



Opinion

## Iran living in an era of suspicion while it needs someone to trust it

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

CITIZENS of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries want the Gulf to be a peaceful haven, a goal their governments have long strived to achieve. Therefore, the Gulf states' condemnation of the Israeli attack on Iran were sincere, despite Iran's repeated efforts to stir unrest in the region over the past

48 years.

The list of reasons for holding Iran accountable is long, starting with the Iran-Iraq War and the terrorist operations carried out during those eight years by militias formed and backed by Tehran. This is followed by Iran's support for the Houthis, including supplying missiles used to target Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

Furthermore, since 1982, Tehran has worked to establish terrorist groups in Lebanon. After the fall of the Baath regime, Iran gained control over Iraq through extremist sectarian militias that continue to destabilize the country.

Since 1979, the current Iranian regime has sought to weaken Syria's resilience. In 2011, Iran succeeded

in replacing the Arab blood that flows through Syria, the beating heart of Arabism, with a sectarian divide that opposes and undermines Arab unity. During this time, Iran's actions led to the deaths and injuries of approximately one and a half million Syrians and the displacement of more than eight million people.

The Arab peoples will never forget the devastation caused by these sectarian militias throughout the Arab world, nor their efforts to corrupt the minds of youth through the promotion of drugs and other destructive behaviors.

We do not slander the Iranian mullahs' regime, which has repeatedly violated the teachings of God Almighty by refusing to achieve peace and tranquility among Muslims and throughout the world.

For the past five decades, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have sought to spare the Iranian people from hardship, even as their leaders persistently ignore reason and logic.

The governments and leaders of the GCC countries are well aware that external forces are waiting for the right moment to exploit the region's resources. They also recognize that Iran, which is a great

Continued on Page 5

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## GCC APPEALS FOR DIALOGUE TO AVOID REGIONAL CATASTROPHE



Kuwait Army photo  
Vehicles of the Chief of the General Staff, which specializes in analyzing samples and disinfecting personnel and equipment from chemical and biological contaminants.



KUNA photo  
Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya heads Kuwait's delegation participating in the 51st session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states.

### OIC condemns strikes on Iran

ISTANBUL, June 21, (KUNA): The 51st session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states kicked off on Saturday in Istanbul, Türkiye, with the participation of Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya.

In his speech, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on the Islamic world to "set aside differences and unite when it comes to our common issues and interests."

"If we do not take responsibility for our issues with our common thought and will, we will serve the interests of others," he said.

He pointed out that Türkiye would not allow the establishment of what he called a "new Sykes-Picot system" whose borders would be drawn in blood in the region.

He stressed that the "Zionist ambitions" of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu aim to "drag the world into a catastrophe, just as Nazi leader Adolf Hitler did."

"Just as the spark ignited by Hitler burned the world 90 years ago, Netanyahu's Zionist ambitions aim only to push the world into a similar catastrophe," he noted.

The Turkish President stressed that

the Israeli occupation's attacks on Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and recently on Iran "can only be described as piracy."

On his part, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan said that the Israeli occupation is "dragging the region to the brink of a comprehensive catastrophe by attacking Iran," noting that "Türkiye, under its current rotating presidency of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, will continue to raise the voice of the Islamic world, prioritize the establishment of global justice, and stand firmly against injustice."

Fidan stressed that "the problem is the ongoing Israeli occupation, not Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or Iran."

The two-day session is being attended by approximately 40 officials at the level of prime ministers and foreign ministers.

Approximately 1,000 participants from the 57 OIC member states, as well as OIC institutions, observer states, and other international organizations, are also attending.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Friday with Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit, on the sideline of 51 ministerial session of the Organization of

Continued on Page 5

## Online activity checks a must for US student visa applicants

**By Fares Ghaleb**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: The US Department of State announced the implementation of expanded security checks for applicants of non-immigrant visas (F, M and J) granted to students pursuing academic studies, vocational training and cultural exchange programs.

According to an official statement issued by the department, the new guidelines require all applicants in these categories to change the privacy settings of their social media accounts to 'public' to enable consular authorities to review digital activity

and verify its compliance with security eligibility criteria.

The department emphasized that visa screening procedures are a national security decision; indicating that granting a US visa is "a privilege, not a right." It added that the competent authorities will use all available information, including online presence, to ensure the absence of any potential threat to national security or US interests.

The ministry stated that its diplomatic missions will soon resume scheduling interviews for study and training visas, calling on applicants to follow the websites of the relevant embassies and consulates to obtain available appointments.

**By Fares Ghaleb**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: The first evacuation flight from Ashgabat International Airport in Turkmenistan arrived at Kuwait International Airport Terminal Four (T4) early Saturday morning with 334 citizens on board who were evacuated as part of the emergency plan laid down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs — in cooperation with the relevant authorities — to ensure the safe return of citizens stranded in Iran due to the regional developments.

The flight, operated directly by Kuwait Airways, is the first coordinated flight from Turkmenistan to Kuwait. This flight was arranged upon completion of procedures to determine the actual number of Kuwaiti citizens in several Iranian cities, followed by their land transport to Turkmenistan, in preparation for their air repatriation.

Specialized teams at Kuwait International Airport made advanced preparations to receive the returning citizens, facilitate their entry procedures, and provide them with the necessary care. This reflects the integrated national efforts to ensure the safety of citizens abroad.

Sources praised the extensive field efforts exerted by the ministry and the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tehran, which



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq  
A moment of relief at Kuwait International Airport Terminal 4 early Saturday morning, as the first evacuation flight brings home 334 citizens safely from Iran.

led the communication efforts with citizens and coordinated their transit outside Iran, resulting in the success of the first phase of the evacuation plan.

Sources also lauded the pivotal role played by Kuwait Airways in harnessing its capabilities to operate the direct flight from Ashgabat to Kuwait at a sensitive time and under exceptional circumstances. They emphasized that

this embodies the commitment of the airline to efficiently play its national role as a strategic partner in times of crisis.

In a related development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced in an official statement the arrival of the first batch of Kuwaiti citizens returning from Iran through Turkmenistan.

The statement disclosed that Dep-

uty Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad welcomed the returning citizens upon their arrival in the country — a move that is considered a manifestation of the commitment of the ministry to implement the directives of the political leadership and its utmost concern for the safety of citizens abroad.

Continued on Page 5

### Other Voices

## Unmasking injustice: Why publishing arrest photos undermines the Kuwaiti Constitution

**By Dr. Fawaz Alkhateeb**

In any system governed by law, the dignity of the individual is not a privilege, it is a right. In Kuwait, this right is enshrined in our Constitution, codified in our laws, and rooted in the ethical values of our society. And yet, a troubling practice persists: the premature publication of arrest photos by official authorities. This practice, often presented as routine or procedural, in fact poses a direct threat to constitutional rights, legal due process, and the very philosophy of justice.

**The Constitutional Breach**  
Article 34 of the Kuwaiti Constitution states unequivocally:

"An accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a legal trial with full guarantees for self-defense."

This is not an aspirational phrase. It is binding law. When the image of a suspect is publicly circulated before trial before any judicial determination of guilt, it imposes a penalty without process. It transforms suspicion into stigma, investigation into indictment, and a photograph into a public verdict.

In effect, the State itself bypasses the judiciary and pronounces guilt in the court of public opinion.

**The Legal Foundation: Silence Is Not Secrecy. It Is Safeguard**

Kuwaiti criminal procedure law is explicit: investigations are confidential by default. This is not to protect the guilty, but to protect the process ensuring that no external influence, no social uproar, no premature exposure, interferes with the impartial assessment of evidence.



Dr. Fawaz Alkhateeb

One cannot disclose confidential information from ongoing investigations. It is the law's way of saying: truth must be uncovered in court, not unrolled in press conferences.

When an image is released, what follows is not transparency it is trial by narrative, often framed by incomplete facts and assumptions. And once made public, it cannot be undone.

**A Deeper Question: Who Owns Our Faces?**

The image of a person is not just data, it is identity. To publish someone's photo while they are still legally innocent is to say: *this person belongs to the State, not to themselves*. Their story is hijacked. Their defense is drowned in headlines.

This practice becomes especially troubling when applied to vulnerable individuals, those suffering from addiction, trauma, or mental illness. In such cases, exposure is not deterrence; it is dehumanization. It is to weaponize shame against the weakest.

**A Global Standard Kuwait Should Uphold**

Most advanced jurisdictions have moved away from the practice of publishing arrest images. In France, Germany, and several U.S. states, it is now either banned or severely limited precisely because it is recognized as **extrajudicial punishment**.

Even Interpol, in its public notices, follows strict rules to limit identification. Why? Because premature exposure can endanger trials, violate rights, and inflict disproportionate harm.

Kuwait, a nation governed by law and proud of its constitutional legacy, must not lag behind. We must lead with principle.

**Justice Without Dignity Is Not Justice**

The role of the State is not to satisfy public curiosity. Nor is it to punish through humiliation. It is to ensure that

Continued on Page 5

**8 NBK hosts Harvard Club of Kuwait members at bank's headquarters**



**ABK wins 'Best Digital Transformation Initiative' at the MEED MENA Banking Excellence – Corporate & Investment Awards**

**16 Kuwait Club renews contracts of key players, Hamdan set to join Al-Ramtha from Al-Arabi**

Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	03:13	Asr .....	15:24
Sunrise ..	04:49	Maghrib ..	18:50
Zohr .....	11:50	Isha .....	20:23

# Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-45 km/h with a chance for rising dust and some high clouds will appear.			
By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	47	33	
Kuwait Airport	46	34	
Abdaly	46	27	
Weather			
Jahra	47	32	
Salmiyah	42	33	
Ahmadi	42	31	
Nuwaisib	47	30	
Wafra	45	32	
Salmiyah	46	25	
Managish	47	28	

## National Day revelry at Expo '25 showcases Kuwait's rich heritage, vibrant folklore



Kuwaiti pavilion at the Expo '25



Salem Al-Watyan, his team and local officials pose for a picture.



KUNA photos  
Kuwaiti troupe performs in a procession at the Expo.

OSAKA, June 21, (KUNA): Commissioner-General of Kuwait at Expo Osaka 2025 Salem Al-Watyan stated that the celebration held by the Kuwaiti Pavilion on Thursday to mark the Independence Day achieved great success in attracting the attention of visitors from various nationalities.

It showcased the richness and diversity of Kuwait's authentic heritage, Al-Watyan said in statements to KUNA on Friday.

The event, organized under the directives of the Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and supervised by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Dr. Nasser Mohsen, featured traditional and contemporary

artistic performances that were well-received by attendees and reflected Kuwait's cultural and creative identity.

He added that the celebration included folkloric and musical performances, as well as expressive visual presentations, forming a refined artistic window that highlighted Kuwait's civilized image.

He explained that on this national occasion, the pavilion blended traditional Kuwaiti culture with modern art, highlighting the country's heritage in a contemporary way.

Performances inspired by Kuwait's marine and desert environments added a rich cultural touch that impressed the audience.

Al-Watyan pointed out that the success of the celebration reflects the

collective efforts of the team working at the Kuwaiti Pavilion and their collaboration with a number of young Kuwaiti artists.

This contributed to delivering a rich and comprehensive experience that expresses the bright image of Kuwait and embodies its cultural and humanitarian presence in international forums.

The Kuwaiti Pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025 held a special celebration on this occasion, attended by Japan's Minister for Expo 2025 representing the Japanese government, Yoshitaka Ito, the Ambassador of Kuwait to Japan, Sami Al-Zamanan, along with several Japanese officials. The event also witnessed a notable turnout from exhibition visitors.

# 'Speech key to unity or discord'

Call for vigilance, restraint to avoid conflict

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: In a Friday sermon distributed to imams and preachers titled, "The Responsibility of Words," the Ministry of Islamic Affairs underscored the power of speech -- especially in the age of social media -- to maintain unity or incite chaos.

The sermon pointed out that a single social media post, tweet or video clip could shield a nation from

grave harm or ignite strife that leaves lasting destruction.

This is part of governmental efforts to highlight the serious risks posed by rumors, misinformation and unverified content circulating online; particularly their impact on social cohesion and national unity.

The ministry called for vigilance and restraint urging people to avoid conflict, division and discord. It emphasized that unity, harmony, mutual affection, and the gathering of hearts are not only moral virtues, but religious imperatives as well. It added anything that causes alienation, division and the tearing apart of communities is strictly forbidden in Islam.

