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# A happy Eid Al-Adha to all

The Arab Times will be off the news-stands from June 7 to June 9. The next issue of the paper will appear on the stands on Tuesday, June 10. — See you then

## Kuwait airport braces for 236K Eid travelers

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) expects Kuwait International Airport to handle 1,737 incoming and outgoing flights, carrying approximately 236,000 passengers during the Eid al-Adha holidays, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement about the anticipated flight traffic, DGCA highlighted that the most popular travel destinations during this period are Dubai, Cairo, Jeddah, Doha, and Istanbul.

It affirmed its commitment to ensuring smooth travel and providing excellent services to passengers throughout the Eid season, in coordination with airport authorities.

DGCA spokesperson Abdullah Al-Rajhi stressed the importance of arriving at the airport well in advance of flights and ensuring that all travel documents are complete and valid, including passports, confirmed flight and hotel reservations, and obtaining entry visas for the destination if required.

## 57 EID PRAYER LOCATIONS SET ACROSS KUWAIT



A Muslim pilgrim prays during the annual Hajj pilgrimage on the Plain of Arafat, near the holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia, Thursday, June 5, 2025. (AP)

## More than 1.5 mn foreign pilgrims in Saudi for Hajj

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (Agencies): The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has announced the allocation of 57 prayer yards for Eid Al-Adha prayers in all six governorates, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The distribution of the prayer yards are as follows: 11 in the Capital Governorate, 8 in Hawally, 10 in Farwaniya, 8 in Jahra, 5 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and 15 in Ahmadi.

The ministry also announced yesterday that Eid Al-Adha prayers will begin at 5:03 am.

Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia a total

of 1,673,230 pilgrims are performing Hajj this year, including 1,506,576 from abroad and 166,654 from within the Kingdom, the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) announced Thursday.

The number of male pilgrims totaled 877,841, while female pilgrims numbered 795,389, the GASTAT said in a press release.

A total of 1,435,017 pilgrims arrived in the Kingdom via airports, 66,465 through land border crossings,

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## Test tampering now a felony

## Kuwait targets exam cheating with prison terms, hefty fines

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei praised the Cabinet's approval on Wednesday of a draft bill amending the Penal Code and criminalize cheating and exam leaks.

He called the legal amendments "a turning point" for educational justice.

He expressed gratitude to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and other Cabinet members for their roles in this development, which reflects the political leadership's commitment to safeguarding the futures of students.

The draft law explicitly outlaws the printing, selling, or leaking of

exam questions and answers for intermediate and secondary schools, mainly when intended to facilitate cheating or undermine the examination process.

Al-Tabtabaei emphasized that such actions threaten Kuwait's educational reputation and that legal action would be taken against offenders.

The Cabinet's approved amendments add two articles to the Penal Code: Article 259 bis, which punishes leaking exam materials with imprisonment of up to five years and fines ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 dinars, and Article 259 bis (a), which penalizes altering exam answers or

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# Lawsuits get a fee-lift

## Court costs soar to cut case flood

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presided over the weekly meeting of the Cabinet, during which a decree-law amending certain provisions of Judicial Fees Law No. 17/1973 was approved.

This amendment is the first in more than five decades. It aims to limit the growing number of vexatious cases, ensure the seriousness of the right to litigation, and promote alternative dispute resolution methods like arbitration and conciliation.

The amendment includes the increase of fees and rates imposed on lawsuits with

a specified or unspecified claim value. It stipulates a five percent rate if the claim value is up to KD30,000; 3.5 percent if the claim value exceeds KD30,000 up to KD150,000; 2.5 percent if the value ranges between KD150,000 and KD500,000; 1.5 percent if the claim value ranges between KD500,000 and KD5million; and one percent if the claim value exceeds KD5 million.

It raised the fees for orders on petitions and requests from KD5 to KD10; KD50 for urgent lawsuits and enforcement issues — up from KD3; court lawsuit fees increased to KD100, including the request to appoint an expert; KD150 for enforcement issues — up from KD30; KD100 for requests to dismiss a judge, expert and arbitrator; KD500 for a request to refer a property to a sales judge; the fee for warnings for each party increased from 500 fils to KD5; cost of stamp duty increased from 500 fils to KD1; and requests to expedite lawsuits, suspension and cancellation are subject to a fee of KD5.

Article One of the Decree-Law stipulates the replacement of a number of articles of the Judicial Fees Law with new texts.

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## Call for more affordable options amid price hikes

## Eid holiday drives chalet rents up 60%

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The five-day Eid Al-Adha holiday has become an opportunity for families to enjoy a relaxing time, away from the pressures of daily life.

Almost everyone has resorted to chalets as a haven and the first and most attractive option; especially given the seaside atmosphere they

offer amid the intense heat, as well as the comprehensive entertainment services at a time travel outside the country is not feasible for many.

In this context, several reservation office workers confirmed to the newspaper that chalets in Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City witnessed a high demand and a remarkable increase in prices — about 60 percent higher compared to normal days. This price hike is due to the increased demand

during the Eid holiday, which some consider an unjustified increase.

They revealed that the rent for 'deluxe' chalets — consisting of four rooms and a swimming pool, and located on the second row from the sea — reached about KD500 during the holiday, while the rent for those on the first row from the sea (on the creek) ranged between KD600 and KD800.

They said the rent for 'super deluxe' chalets on the first row of the creek ranged from KD900 to KD1,800; while prices for VIP chalets — which consist of 10 to 14 rooms in modern buildings, with indoor and outdoor swimming pools, and game rooms for adults and children — reached between KD1,800 and KD2,500. They added all these chalets are fully booked days before the holiday.

They pointed out that the significant increase in bookings coincided with the school holidays and Eid Al-Adha. "The long holiday was expected to encourage many to travel, but the reality proved otherwise, contributing to a surge in domestic bookings," they added.

They also indicated that occupancy rates reached nearly 100 percent

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

People relax by the beach beneath Kuwait's hazy, sun-drenched sky.

## Humidity cranks up Kuwait's Eid weekend heat

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department says the high-pressure system accompanied by a hot and dry air mass experienced in the country will recede, making way for the seasonal Indian low-pressure system during the weekend. This will bring a relatively hot and humid air

mass, along with variable winds shifting to southeasterly at light to moderate speeds during the weekend.

The acting Director of the Meteorological Department Dhirar Al-Ali told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that wind speeds will gradually decrease until Sunday, after which south-

easterly winds are expected to become active again starting Monday morning. These winds may stir up dust and cause an increase in sea waves.

He explained that on Friday, the weather is expected to be hot during the day, with northwesterly to variable

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## Newswatch

**CAIRO:** Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian underlined Thursday the significance of restraint to avoid escalation in the Middle East region.

This came during a phone call made by the Iranian leader, calling for fending off a slide into a military conflict that could trigger serious reflections on regional security and stability. Spokesman for the Egyptian President Ambassador Mohammad Al-Shennawi said in a press statement.

The two leaders also exchanged greetings on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, the spokesman added. (KUNA)

**GAZA:** At least 70 Palestinians were killed and over 189 others wounded on Wednesday in a series of Israeli occupation airstrikes targeting areas in the Gaza Strip, according to Gaza health authorities.

The latest fatalities have thus taken the death toll from Israeli occupation aggression since October 7, 2023, up to 54,677, while 125,530 others have been injured, health authorities said in a press release. (KUNA)

## New US entry ban hits twelve countries, tightens rules for 7

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): US President Donald Trump on Wednesday resurrected a hallmark policy of his first term, announcing that citizens of 12 countries would be banned from visiting the United States and those from seven others would face restrictions.

The ban takes effect Monday at 12:01 a.m., a cushion that may avoid the chaos that unfolded at airports nationwide when a similar measure took effect with virtually no notice in 2017. Trump, who signaled plans for a new

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US President Donald Trump gestures after speaking during a summer soiree on the South Lawn of the White House, Wednesday, June 4, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

## Kuwait energizes grid with new high-tech cyber armor

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has completed four new contracts to protect its electronic infrastructure from hackers and cyber criminal breaches, say sources from the ministry.

Sources disclosed that the contracts will be offered for bidding soon through the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), through which the ministry shall seek the assistance of companies specialized in this field that meet the technical requirements and financial capabilities.

Sources stated that the first contract is for combating 'ransomware', a type of malware that encrypts users' files or blocks access to a computer system. It then demands a ransom in exchange for decrypting or restoring access after the devices are infected. A message is also sent requesting payment of certain amounts to decrypt

files or restore access to the device.

Sources added that the second contract is for the identification and assessment of cybersecurity strengths and weaknesses, third is for the provision of practical and implementable recommendations to improve the ability of the ministry to respond quickly and effectively to cybersecurity breaches, and fourth is for uncovering the most dangerous unknown threats and exploited vulnerabilities in harmless infrastructure that amplify cybersecurity risks.

Meanwhile, sources revealed that three companies are competing for the tender to supply and install 400 kV overhead lines connecting Shagaya (z) SGRE solar power conversion station to Subiya 2-SWPS power plant.

Sources said the bids were submitted through CAPT, which referred the bids to the ministry for review and preparation of technical recommendations. CAPT will then make the award decision based on the requirements.

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## 47 primary health centers to stay open during 'Eid'



## Jazeera Airways first direct flight to Budapest takes off from Kuwait



## Kuwait wins two gold and one bronze at Asian Shooting Championships in China



Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	03:14	Asr .....	15:21
Sunrise ..	04:48	Maghrib ..	18:45
Zohr .....	11:46	Isha .....	20:16

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.  
**By Night:** Hot to rather hot

Weather			
with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds ranging from 08-30 km/h.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	41	30	
Kuwait Airport	40	23	

Bubyan	41	24
Jahra	41	26
Failaka Island	41	27
Salmiyah	38	29
Ahmadi	38	25
Nuwaisib	41	23
Wafra	40	21
Salmiya	39	22

## Kuwait prioritizes protection of workers

# Support pledged for sustainable labor market

GENEVA, June 5, (KUNA): Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Naser Al-Hayen reiterated utter commitment to backing international cooperation for a fairer and more sustainable future at the global labor market.

Addressing the 113th session of the International Labor Conference on Wednesday, he reaffirmed Kuwait's support for the International Labor Organization (ILO), warning of interconnected world labor challenges, mainly biological risks, digitalization and growing platform economy.

He underlined that such challenges require collection response based on flexible and updated legislative frameworks that ensure social protection and promote justice at the labor market.

In this regard, the Kuwaiti diplomat noted Kuwait's package of legislative and regulatory measures and reforms, which are in line with Kuwait's development plan (New Kuwait 2035) regarding effective involvement in the international community.

He added that the package, including the achievement of the Eighth Sustainable Development Goal pertinent to decent work and economic growth, aims to promote fairness at the labor market and ensure protection for workers.

He cited the Private Sector Labor Law No. 6 of 2010, the Domestic Workers Law No. 68 of 2015, and Law No. 114 of 2024 regarding foreigners' residence in Kuwait.

Ambassador Al-Hayen pointed to the formation of an ad hoc committee to review the Kuwaiti labor law and propose essential amendments that enhance a decent work environment, including prohibiting document withholding, criminalizing forced labor, harassment, and discrimination, and ensuring the principle of equal opportunities.

He also spoke highly of the country's national efforts to fight trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling by setting up a relevant national committee



KUNA photo  
Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Naser Al-Hayen.

and hosting the Sixth Regional Government Forum to Combat Trafficking in Persons in April 2025.

He added that the State of Kuwait has also taken serious measures to protect victims by launching specialized centers to shelter female migrant workers since 2015 and opening a shelter for male migrant workers in February 2025.



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince



HH the Prime Minister

## Amir congratulates Danish King on Constitution Day celebration

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to King Frederik X of Denmark, expressing sincere congratulations on Denmark's Constitution Day anniversary.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the king good health and well-being and his country further prosperity and progress.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-

Sabah sent Thursday a cable to King Frederik X of Denmark, expressing sincere congratulations on Denmark's Constitution Day anniversary.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the king good health and well-being.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent Thursday a cable of congratulations to King Frederik X of Denmark on his country's Constitution Day.

# Spotlight on plastic pollution as world marks Environs Day

Govts urged to bring about 'systematic change'

By Zahra Al-Kathmi

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): Accelerating collective measures to tackle plastic pollution is a matter that has risen in significance given how it forms an inextricable part of environmental conservation efforts, against the backdrop of World Environment Day, which is marked on June 5th of every year to raise awareness and encourage action.

The initiative, which dates back more than 50 years ago, is the largest international platform allowing countries to work together to address the issue, through a range of activities and events that ultimately promote and stimulate environmental conservation efforts.

This year's edition of World Environment Day shines the spotlight on the crisis of plastic pollution, urging governments to adopt measures and practices that trigger "systemic change" in efforts to fight plastic pollution, according to the long-standing initiative's website.

As among the participants in World Environment Day, Kuwait's Environment Public Authority's (EPA) acting director general Nouf Behbehani said that the body has launched a media campaign to generate awareness about the matter, in conjunction with relevant state bodies and international organizations, she said.

Environmental conservation efforts form a ma-



Dr. Wejdan Al-Oqab



Nouf Behbehani

jor component of Kuwait's sustainable development plans, which include encouraging "positive behavior" across individual and institutional levels, while phasing out single-use plastics is a measure backed by the Kuwaiti body, she underlined. She went on to encourage those who may not be familiar with the EPA campaign to look into the initiative, which largely revolves around the notion of limiting plastic use and developing environment-friendly habits such as recycling, the official said.

Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) is advocating practices such as limiting plastic production and recycling, its chief Dr. Wejdan Al-Oqab told KUNA, citing the society's involvement in a wide range of activities on national and global levels, all of which aim to keep plastic waste at bay, she said. The official went on to list some of the perils of plastic waste on both the environment and human health, posing risks to the wellbeing of the environment and humans alike, which behooves environment protection

bodies to take "urgent steps" and address a matter that has increasingly grown in importance.

On a local level, KEPS has assembled an initiative called "Green Schools" that comprises numerous lectures and workshops in a bid to educate students about the detrimental effects of plastic pollution, which target ecosystems, wildlife and human well being, added the official.

The initiative brings into focus the pivotal role of individuals through their daily habits in fighting plastic pollution, where even simple acts at home such as using sustainable material instead of plastic can go a long way in contributing towards environment conservation efforts, she underlined.

While Kuwait has passed stringent legislations that impose legal penalties on actions that cause harm to the environment, the official said that it was imperative for the general public to develop "proper behavior" that limits any potential perils to the environment.

Offering his input on the matter, Kuwait Society for Earth Sciences Dr. Mubarak Al-Hajeri hoped that World Environment Day this year would mark a "transition" in efforts to clarify and reshape the principles of environmental sustainability, he said.

The global initiative is a significant platform to shore up local and global efforts to fight environmental crises, in addition to encouraging creativity when it comes to adopting environment-friendly practices whether on an individual or institutional level, he said. The official lamented the increasing amount of plastic waste flowing into oceans and other bodies of water, choking marine life and threatening the existence of fish and other creatures through entanglement, ingestion and the spread of harmful chemicals into water.



The Catholic Church in Kuwait City.

## Church sends Eid greetings to Kuwait's leadership & people

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Catholic Church congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Father Suleiman Haifawi extended his

heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, praying to God Almighty to grant the Amir and Crown Prince good health on this blessed occasion, to bless Kuwait with continued security and stability, and to uphold the blessings of harmony, love, and fraternal coexistence among all its citizens.

## Other Voices

## Bank's board and admin finding

By Ahmad alsarraf

IN several articles, I have reflected on my banking career, not out of pride, but because of the deep psychological, cultural, financial, and personal impact it has had on my life. Even today, I continue to draw on the depth of that experience, which began in the mid-1960s and ended in the mid-1990s. I was in my late teens when I started working at the bank. My position was the most junior, and accordingly, my salary was the lowest. Nevertheless, I advanced quickly, and by 1970, I was appointed manager of the bank's largest branch, becoming the youngest person ever to hold that position.

All of this allowed me to participate in board meetings along with my fellow employees. Due to the nature of the relationship between the board of directors and senior management, we were often frustrated and embarrassed when our requests for banking facilities on behalf of clients were rejected. Their decisions frequently surprised us, especially since we felt we were more professionally qualified than them in banking matters.

However, the days that followed often proved us wrong. Time and experience revealed the wisdom behind the board members' decisions. Despite their modest formal education, they possessed remarkable insight and extensive life experience.

I resigned from the bank after that and devoted myself to my own business, but I returned in the early 1990s as a board member. I now found myself on the other side, the side I had once criticized when I was part of the senior management, believing it failed to appreciate our efforts or understand our opinions, often without offering any justification.

At the time, I believed that if I were in the board's position, my decisions would be more in line with those of the management. However, from my very first day on the board, I realized that my perspective, actions, and decisions had become naturally more



alsarraf

cautious and less inclined to meet management's demands, which were often driven by the desire to maximize profits without fully considering other factors. The general view I had as a board member was entirely different from the view held by those in senior management. Rome beneath the olive tree is not the same as Rome at the seat of power.

With the successive government decisions to revoke the citizenship of various groups, and the resulting complex problems faced by these individuals, their families, and those who interact with them, many of those affected, along with their sympathizers, began to voice their frustration over the hardships they face, holding government officials responsible for their suffering.

What they may not realize is that the officials who issued these decisions are undoubtedly viewing the situation from a broader perspective, one that is far removed from that of the ordinary citizen, who bears no responsibility for national outcomes. This situation closely mirrors my own experience in bank management, when my colleagues and I viewed the decisions of the board as strange and illogical.

This is similar to how we often form quick, and often inaccurate, judgments upon hearing about a heinous crime. Yet, in time, the courts, after careful review at various levels, may acquit those whom the public had already deemed guilty. The courts arrive at their decisions from a different vantage point, one that is not shaped by hearsay or emotion.

In my article titled "Revocation of Street Names" published not long ago, I tried to shed light on these considerations. But few took notice, perhaps due to my own inability to clearly present the full picture.

I am not trying to downplay the seriousness of the issue. It is, by any measure, a difficult situation. But we must place our trust in those responsible for making such decisions. They see things from a perspective we cannot, with greater clarity and context. In the end, time will reveal the wisdom or the flaws of their choices.

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email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

## PM calls Hajj Mission chief to check on pilgrims status

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday called Undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Chief of the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi.

During the contact, His Highness conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to Kuwaiti pilgrims.

His Highness the Prime Minister also

checked on the conditions of Kuwaiti pilgrims in Makkah and services offered to them from the Hajj mission, hailing the efforts of all concerned bodies to take care of pilgrims.

His Highness the Prime Minister also appreciated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its exceptional efforts and role in organizing the pilgrimage season and serving pilgrims.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Education Minister Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei on Thursday extended warm congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown

Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha.

Speaking to KUNA, the minister wished the country's political leadership wellness and good health and the nation perpetual security, peace and stability under the wise leadership.

Al-Tabtabaei regarded Eid Al-Adha as an opportunity for everyone to promote great Islamic values and underline the significance of giving, solidarity and togetherness in the society.

# 47 primary health centers to stay open during 'Eid'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Ministry of Health has designated 47 primary healthcare centers to operate during the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

These centers are located in the six governorates, including 22 centers that will operate 24 hours a day.

The ministry announced that six centers will operate during the holiday in the Capital Health District, including four 24-hour centers: Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanim Center, Mirza Al-Ahqaqi Center, Hamad Al-Saqr Center and Jaber Health Center (2); while two centers will operate from 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight -- Munira Al-Ayyar Health Center and Abdullah Al-Abd Al-Hadi Center.

In Hawally Governorate, the ministry designated six centers operating during the holiday -- Rumaithiya, Sabah Al-Salem,

Salmiya, Salwa, West Hawally and Mahmoud Haidar. Four of these centers will operate round the clock and two are open from 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight.

In Farwaniya Governorate, nine centers have been designated -- six of which will operate 24 hours a day and three are open from 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight.

It has also designated 14 centers in Ahmadi Governorate, all of which will operate 24 hours a day during the holiday.

In Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate, the ministry has designated five centers -- three of which will operate 24 hours a day and two will be open from 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight.

In Jahra Governorate, seven centers will operate during the holiday -- five will operate 24 hours a day, while the Southern Sulaiybiya Center will operate from 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight; and the Kabad Center will operate from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.

## Traffic Dept all geared up to maintain public safety

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior confirmed on Thursday that its concerned security and traffic sectors have completed their preparations in the six governorates; as part of efforts to secure the Eid Al-Adha celebration in a way that guarantees public safety and reassures the citizens and expatriates.

In a press statement, the Public Relations and Security Media General Department in the ministry confirmed that various field sectors have intensified their presence in vital locations like commercial complexes, recreational places, residential areas and border crossings; in line with a comprehensive plan aimed at ensuring smooth traffic flow and maintaining public order.

The department urged everyone to adhere to the general guidelines and fully cooperate with the securitymen in a way that contributes to providing a safe and comfortable atmosphere throughout the Eid holiday. It affirmed that the operation units work round the clock to receive reports through the emergency number 112.

The ministry also confirmed the continuation of its security efforts during the holiday period, wishing everyone a happy Eid Al-Adha and a safe holiday.

airport well in advance of the flight, and ensuring that all required travel documents are complete and valid; such as passports, confirmed flight and hotel reservations, and obtaining an entry visa to the intended destination, if required.

It also affirmed its commitment to ensure smooth flow of travel and provide the best services to travelers, in coordination with the entities operating at the airport.

In a press statement, the DGCA revealed that the number of departing and arriving passengers during the holiday is expected to reach 236,000.

It indicated that the most preferred destinations for travelers include Dubai, Cairo, Jeddah, Doha and Istanbul; given the increased demand for these destinations during the holiday season.

It emphasized the importance of arriving at the

## Hajis to start returning on June 9; 236,000 to use airport

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Kuwait International Airport will cater to the first batch of pilgrims returning from the Holy Land on June 9, while the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced that the airport will operate 1,737 flights during the Eid Al-Adha holiday.



diwaniya

كيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Saudi efforts to facilitate Hajj and the lies of ‘Brotherhood’

“WITH each passing day, the malicious agenda and ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood Group and its affiliates become more exposed. Their ongoing campaign to target the Arab Gulf states and launch their poisoned arrows against them is increasingly apparent. The latest of these attempts is their effort to distort the image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and downplay its efforts during the Hajj season in pursuit of the long-standing goal of internationalizing the administration of the Two Holy Mosques,” columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Marri** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.



Hamad Al-Marri

“This objective is in line with the ambitions of the mullah’s regime, which has sought to achieve it ever since coming to power and exporting the Khomeinist revolution to countries of the region.

“The “bankrupt Brotherhood” accounts have been actively spreading lies about Saudi Arabia on social media and their media platforms, with the aim of creating a distorted image that alienates people, even if it means discouraging them from performing Hajj.

“Abdullah Al-Sharif, for example, published a video that was created using artificial intelligence, falsely convincing Muslims that the money they spend on Hajj is sent to America, which then manufactures weapons and missiles supplied to Israel for use against the people of Gaza.

“These accounts have falsely claimed that the Saudi government uses Hajj as a political tool to exclude its opponents or to pressure Muslim countries and governments into supporting its policies on international issues.

“Not stopping there, their media platforms have actively promoted these lies using artificial intelligence, producing audio and video clips that manipulate images and voices of Saudi religious and political figures, portraying them speaking obscenely, disrespectfully, and in ways that contradict Islamic law, to deceive the public.

“Saudi Arabia has never used Hajj as a political tool, nor has it ever prevented any Muslim from performing Hajj or Umrah. On the contrary, it has worked tirelessly to remove obstacles and facilitate the pilgrimage in an organized manner, following laws and regulations designed to ensure the comfort and safety of all pilgrims.

“Even during times of international sanctions and embargoes, such as those imposed on Libya under Muammar Gaddafi and Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Saudi Arabia did not block pilgrims who came from these countries from performing Hajj. Instead, they were able to enter Saudi Arabia through airports in neighboring countries, like Jordan for Iraqi pilgrims and Egypt for Libyan pilgrims. Saudi Arabia’s efforts in serving the Two Holy Mosques are as clear and radiant as the midday sun, and cannot be denied by anyone.

