' for 2024 by Euromoney International. He emphasized that these recognitions reflect the company's ability to provide diverse and high-quality investment

Al Falah
2024 has marked a significant milestone in the company's journey, recording strong and positive profitability rates alongside an improvement in asset quality

services, in line with the highest standards of excellence in wealth management. These awards underscore the company's commitment to meeting client needs while advancing the investment sector.

In conclusion, Al Falah expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all of NIC's clients and shareholders for their unwavering trust in the Board of Directors. He pointed out that this trust has been a cornerstone of the company's strategic success, empowering it to achieve strong financial and operational results—despite the challenges posed by both local and global economic conditions, which have affected market performance on regional and international levels.

Seizing Investment Opportunities

Fahad Abdulrahman AlMukhaizim, Board Member and CEO of National Investments Company, affirmed that the company's financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, reflect the success of its strategy in capturing high-quality investment opportunities, despite the geopolitical challenges and market disruptions that have impacted both regional and global markets.

AlMukhaizim noted that NIC continued to expand its customer base, attracting a growing number

of individual and corporate investors to invest in innovative and advanced investment products and opportunities. This contributed directly to an increase in assets under management, driven by the company's efforts to attract new investors and strengthen the confidence of existing ones.

Al Mukhaizim highlighted that the Financial Instruments Team continued to expand its footprint in the local market over the past year by securing agreements to provide market-making services. These agreements encompass companies currently listed among the Premier Market constituents, as well as others expected to join in 2025. Consequently, the number of companies benefiting from National Investments Company's Market Maker services has increased to 15, solidifying its position as one of the top three investment firms providing market-making services on Boursa Kuwait. He further emphasized the company's critical role in enhancing market liquidity and stimulating trading activity within the local financial sector.

Al Mukhaizim also commended the exceptional performance of the company's investment funds in 2024, highlighting their positive and outstanding returns despite the regional challenges, particularly the political tensions and military escalations in the Middle East. He pointed out that these results reflect the company's deep expertise and the professionalism of its investment team, which has successfully adapted to market fluctuations with efficiency and skill.

Al Mukhaizim highlighted the outstanding performance of the Alternative Investments Department in 2024, executing several successful transactions, including mezzanine financing deals in Europe. These investments enhanced the company's portfolio in the logistics and warehousing sectors, covering two projects in France and another in Germany. Furthermore, NIC invested in a UAE-based healthcare company and participated in a fund managed by Wafra International, which focuses on acquiring partner stakes in asset management firms. This aligns with the company's strategy to capture high-quality opportunities in the private equity sector.

Al Mukhaizim also expressed appreciation for the exceptional performance of NIC's Financial Advisory Services Team, commending their ability to solidify their strategic position in the field of initial public offerings (IPOs). He highlighted the team's pivotal role in managing the IPO of Baitak Investment Holding Group K.S.C.P., which marked a significant milestone in the market's history. The IPO attracted subscriptions exceeding the target value by more than 17 times, with total coverage surpassing USD 2.5 billion. This achievement underscores strong investor confidence and demonstrates the team's expertise in marketing and efficiently managing IPO processes.

Al Mukhaizim further noted that NIC continued to affirm its leadership in investment banking services by executing a series of transactions exceeding USD 2 billion in total value. These included leading a preferred share issuance for a prominent energy company, a landmark deal that reinforces NIC's track record of working with prestigious entities. Moreover, the company participated as a joint financial institution in the IPO of Lulu Group Retail Holdings (PLC) on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, with a value of USD 1.7 billion. This IPO stands as one of the largest in the region, reflecting NIC's ability to execute complex, large-scale, and diverse transactions across sectors in local and global markets.

Al-Mukhaizim reaffirmed the

Fahad Abdulrahman Al Mukhaizim:

In 2024, National Investments Company's business sectors achieved significant milestones, underscoring our commitment to diversification, sustainable returns, and innovation through strategic partnerships and high-impact investments

continued strong performance of the Real Estate Investments Sector at National Investments Company in 2024. The sector successfully increased rental income from the company's owned real estate assets, achieving near-full occupancy rates. This success was driven by an effective operational strategy focused on optimizing property management efficiency, alongside enhancements in the development of the company's

Al Mukhaizim
Successfully signed new Market Maker agreements, positioning the company among the top three providers on Boursa Kuwait

electronic real estate system. These improvements not only boosted operational efficiency, but also enhanced the quality of services provided to various stakeholders, supporting the enhancement of the operating environment and the development of administrative systems.

Al Mukhaizim explained that the sector continued to expand its operations by adding new properties to the company's client portfolios, focusing on acquiring high-quality assets that generate stable cash flows. This not only strengthened the real estate portfolio, but also ensured sustainable returns. As part of the company's comprehensive investment vision, the sector continued its international investments across several Middle Eastern countries, with a strategic realignment aimed at achieving attractive returns, either through internal operational management or well-planned exits. This approach reflects the sector's agility in adapting to opportunities, changes, and regional challenges.

In addition, Al Mukhaizim outlined that NIC established a dedicat-

Al Mukhaizim
The company delivered strong performance in 2024, reaffirming its capability to achieve impactful milestones that reflect its strategic focus on innovation, diversification, and long-term value creation

ed strategy division to develop and implement its comprehensive strategic transformation plan. This aligns with the company's ambitions for sustainable growth, enhanced governance standards, and operational transformation in the coming years, adhering to global best practices and standards. He noted that this move was part of the company's drive to achieve its ambitious goals with the support of a global consulting firm, with whom the company signed a contract to develop the mechanisms for implementing its vision and ensuring alignment with operational and investment priorities.

On the note, Al Mukhaizim explained that the Human Resources and Administrative Affairs Sector at NIC focused its efforts in 2024 on achieving several milestones, most notably the completion of the second phase



Fahad Abdulrahman Al Mukhaizim
Board Member and CEO

of the 'Shift' program. This program is dedicated to supporting and empowering newly graduated Kuwaiti women, preparing them to enter the investment job market. This was accomplished through specialized training courses aimed at developing their skills, enhancing their competencies, and strengthening their capabilities, making them well-qualified candidates for distinguished job opportunities in the private sector.

Social Responsibility

In line with its commitment to developmental and societal roles, National Investments Company continued to implement its annual corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs in 2024 through

Gratitude and Appreciation

At the conclusion of the AGM, Chairman Khaled Waleed Al Falah expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Board of Directors, executive management, and all employees of National Investments Company. He praised their diligent and fruitful efforts, which significantly contributed to the company's positive performance, aligning with its strategic plan and strengthening its position in the financial market.

Al Falah also extended his heartfelt thanks to the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait, the Central Bank of Kuwait, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, acknowledging their continuous support and substantial efforts in enhancing the investment environment and driving economic development in Kuwait. He prayed that the blessings of security, peace, stability, and prosperity continue to grace the nation.

a range of comprehensive and impactful initiatives. These initiatives reflect the company's strategy aimed at creating a positive and sustainable impact on society.

In the educational sphere, the company sponsored the Marketing Management Club at the College of Business Administration, Kuwait University, supporting a series of academic activities that included specialized training courses in investment and finance for students. Additionally, the company supported workshops organized by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), reaffirming its belief in the importance of empowering engineering talents and enhancing the technical skills of students and professionals in the industrial sector.

On the humanitarian front, the company participated in supporting charitable activities by providing financial support to the Kuwait Food Bank during the holy month of Ramadan, in recognition of the vital role the organization plays in providing valuable community services as a prominent humanitarian volunteer entity.



A section of the audience

Cannes tips hat to Charlie Chaplin

Cruise returns to Cannes with ‘The Final Reckoning’

CANNES, France, May 14, (AP): Three years after Tom Cruise and “Top Gun: Maverick” flew into the Cannes Film Festival, he’s coming back Wednesday to the Croisette with “Mission: Impossible - Final Reckoning.”

Christopher McQuarrie’s latest “Mission: Impossible” installment is the biggest Hollywood tentpole wading ashore in Cannes this year, which will only magnify the spotlight on Cruise’s Cannes return.

In 2022, Cruise received an honorary Palme d’Or from the festival and the “Top Gun: Maverick” premiere included an impressively timed jet fly over. Whether the 62-year-old Cruise has anything up his sleeve this time will be much anticipated at Cannes. On Sunday, Cruise climbed atop the roof of the British Film Institute in London.

“The Final Reckoning,” which launched in Tokyo last week, opens in North American theaters on May 23.

Meanwhile, one hundred years after Charlie Chaplin made dinner rolls dance and ate his shoe like it was a fine meal, “The Gold Rush” has been

vividly brought back to life in a new restoration that premiered Tuesday at the Cannes Film Festival.

On the opening day of its 78th edition, Cannes debuted a 4K restoration of “The Gold Rush,” one of Chaplin’s most beloved silent masterpieces. The screening, held just before the festival’s official opening ceremony, was part of a new day-one tradition for restored films, festival director Thierry Frémaux said before the screening at Cannes’ Debussy Theatre.

Years in the making, this “Gold Rush” pristinely restores Chaplin’s Tramp to all his downtrodden glory. The 1925 Alaskan frontier comedy may be marking its centenary, but it looks bracingly fresh in the restoration carried out by La Cineteca di Bologna.

The restoration was more complicated than most because it included an extensive search for any missing footage. In 1942, Chaplin edited the film and re-released it with sound effects, music and narration. That version landed two Oscar nominations, but the restoration sought to get as close to the 1925 original as possible.

In “The Gold Rush” Chaplin’s lone prospector ambles through the snowy Alaskan wilds in pursuit less of gold than some food and perhaps companionship. His antic, cliff-dangling struggles make up much of the film’s deft slapstick, but the Little Tramp’s humble, sweet hopes for romance greatly exceed his strike-it-rich ambitions.

The film’s premiere drew two grandchildren of Chaplin: Kiera Chaplin and Spencer Chaplin.

“What to say about ‘The Gold Rush?’ said Spencer Chaplin. “It was his biggest production to date. He built the set - it was almost like a tourist attraction in L.A. at the time. He built the mountains.”

The screening in Cannes drew a packed house in one of Cannes’ largest theaters, a crowd that the Chaplin descendants warmly surveyed.

“Our grandfather would be really proud to see this, a hundred years later, to see all you here and interested in seeing the film,” said Kiera Chaplin.

“The Gold Rush” will roll out in theaters worldwide on June 26 in a release organized by mk2 Films.