It reminded individuals of their duty to promote love, brotherhood and unity. It warned against interfering in mat-

ters beyond one's knowledge or concern, and against shaping opinions based on incomplete or false information.

It also stressed the need to avoid becoming tools exploited by malicious actors -- whether fools or enemies -- who use others to spread falsehoods and sow division.

"In today's world, a word is no longer confined to its speaker or a specific location. A message can reach the farthest corners of the world in an instant. A tweet may spark blind strife. A video clip can awaken the ignorance of the ignorant. A single word can protect a nation or destroy it," the ministry asserted.

It described reckless speech as a sign of immaturity, weak judgment and lack of wisdom. "Speaking carelessly -- without reflection, verification or concern for consequences -- is labeled as dangerous behavior condemned

by Islamic teachings. Sharing unverified information, especially if it infringes on others' honor or dignity, is associated with hypocrisy and warned against in the Sharia," the ministry stressed.

It asked rhetorically: "What human flaw is more hideous than lying? What sin is more destructive than spreading rumors that corrupt individuals, destroy communities, and incite strife among people?"

It also criticized those who casually circulate fabricated 'Hadiths', unfounded stories or rare tales without scrutiny; thus, knowingly or unknowingly, becoming propagators of falsehood. It added that misinformation spreads rapidly, often with just a click, and reminded that the Sharia warns of severe punishment for those who engage in such behavior.

### Other Voices

## Out of the pan, into the fire

By Ahmad alsarraf

Umm Tariq carried a bowl of vegetable soup to her neighbor, who was suffering from stomach pain. When she knocked on the door, a handsome young man in his twenties, dressed in an elegant black suit and tie, opened it. He invited her inside, and she assumed he was a family friend.

Once inside, he suddenly snatched the bowl from her hands, spilling some soup on his suit. He grabbed Umm Tariq and led her into a room. To her shock, she found her neighbor handcuffed and lying down, while another young man, around the same age, shouted angrily, demanding she reveal where she hid her jewelry box or closet. Umm Tariq repeatedly insisted she didn't have a safe and that she was wearing all the jewelry she owned -- most of which was cheap or fake.

The two men tied Umm Tariq's hands with a rope, snatched her handbag, and began searching the bedrooms. Desperate, the thieves decided to make a quick escape, satisfied only with the jewelry the two women were wearing.

As soon as they left, Umm Tariq's neighbor managed to untie herself, rushed to sound the alarm, then returned to free Umm Tariq. Miraculously, the police arrived in less than a minute. It turned out the two young men had been watching the house but hadn't been suspected of being thieves because of their innocent, elegant appearance and the luxury car they drove.

Upon learning the details, the police chief instructed the pilot of a helicopter hovering nearby to pursue the thieves' car. What followed was a thrilling ground and aerial chase straight out of



alsarraf

a movie.

The chase ended minutes later when the two thieves found themselves trapped on a dead-end street lined with residential buildings and a half-high wall. Next to the wall, the men had abandoned their car. They jumped onto the back of the vehicle and then over the wall, only to find themselves, to their surprise, in the courtyard of the local police station. They were immediately arrested and later referred to trial. Umm Tariq and her friend, the homeowner, witnessed the serious armed robbery.

Umm Tariq then left Britain and returned to her homeland. A few months later, she received a call from the British police requesting her presence. She agreed and was fully covered for travel and accommodation to testify against the thieves, with protection also provided. However, she never received a final decision or travel date. A few months later, she got a second call apologizing for the delay. She later learned from her neighbor, the other witness, that both summonses had failed because one of the accused had escaped from prison. When the authorities tried to summon the other to testify against his accomplice, he too had managed to escape ... from prison.

I remembered this incident that had happened to my wife -- Umm Tariq - 40 years ago, which I have probably never written about before.

I was watching a short video on WhatsApp showing the thief climbing out of a first-floor apartment window he had just robbed. He jumped onto the roof of a car parked directly below, but unfortunately for him, the car was a police patrol with officers both inside and nearby. The thief literally fell into his own trap, and the surveillance camera captured the whole comical scene.

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KFF photo  
Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi is briefed on the modus operandi at the center.

## KFF chief briefed on ways to tackle chem & bio accidents

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, accompanied by Acting Deputy Chief for the Firefighting Sector at KFF Brigadier General Omar Abdulaziz Hamad, conducted an inspection visit on Friday evening to the Shadadiya Hazardous Materials Center and the Search and Rescue Center.

According to a press release issued by KFF, they reviewed the workflows and procedures for handling high-risk incidents, as well as search and rescue operations.

The visit included a field tour of the facilities, during which Major General Al-Roumi was briefed by the center staff on the mechanisms for handling chemical and biological incidents, prevention and safety protocols, training plans, and efforts to enhance the technical skills of specialized personnel.

He also reviewed the operational procedures and response strategies employed by the Search and Rescue Center in handling reports and emergency cases, as well as the latest equipment and tools used in hazardous materials response and search and rescue operations.

Major General Al-Roumi praised the advanced level of technical readiness and the competence of the personnel at both centers, stressing the importance of continued development and modernization to keep pace with the growing challenges in this critical field.

He emphasized that such efforts strengthen KFF's ability to protect lives and property, and ensure community safety.

### Gulf states at risk

## 'Use treated water to curb desertification'

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Chair of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) Dr. Wijdan Al-Oqab affirmed the need to adopt innovative and sustainable solutions to address the problem of desertification in Kuwait and reduce its environmental and economic impacts, such as by expanding the establishment of nature reserves to protect vegetation and soil, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

She said this in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during a workshop organized by the society, represented by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Environmental Training Center, in observance of World Desertification Day.

The workshop, organized in collaboration with the International University, included a series of scientific lectures and research presentations delivered by a group of academics and specialists.

Dr. Al-Oqab noted that desertification is a global challenge affecting the lives of one billion people in more than 110 countries, including the Gulf states.

She cited estimates from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which indicate that the cost of preventing desertification is five times lower than the losses incurred by ignoring it, highlighting the importance of early intervention and sound environmental planning.

Al-Oqab said participants stressed the need to rehabilitate degraded lands, utilize treated wastewater in urban greening projects, regulate grazing, monitor human activity in environmentally sensitive areas, and enforce national environmental legislation. She also stated that participants recommended increasing environmental awareness, encouraging scientific research, and using modern technologies, such as remote sensing to monitor degraded areas and develop accurate, effective land reclamation plans.



Dr. Al-Oqab

## Indian embassy marks International Yoga Day

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: The Embassy of India organized a major event to mark the 11th International Day of Yoga at the Boulevard Cricket Ground in Salmiya.

More than 1,500 people from various segments of society -- including diplomats, students, members of the Indian community, yoga enthusiasts, and prominent figures from Kuwait and India -- attended the event.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsored the event, in collaboration with the Olympic Council of Asia. The event featured a unified yoga protocol and various demonstrations led by yoga instructors from Kuwait.

In his remarks, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Adarsh Swaika expressed his gratitude to the Kuwaiti government for its support; indicating this is the first time the International Day of Yoga was held in a public space in Kuwait.

He also commended the participation of Sheikhha Al-Abdullah, recipient of the Padma Shri of India, in recognition of her role in promoting yoga locally and regionally.

He affirmed that this year's theme, "Yoga for One Earth, One Health," reflects the importance of this practice in promoting health, sustainability, and environmental awareness, in line with India's "Life Mission" environmental protection initiative.

The event included yoga competitions for all ages.

## 'Secured schools' to serve as alternative place for Husseinias

KUWAIT CITY, June 21, (Agencies): First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusef Saud Al-Sabah revealed on Thursday that "secured schools" with the highest safety standards would serve as alternative locations for religious rituals.

Al-Yusuf's remarks came during his meeting with officials and representatives of Husseinias and places of worship, according to a ministry statement.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yusuf stressed the political leadership's keenness to secure this year's rituals and ensure the safety of Husseiniya goers, while taking into considerations regional conditions and circumstances.

He also pointed out the importance of "adhering to the instructions and regulations governing the event," emphasizing the need to harness all logistical capabilities and necessary security measures in this regard.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major General Hamad Ahmad Al-Muneefi confirmed, during his meeting with officials and representatives of Husseinias and other places of worship, that the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef has issued instructions to facilitate all procedures related to securing these sites, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Major General Al-Muneefi welcomed the attendees and stressed the importance of adhering to Decree-Law



Al-Muneefi

No. 73/2025, which amends certain provisions of Law No. 26/1961 concerning the national flag of the State of Kuwait.

Article 1 of the decree prohibits the raising of flags and slogans that symbolize religious, social, tribal groups, or sects.

During the meeting, Major General Al-Muneefi affirmed the importance of adhering to security regulations and instructions governing religious rituals.

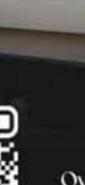
He highlighted the ban on setting up tents, blocking streets, using loudspeakers outside Husseinias, and organizing marches.

He also stressed the necessity of complying with the Kuwait Fire Force's safety requirements inside Husseinias, including ensuring the availability of emergency entrances and exits.



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# CSC sets strict rules on attendance verification

No records accepted before 9:01 am

**By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, June 21: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) confirmed that an employee's fingerprint recorded before 9:01 am will not be accepted if the official work hours begin at 7 am, according to Civil Service Council Resolution No. 6/2024, which added Article 10-bis to Resolution No. 41/2006.**

This clarification came in an official response from CSC to an inquiry sent by the undersecretary of

the Ministry of Education regarding the procedure for verifying attendance of employees who report to work on time but fail to register their presence using the fingerprint system.

CSC explained that employees must verify their attendance within the first 60 minutes after the official start of the workday, that is, between 9:01 am and 10:00 am. Fingerprinting exactly at 9:00 am constitutes a clear violation of the approved regulations.

In the same context, CSC indicated that Article 11 of the same resolution assigns responsibility for verifying employees' punctual attendance to their direct supervisors, with higher-level supervisors overseeing this pro-

cess.

It went on to explain that a direct supervisor may approve an employee's physical presence if it is proven, provided this is documented in an official report prepared by the relevant institution for this purpose. The direct supervisor assumes full responsibility if the employee's presence is incorrectly verified contrary to the data recorded in the report.

CSC emphasized the importance of reminding employees to adhere strictly to the specified times for verifying their attendance.

It also noted that repeated violations of the fingerprint system without a valid excuse, even if the employee is physically present at the workplace, are considered violations subject to disciplinary action.

## CSC regulates overtime period attendance of MEWRE employees

**KUWAIT CITY, June 21:** The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has adopted a new mechanism to verify the attendance of Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy employees required to render overtime, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources from the ministry.

Sources revealed the mechanism involves five fingerprints, which must be verified while the employee is on duty during official working hours and the overtime period.

The daily obtained a copy of the letter that the CSC sent to the ministry, stating that employees assigned to perform overtime work are required to confirm their attendance through the fingerprint devices at the beginning and end of the overtime period to guarantee compliance with

the specified overtime hours.

Sources said the CSC clarified in its circular that the relevant officials can ensure employee compliance through attendance system reports, which monitor employee fingerprints during official and overtime hours.

Sources indicated that the new mechanism for employees assigned to overtime work includes two fingerprints during the official working hours, one in the middle of the official shift and another two for the overtime period (at the beginning and end). Sources revealed this mechanism aims to tighten oversight and ensure that employees are entitled to overtime compensation in accordance with approved regulatory procedures.

## Al-Wasmi tackles citizens' concerns

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

**KUWAIT CITY, June 21:** Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi has stressed the need to seriously address citizens' issues and complaints.

Al-Wasmi on Thursday met with a number of employees, citizens and expatriates to listen to their demands and comments; during which he also tackled the complaints submitted by various sectors in the ministry.

He instructed the relevant authorities in the ministry to quickly investigate the complaints and take appropriate solutions, in accordance with the laws and regulations; and under his direct supervision to ensure the application of the highest standards of justice and governance.



KUNA photo

OANA concludes its 19th session by adopting the 'St. Petersburg Declaration' aimed at promoting media integrity.

## KUNA reaffirms commitment to ethical media

# OANA concludes 19th Assembly by adopting St. Petersburg Declaration

**MOSCOW, June 21, (KUNA):** The 19th General Assembly of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) has concluded proceedings in St. Petersburg, Russia, with the adoption of the St. Petersburg Declaration on Friday.