“Among these efforts is the Grand Mosque expansion initiated by King Abdullah (may God have mercy on him) and completed under the leadership of King Salman (may God protect him) after adding an area of 750,000 square meters.

“The expansion of the Prophet’s Mosque also stands as a testament to Saudi Arabia’s dedication. It began in 1955 under the founding King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud, who expanded it to 16,327 square meters at a cost of 50 million Saudi riyals. Later, King Fahad (may God have mercy on him) carried out a major expansion, adding 98,327 square meters inside the mosque and 235,000 square meters of external courtyards.

“Today, King Salman is continuing the expansion efforts started by King Abdullah (may God have mercy on him), with the goal of accommodating the largest possible number of worshippers.

“These efforts by the Saudi government, which include the deployment of approximately 200,000 personnel from various security sectors and the provision of thousands of service and medical staff, are beyond what most countries could manage. This is especially significant considering that, before the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Two Holy Mosques were subject to instability and frequent incidents of highway robbery.”

Also:

“On June 5, the World Environment Day is celebrated with voices raised worldwide calling for the protection of the Earth and its resources, and for combating pollution and climate change. This year, this occasion coincides with the Day of Arafah, which is the holiest day in the eyes of Allah, as it is a day when mercy descends, sins are forgiven, and prayers are answered,” columnist Major General Engineer **Faisal MUSAED Al-JAZZAF** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“From this emerges a profound message. Caring for the Earth is not merely an environmental responsibility, but an act of worship and devotion that embodies the sacred trust of stewardship that God has entrusted to His servants.

“During the Hajj season, millions of Muslims shed worldly trappings in a majestic spiritual scene. Standing on the plain of Arafah is a time for contemplation, repentance, and self-examination. It is an opportunity that also calls us to reflect on our behavior toward the en-

vironment and to uphold health and hygiene standards.

“Transformation begins with good intentions, followed by small, sincere steps such as rationalizing consumption, adopting recycling practices, and teaching our children that preserving the environment is inseparable from religion, as both seek to protect life and the soul.

“Let us renew our intentions on the Day of Arafah and Eid al-Adha to become more aware of our responsibility to preserve planet Earth and be more committed to the values that call us to kindness in all we do, including how we treat natural resources like water, air, and land.

“On this occasion, I extend my congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid (May God protect them) on the blessed Eid al-Adha. May God make this a year of blessings and prosperity for Kuwait, its people, and all of mankind.

“Eid Mubarak to you all. May God have mercy on our righteous martyrs.”

□ □ □

“This is what the Sinwar family and the Netanyahu family have brought upon the people of Gaza, and no one else. The true people of Gaza, myself included, want to be free of the Sinwar group (Hamas) just as much as they want to be free of Netanyahu, sooner rather than later. The people of Gaza now understand that they are the victims of a war waged not to liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque, but to use that cause as a pretext for their destruction,” Gazan journalist **Adnan Makkawi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“This cursed war has brought no benefit to anyone, neither now nor in the future. That is why the people of Gaza are desperately hoping for a ceasefire.

“But as long as Netanyahu and Hamas militants remain present in the streets of Gaza, the killing of innocent civilians will continue by every possible means, while the world looks on in silence.

“The solution lies with our own people in afflicted Gaza, who are facing death, and are dying, every minute. It lies in the people rising up against Sinwar and Hamas, expelling them by any means, whether openly or secretly, and turning to their legitimate authority, which is the Palestinian Authority.

Neither Netanyahu in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, nor Khalil al-Hayya, Sinwar’s heir who resides abroad, has any real interest in ending this cursed war, even if it results in the deaths of half of Gaza’s population.

“Khalil al-Hayya and his snake-like companions have tied the Palestinian decision to Iran’s agenda and the outcome of negotiations between Tehran and Washington, all because they covet the reconstruction funds for Gaza. Their real aim is to secure their continued control and dominance over the Gaza Strip.

“I do not believe their claim that they have no intention of ruling Gaza after the war. No one is more deceitful than they are, except perhaps their cousin Netanyahu, their partner in bloodshed and violence.

“In his subconscious mind, Netanyahu does not truly want a truce with Hamas, nor does he want the group to do him a favor and hand over his twenty hostages. What he wants is to personally secure their release in order to atone for his failures and redeem himself in the eyes of his people.

“Netanyahu knows all too well that a permanent end to the war would expose him to legal action for his negligence in protecting Israeli lives on October 7, 2023. The Israeli public will neither forget nor forgive such a catastrophic mistake.

“I have much more to say, but I’ll leave it at that for now.”

□ □ □

“The world is now living in an era of artificial intelligence and rapid technological advancement, where access to information and news takes only moments, sometimes just seconds,” Saudi writer **Saleh bin Abdullah Al-Muslim** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“Meanwhile, much of the Arab media, particularly television channels, remains in a deep slumber, disconnected from the current pace and tone of the times. Many Arab TV channels are still stuck in the era

of pre-packaged programming reminiscent of the 1990s that saw the rise of news channels and a public hungry for talk shows, to the extent that audiences could recall the names, gestures, and expressions of regular guests by heart.

“Today, few people still watch traditional talk shows, tune in to televised news, or wait eagerly for the next bulletin. Now, anyone can access the information they need instantly via smartphones, social media, and even personal content creators, many of whom have their own reliable sources and the ability to verify facts in real time.

“People no longer wait for guests to analyze current events or speculate about the future. The outlines are clear, and the strategies adopted by most heads of state and international organizations are well known. The public is no longer unaware of what is happening in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, or the aftermath of airstrikes on Sana’a airport, for example.”

— Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/ Simi K.Kutty



KFF photo  
the Geneva forum.

Court refuses to release manager caught red-handed seeking bribe

Transparency in managing seized funds: Audit Bureau

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Criminal Court has refused to release the acting manager of a co-operative society who was caught red-handed soliciting a bribe in exchange for services during a sting operation carried out by detectives.**

The court adjourned the session to allow time for further review and the presentation of video evidence.

Earlier, the Ministry of Interior revealed that a citizen -- employed as acting cooperative society manager -- was arrested after the submission of an official report to the concerned authorities that he allegedly demanded a bribe in return for carrying out his official duties.

In a press statement, the ministry said “in coordination with the Public Prosecution, a legal authorization was obtained to monitor and record meetings and conversations. All interactions were documented in both audio and video formats, leading to the suspect’s arrest and referral to the concerned authorities for legal action.”

□ □ □

**Transparency sought:** Chief of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) Essam Al-Roumi issued Resolution No. 143/2025; which stipulates the duties of agents tasked to manage seized funds and the controls for the performance of their job, in accordance with Attorney General Resolution No. 74/2025 issued on May 14, 2025 in relation to Money Laundering Case No. 90/2022, reports *Al-Jarida* daily.

The resolution sets a number of controls that agents managing seized funds, real estate and other assets must adhere to; as stipulated in Attorney General Resolution No. 74/2025, pursuant to Article 24 of Law No. 1/1993. These controls are:

1. The agent shall, in performing his duties, comply with all the obligations of a representative, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter Two of Part Three of Book Two of Decree-Law No. 67/1980.
2. The agent shall be obligated to safeguard the funds referred to in the aforementioned clause and entrusted to his management, and he must exercise the care of an ordinary person in doing so.
3. The agent should not delegate any other person to perform all or part of his duties on his behalf, except with written permission from the Attorney General.
4. The agent’s jurisdiction is limited to management activities. He should not undertake any action that is not part of management activities, if necessary, stating the reasons for such action,

Man wanted in 90-year jail term dug out from dwelling

**KUWAIT CITY, June 5:** Officers from the General Department of Investigations apprehended a Bedoun who evaded justice despite a cumulative 90-year prison sentence imposed on him, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The fugitive was arrested in Ahmadi Governorate and then transferred to the Central Prison.

According to a security source, the fugitive was convicted in multiple serious criminal cases, including drug possession and trafficking, as well as robbery.

Authorities received intelligence indicating that the fugitive was hiding in a rented apartment in Ahmadi Governorate. It was revealed that the apartment was leased under the name of a relative to conceal his identity and where-

abouts.

The source added that following extensive surveillance and preparations, the officers set up a well-coordinated entrapment. The fugitive was arrested without incident when he left his residence to go to a nearby grocery store.

□ □ □

**2 stealing money from cars:** The Ministry of Interior announced that personnel from Nagra Investigations Office, which is affiliated with the Hawally Investigations Department, arrested a two-member gang of Ethiopian nationals involved in stealing money from vehicles using deceptive methods, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In a press statement, the ministry explained

that a resident reported the theft of KD 1,700 from his vehicle after leaving a bank in Nagra. One gang member alerted the victim that the rear tire was flat.

While the victim checked the tire, the second gang member stole the money from inside the vehicle and then fled.

Investigations revealed that the two suspects traveled by public bus from Fahaheel.

Their residence was located, and they were arrested after a warrant was issued by the Public Prosecution. Part of the stolen money was recovered, while the suspects admitted to spending the rest.

Investigations are ongoing, and legal measures are underway to refer the accused to the competent authorities.



KFF photo  
The acting Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Qahtani is briefed on the condition of the fire victims.

Al-Qahtani visits victims of Riqqae building fire

**KUWAIT CITY, June 5:** The acting Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Qahtani visited the victims of the fire that erupted early Sunday in a residential building in Riggae on Wednesday morning at the Saud Al-Babtain Burns Center.

According to a press release issued by KFF, Brigadier General Al-Qahtani was accompanied by Director of Public Relations and Media in KFF Brigadier General Mohammad Badr Al-Ghareeb, and Director of Health Affairs Colonel Dr. Faiz Abdulaziz Al-Nassar.

During the visit, Brigadier General Al-Qahtani followed up the health status of the injured, ensured the quality of medical care provided, and affirmed KFF’s commitment to closely monitor their recovery and offer necessary support to them and their families.

Drugs found with 2 Asians

**KUWAIT CITY, June 5:** Two Asians were referred to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry for the possession of narcotics following their arrest in Mangaf by the operations support patrols from Ahmadi Security Directorate, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to a security source, the arrest occurred during the implementation of a security deployment plan aimed at apprehending wanted individuals and violators, as well as ensuring rapid response to incident reports.

While patrolling in Mangaf, the officers got suspicious of a vehicle and proceeded to stop it for inspection. The occupants -- both Asians -- were questioned, and it was discovered that an absconding case was registered against one of them.

A thorough search of the individuals led to the discovery of a bag containing various narcotics; including hashish, chemical substances and shabu (methamphetamine).

KFF chief stresses global efforts to tackle ‘crises’

**KUWAIT CITY, June 5:** As part of his participation in the International Forum on Crises and Disasters held in Geneva, Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi paid an official visit to the headquarters of the International Civil Defense Organization where he was received by the Acting Secretary-General Romain Lapin.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the meeting included discussions on a range of regional and international issues related to civil protection. Both parties reviewed recent devel-

opments in the organization’s activities and discussed preparations for the upcoming meetings of the Executive Council and the General Assembly. They also exchanged views on matters of mutual interest.

During the forum, Major General Al-Roumi delivered a speech on behalf of the Arab countries, and presented a midterm report that highlighted important elements of Kuwait’s declaration.

He affirmed the importance of international cooperation in addressing crises and enhancing civil protection capabilities.

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Multi-agency drill tests safety protocols and enhances staff preparedness

Promenade Mall hosts mock evacuation to boost emergency readiness

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Directorate General of Civil Defense, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior -- represented by the Public Security Department, General Traffic Department, Rescue Department and Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) -- as well as the Medical Emergency Department (Ambulance) at the Ministry of Health, successfully conducted a mock evacuation at the Promenade Mall in line with the approved emergency plan.

Executive Director of Al-Othman Real Estate Portfolio Eng. Adnan Al-Othman lauded the successful emergency readiness exercise at the mall. He said the primary objective was to guarantee the maintenance, security and safety teams' prompt response to emergencies. He added this exercise was aimed at upholding the ongoing safety and security efforts for the visitors and employees.

He confirmed that the exercise included training on efficient and orderly evacuation within minimal time. "It also bolstered the employees' preparedness in managing emergencies and enhanced their understanding of safety protocols," he disclosed.



Participants in the evacuation exercise at the Promenade Mall complex.

He then affirmed the participation of various entities in the exercise like the security agencies at the Ministry of Interior, KFF, Medical Emergency Department at the Ministry of Health, and the General Directorate of Civil Defense.

He stated that these measures are intended to raise awareness on security and safety procedures, and how to deal with

emergencies and crises, by implementing a short evacuation drill under the supervision of the concerned authorities; reflecting a commitment to the highest standards of safety and security.

He pointed out that "the safety and security of visitors and employees are our top priority. Therefore, we continually develop emergency response plans. Our employees have demonstrated a high level of ability to respond to emergencies."

He commended the visitors' commitment to follow guidelines during the evacuation drill, such as the use of emergency exits, under the supervision of security and safety personnel.

He asserted that "we are committed to fully cooperate with relevant ministries and authorities to organize training courses on security and safety procedures for the employees -- the most recent of which was the first aid course in cooperation with the Medical Emergency Department at the Ministry of Health."

He stressed that efforts and activities are ongoing to promote environmental sustainability within malls, raising awareness on health issues, providing a healthier environment, and improving the quality of life and public health by encouraging healthy behaviors and providing health-promoting environments.

KNPC forms dual committees to safeguard employee rights

Company aims to build 24 new fuel stations by 2030

**By Najeh Bilal**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) Wadha Al-Khatib has formed a committee tasked to deal with grievances related to decisions made by grievance committees at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries, say reliable sources.

Sources disclosed this committee shall ensure a positive work environment for Kuwaiti employees by safeguarding their rights and preventing any perceived injustice.

Sources said the committee was formed based on KPC Board Resolution No. 72/2024 issued on June 25, 2024 and Resolution No. 109/2024 issued on Sept 26, 2024. Sources added the committee will review procedures of the company's Administrative Decisions Grievances Committee, in line with the laws and regulations concerning dismissals or resignations. They clarified that the committee will not examine the grievance itself.

Sources revealed that employees facing dismissal or resignation can appeal to this committee after their grievance is reviewed by the company's Admin-

istrative Decisions Grievances Committee. "Appeals must be submitted in writing to the committee rapporteur within 60 days of the original decision notification, detailing the reasons for the appeal. Grievances pending in court will not be considered," sources explained.

Moreover, Al-Khatib -- who also serves as acting CEO of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) -- formed a separate individual complaints committee at KIPIC.

This committee, formed in collaboration with the KIPIC Workers Union Council, will include the head of Employee Relations, head of Research and Technology, and the head of Accreditation.

In other developments, KNPC plans to construct 24 new fuel stations by 2030, with a potential increase in this number within five years. These plans are coordinated with various government entities.

Currently, KNPC operates 69 fuel stations and is integrating solar panels into new and existing stations to reduce the load on the Ministry of Electricity and support Kuwait's 2050 carbon neutrality goal.

Solar panels are also being installed at the KNPC main building in Ahmadi and the Mina Abdullah Refinery.

Furthermore, the KNPC Board of Directors has approved the establishment of 'Beit Al Wataniya' Club for current KNPC and KIPIC employees only, excluding retirees and family members.



KUNA photo  
Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sweden, Mohammad Hayati, with Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Stenergård.

Kuwait diplomat and Swedish FM discuss bilateral relations

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sweden Mohammad Hayati and Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Stenergard met in Stockholm on Wednesday to discuss bilateral relations and cooperation covering many areas.

During the meeting, the Kuwaiti diplomat handed the Swedish minister a letter from Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya hailing bilateral relations between both friendly countries, which mark, this year, 60 years since they forged their

diplomatic relations, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Sweden said in a press release.

They also looked into ways of promoting bilateral cooperation in the investment field and trade exchange, and drawing upon Swedish expertise in innovation, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, it added.

Kuwaiti-Swedish cooperation covering health, pharmaceutical industries, green economy and recycling was also considered during the meeting between the Kuwaiti ambassador and the Swedish foreign minister.

SJC President discusses cooperation with French Ambassador to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): President of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) Counselor Dr. Adel Boursali discussed cooperation between both countries with the French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin, Tuesday.

The meeting reviewed the strong historical relations linking both countries, as well as the joint work in judicial authorities, said the Ministry of Justice in a statement.

Modern mechanisms for establishing and training judicial staff were also discussed, alongside the latest legislative developments regarding the enforcement of judgements within reasonable times, added the statement.



KUNA photo  
Counselor Dr. Adel Boursali, President of the Supreme Judicial Council.

Both sides affirmed their commitment to continue developing the mutual bilateral relations in the judicial field.

Abdulaziz Hamad Al-Saqr Center holds first board meet of 2025 to review KCCI scholarship program

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Board of Trustees of the Abdulaziz Hamad Al-Saqr Center for Development and Advancement, a subsidiary of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), held its first meeting of 2025 on Monday morning, June 2, to discuss several important topics, most notably the KCCI's annual Master's Scholarship Program.

According to a press release issued by KCCI, the meeting reviewed the outcomes of the Scholarship Committee meeting held on Sunday, June 1, which concluded with a recommendation to award five Master's degree scholarships for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The number of applicants to the program reached 29 candidates by the end of the submission deadline on Thursday, May 15.

Board members praised the Scholarship Committee's efforts in reviewing the applications in accordance with the approved regulations and standards of the scholarship program.

The board decided to allocate the scholarships as follows:

- One scholarship in Artificial Intelligence
- One scholarship in E-commerce
- Two scholarships in Supply Chain Management
- One scholarship in Risk Management and Compliance



KCCI photo  
Board of Trustees of the Abdulaziz Hamad Al-Saqr Center meeting.

The board discussed several important issues related to enhancing the center's performance and reinforcing its role as a leading institution supporting the development of national competencies.

They focused on updating programs and initiatives to align with the demands of the next

phase and the needs of the Kuwaiti labor market, as well as strengthening cooperation with relevant entities.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board of Trustees expressed pride in the outstanding Kuwaiti students awarded KCCI's scholarships, and wished them continued success.

Ministry of Education launches online CV upload for supervisory candidates

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: In an effort to streamline procedures and enhance efficiency, the Ministry of Education has launched a new online service enabling candidates for supervisory positions, who passed the written exams, to upload their curriculum vitas (CVs) through its official website ahead of their personal interviews, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry said all candidates shortlisted for the interview stage -- particularly those applying for the school principal and assistant school principal positions -- are required to submit a comprehensive CV, along with details of their professional achievements and career development. This documentation must be approved by both the candidate's direct supervisor and the director for Educational Affairs.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry

وزارة التجارة والصناعة

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Agreement secures continuity

KU president ensures stability and housing support for academic staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Maillem affirmed her commitment to overseeing all university-related matters to ensure job stability for staff, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Maillem highlighted an agreement with Abdullah Al-Salem University to allow the university's academic staff and assistant academic staff members to continue residing in the current housing

buildings in Shuwaikh under rental contracts at existing rates.

She said the university will provide these staff members with a housing allowance as part of this arrangement.

The university administration affirmed that this initiative reflects its dedication to maintaining a stable work environment and its ongoing support for enhancing the educational experience.

News in Brief

DGCA adds weather alerts to Sahel:

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has launched the "Weather Warning Notifications" service on Sahel app, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This new service enables users to receive instant weather warning notifications, which will help in enhancing public safety and increasing awareness of weather conditions via a reliable official source.

Intermediate exam results released:

The Ministry of Education has announced that the results of the intermediate school exams for the 2024/2025 academic year are now available on the Sahel app and on the ministry's official website - https://results.moe.edu.kw, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

2,800 visit 'Guide Me' campaign:

The Ministry of Higher Education announced that over 2,800 visitors came to the "Guide Me" campaign headquarters at The Avenues Mall during six days (May 25-30) to inquire about foreign scholarships, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry is preparing to launch the campaign's second phase via its official social media accounts.

The campaign targeted Kuwaiti high school graduates and holders of foreign high school diplomas issued inside and outside Kuwait who meet the requirements for foreign scholarships for the 2025/2026 academic year.

Parking clause proposed

Council member seeks reform in building rules

**By Inaas Awadh**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff/Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Municipal Council member Sharifa Al-Shalfan on Monday submitted a proposal to add a clause to Item No. One of the building regulations.

This proposal allows for the provision of parking spaces on the ground floor, not counted as part of the building percentage; provided that the setback distance from the property's boundaries does not exceed six meters and is not enclosed.

It also allows for the space used for parking to be compensated for by adjoining the street on the first and second floors.

In the introduction to her proposal, Al-Shalfan pointed out that over the past several years; changes have been made to the private and model housing schedule, including raising building percentages, reducing setbacks and increasing the total number of units.

She said this led to increased population density in private and model housing areas; reflected in an increase in the number of cars in residential areas, on the streets and on the sidewalks.

"This has had negative effects on the overall character of the areas and the quality of life there, as parking on the streets and sidewalks has become a priority over pedestrian safety, greening and other elements of urban areas," she added.

Meanwhile, as part of the 'Healthy City' project implemented by the Capital Governorate and Abdullah Al-Salem Suburb Administration, the Embassy of the Republic of Turkiye in Kuwait is participating in an environmental initiative focused on promoting recycling and sustainability, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The initiative aims to collect used cooking oil, glass containers, paper and plastic waste for recycling; contributing to environmental protection and community awareness.

In a statement posted on its official 'X' account, the embassy announced that the waste collection event will take place on July 7, at Umm Atiya Al-Ansariah Elementary School, from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm.





KUNA photo  
The Minister of Social Affairs chairs a meeting of the National Committee for Protection Against Domestic Violence.

## Al-Huwailah recommends authorities' coordination against domestic violence

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah on Tuesday underscored need to unify efforts of the public and private institutions for protection against domestic violence.

The minister was speaking after she headed a meeting of the National Committee for Protection Against Domestic Violence, an affiliate of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs that compris-

es representatives from government departments and civil society associations.

The conferees examined key achievements by the council's secretariat general and plans for overhauling work mechanisms related to digital transformation.

Minister Al-Huwailah has affirmed that the coordination among these stakeholders would be enhanced to attain effective protection of vulnerable segments.

# UCCS board of directors dissolved

Al-Mutairi appointed interim director

**By Fares Ghaleb**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
**KUWAIT CITY, June 5: In confirmation of a recent article published by the daily regarding the resignation of the board of directors of the Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies (UCCS), the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal**

**Al-Huwailah has issued a ministerial decision to dissolve the union.**

The decision stipulated the appointment of Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi as the interim director of the union for one year, or until a new board of directors is elected. During this transitional period, Al-Mutairi will manage the union's affairs.

Meanwhile, Vice Chair of UCCS Talal Al-Kishti announced his resignation, citing a lack of will and seriousness, and the prioritization of personal

interests over competence and expertise as the main reasons behind his decision. These factors, he said, have hindered progress toward achieving comprehensive strategic goals for developing the cooperative sector.

In a statement issued shortly before his resignation, Al-Kishti said, "The cooperative sector is burdened by a complex mix of overlapping responsibilities, unclear administrative and organizational structures, and a state of institutional stagnation that has built up over decades. The sector cannot be managed using outdated methods that have caused recurring crises over the

past 30 years. True reform requires a new framework, a clear and committed will, and transparent procedures to restore the sector's economic and social role."

He clarified that his resignation is not a withdrawal from responsibility, but a principled stance calling for a comprehensive review and course correction.

Al-Kishti affirmed his continued commitment to cooperative work through his role as a board member and secretary of the Qairawan Cooperative Society, as well as his ongoing representation of the union in various committees and events.

## 'Strawberry Moon' to illuminate Kuwait on June 11

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Al-Ojairi Scientific Center announced on Wednesday that a full moon, known as the "Strawberry Moon", will illuminate Kuwait's skies on June 11, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the center explained that the name comes from the strawberries that ripen in the Northern Hemisphere during this time.

The month of June will witness several notable astronomical events. On June 7, the moon will reach its farthest point from Earth in its orbit, appearing slightly smaller than usual, and this phenomenon is called the "moon at apogee." On June 19, the moon will come into conjunction with the planet Saturn, passing about 23 degrees apart

when the moon is 23 days old.

This month will also witness the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, when the sun reaches its highest point in the sky. This day, June 21, marks the official start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere.

Jupiter will be in conjunction with the sun on June 24, passing close to the sun as it moves to the far side of

the solar system. The following day, a new moon will appear, coinciding with the moon's perigee, its closest point to Earth, at a distance of approximately 1.01140 astronomical units from the sun.