Tom Cruise poses for photographers during the photo call for the film ‘Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning’ at the 78th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, May 14. (AP)

Obit

‘Oscar winner’

Filmmaker Robert Benton dies at 92

NEW YORK, May 14, (AP): Robert Benton, the Oscar-winning filmmaker who helped reset the rules in Hollywood as the co-creator of “Bonnie and Clyde,” and later received mainstream validation as the writer-director of “Kramer vs. Kramer” and “Places in the Heart,” has died at age 92.

Benton’s son, John Benton, said that he died Sunday at his home in Manhattan of “natural causes.”

During a 40-year screen career, the Texas native received six Oscar nominations and won three times: for writing and directing “Kramer vs. Kramer” and for writing “Places in the Heart.” He was widely appreciated by actors as attentive and trusting, and directed Oscar-winning performances by Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep and Sally Field. Although severe dyslexia left him unable to read more than a few pages at a time as a child, he wrote and directed film adaptations of novels by Philip Roth, E.L. Doctorow and Richard Russo, among others.

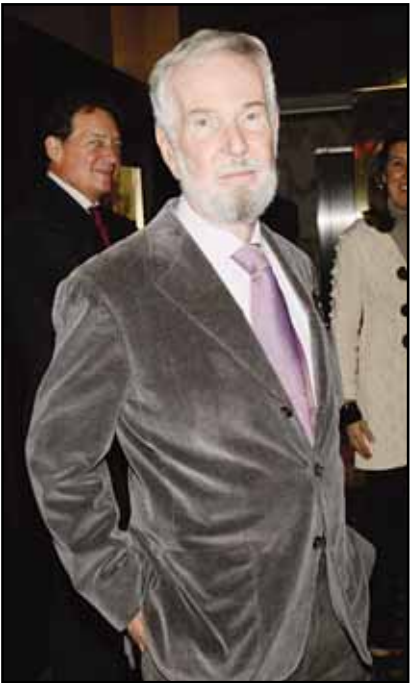
Benton was an art director for Esquire magazine in the early 1960s when a love for French New Wave movies and old gangster stories (and news that a friend got \$25,000 for a Doris Day screenplay) inspired him and Esquire editor David Newman to draft a treatment about the lives of Depression-era robbers Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, imagining them as prototypes for 1960s rebels.

Project

Their project took years to complete as Francois Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard were among the directors who turned them down before Warren Beatty agreed to produce and star in the movie. “Bonnie and Clyde,” directed by Arthur Penn and starring Beatty and Faye Dunaway, overcame initial critical resistance in 1967 to the film’s shocking violence and became one of the touchstones of 1960s culture and the start of a more open and creative era in Hollywood.

The original story by Benton and Newman was even more daring: they had made Clyde Barrow bisexual and involved in a 3-way relationship with Bonnie and their male getaway driver. Beatty and Penn both resisted, and Barrow instead was portrayed as impotent, with an uncredited Robert Towne making numerous other changes to the script. “I honestly don’t know who the ‘auteur’ of ‘Bonnie and Clyde’ was,” Benton later told Mark Harris, author of “Pictures at a Revolution,” a book about “Bonnie and Clyde” and four other movies from 1967.

Over the following decade, none of Benton’s films approached the impact of “Bonnie and Clyde,” although he continued to have critical and commercial success. His writing credits included “Superman” and “What’s Up, Doc?” He directed and co-wrote such well-reviewed works as “Bad Company,” a revisionist Western featuring Jeff Bridges, and “The Late Show,” a melancholy comedy for which his screenplay received an Oscar nomination.



Director Robert Benton arrives for the screening of ‘Feast of Love’ in New York on Sept. 17, 2007. (AP)

Cannes



Jury president Juliette Binoche appears during the opening ceremony of the 78th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Tuesday, May 13. (AP)

De Niro takes stand against Trump’s tariff on foreign films

Stars shine, politics soar as Cannes kicks off

CANNES, France, May 14, (AP): Much of the cinema world, including Robert De Niro, Leonardo DiCaprio and Quentin Tarantino, descended on the Cannes Film Festival as the French Riviera extravaganza got its 78th edition underway Tuesday.

Expectations are running high for a potentially banner Cannes. All of the ingredients - loads of stars, top-tier filmmakers, political intrigue - seem to be lined up. Over the next 12 days, Cannes will play host to megawatt premieres including those of “Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning,” Spike Lee’s “Highest 2 Lowest” and Ari Aster’s “Eddington.”

DiCaprio skirted the red carpet but drew a standing ovation when he presented De Niro with an honorary Palme d’Or. The moment, which brought together two of Martin Scorsese’s most regular stars, came 49 years after “Taxi Driver” was crowned with the Palme d’Or.

DiCaprio praised De Niro as “the archetype” actor, while also praising the 81-year-old performer - a fierce critic of US President Donald Trump - for “fighting for our democracy.” When the crowd rose to its feet for a lengthy ovation for De Niro, DiCaprio handed him the Palme. “Thanks, kiddo,” said De Niro.

After thanking the festival, De Niro quickly turned to speaking about Trump, who recently said he wants to enact a tariff on films made outside the country.

Diversity

“Art is the truth. Art embraces diversity. And that’s why art is a threat to the autocrats and the fascists of the world,” said De Niro. “America’s philistine president has had himself appointed head of one of America’s premier cultural institutions. He has cut funding and support to the arts, humanities and education. And now he announced a 100% tariff on films made outside the United States. You can’t put a price on connectivity.”

The opening ceremony, which preceded the premiere of Amélie Bonnin’s French romance “Leave One Day,” was attended by Tarantino, who emerged to grandly declare the festival open, and then promptly dropped the mic and walked off stage. On Wednesday, Tarantino will pay tribute to Western filmmaker George Sherman. Also in attendance: Sean Baker, the “Anora” director and last year’s Palme d’Or winner.

The ceremony capped a busy day at Cannes that included a three-film salute to Ukraine, the introduction of the jury that will decide the Palme d’Or, headed by Juliette Binoche, and the debut of a restoration of Charlie Chaplin’s “The Gold Rush” for its 100th anniversary.

Cannes is coming off a 2024 festival that produced a number of eventual Oscar contenders, including “Emilia Pérez,” “The Substance,” “Flow” and the best picture winner, “Ano-



Leonardo DiCaprio, (left), and Robert De Niro, recipient of the Honorary Palme d’Or, pose for photographers during the opening ceremony of the 78th international film festival, Cannes. (AP)

ra.” Asked Monday if he’s feeling the pressure this time around, festival director Thierry Frémaux said the only kind of pressure he believes in is in beer. (Beer on tap in France is “bière à la pression.”)

Cannes launched the same day Gérard Depardieu, one of France’s most famous actors, was found guilty of having sexually assaulted two women on a 2021 film set. In one of France’s most prominent #MeToo cases, Depardieu was given an 18-month suspended prison sentence. The 76-year-old has long been a regular presence at Cannes.

This year’s Cannes Film Festival, the premier international cinematic gathering, is also unspooling following Trump’s call for tariffs on movies made overseas. Confusion over the still-unformed plans characterized most responses.

Comments

“I don’t know what to say, really, about that,” Binoche told reporters Tuesday. “We can see that he’s fighting and trying in many different ways to save America and save his ass.”

Along with Binoche, the other eight jurors include Halle Berry and Jeremy Strong, who was unable to attend Cannes last year for the premiere of his Trump film “The Apprentice.” Strong referenced that film, which led to his first Oscar nomination, in his comments on the American president Tuesday.

“Truth is under assault,” said Strong. “Specifically at this temple of film, the role of film is increasingly critical because

it can combat those forces in the entropy of truth, and can communicate truths, individual truths, human truths, societal truths, and affirm and celebrate our shared humanity.”

Berry, responding to Cannes’ new protocols on attire for the red carpet, said she had “an amazing dress” with a long train for the opening ceremony but wore something else instead. Cannes has outlawed nudity and dresses with long trains for its evening premieres at the Palais.

“I had to make a pivot,” said Berry. “But the nudity part, I do think is probably also a good rule.”

Cannes will follow up Tuesday’s festivities with the return Wednesday of Tom Cruise. Three years after he brought “Top Gun: Maverick” to the festival, he’s back with the latest “Mission: Impossible” movie.

Twenty-two films will vie for Cannes’ top prize, the Palme d’Or, to be presented May 24. Those films include Wes Anderson’s “The Phoenix Scheme,” Richard Linklater’s “Nouvelle Vague,” Lynne Ramsay’s “Die, My Love,” Joachim Trier’s “Sentimental Value,” Kelly Reichardt’s “The Mastermind,” Oliver Hermanus’ “The History of Sound,” Julia Ducournau’s “Alpha” and Jafar Panahi’s “A Simple Accident.”

Debuts

In Cannes’ Un Certain Regard section, three prominent actors are making their directorial debuts: Harris Dickinson (“Urchin”), Kristen Stewart (“The Chronology of Water”) and Scarlett Johansson (“Eleanor the Great”).

Geopolitics are likely to play a starring role at Cannes, which began by screening three 2025 Ukraine documentaries: “Zelensky,” Bernard-Henri Lévy’s “Notre Guerre” and The Associated Press-Frontline coproduction “2000 Meters to Andriivka,” by “20 Days in Mariupol” Oscar winner Mstyslav Chernov.

“This ‘Ukraine Day’ is a reminder of the commitment of artists, authors and journalists to tell the story of this conflict in the heart of Europe,” the festival said in a statement.

On Tuesday, more than 350 filmmakers, actors and others in the film industry - including Richard Gere, Pedro Almodóvar, Javier Bardem, Viggo Mortensen and Mark Ruffalo, published an open letter in the French newspaper Libération and in Variety calling on cinema institutions to more forcefully respond to what they called “genocide in Gaza.”

ACID, a Cannes parallel section, includes the documentary “Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk.” It’s about Fatma Hassona, a 25-year-old Palestinian photojournalist who was killed the day after the selection of the documentary was announced in April.

“Why is it that cinema, a breeding ground for socially committed works, seems to be so indifferent to the horror of reality and the oppression suffered by our sisters and brothers?” the letter read.

‘I forgive you, but my life is changed forever’

Defiant Kim Kardashian faces Paris robbery suspects

PARIS, May 14, (AP): Defiant in diamonds, Kim Kardashian appeared in a Paris courtroom Tuesday to testify in the trial over the 2016 armed robbery that upended her life. The reality star and business mogul gave emotional, at times harrowing, testimony about the night masked men tied her up at gunpoint and stole more than \$6 million in jewelry.