In a statement, OANA said that St. Petersburg Declaration is significant as a document that serves as a new benchmark for reinforcing the principles of media integrity and transparency while also striving to enhance the overall credibility of news agencies in the region.

Russian news agency, TASS, has been elected president of the organization for a three-year term (2025-28) to shape global media and enhance regional cooperation.

TASS reported that hosting the association's activities alongside the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum showcases Moscow's significant position in the global media landscape and underscores Russia's commitment to fostering a balanced media environment that prioritizes professional responsibility and cultural diversity.

TASS Director General, Andrei Kondrashov, an-

nounced a collaboration with OANA to create a framework for four main topics: strategies for combating fake news, regulatory frameworks for AI tools in crises, editorial policies for crises, and promoting cultural and media exchanges to enhance mutual understanding and shared values.

The sessions featured heads of news agencies and representatives from official and academic bodies, including from China, Iran and Russia, as well as officials from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Duma.

OANA was founded in 1961 by an Initiative from the UN and UNESCO, and had 41 members covering 33 countries and regions, making it one of the largest regional media organizations in the world.

They meet once every three years to define general directions, coordinate joint media policies and enhance the exchange of expertise.

Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) has been a member in OANA since 2000, serving as an executive member, a clear indication of the growing Arab presence in the international media space.

## Authority issues over 32,000 certificates

# PAHW delivers over 44K services in May, advances key housing projects

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

**KUWAIT CITY, June 21:** Deputy Director General for Public Relations and Development and official spokesperson of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Omar Al-Ruwaih said the Citizen Services Department provided 44,289 services in May.

In a press statement, Al-Ruwaih reviewed the monthly performance report of the department; indicating that 24,847 services were provided through the electronic systems of the authority and the Sahel government application; 17,397 inquiries were received through the telephone service and chatbot; and 2,045 services were provided at the reception centers.



Al-Ruwaih

Regarding the latest developments in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad housing project, he revealed that the completion rate of the three infrastructure contracts and the main roads contract exceeds the contractual rate. He said the completion rate of the main roads contract reached 50.82 percent, which is 6.15 percent advance compared to the contractual rate.

Meanwhile, the first infrastructure contract recorded an actual completion rate of 9.84 percent and this contract serves 7,623 plots. The second contract -- which serves 6,189 plots -- reached a completion rate of 15.78 percent -- 8.56 percent advance compared to the contractual rate, while the third contract recorded an actual completion rate of 5.48 percent, Al-Ruwaih added.

On the affordable housing project, he said the authority has begun implementing six contracts; four of which are still in the preparatory period. The first contract, which includes the construction of 1,568 homes, achieved a 5.44

percent advance over the contractual rate. The same is true for the second contract, which recorded an actual completion rate of 3.4 percent.

Regarding the South Saad Al-Abdullah City contract, he disclosed that three infrastructure contracts for the project have entered the preparatory period, covering work on 23,551 plots; while the completion rate for the main roads contract reached 35.88 percent -- 21.4 percent advance compared to the contractual rate.

Talking about the public building projects, Al-Ruwaih confirmed that the authority is following up the construction of 217 public buildings in seven different projects. He said there are 92 buildings under construction in Mutlaa City, 74 buildings in affordable housing, 31 in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak City, 17 buildings in Sabah Al-Ahmad City and one building each in Jaber Al-Ahmad City, Saad Al-Abdullah City and South Khaitan.

He affirmed that the authority signed four contracts in the past month -- starting with the consulting services contract for the management and supervision of infrastructure for 7,623 plots in the suburbs N5, 7, 9, and 10 in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad project.

He added the authority also signed a consulting services contract for the management and supervision of infrastructure for 6,189 units in suburbs N4, 6 and 8; and a similar contract for 6,568 units in suburbs N1, 2, 3, and 11 in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City project.

He also cited another contract for consulting services for the management and supervision of construction and completion of main roads and infrastructure services in the South Saad Al-Abdullah Residential City project.

He said the authority issued 32,303 'To Whom It May Concern' certificates to citizens for them to obtain building permits for three projects -- Al-Mutlaa, South Khaitan and South Abdullah Al-Mubarak.

## MoE launches comprehensive training program for new appointed engineers

**KUWAIT CITY, June 21:** Acting Assistant Undersecretary for the Educational Facilities and Planning Sector at the Ministry of Education Eng. Mohammad Al-Khalidi said the ministry has launched a comprehensive training program for newly appointed engineers nominated by the Civil Service Commission (CSC); as per the directive of Education Minister Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabei, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, Al-Khalidi confirmed that the program reflects the commitment of the ministry to qualify new engineering staff. He disclosed that the aim is to familiarize them with their job responsibilities and provide hands-

on training in main areas like effective communication with direct supervisors, understanding technical contracts, conducting site visits, and addressing building maintenance issues and school infrastructure needs.

He added that this marks the third phase of the training program, with each phase targeting 70 engineers; bringing the total number of trained engineers to 210 in various specialties. He added the three-day program is designed to enhance the participants' readiness for fieldwork and improve their operational efficiency; thereby, contributing to the overall development and quality of the services.



# JUNE

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# Lulu celebrates International Yoga Day with Wellness Awareness Session

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Lulu Hypermarkets across Kuwait proudly joined the global community in celebrating International Yoga Day on 21st June by organizing a special Yoga Awareness Session for its employees.

The event featured professional and certified yoga experts, who led an engaging and educational session focused on the significance of yoga in daily life. Lulu staff members from various departments participated with great enthusiasm, reflecting the growing interest in adopting healthy and mindful practices at the workplace.

The yoga trainers shared valuable insights on the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of yoga, covering areas such as flexibility, posture correction, stress relief, and enhanced focus. They also spoke about the importance of a balanced diet, proper hydration, and breathing techniques that can contribute to a healthier lifestyle.



Lulu staff members from various departments participate in a special Yoga Awareness Session.



This initiative is part of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait's ongoing commitment to promoting employee wellness and holistic development, in line with its belief that a healthy workforce contributes to a healthier community. The management extended heartfelt thanks to all the trainers and team members who participated and helped make the event a success.

Continued from Page 1

## Iran living

country, could play a vital economic, political, and developmental role in the region if it abandons hostile actions and provocations influenced by the West. Unfortunately, Iran has consistently chosen to fuel crises instead.

Successive U.S. administrations since 1979 have not forgotten the 444-day hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, where American hostages lived in terror, along with threats to vital U.S. interests in the Middle East. Consequently, the U.S. has viewed the Iranian regime as a destabilizing force for international security, especially as it revived its nuclear program.

Moreover, the Iranian regime has continued to threaten global stability by threatening to block important maritime routes, through which 20 percent of global trade passes daily via the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

This highlights the scale of the potential global crisis if Iran were to block these straits. Such actions are rightly unacceptable to the world, especially after the months of disruption caused by Houthi attacks on commercial and military vessels.

The administration of former U.S. President Barack Obama appeared uncertain, resulting in an agreement with Tehran that later proved to be little more than ink on paper. Under former President Joe Biden, Washington sought to ease tensions, inadvertently granting Tehran greater freedom of action.

In response, Iran openly revealed the true extent of its nuclear program and missile projects. It accelerated uranium enrichment to high levels, signaling an intention to develop a nuclear bomb. On the missile front, Iran possesses long-range missiles capable of reaching all Arab capitals, as well as threatening targets in Europe and Southeast Asia.

It is only natural that the world would reject a regime that sponsors terrorism to possess weapons of mass destruction, which could enable it to spread terror across the globe.

Accordingly, Washington and Western capitals have sought to apply the language of reason. Meanwhile, the Iranian Foreign Minister's meetings in Geneva and Tehran's representative's speech at the UN Security Council were marked by arrogance and bravado.

This does not absolve Israel of responsibility. As I noted in a previous article, Israel is the mother of all evils. Nonetheless, most countries support and back its actions against the Iranian nuclear program.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz rightly stated, "Israel is currently doing the dirty work on behalf of the West." In reality, Israel is carrying out this role for the entire world.

In contrast, Iran is today living in an era of suspicion, as it is suspecting everyone, including its own citizens, when what it truly needs is someone to trust it.

## Unmasking injustice:

every person no matter how grave the accusation is treated with fairness, dignity, and restraint.

**Questions to think about:**  
What If It Were You? What if you were falsely accused? What if your image was displayed, your name maligned, your silence mistaken for guilt? Would a later acquittal truly restore what had been stripped away?

Publishing arrest photos before a verdict is not a form of public service. It is a form of institutional overreach. It violates the presumption of innocence, undermines the integrity of investigations, and inflicts disproportionate and enduring harm on individuals who may ultimately be found innocent.

We do not need public spectacle. We need procedural integrity. We need a legal culture that understands that human dignity is not conditional on innocence, it is inherent.

All state bodies must urgently revisit this practice not as a political concession, but as a legal necessity. Kuwait's commitment to justice is measured not by how loudly it condemns, but by how carefully it protects.

Because in law, as in life, the true test of a society is not how it treats the guilty, but how it treats the presumed innocent.

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## Kuwaitis praise

The ministry confirmed that the evacuation plan is being implemented in close coordination with Kuwaiti embassies, expressing its deep appreciation for the facilities provided by the relevant authorities in Tehran and Ashgabat to ensure the safe return of Kuwaiti citizens.

The ministry added it continues to exert efforts round the clock to guarantee the safe return of all Kuwaiti citizens from Iran, in coordination with its partners and other relevant agencies to achieve this goal with the highest level of efficiency and responsibility.

The ministry, led by Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and his deputy — Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad, demonstrated high diplomatic readiness in managing the evacuation operations. The efforts of Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat and the Kuwaiti ambassadors in Tehran and Ankara complemented the work of embassy teams in ascertaining the safe and smooth passage of citizens and their return to the country amidst exceptional circumstances.

Sources said other flights will be scheduled once the actual numbers are determined, and they will be executed in the same manner, especially since the airlines do not have a special route from Turkmenistan to Kuwait.

Sources revealed that flight number 5006 was scheduled to arrive at 11:35 pm Friday, but it was postponed until 4:20 am on Saturday.

The evacuated citizens expressed their deep gratitude for the tremendous efforts exerted by the ministry, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tehran and the diplomatic mission in Ashgabat; particularly the support and care they provided during the evacuation stages, starting with securing their exit by land from Tehran through Turkmen territory, and ending with their return by air to Kuwait. They pointed out that this rapid response and tight coordination reflect the concern of the State for its citizens under all circumstances.

Moreover, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat confirmed that the ministry has activated the approved emergency plans as per the directives of the political leadership to guarantee the safety of Kuwaiti citizens in Iran.

In a television interview, Hayat stressed that the ministry is moving according to pre-prepared plans that are implemented based on the nature of challenges. He said coordination with the Council of Ministers and all relevant ministers is ongoing round the clock, while field reports are continuously submitted to monitor developments and make appropriate decisions at the appropriate time.

He added the Kuwaiti embassies, especially the embassy in Tehran, operate with high efficiency; stressing that the diplomatic staff are trained to deal with difficult circumstances, including natural disasters, conflicts and security emergencies. He confirmed the direct communication with the foreign ministries of friendly countries and effective cooperation with the ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the Iranian capital.

He explained that the current evacuation plan takes into account the use of land routes due to the closure of Iranian airspace, emphasizing that the speed of transportation should not be at the expense of safety. He said coordination includes all the details to ensure the safety of citizens during their travel, indicating that Kuwait is open to cooperating with the United Nations and other international bodies to facilitate the evacuation process; reflecting the country's active diplomacy and extensive relations with various countries around the world.

He stressed the importance of Kuwaiti citizens' commitment to communicate with Kuwaiti embassies abroad and to provide them with accurate information upon entering any country. He said the ministry monitors all reports and communications through teams operating round the clock from the headquarters of the ministry and from the diplomatic missions.

He asserted that Kuwait does not discriminate in its humanitarian treatment and also provides assistance to the citizens of other Gulf countries that do not have diplomatic missions in Tehran, in adherence to its established humanitarian principles. He pointed out that "the unity of blood and common destiny among the GCC countries is the fundamental pillar from which the Gulf solidarity movement was launched. The liberation of Kuwait more than 35 years ago was the fruit of this solidarity and will remain a symbol of true Gulf unity. Gulf blood liberated Kuwait. Our blood has become one and our Gulf is one. We continue to follow this approach today, because experience has proven that overcoming exceptional circumstances at the regional or international levels can

only be achieved through our unity."