On June 30, the moon and Mars will share the same ascendant, with the moon passing 12 degrees north of Mars while being five days old.

Continued from Page 1

## Eid holiday

in most locations, especially in Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, which has become a major destination for short vacations and special occasions.

The heightened activity is not limited to chalets, as it extended to coastal hotels and resorts, where the price of a single room per night ranged between KD100 and KD140; while hotel suites reached about KD400 for two nights during the weekend.

They reported that majority of the tenants prefer chalets with a direct sea view, a private pool, daily housekeeping, and proximity to public amenities such as shopping malls, restaurants, mosques and play areas for children.

Meanwhile, Ahmed Al-Dahham said the chalets have become an indispensable annual choice for him and his family during the Eid holiday; explaining that the tranquil atmosphere and services provided make the stay a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

He pointed out that gathering at a chalet restores the warmth of family relationships, which could be lost amid the busyness of daily life. He asserted "the cost may be high, but the psychological and social benefits are worth it."

Ali Al-Zaid believes that the high prices of chalets during Eid are unjustified; but he finds himself forced to book them due to the lack of suitable alternatives, especially for large family groups.

He stated that many young people and families turn to chalets, because these facilities provide a safe environment for entertainment, without having to leave the country. He called for increasing the number of local entertainment facilities at affordable prices.

Umm Yousef said the chalet has become part of her family's Eid rituals; disclosing that the children eagerly await this holiday to play and swim, away from the routine of school and gadgets.

She revealed the chalets provide psychological comfort to mothers, as they can enjoy the tranquility and services offered. She called for the development of more family resorts that ensure privacy and suit different budgets.

Ghada Al-Azmi described the chalet experience as a "psychological break" from the city's traffic and work pressures, pointing out that having local options for relaxation is better than quick and expensive travel.

She added the high demand for chalets is a manifestation of the community's need for organized, state-supported recreational outlets.

She emphasized that the development of Failaka Island will enhance these destinations, and contribute to stimulating domestic tourism and reducing reliance on foreign travel.

Mohammed Akbar pointed out that chalets have become a practical alternative to travel, particularly during short vacations that do not require foreign travel arrangements.

He said many families eagerly await the Eid holiday to book a chalet and spend a few days of rest and relaxation. He noted that these destinations have also become a logical choice from a financial standpoint, as they help avoid the high costs of travel, especially during the off-peak season.

Abdulaziz Al-Kandari shared that he is keen on spending official holidays in a chalet due to the country's lack of family-friendly recreational facilities other than malls.

Al-Kandari added "unfortunately, there are no real recreational facilities that accommodate young people and families, and for them to use their free time properly. This is a clear defect, especially when we are talking about children who are considered the backbone of the future." He stressed the importance of giving this group adequate attention by establishing appropriate facilities that meet their needs.

## Humidity cranks

winds, light to moderate in speed, ranging from 8 to 32 km/h. The high temperatures are expected to be between 41 and 43°C, and sea conditions will be light to moderate, with waves ranging from one to four feet.

The weather on Friday evening will be hot to warm, with northwesterly to variable winds at light to moderate speeds ranging from 8 to 30 km/h. The low temperatures are expected to be between 26 and 28°C, and sea conditions will be light to moderate, with wave heights between one and three feet.

On Saturday, weather will be hot and relatively humid in coastal areas during the day, with winds shifting from northwesterly to southeasterly at light to moderate speeds of 8 to 32 km/h. The expected high temperatures will range between 42 and 44°C, and sea conditions will be light to moderate, with waves from one to four feet.

The weather on Saturday evening will be hot to warm and relatively hu-

mid, especially in coastal areas, with southeasterly to variable winds at light to moderate speeds of 8 to 30 km/h. The expected low temperatures will be between 24 and 26°C, and sea conditions will be light to moderate, with waves between one and three feet.

## Kuwait energizes

Sources confirmed that the tender is one of the important projects the ministry is counting on to transfer the electricity generated from Shagaya renewable energy plant to the Subiya plant, and then use it to feed the electricity grid; taking into consideration the projects being prepared for tendering at the Shagaya station to produce 4,500 megawatts of renewable energy.

## Kuwait targets

grades with up to seven years in prison and fines between 5,000 and 10,000 dinars.

This initiative aims to protect the integrity of education and ensure fair assessments for all students.

## Lawsuits get

Article Two states that if the lawsuit includes multiple claims of known value — whether original or reserve, and arising from a single legal cause; the assessment shall be based on their total value. However, if they arise from different legal causes, the assessment shall be based on the value of each one separately.

Article Five states that if it is impossible to estimate a claim, it shall be deemed unvalued. The following claims, in particular, shall be deemed unvalued: claims for the authenticity of a signature, claims and objections submitted to the judge of urgent matters, original forgery claims, requests for enforcement of arbitrators' rulings and appeals against such orders, requests for orders to implement foreign court rulings, requests to dismiss judges, experts and arbitrators, requests and orders on petitions submitted to the Execution Department and appeals against them, claims for easements, claims for interpretation and correction of rulings, claims for review of endowments, claims for entitlement to residency in endowment sites or their

eviction, and claims for eviction of rented premises.

It also stipulates that if a claim includes multiple original claims or original and reserve claims — all of which are unvalued — a fee shall be imposed on each of them separately. If these claims are related, a single fee shall be imposed on them.

Under the decree, a fixed fee is imposed on the following lawsuits: personal status lawsuits of all types, partition lawsuits between partners, appeals against orders on petitions, and the list of fees and expenses. Fees are also collected for each lawsuit that has been in effect for one year from the date of its cancellation and has not been renewed from the date of cancellation, or from the date of the expiration of the penal or consensual stay and has not been resumed. A fee of KD5 is imposed for a request to renew a lawsuit from cancellation, shorten its hearing date, or expedite it from the penal or consensual stay. The applicant is obligated to pay this fee regardless of the outcome of the lawsuit.

A new fee of 10 percent of the value of the fee due is collected for the lawsuit when it is re-filed within three months from the date of the judgment, as if it never existed, or by abandoning it; provided that the subject of the lawsuit or its litigants do not change. The exemption request shall be submitted to the Clerks Department of the Court of First Instance, accompanied by the supporting documents or a copy thereof. The Clerks Department shall notify the Judicial Fees Department of the request and its documents, so that it may submit its report.

A committee of three judges shall be formed to decide on the request in the absence of the parties and without pleading unless the committee deems it necessary to attend. The committee shall have a secretary who will attend its sessions and record its minutes. The committee's decision shall be issued by a majority vote of its members, including the reasons for the decision and the basis upon which the exemption was based.

The exemption from fees shall be personal and shall not extend to the heirs of the exempted person or their replacement. The committee referred to in the previous article may, during the course of the case or after judgment therein, based on a request from the Judicial Fees Department or the opposing party in the case, annul the exemption decision if it is proven that the justified incapacity has ceased. The

Court Clerks Department shall notify the circuit hearing the case of the annulment decision.

If the fee-exempt opponent is required to pay the fees, he must first be requested to pay them. If it is impossible to collect the fees from him, it is permissible to recover them from the concerned party if the state of his inability is no longer in accordance with the previous article.

A fee of KD5 is imposed on warnings and notifications — other than notification of the statement of claim, judgment and other notifications related to the progress of a dispute before the court — for each person notified. A fee of 500 fils is collected for each page of the copy of the judgment requested from non-litigants. The same fee is imposed for each page requested by the litigants after they obtained the first copy. A fee of KD1 is imposed on certificates and copies of the lawsuit papers requested by the litigants or others regarding the progress of the lawsuit or the judgment therein.

It also stipulates that the courts shall adjudicate in lawsuits and requests for which the fee is paid in advance, or for which a temporary exemption is established. No lawsuit or request may be initiated before this fee is paid. If it is found that it has not been paid, the court shall grant the plaintiff an appropriate period for payment. If he does not pay within that period without an acceptable excuse, the lawsuit is deemed null and void.

The provisions of Article 123 of the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law shall apply to orders to assess fees and the appeals against them. Without prejudice to the rules of exemption from court fees, the plaintiff is obligated to pay the fee until a final judgment is issued against the other party.

The explanatory memorandum states that Law No. 17/1973 regarding judicial fees was issued more than 50 years ago; and it has not been amended despite the economic and social changes in recent years, including the rise in inflation rate and the level of per capita income, which led to an increase in the prices of goods and services.

It added that the increasing level of public culture and trust in the judiciary have encouraged citizens to resort to the courts as a safe haven for resolving their disputes. This has led to a steady increase in the number of cases brought before them; hence, litigants have to endure the pain of waiting for resolution.

## More than

and 5,094 via seaports, it added.

Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, a religious obligation involving rituals and acts of worship that every Muslim must fulfill if they have the money and are physically able to do it.

On Wednesday, pilgrims streamed into Arafat, some making the journey on foot, carrying their luggage through temperatures nudging 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). Others carried the elderly.

People paused to sit on the ground to rest or eat before heading to their camps.

Mount Arafat, a rocky hill southeast of Makkah, holds immense significance in Islam. Arafat is mentioned in the Holy Quran and it is where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is said to have given his last sermon on his final Hajj.

According to traditional sayings of the prophet (PBUH), the Day of Arafat is the most sacred day of the year, when God draws near to the faithful and forgives their sins.

Pilgrims remain in Arafat, in prayer and reflection, from after midnight until after sunset. After sunset Thursday, pilgrims will go to the desert plain of Muzdalifah to collect pebbles, which they will use in a ritual.

Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars on crowd control and safety measures, but the mass of participants makes ensuring their safety difficult. One of the greatest challenges at the Hajj in recent years has been the heat.

Earlier in the week, Health Minister Fahad bin Abdulrahman Al-Jalajel told The Associated Press that 10,000 trees have been planted to provide more shade, there is increased hospital bed capacity, and the number of paramedics has tripled.

## New US

ban upon taking office in January, appears to be on firmer ground this time after the Supreme Court sided with him.

Some, but not all, 12 countries also appeared on the list of banned countries in Trump's first term. The new ban includes Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

There will be heightened restrictions on visitors from Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela.

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Job fairness upheld

## Al-Awadhi grants 2025 promotion by selection

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has approved the 2025 promotion by selection lists, which include 876 employees who met the legal and job requirements, reports Al-Anba daily.

These employees were promoted from their current job grade to the first salary scale of the grade, to which they were promoted, with the addition of one periodic bonus.

The Ministry of Health affirmed that the promoted employees met the following conditions: must have received an excellent rating in their most recent job performance evaluation, there must be a vacant grade for promotion, must have been in the same financial grade for at least two years except those promoted from Grade B to Grade A that requires at least four years, and must not have been promoted by selection to the current grade, except those in grades A and B, where this is permitted.

It stated that promotion by selection is limited to Kuwaiti employees only and covers all job categories, except doctors, whose promotion is subject to special regulations within the approved professional promotion scale.

It added that this step is within the framework of its efforts to motivate national cadres and consolidate the principles of job fairness and professional competence, which will reflect positively on the quality of health services in the country and enhance the positive work environment in the government health sector.

## Ministry of Commerce and Industry



### RECALL INFORMATION



Camaro 2020-2022

#### RECALL REASON

A transmission control valve in some of these vehicles may be susceptible to excess wear over time, resulting in a gradual loss of pressure within the transmission control valve that can cause harsh shifting.

#### REMEDY

Dealers will install new transmission control module software that will monitor valve performance and detect excess wear approximately 10,000 miles (16,000 km) before a wheel lock up condition could occur. Once detected, the transmission will be limited to fifth gear, preventing the possibility of a wheel lock up condition, which occurs in a downshift from eighth gear. A service engine light and reduced propulsion message will also display in the instrument panel.

#### CONTACT

Yousef Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company  
Phone: 1800022  
Working hours: Saturday to Thursday, from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM

This recall is present to articles (42,43,44,46,46,47 and 48) of no. (27/2015) issuing the executive by laws no (39/2014) on consumer protection



# Trump orders investigation into Biden’s actions as US president

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): US President Donald Trump has directed his administration to investigate Joe Biden’s actions as president, alleging aides masked his predecessor’s “cognitive decline” and casting doubts on the legitimacy of his use of the autopen to sign pardons and other documents.

The order marked a significant escalation in Trump’s targeting of political adversaries and could lay the groundwork for arguments by the Republican that a range of Biden’s actions as president were invalid.

Biden responded in a statement Wednesday night: “Let me be clear: I made the decisions during my presidency. I made the decisions about the pardons, executive orders, legislation, and proclamations. Any suggestion that I didn’t is ridiculous and false.”



US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, wave as they walk to board Air Force One at Los Angeles International Airport in Los Angeles on Jan 8 en route Washington. (AP)

The Justice Department under Democratic and Republican administrations has recognized the use of an autopen to sign legislation and issue pardons for decades, Trump presented no evidence that Biden was unaware of the actions taken in his name, and the president’s absolute pardon power is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

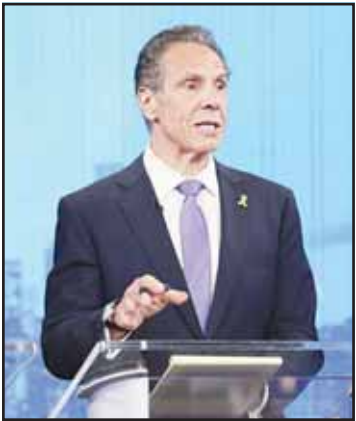
# Cuomo faces attacks from all sides in crowded NY city mayoral debate

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): New York City mayoral race front-runner Andrew Cuomo was forced to fend off a volley of attacks from his Democratic primary rivals in a debate Wednesday, with his opponents unleashing pent up barbs at the former governor in an attempt to crack his lead.

Cuomo was on the defensive from the opening bell.

From a crowded stage, Cuomo’s opponents swiped at him over the sexual harassment scandal that forced him from the governor’s mansion, his coronavirus response and the federal investigation into whether he lied to Congress about his handling of the pandemic in nursing homes. At one point, Zohran Mamdani, a democratic socialist state lawmaker who has emerged as one of the leading candidates in the race, pressed Cuomo on the overlap between the former governor’s political donors and those who donated to Republican President Donald Trump.

“The difference between myself and



Democratic mayoral candidate Andrew Cuomo speaks during a Democratic mayoral primary debate on June 4, in New York. (AP)

Andrew Cuomo is that my campaign is not funded by the very billionaires who put Donald Trump in D.C.,” Mamdani

said, calling himself “Donald Trump’s worst nightmare.”

Weathering the onslaught, Cuomo started flicking out his own jabs.

“Mr. Mamdani is very good on Twitter, with videos, but he actually produces nothing,” Cuomo said. “Donald Trump would go through Mr. Mamdani like a hot knife through butter. He’s been in government 27 minutes, he’s passed three bills. That’s all he’s done.”

The pile-on came after Cuomo, who has led every poll since entering the race, has avoided his opponents in public, giving them virtually no opportunities to meet him face-to-face.

That all changed Wednesday night.

The former governor’s opponents had him in their sights throughout the debate, working in criticisms of Cuomo in their responses to questions or interjecting at points to get in another quick dig at the former governor of New York. The cross talk was heavy on a stage that hosted nine candidates.

University said it will ‘continue to protect its international students’

# Trump moves to block US entry for foreign students planning to study at Harvard

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): US President Donald Trump is moving to block nearly all foreign students from entering the country to attend Harvard University, his latest attempt to choke the Ivy League school from an international pipeline that accounts for a quarter of the student body.

In an executive order signed Wednesday, Trump declared that it would jeopardize national security to allow Harvard to continue hosting foreign students on its campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

“I have determined that the entry of the class of foreign nationals described above is detrimental to the interests of the United States because, in my judgment, Harvard’s conduct has rendered it an unsuitable destination for foreign students and researchers,” Trump wrote in the order.

It’s a further escalation in the White House’s fight with the nation’s oldest and wealthiest university. A federal court in Boston blocked the Department of Homeland Security from barring international students at Harvard last week. Trump’s order invokes a different legal authority.

Trump invoked a broad federal law that gives the president authority to block foreigners whose entry would be “detrimental to the interests of the United States.” On Wednesday, he cited the same authority when announcing that citizens of 12 countries would be banned from visiting the US and those from seven others would face restrictions. Trump’s Harvard order cites several other laws, too, including one barring foreigners associated with terrorist organizations.

In a statement Wednesday night, Harvard said it will “continue to protect its



Students cheer during Harvard University’s commencement ceremonies on May 29 in Cambridge, Mass. (AP)

international students.”

“This is yet another illegal retaliatory step taken by the Administration in violation of Harvard’s First Amendment rights,” university officials said.

It stems from Harvard’s refusal to submit to a series of demands made by the federal government. It has escalated recently after the Department of Homeland Security said Harvard refused to provide records related to misconduct by foreign students.

Harvard says it has complied with the request, but the government said the school’s response was insufficient.

The dispute has been building for months after the Trump administration demanded a series of policy and governance changes at Harvard, calling it a hotbed of liberalism and accusing it of tolerating anti-Jewish harassment. Harvard defied the demands, saying they encroached on the university’s autonomy and represented a threat to the freedom of all U.S. universities.

Trump officials have repeatedly raised the stakes and sought new fronts to pressure Harvard, cutting more than \$2.6 billion in research grants and moving to end all federal contracts with the university. The latest threat has targeted Harvard’s roughly 7,000 international students, who account for half the enrollment at some Harvard graduate schools.

“Admission to the United States to study at an ‘elite’ American university is a privilege, not a right,” Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a post on X. “This Department of Justice will vigorously defend the President’s proclamation suspending the entry of new foreign students at Harvard University based on national security concerns.”

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., called the measure ridiculous and said it has nothing to do with national security.

# EID ADHA

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Rescue workers extinguish a fire at a house destroyed by a Russian drone strike in Pryluky village, Ukraine on June 5. (AP)

## Russia strike kills 5 in Ukraine

At least five people, including a 1-year-old child, his mother and grandmother, were killed Thursday in a nighttime Russian drone attack on the northern Ukrainian city of Pryluky, officials said.

Six drones hit a residential area in the city shortly before dawn, injuring nine others, according to authorities. The child killed was the grandson of the local fire chief, Ukraine’s Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

The fire chief, identified by local officials as 50-year-old Oleksandr Lebid, “arrived to respond to the aftermath right at his own home,” Ukrainian Presi-

dent Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a post on Telegram. “It turned out that a Shahed drone hit his house.”

The attack came just hours after US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin. According to Trump, Putin said “very strongly” that Russia will retaliate for Ukraine’s stunning drone attacks on Russian military airfields on Sunday.

U.S.-led diplomatic efforts to stop the more than 3-year-long war have delivered no significant progress, and the grinding war of attrition has continued unabated. (AP)

## Merz plans to discuss Ukraine, trade with Trump in WH visit

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): Germany’s new leader is meeting President Donald Trump in Washington on Thursday as he works to keep the U.S. on board with Western support for Ukraine, help defuse trade tensions that pose a risk to Europe’s biggest economy and further bolster his country’s long-criticized military spending.

Trump and Chancellor Friedrich Merz have spoken several times by phone, either bilaterally or with other European leaders, since Merz took office on May 6. German officials say the two leaders have started to build a “decent” relationship, with Merz wanting to avoid the antagonism that defined Trump’s relationship with one of his predecessors, Angela Merkel, in the Republican president’s first term.

The 69-year-old Merz is a conservative former rival of Merkel’s who took over her party after she retired from politics. Merz also comes to office with an extensive business background - something that could align him with Trump.

A White House official said topics that Trump is likely to raise with Merz include Germany’s defense spending, trade, Ukraine and what the official called “democratic backsliding,” saying the administration’s view is that shared values such as freedom of speech have deteriorated in Germany and the country should reverse course. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the discussions.

Merz will want to avoid an Oval Office showdown of the kind that



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz speaks at the municipal congress of the German Association of Towns and Municipalities (DStGB) in Berlin, Germany, on June 3. (AP)

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa experienced in recent months. Asked about the risk of a White House blow-up, Merz spokesperson Stefan Kornelius said on Monday that the chancellor is “well-prepared” for the meeting and that he and Trump have “built up a decent relationship, at least by phone” and via text messaging.

Merz has thrown himself into diplomacy on Ukraine, traveling to Kyiv with fellow European leaders days after taking office and receiving Zelenskyy in Berlin last week.



## North Korea ‘unconditionally support’ Russia’s war against Ukraine, says Kim

SEOUL, South Korea, June 5, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told a visiting top Russian official that his country will “unconditionally support” Russia’s war against Ukraine, the North’s state media reported Thursday, the latest sign of expanding cooperation between the two nations.

In April, the two countries officially confirmed North Korean troops’ deployment to Russia for the first time, saying that soldiers of the two countries were fighting alongside each other to repel a Ukrainian incursion into Russia’s Kursk border region. At the time, Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked North Korea’s participation in the war and promised not to forget their sacrifices.

In a meeting with Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu in Pyongyang on Wednesday, Kim affirmed that North Korea will “unconditionally support the stand of Russia and its foreign policies in all the crucial international political issues including the Ukrainian issue,” the official Korean Central News Agency said.

The two discussed how to solidify strategic partnership between North



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, right, shakes hands with Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu in Pyongyang, North Korea on June 4, 2025. (AP)

Korea and Russia and reached a consensus on the Ukraine issue and other unspecified international situations, KCNA said. It didn’t elaborate.

Russia’s state Tass news agency, citing the Russian Security Coun-

cil’s press service, reported that Shoigu and Kim also discussed prospects for rebuilding the Kursk region and outlined steps to commemorate the contribution made by North Korean soldiers.

## South Korean lawmakers approve special investigations into martial law, Yoon’s wife

SEOUL, South Korea, June 5, (AP): South Korea’s liberal-led legislature overwhelmingly passed bills Thursday to launch special investigations into former President Yoon Suk Yeol’s short-lived imposition of martial law in December and criminal allegations against his wife, targeting the ousted conservative a day after his liberal successor took office.

The National Assembly also passed a bill to initiate an independent investigation into the 2023 drowning death of a marine during a search-and-rescue operation for flood victims, an incident the Democratic Party, which holds majority, accuses Yoon’s government of covering up.

The bills previously had been vetoed by Yoon during his term and by South Korea’s caretaker government after his Dec. 14 impeachment.

President Lee Jae-myung, a Democrat who won Tuesday’s snap election triggered by Yoon’s removal from office, is expected to sign the bills.

Many members of the conservative People Power Party refused to participate in the votes, which took place



South Korean lawmakers pass a bill to launch special investigations into former president Yoon Suk Yeol’s short-lived imposition of martial law in December, at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea on June 5. (AP)

after one of the party’s lawmakers accused the liberals of being driven by vendetta.

Kim Yong-min, a Democratic Party lawmaker, said the conservatives were effectively defending Yoon’s

imposition of martial law by repeatedly opposing investigations into it.

“That’s why they failed to win public support and were rejected by voters in the presidential election,” he said in a speech.



New Zealand lawmakers, Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, (center at second row), Debbie Ngarewa-Packer, (center in front row), and Rawiri Waititi, (bottom right), who received lengthy suspensions from Parliament for a protest haka they performed last November, watch as other legislators debate their proposed bans in Wellington, New Zealand on June 5. (AP)

### 3 Maori MPs suspended

New Zealand legislators voted Thursday to enact record suspensions from Parliament for three lawmakers who performed a Maori haka to protest a proposed law.

Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke received a seven-day ban and the leaders of her political party, Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and Rawiri Waititi, were barred for 21 days.

Three days had been the longest ban for a lawmaker from New Zealand’s Parliament before.

The lawmakers from Te Pati Maori, the Maori Party, performed the haka, a chanting dance of challenge, in November to oppose a widely unpopular bill, now defeated, that they said would reverse Indigenous rights. (AP)



Indians crowd ticket counters at a railway station in Ahmedabad, India on Oct 23, 2011. (AP)

### ‘Largest peacetime mobilization in world’

## India prepares to launch its delayed census

NEW DELHI, June 5, (AP): India will start counting its vast population in a mammoth exercise starting next year. The first census in 16 years will be conducted digitally and include controversial questions about caste for the first time since independence.

The Home Ministry announced plans to conduct a two-stage count ending March 1, 2027 in a statement Wednesday night.