Here’s what she revealed - and what’s still to come.

Kardashian said she was starting to doze off in bed in the early hours when she heard stomping on the stairs. She assumed it was her sister Kourtney returning from a night out. “Hello? Hello? Who is it?” she called.

Moments later, two masked men burst in. They dragged the concierge in handcuffs. They were dressed as police.

“I thought it was some sort of terrorist attack,” she said.

She grabbed her phone but froze - “I didn’t know what 911 was (in France).” She tried to call her sister and her bodyguard, but one man grabbed her hand to stop her. They threw her on the bed, bound her hands and held a gun to her back.

“I have babies,” she recalled telling the robbers. “I have to make it home. They can take everything. I just have to make it home.”

Her robe fell open - she said she was naked underneath - as one man pulled her toward him. “I was certain that was the moment that he was going to rape me,” Kardashian said.

One attacker leaned in and told her, in English, she’d be OK if she stayed quiet. He taped her mouth shut, and took her to the bathroom.

Kardashian later managed to free her hands by rub-



Kim Kardashian leaves the justice palace after testifying, regarding a robbery of millions of dollars in jewels from her Paris hotel room in 2016, in Paris, Tuesday, May 13. (AP)

bing the tape against the bathroom sink. She hopped downstairs, ankles still bound, and found her friend and stylist, Simone Harouche. Fearing the men might return, the women climbed onto the balcony and hid in bushes. While lying there, Kardashian called her mother.

The men took a diamond ring she’d worn that night to a Givenchy show and rifled through her jewelry box. They took items including a watch her late father had given her when she graduated high school. “It wasn’t just jewelry. It was so many memories,” she said.

Investigators believe the attackers followed Kardashian’s digital breadcrumbs - images, timestamps, geotags - and exploited them with old-school criminal methods.

The robbery reshaped Kardashian’s sense of safety and freedom. “This experience really changed everything for us,” she said. “I started to get this phobia of going out.”

She often rents adjoining hotel rooms for protection and no longer stores jewelry at home, and now has up to six security guards at home.

“I can’t even sleep at night” otherwise, she said.

She also said she no longer makes social media posts in real time unless at a public event. Her Los Angeles home was robbed shortly after the Paris heist in what she believes was a copycat attack.

In a powerful courtroom moment, the chief judge read aloud a letter from one of the accused, who is too ill to testify. The letter said he had seen Kardashian’s tears on television and expressed regret. Kardashian was visibly moved.

“I’m obviously emotional,” she said in response.

“I do appreciate the letter, for sure,” she added. “I forgive you for what had taken place. But it doesn’t change the emotion, the trauma, and the way my life is forever changed.”

Kardashian, who is studying to become a lawyer, added that she regularly visits prisons. “I’ve always believed in second chances,” she said.

Kardashian made a fashion statement in court, wearing a \$1.5 million necklace by Samer Halimeh New York. The jeweler’s press release for the necklace came out even as she was on the witness stand, a reminder that visibility remains currency, even if the rules have grown more complicated.

The choice reflected defiance and the reclaiming of the image and luxury once used against her.

Kardashian said Paris had once been a sanctuary, a place where she would walk at 3 or 4 a.m., window shopping, sometimes stopping for hot chocolate. It “always felt really safe,” she said. “It was always a magical place.”

Twelve suspects were originally charged. One has died. One was excused due to illness. The French press dubbed the group les papys braqueurs - “the grandpa robbers” - but prosecutors say they were no harmless retirees.

The defendants face charges including armed robbery, kidnapping and gang association. If convicted, they could face life in prison.

Kardashian said she was grateful for the opportunity to “tell my truth” in the packed Paris courtroom.

“This is my closure,” she said. “This is me putting this, hopefully, to rest.”

The trial is expected to conclude May 23.

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Erik and Lyle Menendez will have a new shot at freedom after 35 years behind bars for murdering their parents, a judge ruled Tuesday.

The ruling from Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic reduced the brothers’ sentences from life in prison without parole to 50 years to life, making them immediately eligible for parole. The state parole board must decide whether to release them.

The judge’s decision followed months of pushback from prosecutors who opposed resentencing, arguing the brothers hadn’t taken adequate responsibility for their crimes. Ultimately prosecutors did not call any witnesses, saying they had presented all of their evidence.

The defense turned to family members and those who knew the brothers since their conviction to speak to their character and rehabilitation. The brothers also addressed the court via video as family members listened on tearfully. Most of the brothers’ family members, including aunts and uncles, have long supported their bid for freedom. (AP)



Erik

BAMAKO, Mali: Mali’s media regulatory body said it is banning a French television channel in the country due to “defamatory remarks” it made about a pro-democracy demonstration in the capital earlier this month.

The High Authority for Communication said in a letter published on Tuesday that it was cutting the signal of French channel TV5 Monde after a news anchor remarked that “hundreds of security forces were mobilized to prevent demonstrators from accessing” the Palais de la Culture during a May 3 protest.

The authority said this was incorrect and that “the forces of law and order were present at the Palais de la Culture to secure the demonstrators.”

TV5MONDE did not immediately comment on the announcement. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Authorities said Tuesday that a man who attacked rapper Tory Lanez in a California prison is an inmate serving a life sentence for second-degree murder who was previously convicted for an in-prison assault with a deadly weapon.

Lanez was in fair condition a day after the attack in a housing unit at the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, where he’s serving a 10-year sentence for shooting hip-hop star Megan Thee Stallion in the feet, Pedro Calderon Michel, spokesman for the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, said in an email.

Authorities did not specify how Lanez was attacked, but a message posted on the rapper’s Instagram account Monday evening said Lanez was stabbed 14 times and both his lungs collapsed.

Prison officials identified the alleged attacker as Santino Casio, 42. He has been put in restricted housing pending an investigation by the prison and the Kern County District Attorney’s Office. (AP)

ALASKA: Dan Seavey, who helped organize the first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and whose son and grandson have each won the famous Alaska race multiple times, has died. He was 87.

The Minnesota native, who competed in the first two Iditarod races in 1973 and 1974, was out helping tend to his dogs shortly before he died last Thursday, his son Mitch Seavey said. Dan Seavey had been adamant in his later years about remaining at the south-central Alaska home in Seward he had moved his family to decades earlier, the younger Seavey said.

“It’s hard, and everybody will miss him. But he lived a great life and passed away in his own fashion,” Mitch Seavey said.

The Iditarod race organization called Dan Seavey a “true pioneer and cherished figure” in the race’s 53-year history and said he was instrumental in the establishment of the Iditarod Trail as a National Historic Trail in 1978. He also wrote a book, “The First Great Race,” which his son said drew on notes Seavey recorded during the first edition of the Iditarod.

Dan Seavey in total ran the Iditarod five times. His last, in 2012, was aimed at celebrating and drawing attention to the trail’s history. (AP)

Music

5 sent home as music contest heats up

10 acts advance to Eurovision final

BASEL, Switzerland, May 14, (AP): Competition in the 69th Eurovision Song Contest kicked off Tuesday, with sauna-loving Swedish entry KAJ gaining a place in the final and five countries going home after the first of two semifinals of the pan-continental music extravaganza.

Performers from 15 countries battled it out in front of thousands of fans in Basel, Switzerland for 10 spots in Saturday’s final, with the result decided by viewers’ votes.

Betting market favorites KAJ, a trio of Swedish-speaking Finns, performed “Bara Bada Bastu” - a catchy ode to steam and heat whose title translates roughly as “just take a sauna” - accompanied by dancers dressed as lumberjacks and clad in towels.

Joining KAJ in the final is another favorite with oddsmakers, 21-year-old Dutch singer Claude with soulful, Parisian-style ballad “C’est La Vie.” Claude hopes to win for his country after the Netherlands’ 2024 contestant, Joost Keim, was kicked out of Eurovision last year over a backstage altercation.

Others voted into the final included Icelandic brother duo VAEB with a rap song about rowing, “Róa,” Norwegian singer Kyle Alessandro’s “Lighter” and two uber-Italian songs that aren’t from Italy: DJ Gabry Ponte, representing San Marino with the upbeat “Tutta L’Italia” and the highly caffeinated “Espresso Macchiato” by Estonia’s Tommy Cash.

Ukraine, Portugal, Poland and Albania also made the final. Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus and Slovenia were eliminated.

Music fans across Europe and beyond have traveled to the northern Swiss city of Basel, which is hosting Eurovision because Swiss singer Nemo won last year’s contest in Sweden.

Canadian chanteuse Celine Dion, who won Eurovision for Switzerland before she became a mega-star, sent a video message that was played before some of last year’s competitors performed her 1988 contest-winning song, “Ne partez pas sans moi.”

Viewers were also entertained with a comic song performed by hosts Hazel Brugger and Sandra Studer celebrating Swiss inventions, including the Swiss Army knife, muesli, processed cheese - and Eurovision, first staged in Lugano in 1956.

Tuesday’s showdown and a second semifinal on Thursday will narrow the field of 37 nations down to 26 who will compete in Saturday’s grand final. Twenty finalists will be decided by viewers’ votes, while six countries automatically qualify for the final: the host, Switzerland, and the “Big Five” who pay the most to the contest - France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.

Eurovision was founded partly to foster unity on a continent scarred by World War II, and its motto is “United by Music.” But political divisions often cloud the contest, despite organizers’ efforts to keep politics out. Officials say more than 1,000 police officers are on duty in Basel this week, and organizers are expecting protests against Israel’s participation because of the country’s conduct of its war against Hamas in Gaza.

Following tensions over Israel’s participation and Klein’s expulsion last year, the European Broadcasting Union that organizes Eurovision has tightened the contest’s code of conduct, calling on participants to respect Eurovision’s values of “universality, diversity, equality and inclusivity” and its political neutrality.

Audience members will be allowed to wave Palestinian flags inside Basel’s St. Jakobshalle arena, after a contentious ban last year. Participants, however, can only wave their own national flag onstage or in other on-camera areas.



Former Eurovision Song Contest winner Celine Dion, speaks in a pre-recorded video message during the first semi-final of the 69th Eurovision Song Contest, in Basel, Switzerland, Tuesday, May 13. (AP)



Zoe Me from Switzerland performs the song ‘Voyage’ during the first semi-final. (AP)



Shkodra Elektronike from Albania performs during the semi-final of 69th Eurovision. (AP)

From simple tool to weapon

‘Whack Job’ tracks axe’s dark turn

NEW YORK, May 14, (AP): From the murder of a Neanderthal-like man to the infamous Lizzie Borden, “Whack Job: A History of Axe Murder” provides a sarcastic, witty and quirky look at the history of a rather simple tool often found at the scene of a crime: an axe.