He stated that the GCC institutions, specifically the disaster management centers, are witnessing intensified development and close coordination in the exchange of information, especially in sensitive fields like atomic and radiological information. He added this cooperation has become stronger and more integrated today.

He expressed his satisfaction with the level of Gulf coordination, praising the role of His Excellency the Secretary General of the GCC Jassim Mohammed Al-Budaiwi and his continuous communication with the senior political leaders of the GCC countries; in addition to the daily coordination between the ministries of foreign affairs and relevant authorities in the Gulf countries. He asserted that joint efforts among the GCC countries will continue until all dangers are eliminated and the region stabilizes, God willing.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Turkey Abdulaziz Al-Adwani confirmed that the ministry is continuing its tireless efforts to facilitate the return of Kuwaiti citizens from Iranian territory, in cooperation with relevant authorities in the country.

Al-Adwani explained that there is effective coordination in preparation for the departure of the first flights to the homeland in the near future. He stressed that the ministry teams are closely monitoring the number of citizens and working hard to accurately count them.

He called on Kuwaiti citizens wishing to evacuate to fully adhere to the bulletins and instructions issued by the ministry, and to communicate with the Communication Council team of the ministry, which works round the clock to respond to citizens' inquiries and provide the necessary support, especially while they are in Turkmenistan, in preparation for their return to Kuwait. He added that the safety of citizens remains a top priority under these circumstances.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iran Dr. Meshaal Al-Mansour confirmed that coordination is ongoing at the highest levels with Iranian authorities and neighboring countries, as part of a comprehensive plan to evacuate Kuwaiti citizens stranded in Iran due to recent developments.

## GCC appeals

Islamic Cooperation (OIC), hosted in Istanbul.

A statement by the foreign ministry said the two sides tackled the latest development in the region and international arena. Foreign Ministers of the Arab League condemned Friday in an extraordinary meeting in Istanbul the Israeli occupation's aggression against Iran, describing it as flagrant violation of the sovereignty of a UN member state, and a threat to regional peace and security.

The ministers called for an end to this aggression, and for intensified regional and international efforts to reduce tensions and achieve comprehensive calm.

Elsewhere, Representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to the International Atomic Energy Agency held a meeting with IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi on nuclear safety and security in the Arabian Gulf region.

The meeting addressed the concerns of the GCC countries regarding Israeli occupation attacks on Iran, head of the ambassadors of the GCC group of states in Vienna, Kuwait Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to the IAEA Talal Al-Fassam told KUNA on Saturday.

Ambassador Al-Fassam said that the Gulf ambassadors stressed the GCC countries' special interest in the safety of these facilities and emphasized the need to ensure the highest levels of preparedness and preventive measures.

He added that the GCC ambassadors also emphasized during the meeting the pivotal role of IAEA in strengthening preventive security at the regional and international levels.

He also pointed to the agency's role in following up on the technical and operational obligations of states within the framework of the comprehensive safeguards system.

Al-Fassam added that the ambassadors also conveyed the GCC states' warnings of the dangerous consequences that could result from targeting nuclear facilities, both in terms of human and environmental repercussions.

He stressed that this represents a direct threat to radiation safety and the international nuclear safeguards system, in addition to being a clear violation of the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law.

Since June 13, the capital, Tehran, and other Iranian cities have been subjected to a massive attack by the Israeli occupation forces, which included targeting a number of nuclear facilities.

# Science exams conclude; literature tests continue

Results expected online by midweek

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Science section students reached the final stage of the 2024/2025 academic year final exams on Sunday, when they took the Chemistry exam; while the Literature section students continued their exams that will conclude with the Statistics exam later this week.**

Meanwhile, the operations of the General Secondary Education Control Authority continued daily. Teachers and correctors in the relevant committees continued to correct exam papers, record grades and review them carefully to ensure fair assessment and transparency.

Educational sources disclosed that the correction of exams in all subjects in the Science and Literature sections is expected to be completed on Monday. They said the results will be announced and uploaded on the official website of the Education Ministry on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning at the latest.

Sources confirmed that the results will be announced electronically through the portal of the ministry and the Sahel application, in addition to the websites of daily newspapers, to ensure the students and parents have easy access to the results once they are approved.



KUNA photo

Part of the inspection tour of the Ahmadi Governor, Chairman of the Green Urban Development Initiatives Committee, and the Capital Governor for the beautification works initiative on the Second Ring Road.

## Ahmadi Governor praises green initiative

KUWAIT CITY, June 21, (KUNA): Ahmadi Governor and Chairman of the Green Urban Development Initiatives Committee Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, praised on Saturday the green development initiative on the Second Ring Road.

This came in a statement to reporters, on the sidelines of an inspection tour on the Second Ring Road, presented by Engineer Haifa Al-Muhanna. Sheikh Humoud Al-Jaber said that similar initiatives will be launched in various locations across Kuwait in the coming period.


He called on those who wish to take any green development initiative in all governorates of Kuwait to visit the committee's website (<https://gudi.gov.kw>) and its accounts on X and Instagram (@gudikuwait). He expressed his thanks to the Council of Ministers for their support

of the committee's work, and to Al-Asimah Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah for his efforts, as well as the efforts of all participants.

For his part, Al-Asimah Governor said that this initiative represents a qualitative step towards promoting the concepts of environmental sustainability in Kuwait.


He explained that promoting green spaces enhances air quality, reduces pollution, raises environmental awareness in society, reduces carbon emissions, and raises the quality of life for citizens and residents alike.

Acting Deputy Director General for Landscape Agriculture at the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources Falah Al-Enezi reaffirmed the authority's keenness to provide logistical and advisory support for such initiatives.



# JOINT OPERATIONS

**SAUDI ARABIAN CHEVRON INC. (SAC)**     **KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY (K.S.C.)**



Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company), announces the under-mentioned Public Tenders for procurement of materials.

Kuwaiti and Saudi Merchants, registered with either Company wishing to participate in any of the under-mentioned Tenders are invited to collect the Tender documents from Purchasing Section, Purchasing & Logistic Division, Administration Building, Ground Floor, Joint Operations, Wafra, during the official working hours from **22 JUN 2025** up to **10 JUL 2025** for a non-refundable fee mentioned against each tender.

Tender Fees to be deposited in the National bank of Kuwait (NBK) Account No. 1001132057. Saudi Suppliers can collect the tender documents from Saudi Arabian Chevron office in Al-Khobar Telephone No.: (013) 8645104 - Fax No.: (013) 8985436

The closing date for the following tenders will be on **Tuesday, 22 July 2025 @ 9:00 A.M.**

S.NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS	FEES ( KD )
1	037842	MISCELLANEOUS SPARE PARTS, HUBBELL - AB CHANCE	5
2	037840	INSERT SLEEVES, COATED	5
3	037838	S/F 33 KV OHL DISTRIBUTION NETWORK, ABB	5

**Notes:**  
Gate Passes are required for Suppliers entering JO-Wafra Administrative Offices to collect the tender document and gate pass processing time is 48 hours. Please fill request for gate pass along with legible copies of Authorization letter, Civil ID, Car Registration, Supplier Registration (KGOC or SAC) to e-mail [HBJH@chevron.com](mailto:HBJH@chevron.com) and [CBMS@chevron.com](mailto:CBMS@chevron.com) at least 48 hours prior to arrival.

For additional information, you may contact :

Telephone No.: **23983639** - Ext. : **2502 - 3477**



In this photo provided by Utah Fire Info, the Forsyth Fire burns through the Pine Valley area in Washington County, Utah, on June 19. (AP)

Utah blaze destroys structures

A fast-moving fire fueled by high winds on Friday has destroyed a dozen structures, including homes, and forced some in a rural area of southwest Utah to evacuate. The Forsyth Fire started Thursday in the Pine Valley Mountains and has already burned about 2.3 square miles (5.96 square kilometers), said Karl Hunt, a spokesperson for the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands. It has forced people to evacuate from the Pine Valley Community and nearby campgrounds, although the number of people who have fled was not immediately clear.

The blaze, which is about 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) northeast of St. George and includes steep, mountainous terrain, has also threatened 400 structures. By Friday evening, the fire remained uncontained despite 150 people battling the blaze, including two hotshot crews from Utah and Nevada, according to Hunt. Teams were using helicopters, more than a dozen engines and water tenders. (AP)

Vance blames California Dems for violent immigration protests

LOS ANGELES, June 21, (AP): US Vice President **JD Vance** on Friday accused California Gov Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass of encouraging violent immigration protests as he used his appearance in Los Angeles to rebut criticism from state and local officials that the Trump administration fueled the unrest by sending in federal officers.



Vance

Vance also referred to US Sen Alex Padilla, the state's first Latino senator, as "Jose Padilla," a week after the Democrat was forcibly taken to the ground by officers and handcuffed after speaking out during a Los Angeles news conference by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem on immigration raids. "I was hoping Jose Padilla would be here to ask a question,"

Vance said, in an apparent reference to the altercation at Noem's event. "I guess he decided not to show up because there wasn't a theater. And that's all it is."

"They want to be able to go back to their far-left groups and to say, 'Look, me, I stood up against border enforcement. I stood up against Donald Trump,'" Vance added.

A spokesperson for Padilla, Tess Oswald, noted in a social media post that Padilla and Vance were formerly colleagues in the Senate and said that Vance should know better. "He should be more focused on demilitarizing our city than taking cheap shots," Oswald said.

Vance's visit to Los Angeles to tour a multiagency Federal Joint Operations Center and a mobile command center came as demonstrations calmed down in the city and a curfew was lifted this week. That followed over a week of sometimes-violent clashes between protesters and police and outbreaks of vandalism and looting that followed immigration raids across Southern California.



Tourists walk around Bow Lake near Bow Glacier Falls, (seen in background), where a rockslide, light grey area on cliff face, caused fatalities, north of Lake Louise, Alta., in Banff National Park on June 20. (AP)

Second body recovered near Banff

Search teams located a second body Friday following a massive rockfall off a hiking trail in Canada's Banff National Park.

The University of Alberta confirmed one of the two people killed in the rockfall in Banff National Park was retired educator Jutta Hinrichs, who was a leader in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Parks Canada officials say she was 70 and lived in Calgary. The slide happened Thursday afternoon north of Lake Louise on the Icefields Parkway, about 200 kilometers (124 miles) northwest of Calgary. It is also about 137 kilometers (85 miles) from the site of the Group of Seven summit held in Kananaskis, Alberta, this week.

Three others were taken to the hospital and were reported in stable condition.

Officials said no one else has been reported missing and there are no unidentified vehicles at the trailhead. (AP)

‘Republicans proposals reckless, dangerous attack on consumers’

Senate parliamentarian deals blow to GOP plan to gut consumer bureau in tax bill

WASHINGTON, June 21, (AP): US Republicans suffered a sizable setback Friday on one key aspect of President Donald Trump's big bill after their plans to gut the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and other provisions from the Senate Banking Committee ran into procedural violations with the Senate parliamentarian.

Republicans in the Senate proposed zeroing-out funding for the CFPB, the landmark agency set up in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, to save \$6.4 billion. The bureau had been designed as a way to better protect Americans from financial fraud, but has been opposed by many GOP lawmakers since its inception. The Trump administration has targeted the CFPB as an example of government over-regulation and overreach.

The findings by the Senate parliamentarian's office, which is working overtime scrubbing Trump's overall bill to ensure it aligns with the chamber's strict "Byrd Rule" processes, signal a tough road ahead. The most daunting questions are still to come, as GOP leadership rushes to muscle Trump's signature package to floor for votes by his Fourth of July deadline.

Sen.Tim Scott, R-S.C., the chairman of the Banking Committee that drafted the provisions in question, said in a statement, "My colleagues and I remain committed to cutting wasteful spending at the CFPB and will continue working with the Senate parliamentarian on the Committee's provisions."

For Democrats, who have been fighting Trump's 1,000-page package at every step, the parliamentarian's advisory amounted to a significant win. "Democrats fought back, and we will keep fighting back against this ugly bill," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the Banking Committee, who engineered the creation of the CFPB before she was elected to Congress.