India’s last official census in 2011 counted 1.21 billion people. The country’s population is now estimated to be well over 1.4 billion, making it the world’s most populous country, according to the UN’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The once-in-a-decade population survey was originally due in 2021 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical hurdles.

The official count of the country’s

people is used to allocate many of India’s welfare programs and other policies.

It could also pave the way for redrawing the political landscape of India as seats are added to the lower house of Parliament and state legislatures to represent a larger population.

Under the 2023 Women’s Reservation Bill, a third of those seats will be set aside for women.

The Indian census is said to be the largest peacetime mobilization in the world.

Almost 2.7 million people were hired to implement the 2011 census, visiting more than 240 million households.

The Home Ministry said the new census will be carried out in two phases and conclude by March 1, 2027. The government will spell out the details and schedule of the exercise later this

month.

They’ll collect information about houses and their occupants, such as sex, age, marital status, religion, mother tongue, language, literacy and economic activity - as well as caste.

The next census will be the first to consider the caste status of most Indians.

Caste is an ancient system of social hierarchy in India and is critical to Indian life and politics. There are hundreds of caste groups based on occupation and economic status across India, particularly among Hindus, but the country has limited, or outdated data on how many people belong to them.

Since independent India’s first census in 1951, it counted only Dalits and Adivasis, members of marginalized groups known as scheduled castes and tribes.

### Dominican man arrested in killing of 4:

The US Marshals Service announced late Wednesday that agents arrested a man in the Dominican Republic sought in the killing of four people in New York last year, including two children.

Luis Francisco Soriano, also known as Jefry Yevo, had been working at a hotel in the popular tourist coastal town of Punta Cana, the agency said in a statement.

Soriano had originally fled to Puerto Rico after the killings but then jumped on a boat to his native Dominican Republic after becoming aware that federal marshals were in the U.S. territory, authorities said.

US Marshals said it worked with Dominican authorities to arrest 31-year-old Soriano “without incident after he completed his shift at the hotel’s call center.”

It wasn’t immediately clear if Soriano had an attorney. His brother, Julio Pimentel Soriano, was arrested shortly after the August 2024 killings and has pleaded not guilty. Police have said the brothers are related to one of the victims. (AP)

### Population emergency deepens

## Annual births fall to another record low in Japan: govt data

TOKYO, June 5, (AP): The number of newborns in Japan is decreasing faster than projected, with the number of annual births falling to another record low last year, according to government data released Wednesday.

The Health Ministry said 686,061 babies were born in Japan in 2024, a drop of 5.7% on the previous year and the first time the number of newborns fell below 700,000 since records began in 1899. It’s the 16th straight year of decline.

It’s about one-quarter of the peak of 2.7 million births in 1949 during the postwar baby boom.

The data in a country of rapidly aging and shrinking population adds to concern about the sustainability of the economy and national security at a time it seeks to increase defense spending.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has described the situation as “a silent emergency” and has promised to promote more flexible working environment and other measures that would help married couples to balance work and parenting, especially in rural areas where family values tend to be more conservative and harder on women.

Japan is one of a number of east Asian countries grappling with falling birth rates and an aging population.



Japan’s Emperor Naruhito, (center right), accompanied by his wife, Empress Masako, (center), and their daughter Princess Aiko, (left), is greeted before their departure for Okinawa, at the Haneda airport in Tokyo on June 4. (AP)

South Korea and China have fought for years to encourage families to have more children. Also on Wednesday, Vietnam scrapped decades-old laws limiting families to two children in an effort to stem falling birth rates.

The Health Ministry’s latest data showed that Japan’s fertility rate - the average number of babies a woman

is expected to have in her lifetime - also fell to a new low of 1.15 in 2024, from 1.2 a year earlier. The number of marriage was slightly up, to 485,063 couples, but the downtrend since the 1970s remains unchanged.

Experts say the government’s measures have not addressed a growing number of young people reluctant to

marry, largely focusing on already married couples.

The younger generation are increasingly reluctant to marry or have children due to bleak job prospects, a high cost of living and a gender-biased corporate culture that adds extra burdens for women and working mothers, experts say.

### Also:

**TOKYO:** Japan’s Emperor Naruhito and his family prayed on Wednesday in Okinawa for all the war dead in one of the bloodiest battles of World War II that was fought on the southern Japanese island 80 years ago.

The commemoration comes as many residents of Okinawa and the nearby islands are increasingly concerned about the possibility of another war as regional tensions with China escalate.

Naruhito’s father, the 91-year-old former Emperor Akihito, cared especially about Okinawa because of its difficult history, setting an example for his son.

The emperor and his wife, Empress Masako, asked their 23-year-old daughter, Princess Aiko, to accompany them on Wednesday’s trip in an apparent effort to convey their attention for history on the next generation. It is Aiko’s first visit to Okinawa.

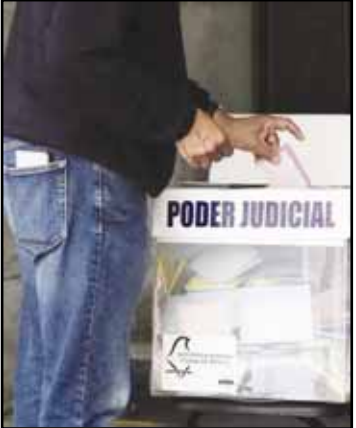
## Election of Mexico first Indigenous Supreme Court justice in 170 yrs raises hope, skepticism

MEXICO CITY, June 5, (AP): In his campaign for Mexico’s Supreme Court, Hugo Aguilar sent a simple message: He would be the one to finally give Indigenous Mexicans a voice at one of the highest levels of government.

“It’s our turn as Indigenous people ... to make decisions in this country,” he said in the lead up to Sunday’s first judicial elections in Mexican history.

Now, the 52-year-old Aguilar, a lawyer from the Mixtec people in Mexico’s southern Oaxaca state, will be the first Indigenous Supreme Court justice in nearly 170 years in the Latin American nation, according to Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. He could lead the high court. The last Indigenous justice to do so was Mexican hero and former President Benito Juárez, who ran the court from 1857 to 1858.

For some, Aguilar has become a symbol of hope for 23 million Indigenous people long on the forgotten fringes of Mexican society. But others fiercely criticize his past, and worry that instead of representing them, he will instead stand with the ruling party, Morena, that ushered him onto the



A voter casting ballot in Mexico’s first judicial elections, in Mexico City on June 1. (AP)

court.

Supporters cite Aguilar’s long history of working on Indigenous rights, while critics say that more recently he’s helped push the governing party’s agenda, including former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s massive infrastructure projects, at the expense of Indigenous communities. Aguilar’s team said he would not com-

ment until after official results were confirmed.

“He’s not an Indigenous candidate,” said Francisco López Bárcenas, a distinguished Mixtec lawyer from the same region as Aguilar who once worked with him decades ago. He applauded the election of an Indigenous justice, but said “He’s an Indigenous man who became a candidate.”

Aguilar was elected in Mexico’s first judicial election, a process that’s been criticized as weakening Mexico’s system of checks and balances.

López Obrador and his party overhauled the judicial system the populist leader was long at odds with. Instead of appointing judges through experience, voters elected judges to 2,600 federal, state and local positions. But the vote was marked by a very low voter turnout, about 13%.

López Obrador and his successor and protegee President Claudia Sheinbaum claimed the election would cut corruption in the courts. Judges, watchdogs and political opposition called it a blatant attempt to use the party’s political popularity to stack courts in their favor, and gain control of all three branches of Mexico’s government.

## Ex-PM Hamdok says military’s recent gains won’t end Sudan’s civil war

MARRAKECH, Morocco, June 5, (AP): Sudan’s former prime minister on Wednesday dismissed the military’s moves to form a new government as “fake,” saying its recent victories in recapturing the capital Khartoum and other territory will not end the country’s two-year civil war.

In a rare interview with The Associated Press, Abdalla Hamdok said no military victory, in Khartoum or elsewhere, could end the war that has killed tens of thousands and driven millions from their homes.

“Whether Khartoum is captured or not captured, it’s irrelevant,” Hamdok said on the sidelines of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s governance conference in Morocco. “There is no military solution to this. No side will be able to have outright victory.”

Hamdok became Sudan’s first civilian prime minister after decades of military rule in 2019, trying to lead a democratic transition. He resigned in January 2022 after a turbulent stretch in which he was ousted in a coup and briefly reinstated amid international pressure.

The following year, warring generals plunged the country into civil war. Sudan today bears the grim distinction of being home to some of the world’s worst humanitarian crises.



Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok speaks during a session of the summit to support Sudan, at the Grand Palais Ephemere in Paris on May 17, 2021. (AP)

Fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has left at least 24,000 dead, though many believe the true toll is far worse.

Both sides stand accused of war crimes.

The RSF, with roots in Darfur’s notorious Janjaweed militia, has been

accused of carrying out genocide. The army is accused of unleashing chemical weapons and targeting civilians where they live.

The war has driven about 13 million people from their homes, including 4 million who have crossed into neighboring countries. Famine is setting in and cholera is sweeping through.

### Lat/Am

**‘6 months jail for El Salvador lawyer’: A judge in El Salvador ordered a lawyer from a prominent human rights organization who has been an outspoken critic of some of President Nayib Bukele’s policies to be jailed Wednesday for six months on illegal enrichment charges.**

Earlier, Ruth Leonora López had demanded a public trial as police brought her before the judge, Wednesday’s hearing was closed to the public as the case is under seal.

Observers say the case against López is retaliation for her work while authorities allege she aided one of her former employers being prosecuted for embezzlement. Authorities arrested López at her home on May 18.

The anticorruption lawyer, who works for the non-governmental organization Cristosal, has denied the accusations. (AP)



KPC: Kuwait crude oil gains 31 cents to

KUWAIT CITY, June 5, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil climbed 31 cents during Wednesday's trading to reach USD 65.24 per barrel compared with USD 64.93 pb the day before, Kuwait Petro-

leum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. Brent futures dropped 77 cents to USD 64.86 pb and West Texas Intermediate lost 56 cents to USD 62.85 pb.

Business

Appointments and promotions at various levels in oil companies

Oil workers' incentive bonus to be paid mid-month

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The subsidiaries of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) are undergoing leadership changes; including the appointment of deputy chief executive officers, promotions and leadership rotations.

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) CEO Wadha Al-Khatib appointed Fahad

Saad Al-Mutairi as Deputy CEO of KIPIC's Al-Zour Refinery and Ali Al-Ajmi as Deputy CEO of KNPC's Fuel Supply Operations.

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) CEO Ahmad Al-Eidan issued organizational decisions that take effect on June 4 as follows: Faisal Shanat as head of the Audit and Support Affairs Team reporting to the CEO's Office Group Director; while the Public Affairs Team is abolished.

In the Gas and Environment Directorate, Khaled Issa is appointed Director of the Drilling Group (Gas);

while heads of the Gas Drilling Team and Emergency Task Force will also be appointed at a later date. Nasser Al-Buhairi is appointed as Director of the Health, Safety and Environment Group and Fatima Al-Shamali as Director of the Human Resources Group, reporting to the Deputy CEO for Administrative and Financial Affairs. The heads of the Human Resources Studies and Payroll Management teams will be appointed at a later date.

In the Medical Group at Ahmadi Hospital, the head of the Health Information Management Team will be

appointed at a later date; while the Well Intervention Team in the Drilling Engineering and Well Repair Group will be abolished.

Moreover, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud, sent a letter to the CEOs of the affiliated oil companies, the managing director for Planning and Finance at KPC, and the managing director for Human Resources and Comprehensive Services at KPC, about the disbursement of the incentive bonus to employees for fiscal 2024/2025 on June 15, 2025; except the managers and others at the same level.

Exciting opportunities for tourism, business, and cultural exchange

Jazeera Airways first direct flight to Budapest takes off from Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Jazeera Airways today started its direct service between Kuwait and Budapest, Hungary. The twice-weekly flights mark the first-ever non-stop air connection between the two countries, opening up exciting opportunities for tourism, business, and cultural exchange.

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, and H.E. András Szabó, Ambassador of Hungary to Kuwait, were onboard the inaugural flight, which featured a celebratory send-off for all passengers and included a unique souvenir boarding pass presented to the first passenger checked in.

The new route, welcomed by Budapest Airport and supported by Visit Hungary, offers travelers from Kuwait easy access to one of Europe's most charming capitals, rich in history, architecture, and thermal spas.

Passengers can now book flights via the Jazeera Airways website, mobile app, or call center at 177. Jazeera Airways also offers a range of fare bundles, products and services as well as connections beyond Kuwait to destinations across the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.

Founded in 2004, Jazeera Airways is a leading low-cost carrier based in Kuwait, serving over 5 million passengers across a network of more than 60 destinations in the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Africa, and Europe. Dedicated to offering affordable, high-quality air travel, Jazeera Airways caters to business, leisure, religious, and weekend travellers, all while maintaining the highest standards of safety and customer service.

Jazeera Airways currently operates a modern and efficient fleet of 24 Airbus A320ceo and A320neo aircraft, enabling it to optimize fuel efficiency and reduce environmental impact. 26 new aircraft from its order-book, 18 A320neos and 8 A321neos are expected to arrive 2027 onwards.

The only publicly traded airline on the Kuwait Stock Exchange (Boursa Kuwait), Jazeera Airways was recognized as a Fortune 500 Arabia com-



Jazeera Airways and Hungary Embassy officials pose together before the flight took off.

pany and named "Great Place to Work" in 2023.

A trailblazer in the aviation sector, Jazeera Airways has introduced several digital initiatives to its customer experience and is one of the first to



design, build, and operate its own terminal, Jazeera Terminal 5 (T5), at the Kuwait International Airport.

For more information visit: [www.jazeeraairways.com](http://www.jazeeraairways.com)

Oil climbs as geopolitical risks offset OPEC+ production boost

Algeria Energy Min. confirms full OPEC+ commitment, rejects any objections

VIENNA, June 5, (KUNA): The continued rise in crude oil prices, despite the OPEC+ alliance's announcement of a production increase, is due to a number of geopolitical and economic factors that hinder market stability, said Economic and Financial Expert Dr. Bashir Aliya.

In remarks to KUNA Thursday, Dr. Aliya affirmed that markets did not react to the OPEC Plus announcement as expected, as prices continued to rise instead of declining.

He noted that the oil market did not respond to the announcement because the increase announced by OPEC+ was limited and viewed as merely a conditional gradual easing, which maintained a state of anticipation and anxiety in the markets.

Markets are not satisfied with promises or partial announcements, but are also affected by actual developments and concerns about future supplies, he added.

Dr. Aliya stressed that a number of geopolitical factors reinforce the belief that supply may not be sufficient in the coming months, even with increased OPEC+ production, pointing out that these factors include escalating tensions in the Middle East and the Red Sea, and the accompanying potential closure of the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, through which a significant portion of Gulf oil and gas exports pass.

He also noted that continued sanctions on Russia and the possibility of new restrictions on its oil sector would reduce its ability to export crude, putting pressure on global supply as well as the stalled nuclear negotiations between the US and Iran are increasing market uncertainty due to the absence of Iranian oil from the markets.

OPEC plus decision to increase production remains an important element, but it alone is not sufficient to stabilize the market, given the presence of several other factors that influence price trends, said Dr. Aliya.

Meanwhile, Algerian Energy Minister Mohamad Arkab underlined the importance of the decision reached by the eight Organization of the Petroleum

Exporting Countries and allied producers such as Russia (OPEC+) members with voluntary cuts, stressing that Algeria had no doubts whatsoever about the agreement.

In a ministry statement, Arkab said Algeria fully backs the collective move, which comes amid a seasonal rise in global Oil demand, particularly over the summer.

Under the deal, Algeria will raise crude output by 8,000 barrels per day starting in July, a step that will also support the phased start-up of several newly developed fields and enhance the value of national resources, he said.

Responding to media reports suggesting divisions among the eight producers, he reiterated the group's unity: consultations on May 31 were constructive and coordinated, producing a unanimous decision to lift output by 411,000 bpd.

Algeria lodged no objections, and no proposal beyond the three previously approved increases was discussed, he added.

Arkab reiterated Algeria's unwavering commitment to OPEC+ principles, noting that the country has always rigorously met its production pledges.

Stablecoin bigwig Circle set to make its debut on the New York Stock Exchange

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): Crypto enthusiasts will be watching the stock market Thursday as the U.S.-based issuer of one of most popular cryptocurrencies makes its debut on the New York Stock Exchange.

Circle Internet Group issues USDC, a stablecoin that can be traded at a one-to-one ratio for U.S. dollars, and EURC, which can similarly be traded for euros.

Stablecoins are a fast-growing corner of the cryptocurrency industry that offer a buffer against volatility because they are pegged to real-world assets, like U.S. dollars or gold. That makes them a much more reliable means of conducting commercial transactions

than other forms of crypto.

Interest in Circle's initial public offering is high. The company's underwriters priced the offering at \$31 per share Wednesday, up from an expected price of \$27 to \$28. The number of shares being sold was raised to 34 million from 32 million. Circle will trade on the NYSE under the symbol "CRLC."

The dominant player in the stablecoin field is El Salvador-based Tether, which has the stablecoin known as USDT that currently has about \$150 billion in circulation. USDC is the second most popular stablecoin market cap, with about \$60 billion in circulation.



A bull sculpture is displayed outside the New York Stock Exchange for the expected Circle IPO, Thursday, June 5, 2025. (AP)

We expect conversations will open with other countries

Exporters are most directly exposed, but most debt issuers face indirect effects

By Moody's Ratings

Tariffs have direct and indirect effects for emerging market debt issuers

The on-again, off-again US tariffs and difficulty predicting US trade policy have negative credit consequences for debt issuers across emerging markets. The US has begun trade discussions with a number of countries. And it reached a temporary tariff agreement with China in May, just days after reaching a separate deal with the UK (Aa3 stable). We expect conversations will open with other countries, but a complete reversal of tariff levels is unlikely.

Companies that generate revenue and profit from the sale of tariffed goods will be hit most directly by tariffs. But the effects of the uncertainty around trade policy are already visible in a weakening of business and credit conditions globally. Consumer sentiment and purchasing managers' indexes in emerging markets have largely declined in recent months, for example. And geopolitics are an additional stress for emerging markets, including the flare-up of tensions between India and Pakistan (Caa2 positive) earlier in May.

Tariffs transmit credit risk to debt issuers through three channels: 1) directly through trade; and indirectly through 2) weakening confidence macroeconomic conditions; and 3) financial markets.

Trade Tariffs eat into profit because companies must either absorb some of the higher costs or try to pass those costs onto customers in higher prices. Companies' ability to pass along higher costs without significantly reducing demand depends on their pricing power. Lower revenue and profit reduce cash flow available for debt service.

Weakening confidence and macroeconomic conditions

Amid rapidly changing US policy, many companies will suspend or slow investment decisions. And many consumers will scale back spending as concerns about the economy and employment weigh on sentiment, and as higher prices reduce their disposable income. Economic growth will slow

as a result. We have reduced significantly our 2025 and 2026 GDP growth forecasts for the 20 largest advanced and emerging economies to reflect the direct effects of tariffs on some economies, particularly China, and tariffs' dampening effect on global trade and investment decisions more broadly. In emerging markets, we revised down our 2025 forecasts for China, India, Indonesia, Mexico (Baa2 negative) and South Africa (Baa2 stable).

Slowing growth in the US and China will reduce their demand for imports, hurting their trading partners. China, for example, is a major importer of oil, metals and agriculture, and a key market for Latin America, Central Asia and the Caucasus. At the same time, the potential for oversupply and price deflation exists if China redirects exports that had been bound for the US to other markets in response to US tariffs.

Sustained higher tariffs could erode economies' long-term growth potential by weakening export competitiveness and export attractiveness. Vietnam (Baa2 stable) would be among the economies most at risk because of its reliance on exports to the US for growth and the high tariffs the US announced on the country and then paused in April.

Tariffs also could drive supply chain diversification, but the high uncertainty in the global trade environment and China's value-chain dominance make it difficult for producers to reduce reliance on Chinese inputs. Multinational companies are, however, making progress in shifting production closer to suppliers.

Financial markets

Uncertainty increases market volatility, and prompts investors and lenders to demand higher returns for taking on risk. Debt issuers with weak liquidity and high or near-term refinancing needs may have trouble accessing debt at terms and prices they can afford. Refinancing and default risk will rise as a result.

Tariffs can also weaken domestic currencies. Demand for a given country's currency decreases alongside demand for imported goods: fewer transactions reduce importers' need for a given country's currency. Outflows of capital to safer havens also reduce demand for a given country's currency.

Emerging market debt issuers are particularly vulnerable to capital outflows when risk aversion increases because they are generally viewed as comparatively risky.

In Turkey (B1 positive), for example, the lira has come under pressure from a broad-based sell-off in Turkish assets following political unrest in March; the pressure was exacerbated by the US' April tariff announcements. In response, the central bank intervened heavily to support the lira exchange rate by selling a large portion of its foreign-currency reserves and hiking the policy rate by 350 basis points. Additionally, a number of emerging market currencies such as the South African rand have shown heightened volatility as a result of the US tariff policy uncertainties. Weaker currency increases the cost of procuring and servicing foreign currency debt, which also raises refinancing risk. Weaker currency may also limit central banks' ability to lower policy rates and thereby support economic growth.

Chinese exported goods are main US tariff targets

Some Chinese companies with large direct export exposure to the US will face higher operating costs and substantial revenue losses. Key exports to the US include computer and electronic products, machinery and electrical equipment, home appliances, textiles and chemicals. These companies may need to absorb some of the tariff costs to remain competitive, invest in alternative markets or adjust their supply chains.

Chinese companies also have indirect export exposure through connector countries such as in Southeast Asia, in which final products are made from raw materials, components or both that are exported from China. We believe the US will urge these economies to enforce greater scrutiny on the "place of origin" of their exports.

Much lower access to the US export market will also reduce demand for raw materials, energy and services (such as logistics), although to a lesser degree because there are other sources of domestic demand for these goods and services. But the lower external demand will exacerbate the excess capacity in some industries, such as steel and chemicals.

Chinese companies will continue to reduce their trade reliance on the US and deepen trade and investment ties with

other countries. Most of the Chinese companies we rate have attributes that will mitigate the effect of tariffs on their credit strength such as bargaining power as supply chains reshape, diversified geographic footprints, sizable domestic revenue streams, and large scales of production, strong financial profiles and funding access.

In South and Southeast Asia, (non-Chinese) companies in the automotive, steel and chemicals sectors are most exposed to the potential for reduced demand and increased costs from US tariffs. But most of the companies we rate in other sectors have mitigants including strong domestic operations, diversified supply chains and US operations. These sectors include mining, shipping, oil and gas, and protein and agriculture.

In Latin America, auto suppliers and companies in mining, paper and forest products, steel and chemicals are most exposed to US tariffs because of trade and macroeconomic conditions in key consuming countries. China, for example, is a major consumer of base metals, iron ore and pulp. Slowing Chinese demand would lead to lower prices for these products globally. And if China increased its exports of chemicals and steel to markets including Latin America because its slowing economy cannot absorb its large domestic production of these commodities, competition would increase for Latin American producers in their domestic markets. Profitability for Mexican auto suppliers would also be strained if automakers reduce production or pass through price increases related to potential tariffs in the US. In contrast, protein and agriculture companies have the potential to benefit from higher exports to China, replacing trade from the US.

In the Middle East and North Africa, oil and gas and petrochemical companies would be hurt by slowing global economic activity and lower oil prices. For the oil-exporting countries, sustained depressed hydrocarbon prices would lead to lower government spending that could slow their domestic economies. A significant global slowdown could also weaken demand for real estate in the Gulf Cooperation Council, particularly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE, Aa2 stable), which has experienced an extended property market boom over the past four years.





A dealer walks past near screens showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI), left, and the foreign exchange rate between U.S. dollar and South Korean won at a dealing room of Hana Bank in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, June 5, 2025. (AP)

FTSE 100 rises 0.1%

Global shares mostly rise after WS' rally stalls on U.S. economic data

TOKYO, June 5, (AP): Global shares were mostly higher Thursday, after Wall Street's big recent rally lost some momentum following a pair of potentially discouraging reports on the American economy.