Rachel McCarthy James spends each chapter of “Whack Job” detailing an instance where “axe murder” has occurred, but for true crime fans the book might not make the cut.

Instead of looking at the gory details and dramatizing events, James examines the social-economic, political issues and human nature that caused these individuals to befall their fate to an axe. As such, the book, while having a true crime element, is ultimately a history crash course on the axe’s evolution - from a

survival tool in 430,000 BCE to a modern-day weapon of murder.

Still, this is what makes the book intriguing - even if, like me, you were hoping it would dive deeper into the axe murder itself.

James has fun with the topic, describing what makes the axe the perfect weapon in each instance, keeping the true crime fan in me thoroughly engaged.

A book such as this, focused on history and facts, could become tedious to a casual reader, but James knows how to disarm readers with properly timed humor and quippy theories.

True crime fan or not, James’ book is a great primer of “axe murder” in all its shapes and forms

People

Cassie to testify

Halle Bailey seeks restraining order

LOS ANGELES, May 14, (AP): A Los Angeles judge has granted a restraining order to “The Little Mermaid” actor and singer **Halle Bailey**, who says her ex-boyfriend, the rapper and YouTube DDG, has been repeatedly violent with her and she fears for herself and the baby they have together.

The judge on Tuesday ordered DDG, whose legal name is Darryl Dwayne Granberry Jr., to stay away from Bailey and their 17-month-old son, Halo, until a June 6 hearing.

“Throughout our relationship,” Bailey said in documents requesting the order, “Daryl has been and continues to be physically, verbally, emotionally, and financially abusive towards me. I am seeking orders to protect myself and our son Halo from his ongoing abuse.”

A message seeking comment from a representative for Granberry was not immediately answered.

Bailey, 25, and Granberry, 27, were in a relationship from 2022 until last year, and since their breakup there have been “multiple acts of physical violence,” Bailey said.

In a January incident that she recounts in detail, Bailey said Granberry was repeatedly calling her a “bitch” as she tried to strap the baby into a seat inside his car.

“The next thing I knew, things got physical between us,” Bailey said in the documents. “We fought each other, wrestling and tussling. At one point, Darryl was pulling my hair. He then slammed my face on the steering wheel, causing my tooth to get chipped. I then stopped fighting back as I was in a lot of pain.”

Bailey included photos of her tooth and bruises on her arms in her filing.

In March, she said Granberry entered her house when she wasn’t home and texted her a photo of her bed along with a threatening message suggesting she was having sex with other men.

A few days later, she said, he berated her when she did not want to send their sick baby on a visit with him, and smashed the Ring camera on her porch when he realized it was recording the confrontation. She said when she called a relative for help, he took her phone and got into his car, slamming the door on her as she was holding the baby. Bailey filed a police report over the incident.

She also asked that Granberry be ordered to stop using his streaming platforms on Twitch and YouTube to turn his followers against her.



Bailey

The R&B singer **Cassie** returns to the witness stand Wednesday after a day spent recounting grotesque and humiliating details of life with her ex-boyfriend, **Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs**.

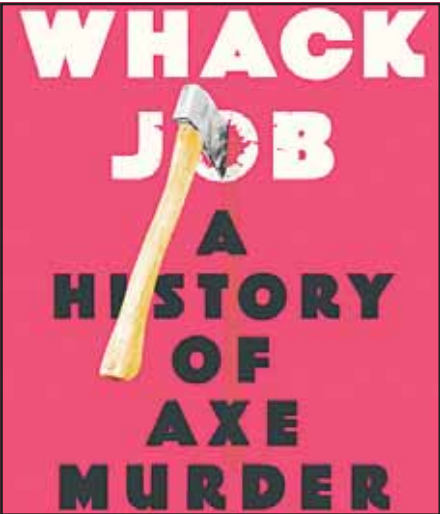
During her first day of testimony Tuesday at Combs’ sex trafficking trial, Cassie described being pressured into degrading sexual encounters with paid workers. She also recounted being beaten numerous times by Combs when she did things that displeased him - like smiling at him the wrong way.

“You make the wrong face and the next thing I knew I was getting hit in the face,” she said.

Cassie, whose legal name is **Cassandra Ventura**, accused Combs of gaining her submission by threatening to publicly release videos of her with male workers.

Combs’ attorneys have acknowledged Combs could be violent but maintain that the sexual acts were consensual. They say nothing he did amounted to sex trafficking or racketeering - the charges that he faces.

Lawyers for Combs have yet to cross-examine Cassie, a type of questioning that will give them an opportunity to challenge her credibility or poke holes in her accounts of what happened.



This cover image released by St. Martin’s Press shows ‘Whack Job: A History of Axe Murder’ by Rachel McCarthy James. (AP)

Health officials question safety of fluoride supplements

US moves to phase out ingestible fluoride products for kids

WASHINGTON, May 14, (AP): US health regulators announced an effort Tuesday to phase out ingestible fluoride supplements sometimes used to strengthen children’s teeth, opening a new front in Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s effort against a mainstay of dental care.

The Food and Drug Administration said it will conduct a scientific review of the children’s products by late October with the aim of removing them from the market. Formally withdrawing medical products requires a lengthy rulemaking process that can take years. Instead, the FDA will ask manufacturers to voluntarily pull their products, according to an administration official.

Fluoride tablets and lozenges are sometimes recommended for children and teens at increased risk of tooth decay or cavities because of low fluoride in their local drinking water. Companies also sell drops for babies.

FDA Commissioner Marty Makary said the products pose a risk when swallowed because they may interfere with healthy gut bacteria that are critical to digestion, immunity and other key bodily functions. He also referenced studies showing possible associations between excess fluoride intake and other problems, including decreased IQ.

Previous reviews by public health experts and dental professionals have not shown any serious health risks



A child shows off her teeth after a dental exam in Concord, N.H., Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

with the products.

As state and local governments begin removing fluoride from their water, the need for supplemental fluoride is expected to grow.

Officials in Utah - the first US state to ban fluoride from drinking water - recently made fluoride supplements available without a prescription.

Fluoride strengthens teeth and reduces cavities by re-

placing minerals lost during normal wear and tear, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 1962, the agency set guidelines for how much should be added to water.

Kennedy, a former environmental lawyer, has called fluoride a “dangerous neurotoxin” tied to a range of health dangers. Last month, he announced a task force to scrutinize fluoride’s use, while at the same time saying he would order the CDC to stop recommending that it be added to tap water.

A report last year by the federal government’s National Toxicology Program concluded that drinking water with more than twice the CDC’s recommended level was associated with lower IQs in kids. The study was based on research conducted in Canada, China, India, Iran, Pakistan and Mexico.

“Ending the use of ingestible fluoride is long overdue,” Kennedy said in a statement Tuesday. “This decision brings us one step closer to delivering on President Trump’s promise to Make America Healthy Again.”

An influential government health panel recommends fluoride supplements for children between the ages of six months and 5 years if they live in areas with low fluoridation levels. The U.S. Preventative Services Task Forces judged the recommendation to have “high certainty,”

based on the available evidence.

A 2010 paper from the American Dental Association recommended supplemental fluoride for children up to 16 years old who are at high risk of cavities. The recommendation was based on a review of studies across different age groups. The most common side effect associated with the products is spotting or discoloration of the teeth, caused by extra fluoride.

The ADA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The FDA regulates most dental products, including fluoride-containing toothpastes, supplements, mouthwashes and rinses. But in Tuesday’s press release, the FDA said the ingestible products targeted by the agency have “never been approved.” Its plan wouldn’t affect toothpastes, mouthwash or fluoride treatments used by adults or offered in dentists’ offices.

In recent weeks fluoride-containing products have increasingly been targeted with lawsuits and legal actions.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton announced an investigation early this month into the marketing of fluoride toothpastes by Colgate-Palmolive and Procter and Gamble. A press release from his office described the companies’ promotions as “misleading, deceptive and dangerous.”

OCD ranks among top 10 causes of global disability

Researchers uncover hundreds of genes tied to OCD, brain changes

By Carol Mathews
University of Florida

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



Obsessive compulsive disorder has many unknowns, including what causes it, why symptoms can differ so much between people, how medication and therapy for it actually work, and why treatment is effective for some people and not for others. In our newly published research, my colleagues and I made a step toward unraveling some of these mysteries by shedding light on the genetics of OCD.

Obsessive compulsive disorder is one of the most impairing illnesses worldwide. Affecting about 1 in 50 people globally, OCD is among the top 10 causes of years lost to disability, leading to harmful effects on a person’s ability to work and function in the world and on their family.

Compared with people without OCD, a person with the condition has a 30% higher chance of dying prematurely from natural causes, such as infections or other illnesses, and a 300% higher chance of dying early from nonnatural causes, such as accidents or suicide.

People with OCD experience obsessions - disturbing, recurrent and unwanted thoughts, fears or mental images - and compulsions, such as repetitive behaviors and rituals performed to ease the anxiety usually caused by obsessions. For example, someone might wash their hands dozens of times or in a specific way to get rid of germs, even if they know it’s excessive or illogical. Avoiding certain places or situations to reduce anxiety or prevent triggering obsessions and compulsions is also common.

While the exact causes of OCD are unclear, researchers know that both genetic and environmental factors play a role in its development. OCD can run in families; studies attribute between 40% to 65% of OCD cases to genetic factors. OCD that begins in childhood has a stronger genetic influence than OCD that begins in adulthood.

Factors

But unlike some genetic diseases caused by a single faulty gene, such as cystic fibrosis or Huntington’s disease, OCD is influenced by hundreds to thousands of genes that each play a small part in disease risk.

My colleagues and I analyzed the DNA of over 53,000 people with OCD and over 2 million people without OCD, the largest study of this kind for this condition. We discovered hundreds of genetic markers potentially linked to OCD - data we hope will ultimately lead to improved ways of identifying people who are at risk for OCD and, down the line, to better treatments.

To find the genes involved in OCD risk, researchers use a method called a genome-wide association study, or GWAS. These studies compare the DNA of tens to hundreds of thousands of people with a disease of interest with the DNA of people without the disease, looking for tiny differences in the genetic material. These genetic markers may be linked to OCD or indicate the presence of other genes linked to the disease.