Warren said that GOP proposals "are a reckless, dangerous attack on consumers and would lead to more Americans being tricked and trapped by giant financial institutions and put the stability of our entire financial system at risk-all to hand out tax breaks to billionaires."

The parliamentarian's rulings, while advisory, are rarely, if ever ignored. With the majority in Congress, Republicans have been drafting a sweeping package that extends some \$4.5 trillion tax cuts Trump approved during his first term, in 2017, that otherwise expire at the end of the year. It adds \$350 billion to national security, including billions for Trump's mass deportation agenda. And it



US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer is joined by Sen Elizabeth Warren, ranking member of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, and Sen. Ron Wyden, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, as he talks to reporters about Senate Republicans' efforts to pass President Donald Trump's tax cut and spending agenda with deeper Medicaid cuts, at the Capitol in Washington on June 18. (AP)

slashes some \$1 trillion from Medicaid, food stamps and other government programs.

All told, the package is estimated to add at least \$2.4 trillion to the nation's deficits over the decade, and leave 10.9 million more people without health care coverage, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office's review of the House-passed package, which is now undergoing revisions in the Senate.

The parliamentarian's office is responsible for determining if the package ad-

heres to the Byrd Rule, named after the late Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, who was considered one of the masters of Senate procedure. The rule essentially bars policy matters from being addressed in the budget reconciliation process.

Senate GOP leaders are using the budget reconciliation process, which is increasingly how big bills move through the Congress, because it allows passage on a simple majority vote, rather than face a filibuster with the higher 60-vote threshold.

But if any of the bill's provisions violate the Byrd Rule, that means they can be challenged at the tougher 60-vote threshold, which is a tall order in the 53-47 Senate. Leaders are often forced to strip those proposals from the package, even though doing so risks losing support from lawmakers who championed those provisions.

One of the biggest questions ahead for the parliamentarian will be over the Senate GOP's proposal to use "current policy" as opposed to "current law" to determine the baseline budget and whether the overall package adds significantly to deficits.

Already the Senate parliamentarian's office has waded through several proposals in Trump's big bill, including those from the Senate Armed Services Committee and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The Banking panel offered a modest bill, just eight pages, and much of it was deemed out of compliance.

The parliamentarian found that in addition to gutting the CFPB, other provisions aimed at rolling back entities put in place after the 2008 financial crisis would violate the Byrd Rule. Those include a GOP provision to limit the Financial Research Fund, which was set up to conduct analysis, saving nearly \$300 million; and another to shift the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, which conducts oversight of accounting firms, to the Securities and Exchange Commission and terminate positions, saving \$773 million.

The GOP plan to change the pay schedule for employees at the Federal Reserve, saving \$1.4 billion, was also determined to be in violation of the Byrd Rule.

The parliamentarian's office also raised Byrd Rule violations over GOP proposals to repeal certain aspects of the Inflation Reduction Act, and one from the Environment and Public Works Committee to repeal emission standards for some model year 2027 light-duty and medium-duty vehicles.



The hull of the superyacht Bayesian, which sank near Palermo, Sicily, on Aug 19, 2024, is lifted by cranes during salvage operations off the village of Porticello on June 21. (AP)

Superyacht pulled from depths 10 months after sinking off Sicily

A British-flagged luxury superyacht that sank off Sicily last year, killing U.K. tech magnate Mike Lynch and six others, resurfaced Saturday as salvage recovery crews finalized the complex operation to bring it ashore for further investigation.

The white top and blue hull of the 56-meter (184-foot) Bayesian was visible on the surface but was not clear of the sea yet in a holding area of a yellow floating crane barge.

"Pumping out of sea water will continue and it will be lunchtime, following a series of lifting and resting procedures to satisfy the salvage team, before Bayesian is fully and finally out of the water," said David Wilson, spokesman for TMC Maritime, which is conducting the

recovery operation.

The local coast guard said the lifting operation is expected to be concluded by the early afternoon and will be followed by some technical tests on the hull. On Sunday, the vessel will be transported to the Sicilian port of Termini Imerese, where it will be made available for investigators to help determine the cause of the sinking.

The Bayesian sank Aug. 19 off Porticello, near Palermo, during a violent storm as Lynch was treating friends to a cruise to celebrate his acquittal two months earlier in the U.S. on fraud charges. Lynch, his daughter and five others died. Fifteen people survived, including the captain and all crew members except the chef. (AP)

Romania's new president nominates center-right former mayor as premier

BUCHAREST, Romania, June 21, (AP): Romania's new pro-Western president on Friday nominated a center-right former mayor to be prime minister, as the European Union and NATO member state seeks to usher in a new government to end a protracted political crisis that has gripped the nation since last year.

President Nicusor Dan nominated 56-year-old Ilie Bolojan of the center-right National Liberal Party, or PNL, after a fresh round of talks Friday following weeks of deliberations.

Bolojan previously served as acting president between February and May, when Dan decisively beat a hard-right opponent in a heated presidential election rerun.

That closely watched vote came months after the previous election was annulled by a top court, which plunged Romania into a deep political crisis.

At the presidential Cotroceni Palace in the capital Bucharest, Dan said Bolojan is the "most suitable person" for the job, which includes tackling a budget crisis.

"It is in Romania's interest for the Government to be supported by a solid majority, and the parties have under-



Romanian President Nicusor Dan, (left), shakes hands with Ilie Bolojan, the President of the country's senate, after nominating him as the new Prime Minister at the Cotroceni Presidential Palace in Bucharest, Romania on June 20. (AP)

stood this," Dan said. "Romania's urgent priority is economic recovery, but ... you need a solid foundation."

The president's nomination will need to be approved by lawmakers.

A new government is expected to be comprised of the leftist Social

Democratic Party, or PSD, the PNL, the reformist Save Romania Union party, and the small ethnic Hungarian UDMR party. The PSD has pushed for a power-sharing agreement that would see a rotation of the prime ministerial post.

Success of key NATO summit in doubt after Spain rejects big hike in defense spending

BRUSSELS, June 21, (AP): The success of a key NATO summit hung in the balance on Friday, after Spain announced that it cannot raise the billions of dollars needed to meet a new defense investment pledge demanded by US President Donald Trump.

Trump and his NATO counterparts are meeting for two days in the Netherlands from next Tuesday. He insists that US allies should commit to spending at least 5% of gross domestic product, but that requires investment at an unprecedented scale.

Trump has cast doubt over whether the US would defend allies that spend too little. Setting the spending goal would be a historic decision. It would see all 32 countries invest the same amount in defense for the first time. Only last week, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte expressed confidence that they would endorse it.

But in a letter to Rutte on Thursday, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote that "committing to a 5% target would not only be unreasonable, but also counterproductive."

"It would move Spain away from optimal spending and it would hinder the (European Union's) ongoing



In this Dec 4, 2019, photo, (from front row left), British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, US President Donald Trump, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez attend a ceremony event during a NATO leaders meeting at The Grove hotel and resort in Watford, Hertfordshire, England. (AP)

efforts to strengthen its security and defense ecosystem," Sánchez wrote in the letter, seen by The Associated Press. Belgium, Canada, France and Italy would also struggle to hike secu-

rity spending by billions of dollars, but Spain is the only country to officially announce its intentions, making it hard to row back from such a public decision.

Europe

**Russian drone attacks kill 1 in Ukraine:** Russian drones slammed into two Ukrainian cities, killing at least one person in nighttime attacks, authorities said Friday, as a Kremlin official said he expected an announcement next week on dates for a fresh round of direct peace talks.

Russia's overnight drone assault targeted the southern Ukraine port city of Odesa and the northeastern city of Kharkiv, hitting apartment blocks, officials said.

The barrage of more than 20 drones injured almost two dozen civilians, including girls aged 17 and 12, Ukraine President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** said.

"Russia continues its tactics of targeted terror against our people," Zelenskyy said on messaging app Telegram, urging the United States and the European Union to crank up economic pressure on Russia.

Russia has shown no signs of relenting in its attacks, more than three years after it invaded its neighbor. It is pressing a summer offensive on parts of the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line and has kept up long-range strikes that have hit civilian areas. (AP)



Zelenskyy

‘More than 600 migrants rescued from boats’:

More than 600 migrants were rescued overnight and early Friday from two wooden fishing boats found sailing miles (kilometers) from the southernmost part of Greece, the country's coast guard said.

The first fishing boat, carrying 352 people, was spotted overnight about 30 nautical miles (35 miles, 55 kilometers) south of the tiny island of Gavdos, the coast guard said. Passengers were rescued by a ship from the European border patrol agency FRONTEX, aided by a coast guard patrol boat and four other vessels.

The second was found 50 nautical miles (about 60 miles, 90 kilometers) south of the island of Crete with 278 people on board. The passengers were picked up by a passing Portuguese-flagged cargo ship. In both cases, the migrants were transported to Crete. (AP)

**Azerbaijan jails 7 journalists:** A court in Azerbaijan on Friday convicted a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist and six others on multiple charges, handing down prison sentences ranging from 7 1/2 to nine years in prison, RFE/RL and local media reported.

The verdict against RFE/RL's Farid Mehralizada and six journalists from Abzas Media, an independent Azerbaijani investigative outlet, marks the latest escalation in the country's crackdown on media. All seven journalists have dismissed the charges as politically motivated and linked to their journalism. International rights groups have called for their release. (AP)

Russia willing to strengthen all-round collaboration with China: Putin

## New Zealand Prime Minister Luxon talks trade in meeting with Chinese President Xi

BEIJING, June 21, (Agencies): The prime minister of New Zealand stressed the mutual benefits of trade with China in a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Friday, while acknowledging their disagreements on geopolitical issues.

Christopher Luxon, on his first visit to China since becoming prime minister in late 2023, flew to Beijing after two days of meetings with officials and business leaders in Shanghai, China's commercial center.

He wants to maintain healthy trade ties despite differences over regional and global security issues and China's growing divide with the United States. China is an important market for New Zealand food, dairy and other exports.

Xi told Luxon that the two countries should seek common ground while setting aside their differences, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said. He called for deepening trade and investment cooperation and exploring cooperation in areas such as climate.

Luxon raised the necessity of reducing tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, according to a news release from his office. He also brought up the importance of what he called "the key role" that China can play in helping to resolve global challenges such as the war in Ukraine.

"In a complex world, open dialogue is more important than ever," Luxon said in a post about the meeting on X.

His exchange with Xi came one day after revelations that New Zealand had suspended millions of dollars in aid to the Cook Islands over concerns about the latter's deepening ties with China.

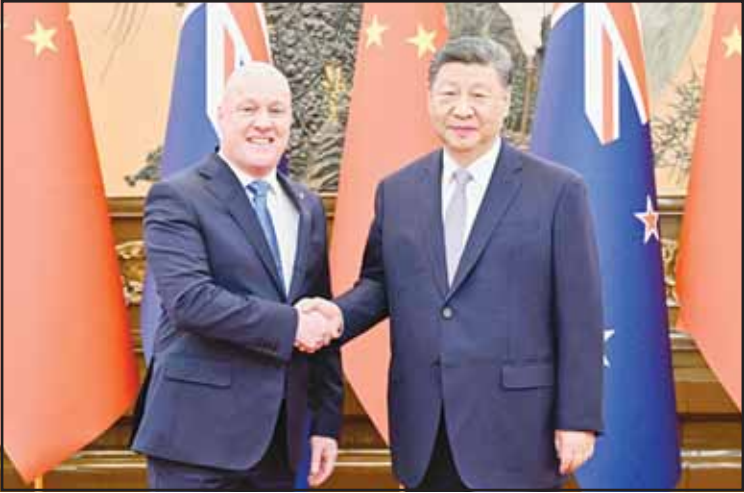
China accounts for more than 20% of New Zealand's exports of goods and services.

"Our trade and economic links are complementary and contribute to prosperity in both countries," Luxon was quoted as saying in the news release.

New Zealand announced this week a limited easing of visa requirements for Chinese visitors, a major source of tourism revenue.

Luxon is headed to Europe next, where he will have meetings in Brussels and the Netherlands, his office said.

He will discuss trade, security and



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, visiting New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, (left) shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping prior to their bilateral meeting in Beijing on June 20. (AP)

geopolitical issues with European Union leaders. In the Netherlands, he is an invited guest to next week's NATO summit in The Hague.