France's CAC 40 added 0.3% in early trading to 7,826.43, while the German DAX rose 0.5% to 24,378.64. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.1% to 8,811.29. The future for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.2%. The future for the S&P 500 gained nearly 0.1%.

In Asian trading, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 shed 0.5% to finish at 37,554.49, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was little changed at 8,538.90.

In South Korea, the Kospi jumped 1.5% to 2,812.05 after the country's new president and leading liberal politician Lee Jae-myung began his term, vowing to restart talks with North Korea and beef up a trilateral partnership with the U.S. and Japan.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 1.1% to 23,906.97, while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.21% to 3,384.10.

One report released earlier this week said that activity contracted for U.S. retailers, finance companies and other businesses in the services industries last month, when economists were expecting to see growth. Businesses told the Institute for Supply Management in its survey that all the uncertainty created by tariffs is making it difficult for them to forecast and plan.

A second report from ADP suggested U.S. employers outside of the government hired far fewer workers last month than economists expected. That could bode ill for Friday's more comprehensive jobs report coming from the U.S. Labor Department, which is one of Wall Street's most anticipated data releases each month.

So far, the U.S. job market has remained remarkably resilient despite years of high inflation and now the threat of President Donald Trump's high tariffs. But weakness there could undermine the rest of the economy.

Following the reports, traders built up bets that the Federal Reserve will need to cut interest rates later this year in order to prop up the economy, which in turn caused the fall for Treasury yields. The weaker-than-expected ADP report also led Trump to urge Fed Chair Jerome Powell to deliver cuts to rates more quickly.

Trump tariffs threaten economy

ECB cuts benchmark rate by quarter point



The European Central Bank, right, is pictured in Frankfurt, Germany. (AP)

FRANKFURT, Germany, June 5, (AP): The European Central Bank cut its benchmark interest rate for an eighth time, aiming to support businesses and consumers with more affordable borrowing as U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war threatens to slow already tepid growth.

The bank's rate-setting council cut interest rates by a quarter of a point Thursday at the bank's skyscraper headquarters in Frankfurt. Analysts expected a cut, given the gloomier outlook for growth since Trump announced a slew of new tariffs April 2 and subsequently threatened to impose a crushing 50% tariff, or import tax, on European goods.

The bigger question remains how far the bank will go at subsequent meetings. Bank President Christine Lagarde indicated at a post-decision news conference that much depends on whether trade tensions with the U.S. can be resolved.

"A further escalation in global trade tensions and associated uncertainties could lower euro area growth by dampening exports and dragging down investment and consumption," Lagarde said. "By contrast, if trade and geopolitical tensions were resolved swiftly, this could lift sentiment and spur activity. A further increase in defense and infrastructure spending, together with productivity enhancing reforms, would also add to growth."

While the trade war and the uncertainty that goes with it is holding back growth, the ECB said the economy should get additional stimulus from higher government spending on defense and infrastructure. European governments are stepping up plans for defense purchases to counter Russia and its invasion of Ukraine. The spending boosts arrive amid concern that the U.S. is no longer a fully committed ally in support of Ukraine.

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth did not attend a recent meeting of allied nations created to organize Ukraine's military aid. It was the first time the U.S. was not present since the group was set up three years ago. Hegseth's predecessor, Lloyd Austin, created the group after Russia launched all-out war on Ukraine in 2022.

Given the different possible outcomes the bank said that it was "not committing to a particular rate path" for future policy meetings.

Thursday's decision took the bank's benchmark rate to 2%, down from a peak of 4% in 2023-24. The bank raised rates to suppress an outbreak of inflation in 2021-23 that was triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and by the rebound from the pandemic.

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): The Labor Department has cut back on the inflation data it collects because of the Trump administration's government hiring freeze, raising concerns among economists about the quality of the inflation figures just as they are being closely watched for the impact of tariffs.

The department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, which produces the monthly consumer price index, the most closely watched inflation measure, said Wednesday that it is "reducing sample in areas across the country" and added that it stopped collecting price data entirely in April in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Provo, Utah. It also said it has stopped collecting data this month in Buffalo, New York.

In an email that the BLS sent to economists, viewed by The Associated Press, the agency said that it "temporarily reduced the number of outlets and quotes it attempted to collect due to a staffing shortage" in April. The reduced data collection "will be kept in place until the hiring freeze is lifted."

The cutbacks have intensified worries among economists that government spending cuts could degrade the federal government's ability to compile key economic data on employment, prices, and the broader economy. The BLS also said last month that it will no longer collect wholesale prices in about 350 categories for its Producer Price Index, a measure of price changes before they reach the consumer.

The inflation data plays a huge role in the U.S. economy. It is used to calculate the annual cost of living adjust-



The entrance to the Labor Department is seen near the Capitol in Washington, May 7, 2020. (AP)

ments for tens of millions of Social Security recipients and it helps determine the interest rate paid in about \$2 trillion of inflation-adjusted Treasury bonds. Many private-sector wages are also influenced by the CPI.

The reduced data collection is also occurring at a time of heightened uncertainty about the economy and the impact of Trump's sweeping tariffs on hiring, growth and inflation. Officials at the Federal Reserve, for example, have repeatedly cited the cloudy outlook as a key reason they are no longer cutting their short-term interest rate, after reducing it three times late last year.

"The PPI is cutting hundreds of indexes from production, and the CPI is now being constructed with less data," Omair Sharif, chief economist at the consulting firm Inflation Insights, said in an email. "That alone is worrying given that we're heading into the teeth of the tariff impact on prices."

The BLS said that the cutbacks "have minimal impact" on the overall inflation data, but "they may increase the volatility" of the reported prices of specific items.

President Donald Trump froze federal hiring on his first day in office and extended the freeze in April until late July, suggesting future inflation reports will also involve less data collection. The White House could continue to extend the freeze indefinitely.

Sharif and other economists said the BLS hasn't released enough information to judge how big an impact the cutbacks are having on the inflation figures. But it could make them less slightly less accurate.

"When you have a reduced sample size, it introduces more error into the estimate," Sharif said. "It creates the potential for the indexes to be more volatile and potentially less accurate."

Earlier this year, the Trump administration disbanded several advisory committees that worked with BLS and other statistical agencies on fine-tuning their data-gathering.

Alan Detmeister, an economist at UBS, an investment bank, said the cutbacks likely had little impact on April's inflation figures. But "if these types of cuts continue, they will degrade the reliability and efficacy of these statistical agencies," he said.

10.9m more will be left uninsured: CBO

Trump tax bill will add \$2.4 trn to the deficit

WASHINGTON, June 5, (AP): President Donald Trump's big bill in Congress would unleash trillions in tax cuts and slash spending, but also spike deficits by \$2.4 trillion over the decade and leave some 10.9 million more people without health insurance, raising the political stakes for the GOP's signature domestic priority.

Republican leaders in Congress, determined to muscle the sweeping package forward, had little to say after the analysis released Wednesday by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. GOP senators spent more than an hour at the White House in what they called a robust afternoon discussion with Trump.

"We're committed to making a law that will make the lives of the American people better," Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota said afterward. He vowed to "get this done one way or another."

But Democrats angling to halt the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, named after the president's own catchphrase, piled on with relentless opposition.

"In the words of Elon Musk, this bill is a 'disgusting abomination,'" said Rep. Brendan Boyle of Pennsylvania, the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee, reviving the billionaire former Trump aide's criticism of the package.

The analysis comes at a crucial moment as Trump is pushing Congress, where Republicans have majority control, to send the final product to his desk to become law by the Fourth of July. The House passed the bill last month by a single vote, but it's now slogging through the Senate, where Republicans want a number of significant changes, including those discussed with Trump.

And the politics are only intensifying.

Musk blindsided Congress with

an all-out assault against the bill this week, leaving House Speaker Mike Johnson rushing to do damage control. The GOP speaker said he called Musk to discuss the criticism, but had not heard back. Musk has threatened to use his political apparatus to go after Republicans in the midterm elections.

"I hope he comes around," Johnson, R-La., told reporters.

Hours later, Musk, whose business interests could be impacted by green energy rollbacks in the bill, implored voters to call their representatives and senators. "Bankrupting America is NOT ok!" he wrote on social media, "KILL THE BILL."

The work of the CBO, which for decades has served as the official scorekeeper of legislation in Congress, is closely watched by lawmakers and others seeking to understand the budgetary impacts of the sprawling 1,000-page-plus package.

Bid to secure critical raw materials

EU selects 13 projects in non-EU countries

BRUSSELS, June 5, (KUNA): The European Commission said on Wednesday it adopted an initial list of 13 strategic projects focused on critical raw materials located outside the European Union.

This step aims to diversify the EUs supply sources and enhance the blocs economic security, while also supporting local value chains in the host countries.

This announcement complements a previously adopted list of 47 strategic projects within the EU, endorsed on March 25, 2025. Together, these 60 projects form part of the implementation of the Critical Raw Materials Act, which entered into force in May 2024.

These initiatives are considered a key pillar of the EUs new industrial strategy, especially amid current geopolitical challenges and the growing need to support the green and digital transitions.

According to the Commission, the newly selected projects are located in countries that have established strategic partnerships with the EU in raw materials value chains. These include Canada, Greenland, Kazakhstan, Norway, Serbia, Ukraine, and Zambia, as well as overseas territories such as New Caledonia. Other project sites include Brazil, Madagascar, Malawi, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

Ten of these projects focus on extracting strategic raw materials essential for the production of batteries, energy storage, and electric mobility, specifically lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese, and graphite.

Two additional projects cover the extraction of rare earth elements, used to produce high-performance magnets critical for wind turbines and electric motors, core components in renewable energy technologies and electro-mobility. Other covered materials include copper, used in power grids and microelectronics, as well as tungsten and boron, both of which are crucial in the automotive, aerospace, energy, and defense industries.

The Commission also confirmed that it will intensify cooperation with countries hosting these projects, particularly through existing strategic partnerships, to ensure their effective development and implementation.

This initiative is part of the EUs broader effort to reduce its dependency on external sources for critical raw materials, which are essential for many strategic industries including renewable energy, electric transportation, defense, and space technologies.

US and Europe trade negotiators say progress but no breakthroughs on tariff talks in Paris

PARIS, June 5, (AP): Europe and the United States say progress has been made but there were no breakthroughs during a meeting in Paris to negotiate a settlement of a tense tariff spat with worldwide economic ramifications between two global economic powerhouses.

The European Union's top trade negotiator, Maroš Šefčovič, met Wednesday with his American counterpart, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, on the sidelines of a meeting of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

"I am pleased that negotiations are advancing quickly," said Greer. He said the EU negotiators showed a "willingness by the EU to work with us to find a concrete way forward to achieve reciprocal trade. I look forward to continued constructive engagement in the coming days and weeks."

"We're advancing in the right direction at pace," Šefčovič said at a news conference. He said ongoing technical meetings between EU and U.S. negotiators in Washington would be followed by a video conference between himself and Greer to "assess the progress and charter the way forward."

Brussels and Washington are unlikely to reach a substantive trade agreement in Paris. The issues dividing them are too difficult to resolve quickly.

President Donald Trump regularly fumes about America's persistent trade deficit with the European Union, which was a record \$161 billion last year, according to the U.S. Commerce Department.

Trump blames the gap between what the U.S. sells and what it buys from

Europe on unfair trade practices and often criticizes the EU's 10% tax on imported cars. America's tax on imported cars was 2.5% until Trump raised it to 25% in April. The EU has argued its purchases of U.S. services, especially in the technology sector, all but overcome the deficit.

After the Trump administration's surprise tariffs on steel last week rattled global markets and complicated the ongoing, wider tariff negotiations between Brussels and Washington, the EU on Monday said it is preparing "countermeasures" against the U.S.

The EU has offered the U.S. a "zero for zero" deal which would see both sides end tariffs on industrial goods, including autos. Trump has rejected that idea, but EU officials say it's still on the table.

The EU could buy more liquefied natural gas and defense items from the U.S., and reduce duties on cars, but it is not likely to budge on calls to scrap the value added tax, which is akin to a sales tax, or open up the EU to American beef.

"We still have a few weeks to have this discussion and negotiation," French Trade Minister Laurent Saint-Martin said in Paris on Wednesday ahead of the OECD meeting. "If the discussion and negotiation do not succeed, Europe is capable of having countermeasures on American products and services as well."

Greta Peisch, who was general counsel for the U.S. trade representative in the Biden administration, said the zero-for-zero proposal could provide a

way to make progress if the Trump administration "is looking for a reason not to impose tariffs on the EU."

But Peisch, now a partner at the Wiley Rein law firm, wondered: "How motivated is the U.S. to come to a deal with the EU?" Trump, after all, has longstanding grievances and complaints about EU trade practices.

One target of his ire is the value-added tax, similar to U.S. state sales taxes.

Trump and his advisers consider VATs unfair protectionism because they are levied on U.S. products. But VATs are set at a national level, not by the EU, and apply to domestic and imported products alike, so they have not traditionally been considered a trade barrier. There is little chance governments will overhaul their tax systems to appease Trump.

Likewise, the Europeans are likely to balk at U.S. demands to scrap food and safety regulations that Washington views as trade barriers. These include bans on hormone-raised beef, chlorinated chicken and genetically modified foods.

"When you start talking about chickens or GMOs or automobile safety standards, you're talking about the ways countries choose to regulate their economies," said William Reinsch, a former U.S. trade official now with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "We think that's protectionist. They think it's keeping their citizens healthy ... It's been a sore point for 60 years."



Fast, smart ... exhausted as race for robot endurance is on

# Synthetic metabolisms could power tomorrow’s machines



A Booster T1 robot from Booster Robotics prepares to kick a football during a demonstration to the Zhongguancun Forum at the Zhongguancun International Innovation Center in Beijing, China, on March 28, 2025. (AP)

**By James Pikul**  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

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

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‘ If robots are to play meaningful roles in society assisting the elderly, exploring hazardous environments and working alongside humans, they need the endurance to stay active for hours, not minutes. ’

Earlier this year, a robot completed a half-marathon in Beijing in just under 2 hours and 40 minutes. That's slower than the human winner, who clocked in at just over an hour - but it's still a remarkable feat. Many recreational runners would be proud of that time. The robot kept its pace for more than 13 miles (21 kilometers).

But it didn't do so on a single charge. Along the way, the robot had to stop and have its batteries swapped three times. That detail, while easy to overlook, speaks volumes about a deeper challenge in robotics: energy.

Modern robots can move with incredible agility, mimicking animal locomotion and executing complex tasks with mechanical precision. In many ways, they rival biology in coordination and efficiency. But when it comes to endurance, robots still fall short. They don't

tire from exertion - they simply run out of power.

As a robotics researcher focused on energy systems, I study this challenge closely. How can researchers give robots the staying power of living creatures - and why are we still so far from that goal? Though most robotics research into the energy problem has focused on better batteries, there is another possibility: Build robots that eat.

Modern robots are remarkably good at moving. Thanks to decades of research in biomechanics, motor control and actuation, machines such as Boston Dynamics' Spot and Atlas can walk, run and climb with an agility that once seemed out of reach. In some cases, their motors are even more efficient than animal muscles.

But endurance is another matter. Spot, for example, can operate for just 90 minutes on a full charge. After that, it needs nearly an hour to recharge. These runtimes are a far cry from the eight- to 12-hour shifts expected of human workers - or the multiday endurance of sled dogs.

The issue isn't how robots move - it's how they store energy. Most mobile robots today use lithium-ion

batteries, the same type found in smartphones and electric cars. These batteries are reliable and widely available, but their performance improves at a slow pace: Each year new lithium-ion batteries are about 7% better than the previous generation. At that rate, it would take a full decade to merely double a robot's runtime.

Animals store energy in fat, which is extraordinarily energy dense: nearly 9 kilowatt-hours per kilogram. That's about 68 kWh total in a sled dog, similar to the energy in a fully charged Tesla Model 3. Lithium-ion batteries, by contrast, store just a fraction of that, about 0.25 kilowatt-hours per kilogram. Even with highly efficient motors, a robot like Spot would need a battery dozens of times more powerful than today's to match the endurance of a sled dog.

And recharging isn't always an option. In disaster zones, remote fields or on long-duration missions, a wall outlet or a spare battery might be nowhere in sight.

In some cases, robot designers can add more batteries. But more batteries mean more weight, which increases the energy required to move. In highly mobile robots, there's a careful balance

between payload, performance and endurance. For Spot, for example, the battery already makes up 16% of its weight.

Some robots have used solar panels, and in theory these could extend runtime, especially for low-power tasks or in bright, sunny environments. But in practice, solar power delivers very little power relative to what mobile robots need to walk, run or fly at practical speeds. That's why energy harvesting like solar panels remains a niche solution today, better suited for stationary or ultra-low-power robots.

These aren't just technical limitations. They define what robots can do.

A rescue robot with a 45-minute battery might not last long enough to complete a search. A farm robot that pauses to recharge every hour can't harvest crops in time. Even in warehouses or hospitals, short runtimes add complexity and cost.

If robots are to play meaningful roles in society assisting the elderly, exploring hazardous environments and working alongside humans, they need the endurance to stay active for hours, not minutes.

New battery chemistries such as lithium-sulfur and metal-air offer a more

promising path forward. These systems have much higher theoretical energy densities than today's lithium-ion cells. Some approach levels seen in animal fat. When paired with actuators that efficiently convert electrical energy from the battery to mechanical work, they could enable robots to match or even exceed the endurance of animals with low body fat. But even these next-generation batteries have limitations. Many are difficult to recharge, degrade over time or face engineering hurdles in real-world systems.

Fast charging can help reduce downtime. Some emerging batteries can recharge in minutes rather than hours. But there are trade-offs. Fast charging strains battery life, increases heat and often requires heavy, high-power charging infrastructure. Even with improvements, a fast-charging robot still needs to stop frequently. In environments without access to grid power, this doesn't solve the core problem of limited onboard energy. That's why researchers are exploring alternatives such as "refueling" robots with metal or chemical fuels - much like animals eat - to bypass the limits of electrical charging altogether.

In nature, animals don't recharge, they eat. Food is converted into energy through digestion, circulation and respiration. Fat stores that energy, blood moves it and muscles use it. Future robots could follow a similar blueprint with synthetic metabolisms.

Some researchers are building systems that let robots "digest" metal or chemical fuels and breathe oxygen. For example, synthetic, stomachlike chemical reactors could convert high-energy materials such as aluminum into electricity.

This builds on the many advances in robot autonomy, where robots can sense objects in a room and navigate to pick them up, but here they would be picking up energy sources.

Other researchers are developing fluid-based energy systems that circulate like blood. One early example, a robotic fish, tripled its energy density by using a multifunctional fluid instead of a standard lithium-ion battery. That single design shift delivered the equivalent of 16 years of battery improvements, not through new chemistry but through a more bio-inspired approach. These systems could allow robots to operate for much longer stretches of time, drawing energy from materials that store far more energy than today's batteries.

In animals, the energy system does more than just provide energy. Blood helps regulate temperature, deliver hormones, fight infections and repair wounds. Synthetic metabolisms could do the same. Future robots might manage heat using circulating fluids or heal themselves using stored or digested materials. Instead of a central battery pack, energy could be stored throughout the body in limbs, joints and soft, tissue-like components.

This approach could lead to machines that aren't just longer-lasting but more adaptable, resilient and lifelike.

Today's robots can leap and sprint like animals, but they can't go the distance.

Their bodies are fast, their minds are improving, but their energy systems haven't caught up. If robots are going to work alongside humans in meaningful ways, we'll need to give them more than intelligence and agility. We'll need to give them endurance. (AP)

Creativity on autopilot: The danger of ‘good enough’ AI

# When everything is generated, what’s still genuine?

**By Wolfgang Messner**  
University of South Carolina

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

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‘ The danger is not that AI will fail us, but that people will accept the mediocrity of its outputs as the norm. ’

Artificial Intelligence began as a quest to simulate the human brain. Is it now in the process of transforming the human brain's role in daily life?

The Industrial Revolution diminished the need for manual labor. As someone who researches the application of AI in international business, I can't help but wonder whether it is spurring a cognitive revolution, obviating the need for certain cognitive processes as it reshapes how students, workers and artists write, design and decide.

Graphic designers use AI to quickly create a slate of potential logos for their clients. Marketers test how AI-generated customer profiles will respond to ad campaigns. Software engineers deploy AI coding assistants. Students wield AI to draft essays in record time - and teachers use similar tools to provide feedback.

The economic and cultural implications are profound.

What happens to the writer who no longer struggles with the perfect phrase, or the designer who no longer sketches dozens of variations before finding the right one? Will they become increasingly dependent on these cognitive prosthetics, similar to how using

GPS diminishes navigation skills? And how can human creativity and critical thinking be preserved in an age of algorithmic abundance?

We've been here before.

The Industrial Revolution replaced artisanal craftsmanship with mechanized production, enabling goods to be replicated and manufactured on a mass scale.

Shoes, cars and crops could be produced efficiently and uniformly. But products also became more bland, predictable and stripped of individuality. Craftsmanship retreated to the margins, as a luxury or a form of resistance.

Today, there's a similar risk with the automation of thought. Generative AI tempts users to conflate speed with quality, productivity with originality.

The danger is not that AI will fail us, but that people will accept the mediocrity of its outputs as the norm. When everything is fast, frictionless and "good enough," there's the risk of losing the depth, nuance and intellectual richness that define exceptional human work.

Despite the name, AI doesn't actually think.

Tools such as ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini process massive volumes of human-created content, often scraped from the internet without context or permission. Their outputs are statistical predictions of what word or pixel is likely to follow based on patterns in data they've processed.

They are, in essence, mirrors that

reflect collective human creative output back to users - rearranged and recombined, but fundamentally derivative.

And this, in many ways, is precisely why they work so well.

Consider the countless emails people write, the slide decks strategy consultants prepare and the advertisements that suffuse social media feeds. Much of this content follows predictable patterns and established formulas. It has been there before, in one form or the other.

Generative AI excels at producing competent-sounding content - lists, summaries, press releases, advertisements - that bears the signs of human creation without that spark of ingenuity. It thrives in contexts where the demand for originality is low and when "good enough" is, well, good enough.

Yet, even in a world of formulaic content, AI can be surprisingly helpful.

In one set of experiments, researchers tasked people with completing various creative challenges. They found that those who used generative AI produced ideas that were, on average, more creative, outperforming participants who used web searches or no aids at all. In other words, AI can, in fact, elevate baseline creative performance.

However, further analysis revealed a critical trade-off: Reliance on AI systems for brainstorming significantly reduced the diversity of ideas produced, which is a crucial element for creative breakthroughs. The systems tend to converge toward a predictable middle

rather than exploring unconventional possibilities at the edges.

I wasn't surprised by these findings. My students and I have found that the outputs of generative AI systems are most closely aligned with the values and worldviews of wealthy, English-speaking nations. This inherent bias quite naturally constrains the diversity of ideas these systems can generate.

More troubling still, brief interactions with AI systems can subtly reshape how people approach problems and imagine solutions.

One set of experiments tasked participants with making medical diagnoses with the help of AI. However, the researchers designed the experiment so that AI would give some participants flawed suggestions. Even after those participants stopped using the AI tool, they tended to unconsciously adopt those biases and make errors in their own decisions.

What begins as a convenient shortcut risks becoming a self-reinforcing loop of diminishing originality - not because these tools produce objectively poor content, but because they quietly narrow the bandwidth of human creativity itself.

True creativity, innovation and research are not just probabilistic re-combinations of past data. They require conceptual leaps, cross-disciplinary thinking and real-world experience. These are qualities AI cannot replicate. It cannot invent the future. It can only remix the past.

What AI generates may satisfy a short-term need: a quick summary, a plausible design, a passable script. But it rarely transforms, and genuine originality risks being drowned in a sea of algorithmic sameness.

The challenge, then, isn't just technological. It's cultural.

How can the irreplaceable value of human creativity be preserved amid this flood of synthetic content?

The historical parallel with industrialization offers both caution and hope. Mechanization displaced many workers but also gave rise to new forms of labor, education and prosperity. Similarly, while AI systems may automate some cognitive tasks, they may also open up new intellectual frontiers by simulating intellectual abilities. In doing so, they may take on creative responsibilities, such as inventing novel processes or developing criteria to evaluate their own outputs.