In a GWAS, scientists carefully test each of the millions

of genetic markers across the genome to identify those found more often in people with OCD than in people without OCD. They then determine which genes those markers are associated with, where in the body they are active and how they might contribute to the condition.

We identified 30 areas in the genome linked to OCD, containing 249 genes of interest in total. Of those, 25 genes stood out as likely contributors to the development of OCD.

The top three genes we found are also linked to other brain disorders such as depression, epilepsy and schizophrenia. Several other genes of interest for OCD were found in a region of the genome that plays a role in adaptive immunity and has been associated with other psychiatric disorders.

Importantly, no single gene can predict or cause OCD on its own. Previous genetic studies have demonstrated that genes across all of the 23 pairs of chromosomes in people may contribute to OCD risk.

Marker

Because the contribution of each genetic marker or gene to disease susceptibility is very small, GWAS are not useful for identifying genes that cause OCD for a given person. Rather, this kind of research helps scientists understand how the brain works in people with OCD and whether OCD shares genetic roots with conditions that commonly occur alongside it.

For example, the genetic markers we found to be associated with OCD were highly active in several brain regions known to play a role in development of the condition. These brain areas are collectively involved in planning, decision-making, motivation, error detection, emotion regulation, and fear and anxiety, all of which can malfunction in OCD.

We also found associations with a brain region called the hypothalamus, which converts emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety or excitement into physical responses. The hypothalamus has not been directly linked to OCD before, but it is part of a network of brain regions that may contribute to its symptoms.

Additionally, we found that certain types of brain cells - particularly medium spiny neurons in a brain region called the striatum - were strongly linked to the OCD genes we identified. Medium spiny neurons play an important role in habit formation, the process by which a behavior becomes automatic and habitual - think compulsions. Specific receptors on medium spiny neurons are common targets for medications that are sometimes used to help treat OCD.

The results of our study can help researchers better understand the relationships between OCD and other conditions. We found genetic links between OCD and several other psychiatric disorders, especially anxiety, depression, anorexia and Tourette syndrome. People with OCD also showed lower genetic risk for conditions such as alcohol dependence and risk-taking behavior, aligning with what doctors see in clinics: Many people with OCD tend to be cautious and avoid risks.

Surprisingly, we also found genetic overlaps between OCD immune-related conditions. While having OCD appears to be linked to an increased risk of asthma and migraines, it may also be linked to a reduced risk of inflammatory bowel disease. These findings may lead to new insights about the role the immune system and inflammation play in brain health. (AP)

‘An hour in the gym is exercise’

Too busy to get fit? Here’s how to work exercise into your schedule

NEW YORK, May 14, (AP): You’re too busy to exercise, right? Your job consumes all your time. You’re strapped by professional and family demands. As you get more and more responsibility, your free time shrinks.

Well, these blockers don’t have to be an excuse. Making time simply calls for creativity and a broader understanding of how to get in daily exercise.

“The trap is thinking that exercise must be an hour in the gym,” said Charles Scott, who describes himself as an executive mentor or exercise coach.

His message is simple: If you have a very demanding job, you need to find a work-life blend.

“An hour in the gym is exercise,” Scott told The Associated Press. “But it’s just one form of exercise.”

Scott coaches about 70 business executives - online and otherwise - and other busy people to improve their physical and professional well-being. He’s based in New York and is relatively hardcore about his own exercise but realizes not everyone can be - or wants to be.

Endurance

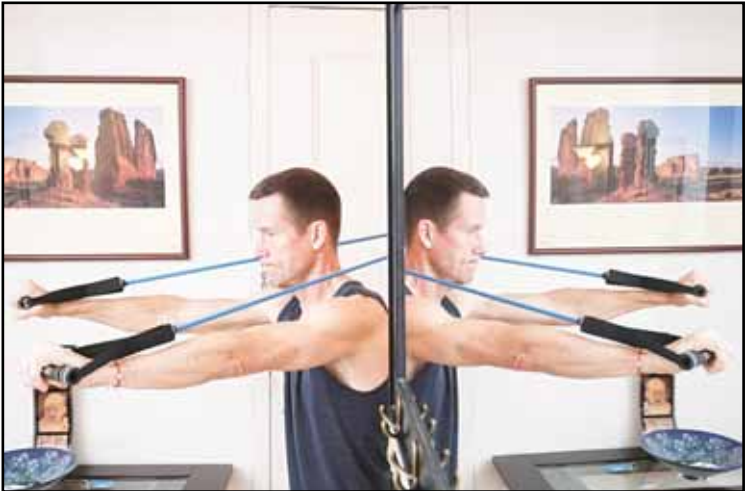
He’s planning to run across the Grand Canyon in June - the out-and-back version - that covers about 46 miles (74 kilometers). He also has guided his blind friend Dan Berlin on several endurance events including a speed ascent up Mount Kilimanjaro and tandem cycling across the United States with a team of blind cyclists.

Rather than terming it exercise, Scott talks about teaching “intentional movement” to his goal-driven clients.

“The ambitious person’s trap is when you undermine your physical and emotional health in pursuit of your professional goals,” he said. “It’s common in this culture among the executives I mentor.”

Scott asks busy people to focus on something other than making money or chasing fame inside the profession. He said he tries to emphasize a holistic approach that includes the emotional, the professional and the physical.

“Our bodies need to move,” he said. “No matter what age you are, our bodies must move to stay healthy. So if you’re not exercising, you’re out of alignment.”



Charles Scott works out with resistance bands at home Thursday, May 1, 2025, in New York. (AP)

Scott has a list of ways to blend movement into your day without needing a gym. Of course, if you can hit the gym, that’s great, too.

He suggests doing one-on-one meetings while you’re walking instead of sitting behind the office desk or laptop. Or, he suggests standing rather than sitting when you hold meetings.

“If you want a meeting to be short and efficient, choose the standing conference room,” he said.

Or do isometric exercises during a meeting to tone, for instance, your stomach muscles.

“Tighten up your stomach muscles. Hold for 20 seconds and don’t hold your breath,” he said. “Don’t make it obvious. Release. Do it again. You’ll be sore tomorrow. It burns calories. It tones muscles. And it takes precisely zero seconds out of your I-am-too-busy-to-exercise day.”

Muscles

Here are a few more ideas about blending exercise into your work schedule.

If your flight is delayed, go for a walk around the airport and add to your daily step count.

Link workouts to daily events. For example, when you wake up, always go for a walk. Or, when you get home from work, do a certain number of pushups after you walk through the door.

Make a workout a social event and do it with a friend or a group.

Give yourself the title “athlete” and

build habits around that identity. Scott is an advocate of experiencing “meaningful discomfort,” which he calls the “birthplace of resilience.”

Pay attention to the food you put in your body. Treat your body with respect.

Take a quick break from answering emails and do 10 squats or pushups or whatever to add movement.

“In business, many people show up to work and they crank it out all day,” which he termed a “rookie mistake,” like a newcomer going out too fast at the start of a marathon.

“Then they go home exhausted and they are fussy with the people they love.”

One of Scott’s clients is Harrison (Harry) Kahn, the general manager of the Vermont Creamery, an artisanal dairy.

Rather than blend, Kahn uses the partition method and awakens at 5 a.m. to get in his exercise, typically running, biking, or popping on skis in the winter in largely rural Vermont.

“I kind of get in the me stuff before the rest of the house wakes up,” he said.

He said his wife, Elisabeth, teaches French. She sets off early as they both combine to get their two children ready for school - 11-year-old Iris and 8-year-old Asher.

“Charles has reminded me that life isn’t a game of comparison with other people,” he said. “You have to figure out your own stuff.”

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Skaters to compete as neutrals

Only 4 Russian figure skaters OK'd for 2026 Oly qualification event

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, May 14, (AP): Four Russian figure skaters were approved by the International Skating Union to try to qualify for the 2026 Winter Olympics as neutral athletes who have not supported the invasion of Ukraine, including 17-year-old national champion Adelia Petrosian.

No Russian athletes, however, were approved to compete in the pairs and ice dance disciplines at a one-off Olympic qualification meeting in September in Beijing. The 2026 Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo Olympics open on Feb. 6.

The ISU said "not all nominated athletes passed the rigorous screening" and the eligibility decisions by its ruling council are "final with regard to all applicants and not subject to appeal."

Russians and Belarusians have been banned from international skating events since the full

military invasion of Ukraine started in February 2022, four days after the Beijing Winter Games closed.

The ISU previously said Russia and Belarus can have just one competitor - individual, pair, or ice dance couple - in each discipline at the Olympics.

At the 2024 Paris Summer Games, Russia was banned from team sports though a small group of individual Russian athletes ended up being allowed to compete as approved neutral athletes. They were judged not to have publicly supported the war or have ties to the military or state security agencies.

A similar process in underway ahead of the Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo Olympics.

The ISU said it "thoroughly examined public appearances and statements made by the nominated (neutral athletes) since February 2022,

to assess any active support for the invasion of Ukraine or any contractual links to Russian or Belarusian military and other national security agencies."

Petrosian is the likely star name among the Russian figure skaters.

The two-time national champion turns 18 in June and is coached by Eteri Tutberidze. The storied Russian team mentor was a controversial figure at the Beijing Olympics coaching gold-medal favorite Kamila Valieva through a doping scandal, and the eventual gold medalist Anna Shcherbakova.

The likely back-up women's skater approved for the Olympic qualifier is 17-year-old Alina Gorbacheva.

The two men's individual skaters approved as eligible to qualify are Petr Gummenik and Vladislav Dikidzhi.



In this file photo, Eteri Tutberidze, congratulates silver medalists Evgenia Tarasova, centre, with Alexandra Trusova, right, following the pairs free skate program during the figure skating competition at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. (AP)

Sunderland to meet Sheffield for place in Premier League



Coventry City's Hajji Wright (11) and Sunderland's Daniel Ballard battle for the ball during a Sky Bet Championship play-off semifinal, second leg soccer match at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland, England. (AP)

Playoff final the most lucrative one-off match in world soccer

LONDON, May 14, (AP): Sunderland has booked a showdown with Sheffield United for a place in the Premier League.

Dan Ballard bundled in a goal in stoppage time of extra time to earn Sunderland a 1-1 draw with Coventry and a 3-2 victory on aggregate in the Championship playoff semifinals.