**Also:**  
**ST PETERSBURG:** Russian President Vladimir Putin said recently that Russia and China share a broad spectrum

of cooperation areas, and Russia is committed to strengthening all-around cooperation and exchanges with China.

Putin made the remarks in response to a question from Fu Hua, president of Xinhua News Agency, during a meeting with heads of major international news agencies in St. Petersburg.

Putin emphasized that Russia has established itself as a key economic partner for China, with bilateral trade reaching 240 billion US dollars in 2024. He noted that the two countries have launched a series of practical investment projects and that the scale of investment is expected to grow further.

"This achievement stems not only from China's economic growth in scale and quality but also from the enduring friendship that binds our countries," he added.

Putin said financial cooperation is now a top priority in bilateral relations, with a focus on ensuring stable capital flows to sustain economic momentum and drive new breakthroughs in trade.

He also highlighted enormous cooperation potential in high-tech, aero-

space and aircraft manufacturing.

Putin stressed that China has achieved remarkable success in the field of artificial intelligence, creating tenfold efficiency at one-tenth the cost of competitors, which is "amazing and gratifying."

As economic and cultural ties deepen, Putin noted growing interest in the Chinese language across Russia. Currently, about 25,000 young Russians are enrolled in Chinese educational institutions.

The regularly held Russia-China theme years have not only deepened cultural and people-to-people cooperation and exchanges, but also enhanced mutual understanding between the two peoples, he said.

Putin also shared a personal anecdote, revealing that his daughter began studying Chinese with a tutor in the early 2000s, and that his granddaughter now speaks fluent Chinese with her teacher from Beijing.

The media event was organized on the sidelines of the 28th St Petersburg International Economic Forum.



In this photo released by the Government Spokesman Office, Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, center, talks to Thai soldiers at Ubon Ratchathani province, northeast of Bangkok on June 20. (AP)

### Thailand's PM Paetongtarn visits border with Cambodia

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra visited the border with Cambodia on Friday as she faced resignation calls following a leaked phone call between her and Cambodia's former leader discussing recent border tensions.

Paetongtarn traveled to a border town in northeastern Ubon Ratchathani province, near a small contested territory with Cambodia where a brief confrontation between the two sides on May 28 killed one Cambodian soldier.

A statement from Thailand's Government House said Paetongtarn's visit was aimed at boosting morale among soldiers who are working hard to protect the country's sovereignty and interests.

Several groups of activists said Friday that they would rally next week to demand Paetongtarn's resignation.

Cambodia's Senate President Hun Sen on Wednesday released a 17-minute recording of a conversation with Paetongtarn. She

could be heard telling Hun Sen not to listen to "an opponent" in Thailand. It's believed to be a reference to regional Thai army commander Boonsin Padklang, who had publicly criticized Cambodia over the border dispute.

Before the leak, Paetongtarn had already been criticized for a perceived soft stance toward Cambodia, especially by right-wing nationalists who are longtime foes of her father, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. (AP)

## Malaysia court drops money laundering charges against jailed ex-premier Najib

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, June 21, (AP): A Malaysian court dropped three money laundering charges against jailed former Prime Minister Najib Razak on Friday, in a case linked to the multibillion-dollar looting of a state fund.

Najib was previously convicted in a graft case tied to the 1Malaysia Development Berhad state fund, or 1MDB, and began serving time in 2022, after losing his final appeal. He also faces other graft trials.

The High Court's decision to drop the charges alleging Najib received 27 million ringgit (\$6.3 million) in illegal proceeds to his bank accounts came after procedural delays by the prosecution, which saw the case dragging on for six years, Najib's lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah said. Prosecutors could not give the court a timeline for when they will be ready for the trial, he added.

Prosecutors reserve the right to revive charges against Najib and a discharge does not mean an acquittal, Shafee said. But, Najib was happy and can now focus on the main 1MDB trial, he added.

Najib set up 1MDB shortly after taking power in 2009. Investigators allege that more than \$4.5 billion was stolen from the fund and laundered by his associates to finance Hollywood films and extravagant purchases. The scandal upended Najib's government and



Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak arrives at the Kuala Lumpur High Court complex escorted by prison officers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on April 4, 2024. (AP)

he was defeated in the 2018 election.

Last November, the High Court also discharged Najib and the former treasury chief in another 1MDB-linked corruption case after repeated delays by the prosecution. The pair can still be charged for the same offence in the future. In 2023, Najib was acquitted on separate charges of tampering with a government audit into 1MDB.

Najib was sentenced to 12 years in jail in his first graft trial but the sentence was halved by the Pardon Boards in 2024. Najib alleged the board had issued a home arrest order for him to complete his sentence at home, but the case is still being heard in court.

Najib awaits his verdict in another key case that ties him directly to the 1MDB scandal, which has prompted investigations in the U.S. and several other countries.

### Armed men kill 34 soldiers

## Suicide bomber kills 10 in Nigeria restaurant

ABUJA, Nigeria, June 21, (AP): A suicide bomber in Nigeria's northeast state of Borno killed at least 10 people and injured several others in an explosion in a restaurant, police said Saturday.

The blast occurred in the Konduga area late Friday, police spokesperson Nahum Daso told The Associated Press.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but Nigeria's northeast has been hit by attacks carried out by Islamic militants from the Boko Haram group and its splinter, the Islamic State West Africa Province.

Boko Haram, Nigeria's homegrown jihadis, took up arms in 2009 to fight Western education and impose their radical version of Islamic law. The conflict also has spilled into Nigeria's northern neighbors.

Some 35,000 civilians have been killed and more than 2 million displaced in the northeastern region, according to the UN.

Despite promises by President Bola Tinubu's administration to address Nigeria's security challenges, the violence has persisted.

**Also:**  
**DAKAR, Senegal:** Armed men killed 34 soldiers and wounded 14 others in western Niger near the tri-state border with Mali and Burkina Faso, the defense ministry said.

The attack was carried out around 9 am Thursday in Banibanguou by attack-



Nigeriens participate in a march called by supporters of coup leader Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, pictured, in Niamey, Niger on July 30, 2023. (AP)

ers using eight vehicles and more than 200 motorbikes, the ministry said in a statement.

The government said its forces killed dozens of attackers it called "terrorists," adding that search operations by land and air were being conducted to find additional assailants.

Niger, along with its neighbors Burkina Faso and Mali, has for more than a decade battled an insurgency fought by jihadi groups, including some allied with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

Following military coups in the

three nations in recent years, the ruling juntas have expelled French forces and turned to Russia's mercenary units for security assistance. The three countries have vowed to strengthen their cooperation by establishing a new security alliance, the Alliance of Sahel States.

But the security situation in the Sahel, a vast region on the fringes of the Sahara Desert, has significantly worsened since the juntas took power, analysts say, with a record number of attacks and civilians killed by Islamic militants and government forces.

## As UN turns 80, its crucial humanitarian aid work faces clouded future

KAKUMA, Kenya, June 21, (AP): At a refugee camp in northern Kenya, Aujene Cimanimpaye waits as a hot lunch of lentils and sorghum is ladled out for her and her nine children - all born while she has received United Nations assistance since fleeing her violence-racked home in Congo in 2007.

"We cannot go back home because people are still being killed," the 41-year-old said at the Kakuma camp, where the UN World Food Program and UN refugee agency help support more than 300,000 refugees.

Her family moved from Nakivale Refugee Settlement in neighboring Uganda three years ago to Kenya, now home to more than a million refugees from conflict-hit east African countries.

A few kilometers (miles) away at the Kalobeyei Refugee Settlement, fellow Congolese refugee Bahati Musaba, a mother of five, said that since 2016, "UN agencies have supported my children's education - we get food and water and even medicine," as well as cash support from WFP to buy food and other basics.

This year, those cash transfers - and many other UN aid activities - have stopped, threatening to upend or jeopardize millions of lives.



Students in an English class at a primary school run by UNRWA for Palestinian refugees at the Mar Elias refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon on June 2. (AP)

As the UN marks its 80th anniversary this month, its humanitarian agencies are facing one of the greatest crises in their history: The biggest funder - the United States - under the Trump administration and other Western donors have slashed international aid spending. Some want to use the money to build up national defense.

Some UN agencies are increasingly pointing fingers at one another as they battle over a shrinking pool of funding, said a

diplomat from a top donor country who spoke on condition of anonymity to comment freely about the funding crisis faced by some UN agencies.

Such pressures, humanitarian groups say, diminish the pivotal role of the UN and its partners in efforts to save millions of lives - by providing tents, food and water to people fleeing unrest in places like Myanmar, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela, or helping stamp out smallpox decades ago.

## 50% chance of tropical depression forming off coast of Central America within seven days

ACAPULCO, Mexico, June 21, (AP): An area of low pressure may develop off the coast of Central America and southern Mexico early next week.

The Miami-based US National Hurricane Center said Saturday environmental conditions might lead to "some gradual development," with a 50% chance of a tropical depression forming within seven days as the system moves west-northwestward.

The chance of formation through 48 hours is near 0%, the center said.

A category 3 major hurricane came ashore down southern Mexico's Pacific coast on Thursday. Hurricane Erick left a 1-year-old boy dead before dissipating.

Authorities in southern Mexico were still assessing damage and watching rising rivers Friday as rain from the remnants of Hurricane Erick doused the region.

Torrential rains over steep coastal mountains and the landslides and



Residents remove debris after the passing of Hurricane Erick, near Charco Redondo, Oaxaca state, Mexico on June 19. (AP)

flooding they could generate became the ongoing concern for officials after Erick dissipated following a landfall early Thursday on a sparsely populated stretch of coast.

The storm's death toll remained at one Friday, a 1-year-old boy who drowned in a swollen river, President Claudia Sheinbaum said. She also said she planned to visit the affected region Friday.

### Lat/Am

**'Constitutional protections suspended':** Panama suspended constitutional protections for five days in its northwestern Bocas del Toro province Friday after two months of protests and road blockades turned more destructive the previous night.

Presidential Minister **Juan Carlos Orillac** said in a news conference that the move would allow the government to reestablish order and "rescue the province" from "radical groups."

What began as nationwide protests against changes to the social security system morphed Thursday night into people damaging the local airport and the facilities of banana giant Chiquita Brands, which fired thousands of striking workers in the province last month.

Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino had said at the time that the banana workers' strike was illegal and included some 5,000 workers.

On May 27, the government declared a state of emergency in the province without suspending constitutional protections.

But actions by masked people authorities described as criminals overnight led Mulino to announce Thursday night that he would meet with his Cabinet Friday to take action. The perpetrators forced their way into the airport in Changuinola, Bocas del Toro's main city, where they vandalized cars and started a fire in the local baseball stadium.



Orillac

They sacked Chiquita's shuttered facility and destroyed a local office of the National Civil Defense Service. (AP)

**Colombia bomb attack kills two:** At least two people were killed early Friday in a bombing at the Alto Pino toll station on a highway in La Guajira department, Colombia's National Infrastructure Agency (ANI) confirmed.

"At the time of the attack, six people were on duty at the toll station. Tragically, the toll station manager and the tow truck inspector died on site," ANI said in a statement.

According to the agency, armed men arrived at the site just before dawn and left behind a box that later exploded, destroying the toll booth located on the road linking Maicao and Riohacha.

Colombia's Transport Minister Maria Fernanda Rojas condemned the attack, noting that guerrilla symbols linked to the ELN were found at the site. "Within the Transport sector, we reject all forms of violence that endanger life and safety on our roads," she said.

Maicao's mayor, Miguel Aragon, called the bombing "deeply sad and outrageous," adding that such violence is unusual in the area. "Innocent working people lost their lives as they headed early to perform their duty," he said, pledging justice and urging public safety agencies to respond.

Aragon also requested immediate deployment of national defense forces and announced an extraordinary security council meeting to strengthen protection and prevent further incidents.

The bombing occurred on the first day of Colombia's mid-year holiday weekend, a period when millions of vehicles are expected to travel by road. (Xinhua)

## Kuwait crude up 18 cents to \$77.64 pb

KUWAIT CITY, June 21, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price rose by 18 cents during Friday's trading to reach USD 77.64 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 77.46 pb the day before, Kuwait

Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Saturday. Brent futures also went up by USD 1.84 to USD 77.01 pb and West Texas Intermediate rose by 21 cents to USD 74.93 pb.