This transformation is only at its early stages. Each new generation of AI models will produce outputs that once seemed like the purview of science fiction. The responsibility lies with professionals, educators and policymakers to shape this cognitive revolution with intention.

Will it lead to intellectual flourishing or dependency? To a renaissance of human creativity or its gradual obsolescence?

The answer, for now, is up in the air. (AP)

editor's choice







Sydney Sweeney attends the Apple TV+ premiere of 'Echo Valley' at AMC Lincoln Square on Wednesday, June 4, in New York. (AP)

### Broadway's biggest night

## Tony Awards promise star power, surprises

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): Twenty-nine shows on Broadway got Tony Award nominations this season, but not all will walk away with a trophy - and the box office attention they usually bring.

Here are some key things to know as Broadway's biggest night approaches, including how to watch, who is poised to make history, what old favorite gets to take a victory lap and how you can see George Clooney on Broadway from the comfort of your couch.

The Tonys will be broadcast to both coasts on Sunday, June 8, from 8-11 p.m. Eastern/5-8 p.m. Pacific, live from Radio City Music Hall.

On CBS and streaming on Paramount+ in the U.

Tony, Emmy and Grammy winner (and three-time Oscar nominee) Cynthia Erivo, the "Wicked" star, will be making her debut hosting the Tonys. She won the lead actress in a musical Tony in 2016 for "The Color Purple" and will have just released her new album, "I Forgive You."

A pre-show will be broadcast on Pluto TV from 6:40-8 p.m. Eastern/3:40-5 p.m. Pacific, where some Tonys will be handed out. Darren Criss and Renée Elise Goldsberry will host that telecast. Viewers can access it on their smart TV, streaming device, mobile app or online by going to Pluto TV and clicking on the "Live Music" channel, found within the Entertainment category on the service.

Presenters include Aaron Tveit, Adam Lambert, Alex Winter, Allison Janney, Ariana DeBose, Ben Stiller, Bryan Cranston, Carrie Preston, Charli D'Amelio, Danielle Brooks, Jean Smart, Jesse Eisenberg, Katie Holmes, Keanu Reeves, Kelli O'Hara, Kristin Chenoweth, Lea Michele, Lea Salonga, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Michelle Williams, Oprah, Rachel Bay Jones, Renée Elise Goldsberry, Samuel L. Jackson, Sara Bareilles and Sarah

Paulson.

A total of 26 competitive categories, from lead and featured actors to scenic, costume and lighting design. Some technical award handouts may be pre-taped and winners won't appear on the live show, only cut down into edited bits sandwiched into the telecast.

There are three of them: "Buena Vista Social Club," which takes its inspiration from Wim Wenders' 1999 Oscar-nominated documentary; "Death Becomes Her," based on the 1992 cult classic film; and "Maybe Happy Ending," a rom-com musical about a pair of androids. Each has a leading 10 nominations.

For new musicals, it's "Buena Vista Social Club," "Dead Outlaw," "Death Becomes Her," "Maybe Happy Ending" and "Operation Mincemeat: A New Musical."

For new plays, it's "English," "The Hills of California," "John Proctor Is the Villain," "Oh, Mary!" and "Pose."

Many of the races are unusually tight this year, the product of a Broadway heaving with shows after having largely rebounded from the pandemic.

"I haven't seen one nominated show that I haven't been wowed by. Everything brings something," says Lowe Cunningham, lead producer of "Death Becomes Her" and also a Tony voter.

"How dare the Broadway community come together with such excellent work," she jokes. "I needed everything else to be much worse, and I don't appreciate it."

Audra McDonald, the most recognized performer in the theater awards' history, could possibly extend her Tony lead. Already the record holder for most acting wins with six Tonys, McDonald could add to that thanks to her leading turn in an acclaimed revival of "Gypsy." She will push the record for a performer to most wins with seven if she prevails on Tony night.

tour, and the musicians are now offering a reward for information leading to their return.

The band was set to kick off the An Evening With Heart tour at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City on Saturday, and its gear had been set up there the day prior to the show. Among the items stolen were a custom-built, purple sparkle baritone Telecaster guitar with a hand-painted headstock made for band member Nancy Wilson, and a vintage 1966 Gibson EM-50 mandolin that band member Paul Moak has played for over 25 years. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Jurors in Harvey Weinstein's sex crimes retrial are due to start deliberating Thursday, with dozens of witnesses, scores of documents and two days of closing arguments to sift through.

The seven-woman, five-man jury will start its private discussions after getting legal instructions from the judge Thursday morning.

Closing arguments concluded Wednesday, with prosecutor Nicole Blumberg saying the former movie studio boss "held the golden ticket" to show-business success and used it to sexually assault women who were afraid to cross him.

Weinstein, 73, has pleaded not guilty to raping a woman in 2013 and to coercing two others in 2006. Defense lawyer Arthur Aidala told jurors Tuesday that Weinstein's encounters with the women were entirely consensual, arguing that they were "using him" to advance their fledgling careers in entertainment. (AP)

### Variety

**NEW YORK:** The English pop singer Jessie J says she has been diagnosed with breast cancer and will undergo surgery after her performance at the London music festival Capital's Summertime Ball next weekend.

Jessie J, 37, shared the news in an Instagram video on Wednesday. "I was diagnosed with early breast cancer," she said in the clip. "Cancer sucks in any form, but I'm holding onto the word 'early'."

"It's a very dramatic way to get a boob job. I am going to disappear for a bit after Summertime Ball to have my surgery, and I will come back with massive (expletive) and more music."

The annual Summertime Ball will be held at Wembley Stadium on Sunday, June 15.

She told her social media audience that she felt compelled to share her diagnosis. (AP)



Jessie J

**ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.:** Two irreplaceable instruments owned by members of the rock band Heart were stolen from a venue in New Jersey last weekend as the group prepared to launch a nationwide

### Young Thug gang trial to end without any murder convictions

## Woman testifies that Combs dangled her from balcony

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): A former graphic designer for **Sean "Diddy" Combs** testified Wednesday that he dangled her from a 17th-floor balcony while screaming profanities, leaving her so traumatized she still has night terrors nearly a decade later and would wake up screaming.

Bryana 'Bana' Bongolan, 33, a friend of Combs' former girlfriend Cassie, told jurors that Combs lifted her over the railing for 10-15 seconds before pulling her back and throwing her onto patio furniture.

"I was scared to fall," Bongolan told jurors at the hip-hop mogul's federal sex trafficking trial in Manhattan.

She said the September 2016 attack at Cassie's Los Angeles apartment caused a bruise on her leg and pain to her back and neck. Jurors saw photos of her wearing a neck brace. Her bruise looked like it was the size of a softball.

"I have nightmares and I have a lot of paranoia and I used to scream a lot in my sleep, but it's dissipated a little bit," said Bongolan, a creative and marketing director at her own art agency.

She said her paranoia includes carefully opening doors and peeking into rooms before going inside. Her last nightmare was just a few days ago, she said.

Combs' lawyers said Bongolan was a heavy drug user and suggested she may have been high during the alleged attack, which she denies. Bongolan has a pending lawsuit against Combs.

Bongolan took the stand during the fourth week of testimony in Combs' trial, and was a prelude to the next big prosecution witness: a woman using the pseudonym "Jane" who alleges she was abused by Combs and made to participate in drug-fueled "freak-off" marathons. She's expected to testify Thursday.

Bongolan is one of several witnesses to accuse Combs of violence toward them. She testified she

also saw him abusing Cassie, the R&B singer whose real name is Casandra Ventura. Cassie testified over the course of four days that Combs beat her and subjected her to hundreds of freak-offs. Other witnesses described seeing similar abuse.

Before Bongolan, forensic video expert Frank Piazza testified about security footage of Combs beating Cassie in a Los Angeles hotel hallway in March 2016. Jurors have seen the footage more than a dozen times. Piazza also analyzed 10 sexually explicit videos from Cassie's device. Those were not shown.

Combs, 55, has pleaded not guilty to charges of running his business empire as a racketeering enterprise, allegedly using employees to enable and conceal the sexual and physical abuse of women over two decades. He faces 15 years to life if convicted.



Combs

followed by a long, problem-plagued trial, nobody will be convicted of murder.

When Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis announced the indictment in May 2022, she said her office was cracking down on a violent street gang responsible for multiple killings run by Young Thug, whose real name is Jeffery Williams.

But Willis dropped the only remaining murder charge Monday after defendant Demise McMullen pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of aggravated assault. Young Thug went home Oct. 31 after pleading guilty to gang, drug and gun charges and remains on probation.

Prosecutors alleged that Young Thug and two

### Film



Ana de Armas arrives at the premiere of 'Ballerina' on Tuesday, June 3, at TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

### Wick spinoff blends ballet and bloody action

## Ana de Armas slays in 'Ballerina'

LOS ANGELES, June 5, (AP): Watch a bunch of John Wick movies all in a row, and you can get pretty paranoid.

You start to think everyone's an assassin. The guy at the newsstand, the street musician, the subway rider, that nice neighbor in the elevator - ruthless contract killers, all.

So perhaps it shouldn't be too surprising that in "From the World of John Wick: Ballerina," the latest installment in the Wickian world, we reach the logical endpoint: a town where every single inhabitant's a killer. Yes, it's a picture-perfect, snowy winterscape in Austria, where everyone wears wool beanies and very nice sweaters. But they also wield a mean flamethrower, and schoolkids have mandatory shooting practice.

The early scenes in this wacky place high in the mountains are the best part of "Ballerina" - they actually contain deft surprises and even a glimmer of humor, which is hardly something we expect in a John Wick film. (Have you ever see the guy smile?) Watching our energetic star, Ana de Armas, engage in a plate-smashing contest with a sweet waitress-turned-vicious-killer reminds us that action can be clever, even if most scenes in this series inevitably become numbing, as the body count rises stratospherically.

Before we go further, some clarification on where this film fits into the timeline. Let's forget (for now) that there was a John Wick 4, because the events of "Ballerina" take place during the third movie. So, erase from your mind whatever huge, life-altering thing may or may not have happened in the last film. OK?

Eagle-eyed viewers may, in fact, remember a brief scene in the third movie where a ballerina is trying to do a series of fouettés, those whiplash turns on one leg that are a big attraction in "Swan Lake." The same scene returns in "Ballerina," where we see de Armas' character, Eve, doggedly trying to master them in training. Why she keeps falling - every time, after years and years of class - is a mystery. We don't aim for full realism in action

films, guys, but may we suggest that falling flat on the floor in your pointe shoes every time you do a turn feels like much more difficult stunt work than anything else in "Ballerina" - including obliterating a horde of townspeople. It also speaks to a troubling lack of coordination, a definite problem for an assassin.

Anyway! We actually first meet Eve as a child, living alone with her cherished father in some wind-swept coastal abode. Suddenly, a crew of black-clad assassins arrives by sea, targeting the father. He manages to protect Eve, but dies from his wounds.

### Approached

Soon, now-orphaned Eve is approached by Winston (Ian McShane, returning) owner of the Continental Hotel. Winston says he can bring her to her father's family. He takes her to The Director (a haughty Anjelica Huston), who welcomes the budding dancer to what seems an elite ballet academy but is also the training ground of the Ruska Roma, the crime organization where Wick himself learned his trade.

The years go by. Eve is now a young woman determined to strike out on her own, though she still has problems completing a fouetté turn. ("Tend to



This image released by Lionsgate shows Ana de Armas in a scene from 'Ballerina.' (AP)

others founded the street gang Young Slime Life, which was associated with the Bloods street gang, in 2012. The 33-year-old artist has a record label called Young Stoner Life, which prosecutors alleged was tied to Young Slime Life.

Prosecutors drew ire for using song lyrics and social media posts in their case. Attorney Doug Weinstein, who represented defendant Deamonte Kendrick, who raps under the name Yak Gotti, said prosecutors targeted men who pursued music as a way out of hardship in economically "deprived" Atlanta areas and tried to "claw them back in, hold them back down."

"Whatever they may have done in their youth, and I would argue most of them didn't do anything, to be targeted in this way by the prosecutors is just wrong," said Weinstein. "Whatever you think of their music - the violence, the misogynistic lyrics - that is not a reason to go after these guys."

Weinstein continued, adding, "People like my client, Mr. Kendrick, had to be incarcerated for 2 1/2 years or more, in the case of some of these defendants, for a crime that they didn't do."

Kendrick was stabbed in jail. He was one of two defendants who didn't take plea deals, and the only one cleared of all charges, including a murder charge in the 2015 drive-by shooting death of rival gang member Donovan Thomas Jr., known as "Big Nut."

In a statement to The Associated Press, Willis spokesperson Jeff DiSantis said "anti-gang efforts" have yielded "over 400 convictions of gang members" since Willis became district attorney, including 19 people in this case. Those efforts were "key" in making Fulton County "safer, taking dangerous offenders off the streets and sending a message that gang activity will not be tolerated in our community," he said.



New console offers bigger screen, faster play

## Nintendo Switch 2 global launch draws eager fans

TOKYO, June 5, (AP): Eager customers lined up outside electronics stores in Tokyo hours in advance to collect their pre-ordered Nintendo Switch 2 video game consoles.

The much anticipated Switch 2, being released around the world Thursday, is an upgrade to its eight-year-old predecessor with new social features meant to draw players into online gaming. Nintendo is counting on the Switch 2 to boost sagging sales.

In the US, a chaotic pre-order process in April left some fans frustrated after the consoles quickly sold out.

In Japan, the new consoles were sold through a competitive lottery system that Nintendo said got about 2.2 million applications.

Outside the official draw, some retailers offered their own lotteries to pre-order the devices.

Koji Takahashi was among those who missed out on the official draw but he was selected in the second round of a lottery held by a major electronics retailer in Japan.

He was first in line waiting outside the store, arriving four hours ahead of its opening. He hoped to secure a limited supply of Nintendo accessories to buy along with his pre-ordered Switch 2.

“I feel very sorry for those who weren’t successful in the lottery. But I also had tough time getting this far, so I hope they forgive me!” Takahashi said.

The new console comes with a larger and higher resolution screen than its predecessor, with improved processing power, offering smoother and more vivid graphics.

Nintendo has said it expects to sell 15 million Switch

2 consoles for the fiscal year through March 2026.

The company has promised to roll out attractive software for the Switch 2 later this year, including “The Legend of Zelda” games, a Pokemon title and a Kirby game, as well as offerings from outside software companies.

Nintendo is capitalizing on the launch with the opening of a store in San Francisco and the Super Nintendo World amusement facility in Orlando, Florida, both set for this month.

The Switch 2’s rollout arrives at an uncertain time for much of the gaming industry due to new tariffs implemented by US President Donald Trump.

In the US, the Switch 2’s baseline launch price is \$449.99 - significantly higher than the original Switch’s \$299 price tag.



A customer purchases Nintendo Switch 2 at an electronics retailer in Tokyo, Thursday, June 5. (AP)

### Stage



The cast appears in a scene from 'All Nighter' in New York. (AP)

New generation stories make loud impact on stage

## Broadway has found its Gen Z audience

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): Kimberly Belflower knew “John Proctor is the Villain” needed its final cathartic scene to work - and, for that, it needed Lorde’s “Green Light.”

“I literally told my agent, ‘I would rather the play just not get done if it can’t use that song,’” the playwright laughed. She wrote Lorde a letter, explaining what the song meant, and got her green light.

Starring Sadie Sink, the staggering play about high schoolers studying “The Crucible” as the #MeToo movement arrives in their small Georgia town, earned seven Tony nominations, including best new play - the most of any this season. It’s among a group of Broadway shows that have centered the stories of young people and attracted audiences to match.

Sam Gold’s Brooklyn-rave take on “Romeo + Juliet,” nominated for best revival of a play and led by Kit Connor and Rachel Zegler with music from Jack Antonoff, drew the youngest ticket-buying audience recorded on Broadway, producers reported, with 14% of ticket purchasers aged 18-24, compared to the industry average of 3%.

The shows share some DNA: pop music (specifically the stylings of Antonoff, who also produced “Green Light”), Hollywood stars with established fanbases and stories that reflect the complexity of young adulthood.

“It was very clear that young people found our show because it was doing what theater’s supposed to do,” Gold said. “Be a mirror.”

The themes “John Proctor” investigates aren’t danced around (until they literally are). The girls are quick to discuss #MeToo’s impact, intersectional feminism and sexual autonomy. Their conversations, true to teenage girlhood, are laced with comedy and pop culture references - Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, “Twilight,” and, of course, Lorde.

Fina Strazza, 19, portrays Beth, a leader who is whip-smart and well-intentioned - but whose friendships and belief system are shaken by the play’s revelations.

“You have so much empathy and are so invested in her, but she still has these mishaps and slip-ups that young people often have,” said Strazza, nominated for best featured ac-

tor in a play. Some audience members have given her letters detailing how Beth helped them forgive themselves for how they handled similar experiences.

The script is written in prose, with frequent line breaks and infrequent capital letters. Director Danya Taymor, nominated for best direction of a play a year after winning a Tony for another teenage canon classic, “The Outsiders,” was drawn to that rhythm - and how Belflower’s depiction of adolescence captured its intensity, just as S.E. Hinton had.

“There’s something about the teenage years that is so raw,” Taymor said. “None of us can escape it.”

During his Tony-winning production of “An Enemy of the People,” Gold found himself having conversations with young actors and theatergoers about climate change, politics and how “theater was something that people their age and younger really need in a different way, as the world is becoming so addicted to technology,” he said.

That conjured “Romeo and Juliet.” The original text “has it all in terms of what it means to inherit the future that people older than you have created,” Gold said.

#### Ensemble

Building the world of this show, with an ensemble under 30, was not unlike building “An Enemy of the People,” set in 19th century Norway, Gold said: “I think the difference is that the world that I made for this show is something that a very hungry audience had not gotten to see.”

Fans, Gold correctly predicted, were ravenous. Demand ahead of the first preview prompted a preemptive extension. Word (and bootleg video) of Connor doing a pullup to kiss Zegler made the rounds. “Man of the House,” an Antonoff-produced ballad sung by Zegler mid-show, was released as a single. With the show premiering just before the US presidential election, Voters of Tomorrow even registered new voters in the lobby.

Audiences proved willing to pay: Average ticket prices hovered around \$150. Cheaper rush and lottery tickets drew lines hours before the box office opened. Every week but one sold out.

“The show was initially really well sold because we had a cast that appealed to a really specific audience,” said producer Greg Nobile of Seaview Productions. “We continued to see the houses sell out because these audiences came, and they were all over online talking about the ways in which they actually felt seen.”

Thomas Laub, 28, and Alyah Chanelle Scott, 27, started Runyonland Productions for that very reason.

“We both felt a lot of frustration with the industry, and the ways that we were boxed out of it as students in Michigan who were able to come to New York sparingly,” Laub said. Runyonland was launched in 2018 with the premise that highlighting new, bold voices would bring change.

This spring, Scott, known for playing Whitney in HBO’s “Sex Lives of College Girls,” acted off-Broadway in Natalie Margolin’s “All Nighter.”

“I was standing onstage and looking out and seeing the college kids that I was playing,” Scott said. “I was like, ‘I respect you so much. I want to do you proud. I want to show you a story that represents you in a way that doesn’t belittle or demean you, but uplifts you.’”

Co-producing “John Proctor,” Scott said, gave Runyonland the opportunity to target that audience on a Broadway scale. Belflower developed the show with students as part of a The Farm College Collaboration Project. It’s been licensed over 100 times for high school and college productions. The Broadway production’s social and influencer marketing is run by 20-somethings, too.

Previews attracted fans with a \$29 ticket lottery. While average prices jumped to over \$100 last week (still below the Broadway-wide average), \$40 rush, lottery and standing room tickets have sold out most nights, pushing capacity over 100%. The success is validating Runyonland’s mission, Laub said.

“Alyah doesn’t believe me that I cry every time at the end,” Laub said. Scott laughs. “I just want to assure you, on the record, that I do indeed cry every time.”

The final scene of “John Proctor” is a reclamation fueled by rage and “Green Light.” Capturing that electricity has been key to the show’s marketing.

Pop Mart’s plush toy sparks global craze

## Viral Labubu blends toy trends with fashion flair

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): Labubu, the plush toy from China’s Pop Mart is a social media darling, but the toothy little monsters are far from an overnight success. Having appeared a decade ago, Labubus may have finally cemented their place in the collectible toy market for years to come.

The Labubu, by artist and illustrator Kasing Lung, first appeared with pointed ears and pointy teeth, in three picture books inspired by Nordic mythology in 2015.

In 2019 Lung struck a deal with Pop Mart, a company that caters to toy connoisseurs and influencers, to sell Labubu figurines. But it wasn’t until Pop Mart started selling Labubu plush toys on key rings in 2023 that the toothy monsters suddenly seemed to be everywhere, including in the hands of Rihanna, Kim Kardashian and NBA star Dillon Brooks. K-pop singer Lisa of Blackpink began posting images of hers for her more than 100 million followers on Instagram and on TikTok, where Labubu pandemonium has broken out.

There are 1.4 million #Labubu TikTok posts and counting, videos of fans unboxing them, showing styles inspired by them, and of course, Labubu cosplay.

Fans have latched on to Labubu’s mashup of play and fashion, making them accessories on handbags, backpacks and belts, or hanging them from car mirrors.

“The character has evolved into a collectible and style symbol, resonating with fans who connect with its quirky



This image provided by Pop Mart, shows Labubu, the plush toy from China’s Pop Mart. (AP)

aesthetic and unique backstory,” Emily Brough, Popmart’s head of IP licensing in the Americas, said.

Labubu has been a bonanza for Pop Mart. Its revenue more than doubled in 2024 to 13.04 billion yuan (\$1.81 billion), thanks in part to its elvish monster. Revenue from Pop Mart’s plush toys soared more than 1,200% in 2024, nearly

22% of its overall revenue, according to the company’s annual report.

Aside from their ability to pique the interest of toy aficionados and fashionistas, Labubu latched on to the blind box phenomenon, where the purchaser doesn’t know exactly which version of the plush toy they’ll get.

And Pop Mart made sure there is a Labubu for everyone, regardless of income. Most are priced in a wide range between \$20 and \$300, with certain collaborations or limited editions priced higher, according to Brough.

Unlike many toys, Labubu devotees include a large number of adults. Buyers ages 18 and over drove a year-over-year increase of more than \$800 million in the U.S. toy market in 2024, according to market research firm Circana. Adult shoppers, mostly female, bought the toys for themselves. In 2025’s first quarter, toy sales for those ages 18 and over rose 12% from the prior-year period. At \$1.8 billion, adults also accounted for the highest spending among all age groups in the quarter.

Like many retailers, Pop Mart is actively monitoring negotiations between the U.S. and just about every one of its trading partners as prices may be impacted. The situation with China is at the forefront, with President Donald Trump saying on Friday that the country “violated” an agreement with the United States on trade talks.

### Music

‘I Forgive You’ honest

## Erivo channels her soul on new album

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): It began as it always should, with her voice.

The second solo album from Cynthia Erivo, fresh off a herculean press run with the success of the first “Wicked” film, was always meant to be “vocal-focused,” she told The Associated Press recently. It may be the understatement of a lifetime: to know her is to know her instrument - that range, the notes few else can hit but many attempt.

And Erivo’s new soulful album, the evocatively titled “I Forgive You,” hits the mark.

In the studio, that meant using her vocals “as the pads, as the stacking,” like an artist might with a guitar or piano. “The meat of each of the pieces that you listen to is the voice,” she says. “So that you can hear the lyrics, you can hear the song, you can hear the emotion in it,” she explains. The other instruments, too, were performed live. “Everything you hear in there is real and tangible.”

For that reason - and other expressions of autonomy take across the album - she says it felt like her first. For the listener, it evokes a real feeling of intimacy.

Erivo spoke to the AP about “I Forgive You,” life after “Wicked” and the forthcoming “Wicked: For Good,” and the ways in which acting, singing and writing inform one another.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

AP: The title is “I Forgive You.” What’s the significance?

Erivo: This album is a collection of stories and songs that are both personal for things that are happening now, things that have happened in the past, and I think some of which I have had to forgive people for. And honestly, some of which I’ve had to forgive myself for. And I loved the idea of calling it this title, because it’s a simple concept, but not an easy one. And not one that we as humans are very good at, often.