Sheffield United had already reached the playoff final at Wembley Stadium by completing a 6-0 aggregate win over Bristol City on Monday.

While Sheffield United is looking to return to the top flight after an absence of just one year, Sunderland hasn't played in the Premier League since 2017 and has since been the subject of a Netflix series documenting the club's struggles.

The playoff final is the most lucrative one-off match in world soccer, with Sunderland in line to get an estimated revenue uplift of around 200 million pounds (\$260 million) in projected matchday, broadcast



Sunderland's Daniel Ballard, center, and teammates celebrate after the final whistle against Coventry City in a Sky Bet Championship play-off semifinal, second leg soccer match at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland, England. (AP)

and commercial revenue - and much more if the team was to survive the first season back in the top flight.

For Sheffield United, the uplift would be an estimated \$180 million as the club is still benefitting from parachute payments from the last time the

team was in the Premier League - in the 2023-24 season.

Coventry, managed by Frank Lampard, last played in the Premier League in 2001 and suffered more heartache, having lost to Luton in a penalty shootout in the playoff final in 2023.

Wrexham is heading Down Under to prepare for its first shot at getting into the Premier League.

The fast-rising Welsh club owned by Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney will play three preseason friendlies in an eight-day span in July during a tour of Australia and New Zealand.

Wrexham has just clinched a third straight promotion and will be playing next season in the Championship - one tier down from the Premier League.

Wrexham will play Melbourne Victory on July 11 and then Sydney FC four days later, the team said Tuesday. The closing game of the tour will be against Wellington Phoenix on July 19.

"From the very beginning, we wanted to help make Wrexham a globally recognized team, town and brand," Reynolds and McElhenney said in a club statement. "We could not be more excited to bring the Red Dragons to Australia and New Zealand."

Wrexham has previously had preseason tours to the United States.

Daughter of Maradona testifies against late soccer star's primary care doctor

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, May 14, (AP): One of Diego Maradona's daughters testified that her father's primary care physician couldn't explain to her what type of treatment the soccer great was receiving and blamed the doctor for recommending that her father be moved to home care before his death in 2020.

Leopoldo Luque, a neurosurgeon who was Maradona's primary care doctor, is one of seven medical professionals on trial accused of negligence in Maradona's death.

Maradona had surgery for a hematoma that formed between his skull and brain and stayed in intensive care at Los Olivos clinic between Nov. 4-11, 2020. He then was sent to recover at a private home where

he died two weeks later at the age of 60.

Gianinna Maradona told the court that her father's health was badly deteriorating a month before his death and that she made this observation to Luque on several occasions.

The deficiencies in Maradona's home care are one of the prosecution's key pieces of evidence. A cardiologist testified that he was against moving Maradona from the Olivos Clinic.

Three judges will decide whether those charged are guilty of manslaughter. The maximum prison sentence is 25 years.

"I told Luque that my dad seemed very lost, that he wasn't happy, and that he couldn't walk. He told

me there were ups and downs in his days," said the daughter of "El Diez."

Recalling Maradona's 60th birthday on Oct. 30, Gianinna testified that when she visited him at home, "he looked at us but didn't understand. I asked him if he felt OK, and he said no, that he felt bad."

The witness stated that every time she asked the doctor to explain why her father "was getting worse and worse ... he couldn't tell me with certainty what treatment he was undergoing." She recounted that Luque, along with psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov and psychologist Carlos Diaz, two other defendants, proposed home confinement for Maradona, and she ended up trusting the decision even though she didn't initially agree.

Squad to assemble on May 31

Rabada picked by SA for test cricket final after serving ban

JOHANNESBURG, May 14, (AP): Kagiso Rabada was picked by South Africa for the World Test Championship final against Australia next month after serving a one-month suspension for using a recreational drug.

The fast bowler has already been cleared to return to play and is back in the Gujarat Titans squad ahead of the re-starting of the Indian Premier League on Saturday.

Rabada was banned for testing positive for a recreational drug during a domestic Twenty20 competition in South Africa in January.

The South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport said Rabada was eligible for a reduced one-month ban because he completed a substance-abuse treatment program. Rabada has said in a statement he is "deeply sorry" for his conduct.

When announcing the 15-man squad on Tuesday, South Africa said the group will assemble in England on May 31 and play a warm-up match against Zimbabwe from June 3-6, before heading to London ahead of the WTC final starting June 11.

The Proteas' pace attack will



In this file photo, South Africa's Kagiso Rabada celebrates during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match against New Zealand at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP)

also include Lungi Ngidi, who returns to the test fold for the first time since October 2024 after injury problems.

Squad: Temba Bavuma (captain), David Bedingham, Corbin Bosch, Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharraj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Lungi Ngidi, Dane Paterson, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs, Kyle Verreynne.

Process kicks off

Trail Blazers going up for sale

PORTLAND, Ore., May 14, (AP): Paul Allen's estate announced Tuesday that it has begun the process of selling the Portland Trail Blazers.

The sale of the team is "consistent with Allen's directive to eventually sell his sports holdings and direct all estate proceeds to philanthropy," the Trail Blazers said in a statement.

Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft, died in 2018 at age 65 from complications of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Since then, his sister, Jody Allen, has served as chair of the Trail Blazers and the NFL's Seattle Seahawks and trustee of the Paul G. Allen Trust.

The estate said it has hired the New York investment firm Allen & Company and the law firm Hogan Lovells to lead the sales process, "which is estimated to continue into the 2025-26 basketball season."

The team noted in its announcement that the NBA Board of Governors must ratify any final purchase agreement.

In addition to the Trail Blazers and Seahawks, Allen was a co-owner of Major League Soccer's Seattle Sounders. The statement said the announcement does not impact the Seahawks or the estate's 25% interest in the Sounders. Neither of those teams is for sale.

Allen bought the Trail Blazers in 1988, telling the The Associated Press at the time that "for a true fan of the game, this is a dream come true."

Since his death, there has been widespread speculation surrounding the future ownership of both the Seahawks and Trail Blazers. Allen stipulated in his will the eventual sale of both teams, with the proceeds given to philanthropic endeavors.

Jody Allen reportedly rebuffed an offer to buy the Trail Blazers from Nike co-founder Phil Knight for more than \$2 billion in 2022. At that time, there were no ongoing discussions about the sale of the teams, she said in a rare statement.

"A time will come when that changes given Paul's plans to dedicate the vast majority of his wealth to philanthropy, but estates of this size and complexity can take 10 to 20 years to wind down," she said. "There is no pre-ordained timeline by which the teams must be sold."

CNBC earlier this year valued the Trail Blazers at \$3.65 billion. In March, the Boston Celtics sold for \$6.1 billion.

The Trail Blazers finished 36-46 this season and missed out on the playoffs for the fourth straight year. They have the 11th pick in the next month's NBA draft, as was decided in Monday night's draft lottery.

Best of the Resst

Messi to reveal favorite goal: Lionel Messi is about to tell the world which of his many goals was his favorite. The Inter Miami star, eight-time Ballon d'Or winner and World Cup champion announced Tuesday that he will unveil his favorite goal on May 22. A depiction of that goal will then be turned into a work of art that will be auctioned off for charity.

Messi has plenty of options to choose from: He's scored more than 800 goals for club and country over his long career with Argentina, Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and Inter Miami.

Messi and the artist, Refik Anadol, will both sign the art piece, which will be unveiled in New York by auction house Christie's on June 11.

"Choosing just one goal out of them all is very difficult," Messi said. "Each one is special in its own way, and some are really important or bring back incredible memories. But highlighting one as a favorite for the first time, to make this unique project possible is worth it. (AP)

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Tour de France final stage to feature Montmartre climb, Champs-Élysées finish

PARIS, May 14, (AP): Tour de France riders will climb up the iconic Montmartre hill in Paris on the final stage this year before cycling's biggest race finishes on the Champs-Élysées, organizers said Wednesday, as they look to build on the popular success of the Olympic road race.

Last year's final stage was held outside Paris for the first time since 1905 because of a clash with the Olympics, moving instead to Nice. Because of security and logistical reasons, the French capital did not have its traditional Tour finish on the Champs-Élysées.

The world famous avenue is back on the program this year for the conclusion of the 3,320-kilometer (2,063-mile) race.

"To mark the 50th anniversary of the first final finish on the Champs-Élysées, and one year after the excitement and cheers of the Paris 2024 Olympic road race, the peloton will return to the capital on a route that passes through the heights of Montmartre," organizers said.

At last year's Olympics, huge crowds of fans gathered in Montmartre - the area in the northern part of Paris that is popular among artists and offers grand vistas of the city - to cheer on riders.

"An exceptional route has been designed, inspired by the course of the 2024 Olympic road race, which drew over 500,000 spectators last August," Tour organizers said. "Rid-

ers will climb the Montmartre hill and pass beneath the Sacré-Coeur before battling it out on a stage that may break from the traditions established over the past 50 years in the heart of the capital."

Traditionally, the Champs-Élysées stage is largely processional until a sprint decides the day's winner. The inclusion of the sharp Montmartre climb could change that scenario. Full details of the route will be presented at a news conference next week.

The Tour starts from the northern city of Lille on July 5, with the women's race kicking off on July 26 from the Brittany town of Vannes.

SPORTS

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing claims historic 5th straight win at Safari Rally Kenya



TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team drivers raise their trophies.

Toyota extends lead in WRC Manufacturers’ Championship to 148 points

NAIROBI, May 14: TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team continued its commanding form in the 2025 FIA World Rally Championship season by securing a fifth straight victory at the formidable Safari Rally Kenya. Elfyn Evans and co-driver Scott Martin delivered an expert performance in their No. 33 GR YARIS Rally1, claiming top honours in what has been widely described as the toughest edition of the rally since its WRC return in 2021.

The win marks Evans’ first at Safari Rally Kenya and the team’s 13th overall victory at the legendary African event, adding another milestone as TGR-WRT celebrated its 100th WRC event since debuting in 2017.

Akio Toyoda, TGR-WRT Chairman, commented: “Elfyn and Scott, congratu-

lations on your victory. Their victory has brought the team three consecutive wins this season and a fifth straight win at the Safari Rally Kenya. We were able to win the rally thanks to Elfyn and Scott, but the roads in Kenya were as challenging as ever. It wasn’t an easy victory. We approached Kenya with thorough preparations based on four years of experience there. However, this year we faced new challenges once again. So many things happened up until the last day and the last stage.”