# Business

### Bank’s strategic focus on innovation, cybersecurity and talent development

## NBK hosts Harvard Club of Kuwait members at bank’s headquarters

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: National Bank of Kuwait hosted the members of Harvard Club of Kuwait at the bank’s headquarters and were received by Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, Group Chief Human Resources Officer.

The aim of the visit was to introduce the club members with clear visions of the bank’s strategic focus on concepts like innovation, financial fraud awareness and its role in talent and leadership development in the banking sector. The visit consisted of a comprehensive program tailored to provide a rich and interactive experience for Harvard alumni, starting with a tour at NBK facilities in which they explored its latest technologies and strong infrastructure that supports its developed banking operations, followed by a specialized session presented by experts at NBK on financial fraud awareness and protection methods.

Moreover, the Talent Management gave a detailed outlook of its programs that aim to develop and upskill future national talentsso as they become capable of continuing NBK’s longstanding success.

This visit came as a valuable opportunity for Kuwait’s Harvard alumni to directly interact and connect with NBK’s leaderships, which enabled them to exchange ideas and gain perspective on the bank’s future strategies and plans, in addition to exploring the best methods applied in the banking industry and building bridges and enriching their professional network.

On this occasion, Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, Group Chief



Al-Ablani and the HR team with members of the Harvard Kuwait Club.

Human Resources Officer commented: “We are pleased to welcome the members of Harvard Club of Kuwait, as this visit embodies NBK’s strong belief in the importance of exchanging knowledge with an elite group of Kuwaiti

alumni of the most venerable universities in the world.”

Al-Ablani added: “This visit enriches the scope of discussions and brings new horizons for collaboration, as it enables Harvard alumni to closely explore the dynamics

of the banking sector in Kuwait and understand the incorporation of innovation and technology in the day-to-day operations. Moreover, this visit is a valuable opportunity for the alumni to connect with NBK’s leaderships and gain from their experiences, as well as exchange ideas about future opportunities and challenges.”

In his statements, he also emphasized that NBK is constantly keen on developing human capital within its institutional partnerships, and it pays special attention to attract and upskill the best young national talents through comprehensive training programs as per its commitments towards society and professional development.

In light of its belief in their effective role in society, Al-Ablani indicated that NBK often organizes annual activities and initiatives, especially in the field of education.

It should be noted that Harvard Club of Kuwait is the official club that brings together Harvard alumni in Kuwait, and it operates under the umbrella of Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) for educational and social purposes. It aims to build relationships among Harvard alumni to help them flourish personally and professionally, provide a platform to exchange knowledge and experiences, encourage life-long learning, intellectual enrichment, professional growth, and social interaction through forums of continuing education and development, and collaborate with other entities within Kuwait for events and programs that serve the local community.

## Small-cap equities as an asset class

By NBK Wealth

### WHAT Are Small-Cap Equities?

Small-cap equities are a distinct asset class, typically comprising publicly traded companies with market capitalizations ranging from \$250 million to \$2 billion. While they offer significant growth potential and diversification benefits, they also carry higher volatility, liquidity constraints, and greater risk compared to large-cap equities. These companies tend to be smaller in scale, often with younger business models and a strong focus on growth opportunities. They frequently operate in niche markets, receive less analyst coverage, and experience lower trading volumes relative to their larger counterparts.

### Why Small Caps Matter in Portfolios

- Growth Potential Small-cap companies are often in early business stages or emerging industries, offering significant room for growth and innovation.
- Diversification They provide exposure to a broad array of sectors and business models, helping to diversify portfolios and reduce concentration risk.
- Alpha Opportunities Lower analyst coverage and less market efficiency in the small-cap space can create opportunities for skilled investors to identify mispriced securities and generate excess returns.
- Complementary Risk/Return Profile Including small-cap equities can enhance long-term returns and potentially reduce the frequency of severe drawdowns when combined with other asset classes or larger companies.
- Unique Considerations for Small Caps
  - Market Structure: The definition and characteristics of small caps can vary, and their performance and risk are influenced by factors like liquidity, regulation, and economic cycles.
  - Volatility: Small caps are generally more volatile than larger companies, but this risk can be managed through diversification and thoughtful portfolio construction.
  - Liquidity: Lower trading volumes in smaller companies can impact trading costs and price stability.

### Academic Research and the Small-Cap Premium

Academic research recognizes small-cap equities as a unique asset class due to the “small-cap premium,” which refers to their historical tendency to deliver higher long-term returns compared to large caps, albeit with greater volatility and downside risk. Pioneering research by Eugene Fama and Kenneth French has extensively documented this outperformance, often attributed to market inefficiency in valuing smaller companies and the higher risk associated with their operations.

### Long-Term Performance Trends (1999-2024)

Over a 25-year period (January 1, 1999, to December 31, 2024), the MSCI All Country World Small Cap Index significantly outperformed other indices, ending at 873, compared to 537 for the World Large Cap Index and 561 for the World Broad Index. Small-cap equities delivered annualized returns of 8.57% versus 6.22% for large-cap equities, but with higher volatility (18.04% standard deviation for small caps vs. 15.69% for large caps) and deeper maximum drawdowns



NBK QR-code



(-56.74% for small caps vs. -53.96% for large caps). Despite these risks, small-cap equities showed faster recovery from drawdowns (24 months vs. 53 months for large caps).

### Performance Disparity in US Indices

While the small-cap premium has been evident globally, it has not consistently held in the US market. Over the past 25 years (ending December 31, 2024), the Russell 2000 Index (US small caps) has underperformed the Russell 1000 Index (US large caps). US large caps delivered 8.3% annualized returns compared to US small caps’ 8.0% over the same period. This gap has widened significantly since 2015, largely driven by the rise of technology mega-caps.

### Several factors could help explain this divergence...

- Mega-Cap Dominance: Much of the Russell 1000’s outperformance has been driven by a handful of massive technology and growth companies, often called the “Magnificent Seven”, whose size and rapid growth have had an outsized impact on large-cap index returns. This concentration effect is less pronounced in global markets and among small caps.
- Interest Rate Sensitivity: Small-cap com-

panies tend to rely more on debt financing, making them more vulnerable to rising interest rates. As borrowing costs increase, smaller firms often experience a squeeze on profitability and growth prospects, while larger companies, typically with stronger balance sheets, face fewer financial constraints.

- Economic Cycles and Investor Sentiment: Small businesses are more exposed to domestic economic shifts, supply chain disruptions, and inflation. During periods of economic uncertainty, large multinationals with diversified revenue streams tend to be more resilient. Additionally, risk-averse investors increasingly favor the perceived stability of mega-cap companies, further contributing to small-cap weakness.
- The Private Market Effect: Many promising growth companies are choosing to stay private for longer, delaying their entry into public markets. This trend reduces the number of high-growth companies available in small-cap indices, which may further diminish their attractiveness.

### Looking Ahead: A Potential Shift?

Against this backdrop, performance data now clearly indicates an alignment between global and US equity trends, where large-cap equities consistently lead the way. While the current environment has been challenging for small caps, there is potential for a shift. The prevailing view suggests that if interest rates ease and broader economic conditions improve, small-cap equities could stand to benefit. This environment may result in lower borrowing costs, a stronger earnings outlook, and potentially increased merger and acquisition activity, creating opportunities for renewed growth within this segment.

### Key Takeaways:

- Small caps offer strong growth potential and portfolio diversification.
- Market inefficiencies create alpha opportunities for active management.
- Higher volatility and lower liquidity can be managed through diversification.
- Academic research supports a long-term small-cap premium despite greater risk.
- M&A activity can accelerate value creation and recovery for small caps.
- While large caps have recently led the US market, small-cap performance remains correlated with economic growth, policy shifts, and valuation trends.

Table 1. Annualized Performance and Risk Metrics and Comparative Analysis (1999-2024)

	Return, %	Std Dev, %	Max Drawdown, %	Max Drawdown # of Months	Max Drawdown Recovery # of Months
World Small Cap Index	8.57	18.04	-56.74	16	24
World Large Cap Index	6.22	15.69	-53.96	16	53
World Broad Index	6.44	15.78	-54.57	16	50

Morningstar data and NBKW MSR-CIO Office Analysis. Indices are MSCI All Country World Indices. Data as of 31 Dec 2024.

Table 2. US Equity Indices Trailing returns (large cap vs. small cap)

	YTD	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	15 Years	25 Years
US Small Cap Index	11.54	11.54	1.24	7.40	7.81	10.33	8.05
US Large Cap Index	24.51	24.51	8.41	14.27	12.87	13.79	8.32

Morningstar data and NBKW MSR-CIO Office Analysis. Indices are Russell 2000 & 1000 USD Total Return Indices. Data as of 31 Dec 2024.

## KIB hosts panel discussion titled ‘Financing and Mortgages: Opportunities and Challenges’

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Kuwait International Bank (KIB), represented by its Real Estate Department, held a panel discussion titled “Financing and Mortgages: Opportunities and Challenges” in collaboration with the Department of Finance and Financial Institutions at the College of Business Administration, Kuwait University.

The panel, held recently as part of the ongoing collaboration between KIB and the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University, was moderated by Dr. Saad Al-Nahedh, Assistant Professor of Finance at the College. It featured Engineer Fahad Al-Saleh, Manager of the Real Estate Advisory Division and the Product Development and Support Division (PDSO) at KIB’s Real Estate Department, and Mr. Ibrahim Adee Al-Awadi, Chairman of the Real Estate Union and CEO of Aayan Real Estate Company.

In this regard, AlSaleh reaffirmed KIB’s commitment to strengthening its collaboration with Kuwait University, driven by its belief in the importance of promoting knowledge and equipping students with practical experience. He emphasized that this reflects the Bank’s dedication to social responsibility and its leading role in the banking sector.

AlSaleh also noted that such collaboration bridges academic studies with real-world application and plays a key role in empowering and preparing young people to enter the job market with confidence and competence.

The panel explored the key challenges facing real estate financing in Kuwait, with a focus on the differences between residential and commercial financing in terms of repayment periods and profit rates. It emphasized the need for innovative financing solutions that can ease the financial burden on citizens, particularly youth.

Speakers also discussed the potential role of the proposed mortgage law in regulating the market and enhancing access to private residential plots. In addition, they highlighted ongoing public and private sector efforts, most notably by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, to develop housing cities comprising more than 170,000 residential

units. The panel also addressed the importance of establishing a regulatory framework for mortgage financing and advancing real estate developer projects to help balance supply and demand in the housing market, ultimately aiming to address Kuwait’s broader housing challenges.

Underscoring the vital role of real estate developers in revitalizing the market by offering integrated property solutions that meet citizens’ needs, the panel also emphasized the importance of enhancing public-private partnerships to advance legislation and regulatory frameworks that support a sustainable financing environment.

The panel saw strong engagement from students and faculty members, who enriched the discussion with thoughtful questions about the future of the real estate sector in light of ongoing economic developments.

It is worth noting that this initiative reflects the shared commitment of KIB and Kuwait University to social responsibility by advancing education, promoting knowledge, and supporting government efforts to provide comprehensive housing solutions, contributing to sustainability and enhancing community well-being in Kuwait.



AlSaleh

### Other Voices

## The myth of closing the Strait of Hormuz

By Kamel Al-Harami

Independent Oil Analyst

THE fear and speculation surrounding the closure of the Strait of Hormuz have largely faded. While Iran has repeatedly claimed it could shut down this strategic passage through which over 19 million barrels of crude oil, petroleum products, and gas flow daily, accounting for about 22 percent of global oil supply, it has also stated that it will not take such action.

Any attempt to close the strait would be seen as a dangerous provocation and could trigger an imminent war.

The continued flow of crude oil and gas through the Strait of Hormuz is vital, particularly for Asian countries. China, in particular, is heavily dependent on oil exports from the Arabian Gulf. As one of the largest consumers of Gulf hydrocarbons, China’s economic stability, and to some extent, its national security, relies on the uninterrupted flow of energy through this important waterway.

The current tensions involving Iran and the threat of a potential U.S. attack have raised concerns among Asian countries that rely heavily on Iranian oil. While any disruption in Iranian supply could be compensated by other Gulf producers, the immediate effect would likely be panic in the markets and a sharp rise in crude oil prices.

China imports around 12 million barrels of crude per day, surpassing the U.S., which imports approximately 9.2 million. Russia is its top supplier, followed by Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Iran, and Iraq, as well as Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman. The Arabian Gulf, therefore, is a main source for China’s energy security.