A part of me was feeling, like, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if people had to keep repeating the words, ‘I forgive you?’” So even if you’re finding it difficult to say this album will give you the permission to actually say the words, even if you’re not quite ready.

AP: There’s a lot of candor on the album. Like in the song “Replay.”

Erivo: The concept of being a work in progress - who still gets scared of things, who still has to deal with things - that won’t ever necessarily stop. It might get quiet, but that feeling doesn’t necessarily always go away. I just wanted to be honest, and I think that “Replay” was probably the first song that I put out was because I felt like it was sort of a reintroduction to the inner part of me that most people might not really know.

But it’s also a tricky song in that it’s fun, it’s kind of upbeat, and if you actually listen, you hear that there’s like a person who’s a little bit fragile, a person whose trying to figure some things out, a person who’s been through some things, who’s dealt with things, who has abandonment issues, who has fear, who an inferiority complex sometimes, who wants to help everyone, who wants to save everyone, but gets it wrong.

Those are human, human things that I want to share.

AP: So, there was no apprehension in being so forthright?

Erivo: No apprehension about writing it, a little apprehension about sharing it, because it’s honest. But once it’s done, what can you do? It’s time to share.

AP: Writing, singing, acting - how does one inform the other?

Erivo: They feed each other. When I sing, I feel free and I feel open, which means that when I go and act - because I’ve given myself that experience - the want to close off again sort of goes away. So, when I’m on a set, I’m as open as I am when I am singing. I’m waiting to receive whatever I’m getting from my counterpart or whoever’s opposite me so I can actually listen. Because the act of writing and singing actually is also the act of listening.

AP: You’ve long been a powerhouse in theater. “Wicked” has launched you to the heights of mainstream culture. What’s the biggest adjustment you’ve had to make?

Erivo: I had a sort of level of anonymity that I think I got used to and I really kind of enjoyed. That isn’t necessarily there anymore, which is still really lovely because people are kind and sweet, and I’m really grateful for it. But that’s an adjustment, to realize that you can’t just walk into a store and no one will know who you are, or you can’t get on a plane, and no one will there you are. That’s a new thing that I didn’t expect or wasn’t seeking.



Cynthia Erivo poses for a portrait on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, in New York. (AP)



Pediatric skull surgery

New endoscopic surgery to treat craniosynostosis

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital announced the launching of a new medical service to treat children with congenital skull deformities, known as craniosynostosis, through endoscopic surgery for the first time in Kuwait, reports Al-Rai daily.

This technology is one of the latest in pediatric surgery; allowing for the correction of the skull shape through a minimally invasive surgical procedure using an endoscope, which reduces surgical complications and significantly speeds up the recovery period.

This delicate procedure is performed on children between three and four months of age, requiring early diagnosis and prompt referral to a specialized team.

The medical program is led by a group of elite Kuwaiti female surgeons -- headed by consultant neurosurgeon Dr. Alia Askar and plastic, craniofacial and reconstructive surgeon Dr. Abeer Kalandar; in collaboration with a multidisciplinary medical team at the hospital, including the Anesthesia and Pediatric Intensive Care Department headed by Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Rifai and Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi.

Several operations have been performed using this technique; with successful outcomes, thanks to the collaboration with the specialized medical team.

The medical team emphasized that the success of this type of surgery depends on early detection. They called on pediatricians and parents to raise awareness on the signs of cranial suture fusion and the need to immediately consult a specialist if they suspect an abnormal head shape.

This service is a significant addition to the advanced surgeries offered by hospital under the Ministry of Health. It is considered a ray of hope in terms of improving the quality of life for children with this congenital condition in a safer and more effective manner.

Al Seef Hospital removes 22 fibroids in complex surgery

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: Al Seef Hospital has recorded a remarkable medical achievement with the surgical removal of 22 fibroids of varying sizes from a 40-year-old patient, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The large number and size of the tumors made the patient's abdomen appear as though she were in the final stages of pregnancy.

The complex surgery, which lasted more than two hours, was carried out by Obstetrics and Gynecology Consultant at Al Seef Hospital Dr. Alia Al Ajmi. She confirmed that the procedure was completed successfully, with close attention to every medical detail to ensure the patient's safety. She also expressed her appreciation for the dedication of the entire medical team involved in the operation.

She added the operation was completed without any complications and the patient's uterus remained intact, with no side effects. She underscored the high level of precision and care employed throughout the procedure.

Meanwhile, Public Health Consultant and Head of the Medical Authority at the hospital Dr. Mahmoud Dashti praised the surgical team and confirmed the commitment of the hospital to push for continuous development. He cited the ongoing investment of the hospital in the latest diagnostic and therapeutic technologies, as well as its focus on attracting top-tier medical professionals.

"One of the pillars of our success lies in our ability to recruit highly experienced and specialized consultants across a wide range of rare and complex medical fields. This allows us to deliver the highest standards of care under one roof and to meet the needs of our patients with excellence and efficiency," he asserted.

Health system collapses

Cholera outbreak worsens in Sudan as infections rise

KHARTOUM, June 5, (KUNA): Sudan is facing a worsening health crisis as the cholera outbreak spreads across 12 states, infecting more than 71,000 people and causing over 1,770 deaths since July 2024. The health emergency coincides with severe challenges on the ground, including ongoing armed conflict and the collapse of critical infrastructure, hindering access to affected areas.

The Ministry of Health in Khartoum reported 942 new infections and 25 deaths at the end of May, amid a nationwide tally of 1,177 infections and 45 deaths. The Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate stated that approximately 90 percent of hospitals are out of service due to bombings, robbery, or a shortage of medical supplies.

During the last week of May, health authorities recorded 172 deaths, 90 percent of which occurred in Khartoum State, despite a reported recovery rate of 89 percent in isolation centers. The ministry warned that deteriorating environmental conditions are accelerating the spread of the disease.

Dr. Mohammad Al-Tijani, Director of Emergency and Epidemic Control at the Ministry of Health said that the overall recovery rate has reached 92 percent, attributing the rise in reported cases to increased field screening and response team activities.

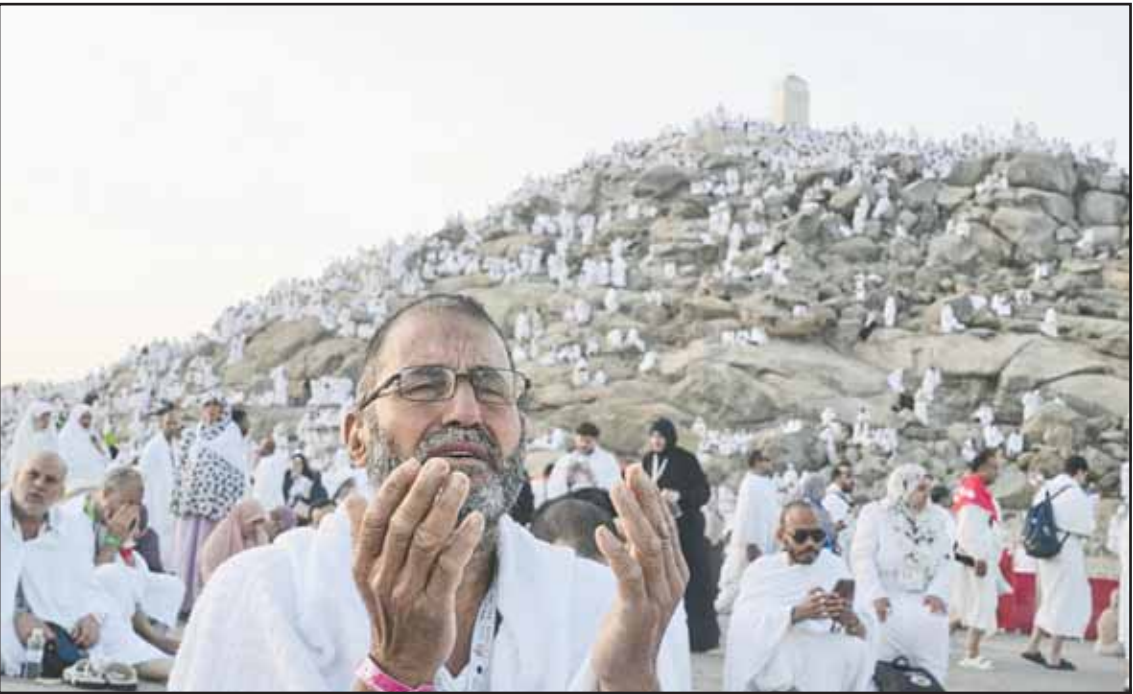
Al-Tijani added that 95 percent of

infections were recorded among adults, with only 5 percent among children.

He noted that vaccination campaigns are ongoing in Khartoum and will expand to other regions once three million additional vaccine doses arrive. As part of its response, the ministry plans to establish 250 rehydration centers in residential areas and has set up 12 isolation wards with a total capacity of 550 beds at Omdurman, Ombadda, and Al-Nau hospitals to support treatment efforts.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) warned that attacks on power infrastructure in Khartoum have worsened the water crisis, forcing residents to rely on contaminated sources and exposing more than one million children to waterborne diseases amid the cholera outbreak.

OCHA indicated a relative decline in daily case numbers in Khartoum, crediting efforts by healthcare workers and volunteers. However, it stressed that the situation remains critical, with over 16,500 infections and 340 deaths reported since the outbreak began. In an official statement, the World Health Organization (WHO) expressed deep concern over the cholera outbreak, as Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus issued an urgent appeal for unrestricted humanitarian access to contain the spread of the disease and save lives.



Muslim pilgrims offer prayers at top of the rocky hill known as the Mountain of Mercy, on the Plain of Arafat, during the annual Hajj pilgrimage near the holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia, Thursday, June 5. (AP)

Pilgrims urged to train, vaccinate

Hajj health guide: Avoid new shoes and look after your mental health

ISLAMABAD, June 5, (AP): Hajj is the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah that is required once in a lifetime of every Muslim who can afford it and is physically able to do it.

It is a spiritual highlight for those fortunate enough to go, but it is also grueling and stressful.

Pilgrims conduct their rituals outdoors, among huge crowds, walking up to 25 kilometers (15 miles) a day. There is often no privacy or personal space. Languages, routines and surroundings can feel unfamiliar, and the emotional impact of doing the Hajj can also take its toll.

Here are some ways to be well at the Hajj.

Pilgrims work on their spiritual readiness to undertake the Hajj, but equally important is their physical preparation.

Saudi authorities have published a 45-page safety kit in eight languages. It encourages people to do aerobic exercises for 30 minutes daily and to "make movement activities" like using the stairs instead of the elevator, before they travel to Saudi Arabia.

There's a lot of walking at the Hajj, even when pilgrims are not performing rituals. Too much traffic, or not enough transport, means people end up walking up to 25 kilometers (15 miles) every day. All the rituals are on foot.

High temperatures, adrenaline, and physical exertion will elevate the heart rate.

If pilgrims are not used to working out, they should have at least prepared their bodies for the long periods that will be spent outdoors and upright, as going from an inactive or sedentary lifestyle straight to the Hajj will be a shock to the system.

This year, temperatures at the Hajj are expected to reach 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

The body's resting core temperature is typically about 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit), just 4 degrees Celsius (7 degrees Fahrenheit) away from catastrophe in the form of heatstroke.

The bigger killer in the heat is the strain on the heart, especially for people who have cardiovascular disease. Blood rushes to the skin to help shed core heat, causing blood pressure to drop. The heart responds by trying to pump more blood to keep someone from passing out.

Avoid going out during the day unless necessary. Seek shade and rest often, despite the temptation to go at top speed. The Hajj is a marathon not a sprint.

White or pale-colored clothing and UV umbrellas reflect

the sunlight, meaning your body and clothing won't get as hot. Oral rehydration sachets can help replenish electrolytes lost through sweating and physical exertion.

There are also hands-free "Hajj" umbrellas that are worn on the head, allowing pilgrims to pray and carry out their rituals unencumbered.

Avoid new shoes, says Dr. Hina Shahid, the London-based chair of the Muslim Doctors Association. "If you have new shoes, break them in beforehand. Make sure your footwear is comfortable. You don't want to get blisters."

Well-fitting sandals or sliders are fine for Makkah, which has well-paved roads and sidewalks. It is common to see Muslims streaming into the city by foot.

There is smooth tiling on the outer courtyard of the Grand Mosque that is washed by an army of cleaners at regular intervals. But pilgrims go barefoot when circling the Kaaba, where the marble flooring is cool to the skin whatever the weather. But the terrain changes in Muzdalifah, where people collect pebbles to use in the symbolic stoning of pillars representing the devil.

They also spend the night in the open air so it's better to wear a sturdier, closed-toe shoe and also at Mount Arafat, where people clamber over rocks to reach the hill's 70-meter-high (230 feet) summit to spend hours in prayer.

Cough? Runny nose? Sore throat? Fever? That's "Hajj flu," a nickname for the respiratory infection that people develop during the crowded conditions of the pilgrimage.

It's common to see people wearing face masks during the Hajj, even though face coverings are not a religious requirement, because they are in close proximity to each other, making droplet infections inevitable.

Pilgrims are exposed to new germs, new environments and new routines. These are tough on the immune system when combined.

To minimize the chances of developing the Hajj flu or giving it to others, pilgrims should wash their hands well, especially before eating and after sneezing, coughing or using the bathroom.

Coughing or sneezing into the arm or elbow can help prevent the spread of germs when a tissue isn't available. It's worth sanitizing frequently touched objects and surfaces in the camps at Mina and opening windows for ventilation.

It's important to stay on top of mandatory and recommended vaccinations before traveling to Saudi Arabia.

Americans move away from fitness influencers

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): As Americans grow increasingly skeptical of the \$100 billion fitness industry, a new study reveals 47% of active adults now trust their own body's signals over experts, influencers, and tracking technology when making fitness decisions. The findings are from "The End of Expert Rule," a comprehensive study conducted by creative agency Mythology and insights partner Vytal World that uncovers a profound cultural shift in how people relate to exercise and wellness.

"People are questioning the assumption that someone else knows their body better than they do," says L Parker Barum, Managing Director at Mythology. "But this isn't about rejecting science or expertise entirely — it's about pushing back against the commodification of health and the obsessive culture that we've seen over the years."

The survey of 1,000 US adults active in fitness highlights

a striking rejection of what the report's authors call "performative suffering," with nearly 30% identifying the "no pain, no gain" mindset as the most outdated fitness status symbol. Just seven percent of adults place primary trust in AI systems or tracking technology, challenging the notion that we need constant digital monitoring to achieve wellness.

The rise of self-trust: Nearly half (47%) of respondents prioritize their own physical signals over external authority. Community experimentation: Friend groups have become innovation hubs, with 49% creating personalized approaches rather than following prescribed programs. Millennials and Gen Z differ significantly in how they apply this approach; Gen Z values authenticity and education, while Millennials prioritize efficiency and time optimization. Try-before-you-buy mentality: Personal experimentation drives 45% of purchasing decisions, far outweighing scientific validation (26%) or cultural credibility (8.4%).

E. coli threat

Measles shots fall post-COVID

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): Childhood vaccination rates against measles fell in the years after the COVID-19 pandemic in nearly 80% of the more than 2,000 US counties with available data - including in states that are battling outbreaks this year.

A Johns Hopkins University study, published in JAMA this week, illustrates where more vulnerable communities are located. The results mirror trends established at state and national levels: Routine childhood vaccination rates are dropping.

"When you look at the state level or national level ... you really don't see those drastic drops. Those are there. They're real and they're really problematic," said Lauren Gardner, an expert in infectious disease modeling at Johns Hopkins University who is the paper's senior author. Gardner also built the university's COVID-19 database.

Spreading

Most of the measles cases in the US this year - 1,088 nationally as of Friday - are in unvaccinated people. It has been spreading among communities due to international and domestic travel. Three people have died from measles during this year's outbreaks, and 2025 is inching closer to becoming the worst for measles in more than three decades.

Measles was eliminated in the U.S. in 2000, and the vaccine is safe and highly effective. Public schools nationwide require two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine before kindergarten, but the number of children with non-medical exemptions from those requirements hit an all-time high in the 2023-2024 school year. Health experts say community-level vaccination needs to be at 95% or higher to prevent outbreaks.

The Johns Hopkins study looked at 2,066 counties across 33 states, comparing kindergarten vaccination rates averaged over school years from 2017-2020 to averages from 2022-2024. Where kindergarten data wasn't available, the researchers used a comparable rate.

□ □ □

E. coli:

US agriculture officials are warning that ground beef sold at Whole Foods markets nationwide may be contaminated with potentially dangerous E. coli bacteria.

Officials on Tuesday issued a public health alert for 1-pound, vacuum-packed packages of Organic Rancher beef, produced on May 22 and May 23, by NPC Processing Inc., of Shelburne, Vermont. The products have use-by dates of June 19 and June 20. The U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service did not request a recall because the products are no longer available for purchase. However, they may still be in consumers' refrigerators or freezers.

The meat was produced in Australia or Uruguay and processed in the U.S. It was sent to distributors in Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois and Maryland and then to Whole Foods stores nationwide. The problem was discovered when company officials notified FSIS that they had shipped beef products that tested positive for E. coli O157:H7, a type of bacteria that can cause serious illness.

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In this file photo, from left, England's Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Sam Cook, Shoaib Bashir and Jamie Smith stand with the trophy after winning the Retheasay International test match at Trent Bridge, Nottingham, England. (AP)

Atkinson ruled out

England regains Carse and Woakes for 1st test vs India

LONDON, June 5, (AP): England's remodeled pace attack lost Gus Atkinson to injury but has regained Chris Woakes and Brydon Carse for the first test against India starting on June 20 in Leeds.

With Atkinson ruled out of selection after injuring his right hamstring in the innings defeat of Zimbabwe in last month's one-off test, England again has had to shuffle a fast-bowler unit missing injured pair Mark Wood (knee) and Jofra Archer (thumb) and permanently deprived of now-retired stalwarts James Anderson and Stuart Broad.

Woakes has only recently returned from a long-term ankle injury and has been playing for England's second-string Lions against India A. Carse also missed the match against Zimbabwe while he fully recovered from a toe injury sustained while playing in the Champions Trophy in February, but is set to return.

Meanwhile, Jamie Overton, a bowling allrounder, has been picked despite breaking his right little finger during a one-day international against the West Indies on May 29 and is back in the test squad for the first time since June 2022 when he earned his sole cap against New Zealand.

That was at Headingley, where England and India will begin their highly anticipated five-match series.

On Atkinson's fitness, England selector Luke Wright said on a video call it was a minor injury and added: "We are going to try and get him ready for the second or third" test.

Wright added that the injury-ravaged Archer, who hasn't played a test match since February 2021, is scheduled to play a County Championship match for Sussex against Durham starting on June 22.

If he comes through that unscathed, Archer would be in contention for the second test against India starting on July 2, Wright said.

Also in the 14-man squad is rising star batter Jacob Bethell, who didn't return home from the Indian Premier League to play against Zimbabwe but has been playing in the ODIs against the Windies.

It looks to be a straight shootout between Bethell and Ollie Pope to bat at No. 3, but Pope has the edge given he is vice captain and scored a big century against the Zimbabweans.

Wright said no decision had been made yet on whether the 21-year-old Bethell would come straight into the team having impressed on tour in New Zealand late last year.

There will be further tests at Edgbaston, Lord's, Old Trafford and the Oval.

England squad: Ben Stokes (captain), Shoaib Bashir, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Sam Cook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jamie Smith, Josh Tongue, Chris Woakes.

Chiefs ready to lift Super Rugby trophy after twice falling short

Crusaders host Reds

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, June 5, (AP): The Chiefs head into the first round of Super Rugby playoffs as top seeds and favorites, poised to win their first title since 2013 after finishing runners-up in the last two seasons.

The Hamilton-based Chiefs will face the Auckland-based Blues on Saturday in a repeat of last year's final, which was won by the Blues 40-10. This year, the Blues are seeded sixth in the qualifying playoffs and the advantage - not just home advantage - seems to be with the Chiefs, who won 11 of 14 matches in the regular season.

"It's only our time if we make it our time," Chiefs captain Luke Jacobson said. "We have to earn everything. We've learned a bit over the last few years in coming close. I'd like to think we're in a better spot than we were last year."

The second-seeded Crusaders will host the fifth-seeded Queensland Reds in the first playoff match in Christchurch on Friday and the third-seeded Brumbies will host the Wellington-based Hurricanes in Canberra on Saturday.

In a quirk of the new playoffs system, the Brumbies and Hurricanes will both progress to the

semifinals if the top two seeds win their matches. The winner in Canberra would go through automatically, the other as the highest-ranked loser.

The Chiefs seem fated to win their third Super Rugby title after losing in last year's final to the Blues in losing the 2023 final to the Crusaders, 25-20.

The Chiefs have won the title twice before, in 2012 and 2013 under Dave Rennie, who went on to become Wallabies coach. This year under Clayton McMillan, who will leave New Zealand after the final to coach Munster in Ireland, the Chiefs have been at the top of the standings throughout the season.

They have twice beaten the Blues, 25-14 in Round 1 and 32-31 in Round 5; have beaten the Crusaders 49-24 and 35-19; the Brumbies 49-34; the Reds 27-15, though they lost to the Hurricanes 35-17.

The Chiefs' style, playing at high tempo and using the width of the field, is hard to counter. The Hurricanes showed the best way to deprive the Chiefs of possession. When they have the ball, flyhalf Damian McKenzie orchestrates the Chiefs attack superbly.

The Blues play much more conservatively and in the middle of the field and have been at sixes and sevens when stretched.

The Crusaders have bounced back from a 2024 season in which they won only four matches to again reach the playoffs. They also have won 11 games this season but have scored fewer and conceded more points than the Chiefs.

The Reds and Brumbies carry Australia's hopes into the finals, with the knowledge no Australian team has won a playoff match in New Zealand in 19 attempts. The Brumbies are 0-8 and the Reds 0-4 in the post-season in New Zealand.

Wallabies coach Joe Schmidt will keep a close on the playoffs and the selection spotlight for the Australian squad will be on the Reds' backrow and flyhalf Tom Lynagh.

"We won't let the occasion really dictate but we know you've just got to play smart footy in finals. That's balance really, so you are playing in the right areas of the field," Lynagh said. "When things don't go our way, it's making sure you get little wins and stack them to get back momentum."

The Brumbies again are the top-ranked Australian team in the playoffs. They won twice against New Zealand opponents during the regular season but lost to the Hurricanes 35-29 in Canberra.

"We are the last game this weekend but we've been pretty firm on making sure that we get a good performance out there on the field," coach Stephen Larkham said. "Irrespective of the other results, we need to know that we're playing well. We can't get distracted by these other games and the other results."

Indianapolis to host trials again in '28 after last year's record run



In this file photo, Aaron Shackell swims during the Men's 400 freestyle finals heat, at the US Swimming Olympic Trials in Indianapolis. (AP)

INDIANAPOLIS, June 5, (AP): The 2028 U.S. Olympic swimming trials will return to Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium after drawing record-breaking crowds last year in the first event held inside a football stadium.

USA Swimming officials made the announcement in Indianapolis where this year's national championships are being held this week. Dates for the event have not yet been announced.

Organizers intend to build three temporary pools on top of the NFL's Colts' home field - a 50-meter competition pool and two warm-up pools. The Indiana Convention Center, which is connected to the stadium, will host USA Swimming's Toyota Aqua Zone.

Last year, more than 285,000 fans attended the nine-day trials. That was a 60% increase over previous events. Single session records also were shattered as television ratings increased 20% from the previous team trials in 2021. Organizers estimated the event helped generate \$132 million in revenue for the city.

The 2024 trials also won the annual Fan Engagement Award and were a finalist for Sports Business Journal's event of the year.

Indianapolis has a long and storied history with the Olympic swimming trials. The 2028 trials will mark the eighth time the city has hosted the event since 1924 when Johnny Weissmuller and Duke Kahanamoku were the stars.

Other familiar names who qualified for the U.S. Olympic teams include Amanda Beard, Janet Evans, Rowdy Gaines, Katie Ledecky, Ryan Lochte, Michael Phelps, Jenny Thompson and Dara Torres.

The 2028 Olympics will be held in Los Angeles and could again feature the brother-sister duo of Alex and Aaron Shackell, who swam for nearby Carmel High School.