Toyoda added: “We get excited every time we encounter a road that reminds us, ‘there is no end to ever-better car making’. Starting tomorrow, everyone in the team will work on improving the GR YARIS Rally1 to make it easier to drive and stronger. And these improvements will extend beyond rally cars to all Toyota vehicles running around the world. The roads of Kenya made us reaffirm the significance of participating in rallies as a car manufacturer. To all the team members, let’s work hard to create ever-better cars from tomorrow, and let’s enjoy the competition with our rivals.”

This year’s Safari Rally Kenya covered a punishing 383.1 kilometers of competitive distance and presented drivers with some of the most extreme rallying conditions of the WRC calendar. From treacherous rocky terrain to sections transformed by torrential rain, every kilometer tested the durability of machine and mindset. After a steady start on day one, Evans and Martin moved into the lead on Friday through a measured yet assertive approach. As other competitors faltered in the harsh conditions, the duo maintained consistency to build an advantage of nearly two minutes by the end of day three. On day four, they managed the final five stages with precision and composure, securing victory by 1 minute and 9.9 seconds.

This result also marks Toyota’s 53rd win and 123rd podium in the WRC since its return to the championship in 2017. With three back-to-back victories in the 2025 season, Toyota now leads the manufacturers’ championship with 148 points.

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of

motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 Hours endurance race.

Toyota’s participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR, to consolidate all of its motorsport’s activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota’s belief that ‘the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,’ TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota’s commitment to making ‘ever-better’ cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

Race Notes:
■ No. 33 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 (Elfyn Evans and Scott Martin)
■ Position: 1st
■ Time: 4 hours, 20 minutes, and 3.8 seconds

Kazma faces big changes: Coach Sefko stalls, key players depart

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Kazma’s Bosnian coach, Rosmir Sefko, requested to postpone his contract with the team in order to add some clauses. The coach left for his country without signing, after an initial agreement was reached to send the contract to Sefko in his home country.

Sources reported that Rosmir received two offers, one from Kuwait and the other from Saudi Arabia, but he has not yet made a decision on either.

On the other hand, the Kazma board of directors only renewed the contract of professional Samson Akiniola (Benin), joining Jordanian Anas Al-Awadat, whose contract expires at the end of next season.

The Moroccan trio of Montaser Lahtimi, Angolan Jonas Ramalho, and Nigerian Kingsley Sokari are no longer in the “Orange” squad’s plans, having failed to establish themselves since joining the team this season. They failed to make an impact with the team, leading to a decline in Kazma’s results. The team finished seventh in the Zain Premier League, forced to compete in the relegation group. It managed to remain in the Premier League, but was eliminated in the preliminary round of the Amir’s Cup and the semifinals of the Crown Prince’s Cup.

The board of directors granted Bosnian coach Rosmir Cefko full authority (if he agrees to renew his contract) to select the three professional players to strengthen the team’s ranks for the upcoming season, as well as to reinforce the “Orange” squad with some local players to compensate for the departures of some players.

Hamad Al-Harbi was the first player to leave, signing with Al-Arabi. Team captain Nasser Al-Faraj will also be removed from Kazma’s plans. The Kuwait Football Association



Rosmir Sefko

announced the dates for the matches between Al-Qadsia and Burgan and Al-Arabi and Al-Sulaibikhat, postponed from the preliminary round of the Amir Cup. These matches will be held on May 21 and 23, respectively.

The matches were postponed due to Al-Qadsia’s participation in the Gulf Champions League, and Al-Arabi’s participation in the AFC Challenge Cup.

The association also set the dates for the quarter-final matches of the tournament for May 25 and 26, with the semi-finals scheduled for the 29th and 30th of the same month.

It is worth noting that the final will be held on June 16 at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

A source at Kazma Club told Kooora that “major changes will occur in the Orange squad next season, based on the recommendation of the technical staff, led by Bosnian coach Rosmir Cefko.”

He added, “The management has approved team captain Hamad Harbi’s request to transfer to any team of his choice, which also applies to some players who have served Kazma in previous seasons.”

Alcaraz, Gauff advance to Italian Open semifinals

ROME, May 14, (AP): Carlos Alcaraz won in straight sets despite a strong challenge from Jack Draper to reach the Italian Open semifinals, and Coco Gauff extended her unbeaten streak against Mirra Andreeva to also advance to the last four at the clay-court tournament Wednesday.

Alcaraz was made to work hard on his serve and saved six of the eight break points he faced on his way to a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Draper, who beat him earlier this year.

The third-ranked Alcaraz, who withdrew from the Madrid tournament due to an upper right leg problem that bothered him during the Barcelona Open final, moved well on the court, often took to the net and used his trademark drop shots and groundstrokes to the best effect.

The four-time Grand Slam champion, who also had a left leg injury, had lost to Draper in their most recent meeting in the semifinals at Indian Wells, California, in March.

Alcaraz rallied from 2-4 to claim the first set. A turning point then came in the eighth game of the second set, when Draper looked like he could force a decider. That game lasted almost 10 minutes and Alcaraz saved two break points before coming out on top. Alcaraz broke at love in the next game and sealed the match.

“The most important thing that I did today was not thinking about the shots at all,” Alcaraz said. “Not thinking about the fact that I was down, just trying to do the things that make me happy. On court I just tried to be aggressive, play good shots, drop shots, go to the net. That’s what I like to do

on the court, and I think that made the difference today.”

Alcaraz’s next opponent will be either defending champion Alexander Zverev or Lorenzo Musetti.

In the women’s draw, Gauff played aggressively throughout to advance to the last four for the third time with a 6-4, 7-6 (5) win.

Both players hit high-quality shots in the tiebreaker, including Andreeva’s superb drop shot just behind the net from a tight angle that allowed her to level at 5-5 before Gauff won the last two points to seal the match.

Gauff has won all four of her matches against the 18-year-old Andreeva, having also beaten her at the French Open and U.S. Open in 2023, and two weeks ago in Madrid.

Gauff will next play the winner between No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and Zheng Qinwen. Jasmine Paolini and Peyton Stearns face off in the other semifinal.

Rome is the last big warmup before the French Open starts on May 25.

Also Wednesday, top-ranked Jannik Sinner visited the new pope, gave him a tennis racket and offered to play, during an off day for Sinner. Leo XIV, the first American pope, is an avid tennis player.

The pope and Sinner posed for photos in front of the Davis Cup trophy that Sinner helped Italy win for the second consecutive time last year.

Sinner has a quarterfinal match Thursday in his first tournament back after a three-month ban for doping that was judged to be an accidental contamination. He will next face freshly-crowned Madrid champion

Al-Qadsia pins West Asia Super League hopes on Tabiat

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

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Al-Qadsia’s basketball team is closely watching the outcome of tonight’s crucial Group B clash between Iran’s Tabiat and Shabab Al-Ahli Dubai in the West Asia Super League (WASL) Final Eight, taking place at Nouhad Noufal Sports Complex in Beirut, Lebanon.

A win for Tabiat would secure Al-Qadsia a spot in the semifinals as the group’s runner-up behind the Iranian side. However, if Shabab Al-Ahli Dubai prevails, all three teams will be tied on points – reigniting qualification scenarios due to Al-Qadsia’s earlier defeat to Tabiat.

If Al-Qadsia advances as Group B’s second-placed team, it will face the winner of Group A, which includes Lebanese giants Al-Riyadi – who have already booked their place in the semifinals with two wins – alongside Al-Hikma (Lebanon), Al-Ittihad (Saudi Arabia), and Astana (Uzbekistan).

The championship, which features seven of Asia’s top clubs, concludes on May 18. The top two teams from each group progress to the semifinals, with the finalists earning qualification for the FIBA Asia Champions League (ACL).

In its final group-stage match, Al-Qadsia put on a dominant display, led by captain Abdulaziz Al-Humaidi, who starred with 26 points – 17 of them from beyond the arc. Cedric Henry added 17 points, while teammates Abdullah Tawfiq and Saleh Al-Youssef chipped in with 8 points each.

Head coach Javier Munoz expressed satisfaction with the team’s performance, stating: “I’m pleased with the win and how the players executed their roles. Now, we wait for the result of Tabiat vs. Shabab Al-Ahli. I hope we move forward and continue this journey.”



Al-Qadsia player is well defended by Shabab Al-Ahli Dubai players.

Catalans eye derby victory over Espanyol

Raphinha’s breakthrough season key for Barcelona as it nears league title

MADRID, May 14, (AP): Raphinha is about to cap his best season for Barcelona with the Spanish league title.

Lamine Yamal has been getting most of the attention as Barcelona moves closer to lifting the trophy, but Raphinha has been just as important for the Catalan club in its title run.

Barcelona can clinch its 28th league title if Real Madrid fails to beat Mallorca at home or if it beats Espanyol in the Barcelona derby on Thursday. Barcelona came from behind to defeat Madrid 4-3 in the last “clasico” of the season on Sunday - with a double by Raphinha - to open a seven-point lead over its rival with three matches remaining.

The 28-year-old Raphinha is having his breakthrough season with Barcelona, being decisive in big matches and putting up career-high numbers in terms of goals and assists. He scored five of the 16 goals scored by Barcelona in the four “clasico” matches that it won against Madrid this season.

“I demand a lot of myself and I’m a player who wants to be doing his very best all the time,”

Raphinha said. “I’ve been working hard for these moments and I’ve tried to find my best version ever since I arrived at this club. I’ve always said that I came here to try to write my name in the history of this club.”

His performances have already helped Barcelona win the

Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup, when he scored twice in a 5-2 final against Madrid. Raphinha also was key in a 4-0 rout of Madrid in a Spanish league match at the Santiago Bernabeu, when he had a goal and an assist.

Raphinha has scored 34 goals



Barcelona’s Raphinha tackles Real Madrid’s Brahim Diaz during the La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Real Madrid in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

for Barcelona this season, more than tripling his previous tallies. The Brazil forward scored only 10 goals in each of his first two seasons after joining the Catalan club from Leeds United.

He is the second top scorer for Barcelona behind Robert Lewandowski, who has 40 goals so far. Raphinha led the team with 13 goals in the Champions League before it was eliminated by Inter Milan in the semifinals. The Brazilian has scored 18 goals in the league, and in addition to his double in the Spanish Super Cup, he also scored once in the Copa del Rey.

Raphinha has also been prolific with his assists, with 22 in 52 appearances this season. He had a total of 23 in the last two seasons combined.

Only Yamal has more assists than Raphinha in the Spanish league, with 12 against the nine by the Brazilian. The two have teamed up to near perfection and with the help of the likes of Lewandowski, Pedri, Dani Olmo and Ferran Torres, Barcelona is set to celebrate yet another league title.

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Damian Moreno of Argentina's Lanus, front, and Luiz Gustavo of Brazil's Vasco da Gama battle for the ball during a Copa Sudamericana Group G soccer match at Nestor Diaz Perez stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Lanus won 1-0. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait Club seals 4th straight volleyball league title



Kuwait Club raises the volleyball Premier League trophy as it celebrates on the podium.

Photo by Mohamed Morsi

Burgan denied historic trophy

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Kuwait Club's first volleyball team claimed Kuwait Premier League title, marking the 16th championship in the club's history and their fourth consecutive crown. Kuwait Club secured the title after defeating Burgan Club

3-0 in the second match of the playoff semifinals, held at Union Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex.

Burgan Club celebrated a historic runner-up finish – the highest in its volleyball history – while Al-Arabi Club took third place with a 3-1 win over Kazma.

According to league regulations, the Premier League champion is determined in a best-of-three playoff series. Kuwait Club secured the title early by winning both matches 3-0, making a third game unnecessary.

Following the final, Dr. Jaber Al-Marri, President of the Kuwait Volleyball Association, along with Association members, Burgan Club President Anwar Al-Otaibi, and Kuwait Club representatives, crowned the top three teams.

Dr. Al-Marri praised the high level of competition this season, stating that the 2024-2025 campaign was among the most competitive in recent years, with teams like Al-Qadsia, Al-Arabi, and Kazma fighting for the title until the final stages. He added that such competitiveness promises an even more exciting upcoming season and hoped for continued strong fan support.

He also emphasized that the improvement in club-level performances reflects positively on the national team, expressing gratitude to the Public Authority for Sports and its acting director Bashar Abdullah for their ongoing support.

Kuwaiti Volleyball League Title History:
Al-Qadsia – 23 titles (record holder)
Kuwait Club – 16 titles
Kazma – 15 titles
Al-Arabi – 4 titles
Al-Jahra – 1 title

Al-Arabi president Ashour claims refereeing injustice cost team Zain Premier League title

KUWAIT CITY, May 14: Al-Arabi Club President Abdulaziz Ashour expressed strong dissatisfaction with the refereeing decisions during the current Zain Premier League season, claiming that officiating errors played a key role in denying his team the league title.

Ashour specifically pointed to controversial incidents in several matches, saying, "In our first-leg match against Kuwait Club, the referee sent off our Mauritanian professional Abdullah Mahmoud after we were awarded a foul. Ironically, Abdullah was the one fouled, yet he received the red card."

He continued, "There was another case where a Kuwait Club player who had already received a yellow card committed another offense that warranted a second yellow – and consequently a red card. However, the referee instead chose to show a yellow card to Hussein Ashkanani to



Abdulaziz Ashour
Al-Arabi Club president

avoid sending off the Kuwait Club player."

Ashour also criticized Mexican referee Ramos, who officiated its

game against Al-Qadsia. "Ramos issued multiple yellow cards, eventually making it easy to send off Hassan Hamdan. He also refereed our decisive game against Kuwait Club and distributed yellow cards to several players. During halftime, players told me he was handing out cards excessively. We also had a clear penalty shout for Jumaa Aboud that went ignored."

He added, "Even earlier in the match, we were denied another penalty, and the referee failed to consult VAR. It's clear to me now that this referee knew exactly what he was doing. I'm convinced we were robbed of the match."

Ashour held the Kuwait Football Association accountable for what he described as a "refereeing injustice" and expressed hope that the federation would not impose harsh penalties on Al-Arabi in light of the post-match events.

OKC closes in on West finals

Pacers send Cavaliers packing, advances to conference finals

CLEVELAND, May 14, (AP): Indiana coach Rick Carlisle put it best in summing up his team's finishing punch in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

"The winning team writes the script," he said. The Pacers' 114-105 victory over the Cavaliers in Game 5 on Tuesday night was similar to the first two games of the series. Cleveland jumped out to a big first-half lead, but Indiana's quick tempo eventually took a toll.

Tyrese Haliburton scored 31 points and Pascal Siakam added 21 as the Pacers reached the conference finals in consecutive years for the first time since 2013-14.

Donovan Mitchell, who missed the second half of Sunday's game due to a sprained left ankle, led Cleveland with 35 points. Evan Mobley added 24 points and 11 rebounds.

The top-seeded Cavs swept their first-round series against Miami, but were unable to match up against the up-tempo Pacers.

The fourth-seeded Pacers will now await the winner of the matchup between the Boston Celtics and New York Knicks. New York leads 3-1 with Game 5 on Wednesday night in Boston.

Indiana rallied from a 19-point deficit in the first half and took control after halftime and won all three games at Cleveland's Rocket Arena.

It was the first time since a 2005 first-round series against Boston that the Pacers won three road games in a playoff series.

The Cavs dropped three home games in a postseason series for the first time.

Indiana then shot 14 of 22 from the field in the third quarter, when it had a 17-2 run, to go up 85-76 going into the final 12 minutes.

The Cavs shot 38.9% for the game and were a woeful 9 of 35 on 3-pointers. Mitchell and Darius Garland were a combined 12 of 41, including 4 of 19 from beyond the arc.

Mitchell's 3-pointer got the Cavs within 106-103 with 1:27 remaining, but Indiana closed it out by scoring eight of the final 10 points.

Thunder 112, Nuggets 105

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 31 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Denver Nuggets to go up 3-2 in their Western Conference semifinal series.

Oklahoma City overcame a 44-point, 15-rebound night from Denver's Nikola Jokic. The Thunder can clinch the series on Thursday in Denver.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 12 of 23 field goals and bounced back from a slow start to lead six players in double figures.

Jokic made 17 of 25 shots. Denver's Jamal Murray scored 28 points, but he made just 10 of 27 shots. No other Denver player scored more than 13 points.

Oklahoma City ran out to a 12-2 lead, and it looked like it might turn out like the Thunder's blowout victory in Game 2. Denver made one of its first nine shots, and



Indiana Pacers guard Andrew Nembhard, right, tries to drive by Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell during the first half in Game 5 of an Eastern Conference semifinal NBA basketball playoff in Cleveland. (AP)



Oklahoma City Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, left, advances the ball up court under pressure from Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) in the second half of Game 5 of an NBA basketball second-round playoff series in Oklahoma City. (AP)

that was a putback by Jokic.

Denver rallied and led by 11 in the second quarter, but Oklahoma City closed strong and trailed 56-54 at halftime. Jokic had 19 points and nine rebounds before the break.

Murray scored 13 points in the third quarter, and Jokic added 12 to help the Nuggets take an 86-78 lead into the fourth. Still, there were missed opportunities.

Oklahoma City's Lu Dort, who scored three total points in the first three quarters, hit a trio of 3-pointers in two minutes to cut Denver's lead to 92-90 midway through the fourth.

Jokic hit a deep fadeaway 3-pointer to tie the game at 103 before Oklahoma City closed it out. Jalen Williams' 3-pointer with 1:18 remaining gave the Thunder a 106-103 lead, and Gilgeous-Alexander's three with 48 seconds to go pushed Oklahoma City's lead to six.

Tatum to miss remainder of playoffs

BOSTON, May 14, (AP): When Jayson Tatum toppled to the court, writhing in pain and grabbing at his right foot late in the Celtics' Eastern Conference semifinals Game 4 loss to the New York Knicks, it looked like a potentially season-altering injury.

Boston's worst fears are now confirmed.

Tatum had surgery Tuesday to repair a ruptured right Achilles tendon that will sideline him for the remainder of the playoffs, the team announced.

The Celtics provided details on the extent of Tatum's injury and announced news of the surgery a day after the six-time All-Star went down in the Celtics' 121-113 Game 4 loss to the New York Knicks. It puts the hopes of the defending champions repeating and Tatum's playing status for next season in doubt.

They did not give a timetable for his return, but said a full recovery was expected.

When Kevin Durant tore his Achilles tendon during the 2019 NBA Finals, he wound up missing the entire 2019-2020 season.

The 27-year-old Tatum is leading the Celtics in points (28.1), rebounds (11.5) and assists (5.4) per game for the second straight postseason.

The Knicks lead the Celtics 3-1 in their Eastern Conference semifinals se-

ries. Game 5 is in Boston on Wednesday night.

Tatum was carried off the court with 2:58 remaining in Monday night's game. The Celtics had just turned the ball over and as Tatum moved for the loose ball, his leg gave out and he went down. He buried his face in a towel in obvious pain while grabbing at his leg above the ankle after the noncontact injury.

Tatum scored 42 points, his highest total during these playoffs and one of the best all-round postseason performances of his career, before he was hurt.

The injury was Tatum's second this postseason. He missed Game 2 of Boston's 4-1 first-round series win over Orlando with a bone bruise in his right wrist. It was the first time he'd missed a playoff game in his career.

Now, Tatum's teammates will face a daunting task that few teams before them have pulled off if they want to break an NBA record six-season drought without a repeat champion.

Teams holding a 3-1 lead in the NBA playoffs have gone on to win 95.6% of the time, with only 13 teams in 293 tries ever coming back from the deficit to win the series.

"Obviously, we all realize in our heads what this could mean. This part of the sport - it's tough," Celtics center Kristaps Porzingis said Monday. "We have to move forward. He don't want

us to be over here sad and not play our best basketball."

To become the 14th team to overcome a 3-1 deficit, the Celtics will need big performances from a roster that has several players who have dealt with injuries this postseason.

All-Star Jaylen Brown entered the playoffs dealing with a right knee issue that has slowed him at times. Porzingis also has been slowed at times by the lingering effects of a viral illness that sidelined him for stretches in the second half of the regular season.

Brown said Monday that his confidence remains high.

"Get ready for the next one. Get ready to fight. Get ready to come out on our home floor and do what we need to do," Brown said. "That's the goal. Still the goal. We've got enough in this locker room. So, I believe in my guys."

Regardless of how this series or the rest of the playoffs play out for Boston, Tatum's injury likely will alter how the franchise confronts this coming offseason.

Including this year, the Celtics' payroll will be over the salary cap and make them a luxury-tax team for the third straight season. That means they will be hit with the "repeater tax" for being over the cap threshold in three out of four seasons.