'Regain the Scottish title from Celtic'

Big job ahead as Martin takes helm at Rangers

GLASGOW, June 5, (AP): Six months after being fired by Southampton, Russell Martin crossed the border to take over as manager of Scottish giant Rangers on Thursday and tasked with regaining the league title from fierce Glasgow rival Celtic.

Martin guided Southampton to promotion to the Premier League last year but left in December following one win from the team's first 16 games.

The 39-year-old Martin has secured a quick return to management at Rangers, going back to a club where he spent a half season on loan in 2018.

"From my time here, I had a taste of how special this club is, the expectation, the passion and the history," Martin said.

"Now, as I return, I'm determined to bring success back, for the supporters, the players, and everyone inside this club. There's



In this file photo, Southampton's head coach Russell Martin greets fans at the end of the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Southampton at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

a lot to be done, but the goal is clear: win matches, win trophies and give Rangers fans a team that they can be proud of."

Rangers finished last season under the caretaker management of its former captain, Barry Ferguson, after firing Frenchman Philippe

Clement in February.

Appointing Martin - an Englishman who played international soccer for Scotland - is the latest big move by Rangers after a U.S.-based consortium, which includes an investment arm of the San Francisco 49ers, purchased a majority ownership stake in the club. Health insurance entrepreneur Andrew Cavenagh and 49ers Enterprises led a consortium of investors to have bought a 51% stake.

A new sporting director, Kevin Thelwell, officially began work at Rangers on Monday.

Celtic's stranglehold on Scottish soccer has just continued with a 13th Premiership title in 14 seasons.

Rangers won the only other title in that period, under Steven Gerrard in the 2020-21 season.

Rangers and Celtic now have 55 Scottish league titles each.

'It's going to be an incredible place for me to develop'

Chelsea signs Delap from Ipswich in time for Club World Cup

LONDON, June 5, (AP): Chelsea signed striker Liam Delap from relegated Ipswich in time to play at the Club World Cup after activating his release clause of 30 million pounds (\$40 million).

Chelsea used the opening of a special trading window from June 1-10 to add a center forward to its squad, with the 22-year-old Delap set to provide competition for first-choice striker Nicolas Jackson.

He signed a six-year contract to keep him at Stamford Bridge until 2031.

Delap scored 12 league goals - representing one-third of Ipswich's topflight total last season - and joins a resurgent Chelsea team that finished fourth in the Premier League and won the third-tier Conference League title under manager Enzo Maresca.

"I understand the stature of this club and can see the trajectory it

is on with these players and the head coach," Delap told club media. "It's going to be an incredible place for me to develop, and I hope to achieve amazing things here and help the club win more trophies."

Chelsea's first group-stage match at the Club World Cup, being held in the United States, is against Mexican club Leon on June 16 in Atlanta.

Delap, who left Manchester

City to join Ipswich in last year's offseason, was also reportedly interesting Manchester United.

He joined City's youth academy in 2019 and played on the club's elite development squad under Maresca, who was then a member of Pep Guardiola's coaching staff.

Chelsea's American ownership group has spent heavily on players - with a particular focus on those in their early 20s - since

buying out Roman Abramovich in 2022.

Delap has played for England through the youth levels but not yet for the senior team.

He was named on England's team for the Under-21 European Championship taking place this month in Slovakia. The final roster is expected Friday.

Delap is also eligible to play for Ireland. His father, English-born Rory Delap, represented Ireland.



In this file photo, Ipswich Town's Liam Delap runs into position during the English Premier League soccer match between Ipswich Town and Southampton at the Portman Road Stadium in Ipswich, England. (AP)



Italians Errani and Vavassori win mixed doubles

Sabalenka ends Swiatek’s 26-match French Open winning streak to reach final

PARIS, June 5, (AP): No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka ended Iga Swiatek’s 26-match French Open winning streak and reached the final in Paris for the first time by winning a back-and-forth semifinal 7-6 (1), 4-6, 6-0 on Thursday.

Sabalenka’s victory prevented Swiatek from becoming the first woman to win four consecutive championships at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament since professionals were admitted in 1968.

It also gives Sabalenka a chance to win her fourth major title - and first away from hard courts, after two at the Australian Open and one at the U.S. Open.

The 27-year-old from Belarus also took the top WTA ranking from Swiatek last October.

Third-seeded Italian pair Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori beat fourth-seeded Americans Taylor Townsend

and Evan King 6-4, 6-2 to win the mixed doubles title at the French Open on Thursday.

It was their second major title together after winning last year’s U.S. Open. For Errani, it was another trophy won at Roland-Garros, after winning Olympic gold in women’s doubles with compatriot Jasmine Paolini last year.

“Let’s see if I will see you next year, let’s hope,” the 38-year-old Errani, who was a 2012 French Open singles runner-up, told the crowd on Court Philippe-Chatrier.

Townsend was the U.S. Open mixed runner-up last year with Donald Young, and has won two major women’s doubles titles.

She hopes their performance inspires others back home and beyond.

“This is special for me and Evan. We grew up on the south side of Chicago,” Townsend said. “I hope this is

inspiration for people to know that this is possible.”

As kids, they learned the game at the same courts.

“He’s seen me since I was coming up,” she said. “We used to play at the public courts, Jackson Park, we used to play at the same park and we used to be at the same places.”

She added they will have another go.

“We’re running it back at Wimbledon so we’re going to try it again,” she said.

It is unusual to think of Novak Djokovic as not being the favorite to win a French Open semifinal, given that his greatest clay-court rival Rafael Nadal has retired.

After all, Djokovic has won three titles at Roland-Garros among his men’s record 24 Grand Slams. He also owns prestigious winning head-to-head records against 22-time major win-

ner Nadal (31-29) and 20-time major champion Roger Federer (27-23).

Yet, when Djokovic faces Jannik Sinner on Friday for a place in Sunday’s final, against defending champion Carlos Alcaraz of Spain or No. 8-seeded Lorenzo Musetti, the favorite could be Sinner.

Top-ranked Sinner has beaten Djokovic in their past three meetings and four of the past five, including in the 2024 Australian Open semifinals. The Italian is 4-4 against him and 15 years younger than Djokovic, who is 38.

Given this, and Djokovic’s early losses in Doha, Indian Wells, Monte Carlo and Madrid, his title chances were subdued before the French Open.

“He’s a bit underrated,” 2024 French Open runner-up Alexander Zverev said after losing to Djokovic in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. “A lot of people count him out already. But this year he’s had wins over Carlos



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus plays a shot against Poland’s Iga Swiatek during their semifinal match of the French Tennis Open at the Roland-Garros stadium in Paris. (AP)

Portugal ends 25-year drought against Germany to reach Nations League final



Germany’s Niclas Füllkrug, right, vies for the ball with Portugal’s Gonçalo Inácio during the Nations League semifinal soccer match between Portugal and Germany at the Munich Football Arena, in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Ronaldo scores 137th goal

MUNICH, June 5, (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo has led Portugal to its first win over Germany in 25 years.

The 40-year-old Ronaldo captained the team and scored his 137th international goal as Portugal came from behind to beat Germany 2-1 in Munich in their Nations League semifinal.

It was Portugal’s first win in Germany since a World Cup qualifier in Stuttgart in October 1985 - some six months after a future superstar was born in Madeira.

On his record-extending 220th appearance, Ronaldo became the oldest player to ever score against Germany while ending his “curse.” The former Real Madrid star lost each of the previous five games he’d played against Germany.

Portugal hadn’t beaten Germany since Sérgio Conceição scored a hat trick for a 3-0 victory at Euro 2000.

Conceição’s son, 22-year-old



Portugal’s Cristiano Ronaldo, left, scores his side’s second goal during the Nations League semifinal soccer match between Portugal and Germany in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Francisco Conceição, pulled Portugal level just five minutes after making his entrance with a brilliant long-range strike inside the far post after he surged past Robin Gosens like he wasn’t there.

Liverpool target Florian Wirtz had given Germany a 48th-minute lead with a perfectly placed header inside the right post. Still, Portugal coach Roberto Martínez made his changes count as he brought on Conceição

and Champions League winner Vitinha among the substitutes.

Vitinha excelled as Portugal finished the game in the ascendancy, just four days after he helped Paris Saint-Germain win the Champions League final against Inter Milan in the same stadium on Saturday.

Germany needed goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen at his best to prevent the visitors from scoring any more.

“When we’re not at 100%, then we can’t compete with the top teams,” said Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann, who was missing Jamal Musiala among others.

PSG wing backs João Neves and Nuno Mendes both started for Portugal, while Stuttgart forward Nick Woltemade started for his Germany debut and had the home team’s best first-half chance saved by Diogo Costa.

Conceição made his mark in the 63rd. Mendes gave Ronaldo a simple finish five minutes after that.

“It could have been more,” Mendes said.

Confusion and chaos brought back

Knicks seek new direction after Thibodeau’s exit

NEW YORK, June 5, (AP): Tom Thibodeau’s firing brought back some of the confusion and chaos the New York Knicks had seemingly left behind.

After an era of stability and more success than they had enjoyed in a quarter of a century, the Knicks opened a coaching search few could have predicted when they fired Thibodeau on Tuesday.

“When I first saw it, I thought it was one of those fake AI things. No way. There’s no way possible,” Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said.

Coaching searches weren’t unusual in New York for much of the 2000s, but the Knicks weren’t winning then. This time, they had just reached the Eastern Conference finals for the first time in 25 years before losing to Carlisle’s team, and were an early favorite to do it again next year. So changing course brought swift and strong reaction from a fan base that seemed satisfied.

Who decided Thibodeau had to go? And why?

“That seemed like an unfortunate call that the boss made, certainly for him,” tennis Hall of Famer John McEnroe, a Knicks fan, said while calling the French Open quarterfinals for TNT.

But which boss?

Direct answers may not come. Knicks leadership, from owner James Dolan to team president Leon Rose, doesn’t do interviews with the reporters who cover the team. So the only hint may have come in the team’s statement announcing the firing, in which Rose said the organization was “singularly focused on winning a championship for our fans.”

That means the view was that Thibodeau was good enough to get the Knicks close but not all the way.

Rose was friends with Thibodeau long before hiring him in 2020 and giving him a three-year contract extension last summer. So immediate speculation was that Dolan, who at times has been viewed as meddlesome and unpopular with his team’s fans, must have ordered the ouster. But a person with knowledge of the decision, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details were to remain private, said Rose made the call with Dolan’s approval.

Rose conducted a thorough search five years ago, even though Thibodeau

had been viewed as a favorite because of his relationship both to Rose and the organization as an assistant to Jeff Van Gundy in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Van Gundy has returned to coaching as an assistant with the Clippers, if the Knicks wanted to gauge interest in a reunion. Michael Malone, who led Denver to the 2023 NBA title, is another former Knicks assistant who is available, as is Johnnie Bryant, who was beaten out Wednesday by Jordan Ott for Phoenix’s head coaching position.

Rick Pitino, Dan Hurley and John Calipari are all big names with ties to the New York area if Rose wanted to go the college route, and the retired Jay Wright coached current Knicks players Jalen Brunson, Josh Hart and Mikal Bridges on national championship teams at Villanova. Brunson’s father, Rick, was an assistant on Thibodeau’s staff, if Rose wanted to promote the team captain’s father.

Pitino, at Yankee Stadium to throw out the first pitch Wednesday, said “only time tells with those” if the Knicks made a mistake firing Thibodeau.

“I feel bad for Thibs because I think he captured all of New York, built something very, very special,” said Pitino, who also coached the Knicks. “A lot of us don’t comprehend what happened but Thibs is going to be well taken care of and he’ll move on to other pastures.”

The Knicks had 12 coaches between the time Van Gundy resigned early in the 2001-02 season and Thibodeau’s hiring, and they won just one playoff series. Thibodeau won four in the last three seasons.

McEnroe thought that earned Thibodeau another year, a common reaction to his firing. The Knicks decided otherwise, sending Rose into a search with much higher consequences than last time.

Back then, on the heels of seven straight losing seasons, he just needed a coach who could win some games. Now he needs one who can deliver a championship.

“I mean, I’m not really in that situation, but the thing I can say is Thibs did a lot for New York,” said Thunder center Isaiah Hartenstein, who played in New York last season. “He did a lot just building that culture over there. So I think I have a lot of respect for him.”

Amorim looks to add to Cunha transfer

Man United wants striker Mbeumo

MANCHESTER, England, June 5, (AP): Manchester United has made a move for Brentford forward Bryan Mbeumo, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press on Thursday.

The person spoke on the condition of confidentiality because United has not publicly declared its interest.

The 20-time English league champion is planning to overhaul a team that has just come off its worst season in the Premier League era and missed out on qualification for any European competition.

United coach Ruben Amorim has identified his forward line as an area in need of major improvement.

A deal has already been agreed for Brazil forward Matheus Cunha and Mbeumo would add further strength to an attack that had the fifth worst scoring record in the Premier League.

English media said a bid of 55 million pounds (\$74.8 million) was made for Mbeumo.

The 25-year-old Cameroon international had 20 goals last season. By comparison, United strikers Rasmus Hojlund and Joshua Zirkzee scored just 18 between them in all competitions.

Amorim is trying to turn United’s fortunes around after 12 years without winning the league.

He has made a fast start to his rebuilding plans, with a deal for Cunha and a move for Mbeumo within weeks of the season ending.

He has previously described his team as perhaps the worst in United’s history and last month he apologized to fans for a “disastrous” season.

United ended the campaign in 15th - its lowest finish in the modern era and just three places above the relegation zone. United also set unwanted club records for the most

losses in a Premier League season and the lowest points total.

Manchester United’s soccer operations are undergoing yet more change with one of its key figures Dave Brailsford scaling back his role with the troubled club, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the information has not been made public.

Brailsford, who was credited for his role in British cycling’s spectacular Olympic success in recent years, was a key component of billionaire Jim Ratcliffe’s United overhaul following his minority investment in the club last year.

But things haven’t gone to plan, with the 20-time English champion suffering its lowest finish in the Premier League era last season - 15th - and recording its lowest points total and highest number of losses.

Brailsford, who is also sporting director for Ratcliffe’s petrochemicals firm INEOS, will remain in that role and also as a United director. However his day-to-day involvement will be reduced, the person said.

It is the latest in a slew of changes at United over the past year since Ratcliffe paid \$1.3 billion for an initial 25% stake in United, assumed control of its soccer operations from majority owners the Glazer family and vowed to bring the good times back.

In that time there have been high-profile hirings and firings, as well new lows on the field and job cuts.

Former manager Erik ten Hag went in October - just three months after being handed a one-year contract extension.

Director of football Dan Ashworth left the club less than six months into the job and following lengthy negotiations to pry him away from Newcastle.

Best of the Rest

**Cornish transfers to Southern California:** Guard Ryan Cornish has transferred to Southern California from Dartmouth, where he played four seasons.

Cornish started 23 of 27 games for the Big Green as a senior, averaging 17.1 points and 4.9 rebounds to earn All-Ivy League first-team honors. He finished his time there with 1,014 points.

“Ryan is a combo guard that can give us versatility at both guard spots,” Trojans coach Eric Musselman said. “He is a proven scorer who can not only knock down the 3-ball, but he also does an excellent job of drawing free throw attempts.”

Cornish is the ninth player to sign with the Trojans as coach Eric Musselman remakes his roster for next season. (AP)

**Suns hire Ott as head coach:** The Phoenix Suns hired Cleveland Cavaliers assistant Jordan Ott as their head coach, opting for a young, emerging leader to rebuild a franchise that has regressed over the past few seasons, a person familiar with the search told The Associated Press.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the hire hasn’t officially been announced.

Ott will be the team’s fourth head coach in four seasons and replaces Mike Budenholzer, who was fired following a miserable 36-46 season that ended without a trip to the playoffs despite the high-priced trio of Devin Booker, Kevin Durant and Bradley Beal.

The 40-year-old Ott has worked for the Atlanta Hawks, Brooklyn Nets, Los Angeles Lakers and the Cavaliers. He also worked as a video coordinator under Tom Izzo at Michigan State, which is where Suns owner Mat Ishbia played as a walk-on from 1999 to 2003.

It remains to be seen if Durant or Beal will be on next season’s roster - both could be moved in trades. Booker seems like the only player on the roster who is truly untouchable after 10 seasons in the desert, including four All-Star appearances. (AP)

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Duaij Al-Otaibi, head of the Kuwaiti delegation and President of the Shooting Club.

# Sports

## Kuwait wins two gold and one bronze at Asian Shooting Championships in China

Significant achievement for Kuwaiti shooting

LINFEN, China, June 5, (KUNA): The Kuwait Shooting Sports Club announced that the national shooting team claimed three medals—two gold and one bronze—at the ongoing Asian Shooting Championships in Linfen, China. The tournament features strong participation from across the continent, making this a significant achievement for Kuwaiti shooting.

Duaij Al-Otaibi, head of the Kuwaiti delegation and President of the Shooting Club, confirmed that champion shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi won gold in the individual skeet competition. Fellow shooter Abdulaziz Al-Saad secured the bronze medal, while the silver went to a Malaysian competitor. In the team skeet shooting competition, the Kuwaiti trio—Abdulaziz Al-Saad, Mansour Al-Rashidi, and Abdulaziz Al-Faihan—clinched the gold medal, outperforming host nation China, who took silver, and Qatar, who earned the bronze. Al-Otaibi dedicated this victory to His High-

ness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait. He praised the shooters' exceptional performances and expressed optimism for further medals as the championship continues through June 10. He also extended his appreciation to the Public Authority for Sports for its consistent support and commended the technical and administrative teams for their efforts in achieving these results.



KUNA photo  
Kuwaiti shooters Al-Rashidi and Al-Saad celebrate after winning gold and bronze medals in the individual skeet shooting competitions at the Asian Championships.

### Second-string Japan beaten

## Australia on brink of World Cup qualification



Japan's Takefusa Kubo, left, and Australia's Riley McGree compete for the ball during their World Cup 2026 Group C qualifying soccer match in Perth. (AP)

PERTH, Australia, June 5, (AP): A last-minute goal from Aziz Behich gave Australia a 1-0 win over Japan in Perth on Thursday and put the Socceroos within touching distance of the 2026 World Cup. With just the top two from Asia Group C certain of a place in the tournament, Australia was six points clear of third and will qualify for a sixth successive World Cup later Thursday if Saudi Arabia, next week's final group opponent, fails to win in Bahrain. The already-qualified Japan fielded an experimental XI with only Daichi Kamada and Koki Machida having made more than four international appearances, but still had the majority of possession and chances. Substitute Takefusa Kubo had perhaps the best opportunity with 10 minutes remaining, but the midfielder shot wide of the post from inside the area. In the 90th minute, Riley McGree broke free down the right and pulled back for Behich to curl home to bring Perth Stadium to its feet and give Australia a first win over Japan in 16 years. "It hasn't sunk in just yet but when the final whistle went it was a great feeling," Behich said. "It was a tough game and we had to grind it out. It's been a long campaign and we have worked so hard." The teams who finish third and fourth in the three groups in this third round of Asian qualifying will advance to a fourth stage to compete for the remaining two Asian places at the World Cup.

### Al-Hilal lands former Inter boss Inzaghi

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, June 5, (AP): Simone Inzaghi took over as head coach of Al-Hilal on Wednesday, a day after leaving Inter Milan and two weeks before the Saudi Arabian club's first game at the Club World Cup. Inzaghi signed a two-year deal after Al-Hilal lured him with an offer of reportedly more than 20 million euros (\$23 million) per season. "The Italian genius is here," the Saudi club said in a social media post. Inter was routed 5-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final last Saturday, marking the most lopsided defeat in the 70-year history of major European finals. The 49-year-old Inzaghi coached Inter to the Serie A title last year and was also in charge when the Nerazzurri lost the 2023 Champions League title to Manchester City. He was at Inter for four years. Al-Hilal opens its Club World Cup campaign against Real Madrid on June 18 at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens.

'He is not for sale'

## Liverpool rejects Barcelona approach for Diaz

LONDON, June 5, (AP): Liverpool has rejected an approach from Barcelona for forward Luis Diaz, a person with knowledge of the situation told the Associated Press on Thursday. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the information has not been made public. Spanish champion Barcelona is looking to strengthen, and sporting director Deco has publicly confirmed admiration for Diaz and Manchester United's Marcus Rashford. It is not known how much Barcelona was prepared to pay for Colombia international Diaz, but Liverpool informed the Catalan club he was not for sale, the person said. The 28-year-old Diaz scored 17 goals in Liverpool's Premier League title-winning campaign last season. He scored a hat trick against Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League and was a key figure in attack for manager Arne Slot. Last month, Deco spoke to Catalan radio RAC1 and was specifically asked about Diaz and Rashford. "We like Luis, we like Rashford, we like a series of players we have



Liverpool's Luis Diaz poses with the winner's trophy after the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at the Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)

on a list that we have been working on for years," he said. Liverpool is also looking to make additions during the offseason, with Germany midfielder Florian Wirtz a reported target. But the Merseyside club sees Diaz as an important part of its plans to retain the Premier

League title next year and make a push in the Champions League. Diaz joined Liverpool from Porto in 2022 for a deal worth around 37.5 million pounds (\$51 million). In that time he was won the league, FA Cup and two English League Cups, scoring 41 goals in 148 games.

## Kuwait delegation heads to Seoul ahead of final World Cup qualifier

KUWAIT CITY, June 5: The Kuwait national football team will depart today for Seoul, South Korea, as part of its preparations for their decisive clash against the host nation next Tuesday. The match marks the tenth and final round of Group B in the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be held in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The delegation is led by Ayman Al-Husseini, a member of the Kuwait Football Association's Board of Directors, and includes the team's technical, administrative, and medical staff. The squad features 26 players, among them Saud Al-Hoshan, Fahad Al-Hajri, Mishari Ghanam, Reda Hani, Ahmed Al-Zenki, Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Mohammed Daham, Yousef Nasser, Khaled Al-Rashidi, and Rashid Al-Dosari. Other notable players in the traveling squad include Moaz Al-Dhafiri, Jassim Al-Matar, Mubarak Al-Fenini, Talal Al-Qaisi, Khaled Sabah, Suleiman Abdul-Ghafoor, Abdul-Wahab Al-Awadhi, Hassan Hamdan, Mohammed Khaled,



Players take a break during training session.

and Hussein Ashkanani. The list is completed by Yousef Majed, Hamad Harbi, Abdul-Rahman Al-Rashidi, Mahdi Dashti, Moaz Al-Aseima, and Fawaz Ayed. The Blue Wave is set to begin

training tomorrow evening (Saturday), with the final training session scheduled for Monday at Seoul World Cup Stadium — the venue for Tuesday's much-anticipated qualifier against South Korea.

## Wiegman says England squad is 'happy' ahead of Women's Euros

LONDON, June 5, (AP): England coach Sarina Wiegman laughed off suggestions of a "crisis" in the camp ahead of the Women's European Championship title defense after a chaotic week when key, experienced players pulled out of selection for the tournament. Star defender Millie Bright declared herself unavailable for the Euros, saying she was not "100% mentally or physically," while goalkeeper Mary Earps and midfielder Fran Kirby retired from international soccer. All three were in England's title-winning team at Euro 2022.

It robs Wiegman of 218 caps worth of experience for next month's tournament in Switzerland, and has led to talk of possible unhappiness in the squad and questions over whether the Dutch coach's lines of communication had come across as too strong or blunt. Wiegman rejected those accusations in a news conference held after her 23-women squad - containing injury doubt Lauren James - was announced on Thursday. "For me, it doesn't feel like a crisis at all," Wiegman said after tough questions at which she occasionally laughed.

She attributed some of the scrutiny - or "noise," as she put it - around squad issues down to the extra eyeballs on the women's game that is growing year on year. "The difference between 2017, when I went into my first tournament (as Netherlands coach), and now is the attention and the visibility of the women's game has increased so much," Wiegman said. "So there's more noise and there's more journalists here who write and show what we are doing. "We just have to deal with it and focus on football."

Wiegman insisted there was a good energy and connection between players in the team and that she was "pretty happy where we are right now." "We know what's happening in the team and I think there's competition going on in the team - and I hope there's competition going on in the team." Bright, England's captain at the 2023 World Cup when the team reached the final, doesn't believe she is in the right frame of mind or physical state to play in a major tournament.