Kamel Al-Harami

Any threat to close the Strait of Hormuz, which is the gateway for much of this supply, would be viewed as a de facto declaration of war. Iran itself has stated that it will not take such a step.

While the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is currently off the table, there is no harm in highlighting its vital role in global oil and gas supply, especially for Asia. China, as the world’s largest oil importer, is highly attractive to international oil companies, as its immense purchasing power offers substantial opportunities for trade, investment, and revenue generation.

Despite growing concerns, the idea of finding an alternative route to bypass the Strait of Hormuz remains largely impractical. Saudi Arabia is one of the only countries with the infrastructure to export a portion of its crude oil through the Red Sea. It currently exports around 3.2 million barrels per day via this route and has a refining capacity of approximately 1.5 million barrels per day along the Red Sea coast - one million barrels per day at the Yanbu refinery and another 400,000 barrels per day at the Petro Rabigh refinery.

In Kuwait’s case, the country relies on the Arabian Gulf to export its crude oil and petroleum products. Kuwait produces approximately 2.6 million barrels of crude oil per day, with a refining capacity exceeding 1.9 million barrels per day. This capacity is distributed over six refineries - three domestic and three overseas, located in Oman, Vietnam, and Italy.

The closure of such a vital and strategic waterway as the Strait of Hormuz would be catastrophic. It would trigger global panic, disrupt energy markets, and likely lead to widespread conflict. Such an act would not only be dangerous and offensive but would also be regarded as an open act of war.

For these reasons, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz should never happen.

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## Burgan Bank organizes field visit for ‘Academy X’ students at its HQ

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: As part of Burgan Bank’s commitment to social responsibility and its ongoing efforts in fostering and reinforcing sustainability, investing in youth talent, and supporting the education sector in Kuwait, the Bank welcomed a group of ‘Academy X’ students for a field visit and educational tour at its headquarters, in the presence of CODED Academy representatives, to introduce them to the world of banking and raise their financial and professional awareness.

As part of the tour, students were introduced to the Bank’s various departments, the different services and accounts it provides to various customer segments, and the most important digital technologies that align with Burgan Bank’s strategy and vision for digital transformation. The tour also highlighted the Bank’s available career opportunities, which contributed to motivating the students to join the banking sector, particularly in the technology and information systems sectors.

Through this field visit, Burgan Bank reaffirmed its steadfast support for the “Let’s Be Aware” (Diraya) banking awareness campaign by equipping ‘Academy X’ students with financial education to help them understand their banking rights and avoid fraudulent activities. In addition, this initiative aligned with the Bank’s “Teach Them Young” campaign, which aims to equip students with the most important skills for sound financial planning and early savings for a better future.

Commenting on the visit, Ms. Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: “It was a pleasure to host the ‘Academy X’ students at our headquarters and witness how engaged they were throughout the whole visit, expressing their inter-

est in the banking sector and happiness with this educational and practical experience. This initiative is part of a series of community programs the Bank is launching to educate and empower the younger generation and raise their financial awareness, which enhances the Bank’s role in supporting sustainable development and contributing to building a knowledgeable and qualified generation for the future.” She added: “This initiative also served as an extension of Burgan’s continued support for the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ (Diraya) financial literacy and banking awareness campaign – launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), with the support of Kuwaiti banks. The visit highlighted vital information about the safe use of online banking, the most common scamming tactics, and how to stay protected against them. It also introduced students to the banking products and services designed to cater to their needs, aspirations, and modern lifestyles.” The ‘Academy X’ program, the largest initiative for empowering women in technology and entrepreneurship, is part of the strategic partnership between Burgan Bank and CODED Academy, a leading institution driving tech education and innovation in Kuwait. This impactful partnership serves as a significant national model for nurturing female talent and guiding participants toward a thriving digital future. The program aims to introduce participants to (UI/UX) design principles, the latest AI tools, and core entrepreneurial concepts, while also developing their leadership and personal skills. It further encourages female students to launch their own startups through dedicated mentorship programs upon completing the course and promotes the use of AI tools to unlock their creative potential in ways that support Kuwait’s transition to a knowledge-based economy.



Burgan Bank representatives in a group photo with ‘Academy X’ students during their visit.

‘Award reflects our successful digital transformation and improved customer experience’

# ABK wins ‘Best Digital Transformation Initiative’ at the MEED MENA Banking Excellence – Corporate & Investment Awards

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has further solidified its leadership and achieved another milestone by winning the 2025 award for Best Digital Transformation Initiative in the banking sector at the MENA Banking Excellence – Corporate & Investment Awards, under the category for companies and the investment sector.

This new award showcases ABK’s exceptional capabilities and serves as yet another example of the success of its ongoing digital transformation journey. The Bank continues to work toward enhancing the banking experience it offers its customers—an objective that remains central to its strategic plans for the upcoming period.

The Bank was honored at a ceremony organized by the globally renowned MEED magazine in Dubai attended by Faisal Al Tamimi, Executive Manager of Digital Transformation and Innovation. During the ceremony, the Bank was commended for its continued efforts to develop cutting-edge digital solutions in recent periods, aligned with the highest



Khalil Al Qattan  
Chief Digital Transformation & Innovation Officer

global standards.

On this occasion, Khalil Al Qattan, Chief Digital Transformation & Innovation Officer at ABK, stated, “This award reflects ABK’s success in earning the trust of specialized institutions that evaluate banking performance and highlights the Bank’s ability to innovate digital banking solutions



Faisal Al-Tamimi celebrating the achievement.

that keep pace with technological developments in the financial services industry.”

He added that the award comes as ABK continues its digital transformation journey, most notably through the launch of its new mobile applica-

tion, which features an enhanced user interface and additional functionalities that allow users to perform their banking transactions easily and seamlessly around the clock. In addition, the Bank continues to enhance its website and rollout more digital ser-



New prize for the bank.

vices for all customer segments.

Al Qattan explained, “ABK is also continuing to digitize its operations and services across various divisions to help achieve its goal of integrating traditional banking services with increasingly in-demand digital solutions in the Kuwaiti market.”

He went on to note that the Bank is committed to developing the skills of its employees to ensure they stay up to date with the latest technologies, adding that ABK has entered into numerous partnerships with leading institutions artificial intelligence and the latest innovation to strengthen its position and increase trust in its diverse digital banking solutions in the local market.

Al Qattan promised customers even more modern banking products and solutions in the near future, pointing out that the Bank is making significant investments in innovation and technology to help attract more customers to its ever-growing family.

This latest recognition comes as ABK continues to garner multiple accolades from various institutions in recognition of its outstanding performance across several areas of the banking sector, including retail banking, corporate banking, governance, human resources, and digital transformation. This reflects the Bank’s continuous pursuit of enhancing its competitive position in the banking industry both locally and regionally.



Kuwait Graduates Development Program group photo.

## KIBS celebrates graduates of Kuwait Graduates Development Program

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the successful completion of the 12th cohort of the Kuwait Graduates Development Program, a flagship initiative of Kafa’a. Launched in collaboration with Kuwaiti banks and the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), the program exemplifies the CBK’s commitment to building national capacity in the financial sector and empowering young Kuwaiti talent.

This cycle of the program ran from May 5, 2024, to February 20, 2025, offering participants a comprehensive blend of academic learning and hands-on training designed to prepare them for successful careers in banking. To mark the program’s conclusion, KIBS hosted a graduation ceremony on Thursday, June 19, 2025, under the patronage of Mr. Basel Ahmed Al-Haroun, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait and Chairman of KIBS Board

of Directors. The event was attended by Ms. Rana Al-Nibari, Director General of KIBS, alongside senior executives from the human resources and training departments of participating Kuwaiti banks.

In her address, Ms. Al-Nibari highlighted the program’s unique value in bridging the gap between academic education and professional practice. She emphasized how the year-long journey – encompassing both classroom instruction and field training at the CBK and Kuwaiti banks – provides graduates with meaningful exposure to the realities of the financial industry. She congratulated the graduates and urged them to carry forward the knowledge, discipline, and values gained during their training.

The program features a blended learning model that combines in-person instruction, digital learning modules from world-class training partners, and local

field placements. Its final stage includes an international training component in countries with advanced financial systems, offering participants first-hand insight into global best practices and innovations in banking.

Further validating the program’s excellence, the CBK recently earned accreditation from The London Institute of Banking & Finance (LIBF), a globally respected authority in banking education. This recognition reflects the program’s adherence to rigorous international standards in training quality and instructional methodology.

With this initiative, the Central Bank of Kuwait reaffirms its commitment to nurturing young Kuwaiti talent, strengthening the national banking system, and advancing a knowledge-driven economy through sustained investment in human capital.

## Boursa Kuwait champions solidarity on World Refugee Day

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Reaffirming its commitment to social and humanitarian responsibility, Boursa Kuwait lit its building in blue in a symbolic gesture of solidarity with refugees worldwide on World Refugee Day, observed annually on June 20.

Marking the occasion for the fifth consecutive year, the company continues to highlight humanitarian crises and advocate for the most vulnerable communities, underscoring its dedication to corporate social responsibility and alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

This year’s World Refugee Day is held under the theme of “Solidarity with Refugees,” serving as an open call to the international community, particularly the private sector, to show their support for refugees through tangible initiatives that empower them to rebuild their lives amid growing global challenges from the rise in forced displacement to the decline in humanitarian funding.



Al-Sanousi

“Boursa Kuwait’s participation in World Refugee Day reflects its strong belief in the vital role of the private sector in driving positive, sustainable change. Through its strategic partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the company continues to support impactful initiatives and institutional partnerships that empower refugees to meet their basic needs – including cash assistance, education, and healthcare,” said Mr. Naser Al-Sanousi, Boursa Kuwait’s Senior Director of Marketing and Communication.

“Boursa Kuwait remains committed to raising community awareness and fostering a culture of solidarity, social responsibility and meaningful giving that contributes to the development of more inclusive and equitable societies,” he added.

To mark the occasion, Boursa Kuwait announced the continuation of its strategic partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), reaffirming its ongoing support for the agency’s initiatives across the region. Since 2020, the bourse has helped deliver aid to more than 1,980 refugee families through various relief programs, including winter assistance, education and emergency response.

In 2025, Boursa Kuwait supported UNHCR’s cash assistance and protection program, empowering refugees and displaced persons to meet their essential living needs with dignity. This initiative reflects the bourse’s ongoing commitment to adopting best-in-class practices in corporate sustainability, governance, environmental and social responsibility (ESG).



Rubaian

“On World Refugee Day, let us remember that solidarity with refugees is a humanitarian duty – an act of extending support to people who have been forced to flee their homes and countries due to circumstances beyond their control. By opening our doors and listening to their stories – stories that blend pain with hope – we affirm the importance of supporting initiatives that empower them and facilitate their integration into host communities,” said UNHCR Representative in Kuwait Ms. Nisreen Rubaian.

“I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Boursa Kuwait for its continued support of refugee families across the Middle East and North Africa, especially recognizing the bourse’s backing of initiatives dedicated to unaccompanied children and its efforts to amplify the noble message and objectives of World Refugee Day. I urge everyone to unite in building a more welcoming world for refugees, one that offers dignity, hope and the promise of a brighter, more sustainable future,” added Rubaian.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a global organization committed to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution. As the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR leads international efforts to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and forcibly displaced communities around the world.

The initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait’s efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the community as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy, and is in line with Goal 1 – No Poverty, Goal 2 – Zero Hunger, Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-Being, Goal 4 – Quality Education, Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities and Goal 17 – Partnership for the Goals – of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Boursa Kuwait’s Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations, creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Boursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields, and integrating sustainability efforts with the company culture, in order to achieve longevity and an ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

## Grab 15 percent off with Jazeera Airways J9PAYDAY



Jazeera Airways J9PAYDAY

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait’s leading low-cost airline, is making travel more rewarding this summer with its exclusive Payday Promo, offering 15% off fares to a wide range of destinations across its network.

Running from 22 to 28 June 2025, the offer gives passengers the perfect opportunity to lock in great fares for their upcoming holidays. On the first day of the promotion, the discount is available exclusively through Jazeera’s website, mobile app, and call center, using the promo code J9PAYDAY. From 23 June, the offer will be extended across all booking platforms. Travel is valid from 1 July to 30 September 2025.

The promotion applies to nearly all Jazeera routes, with the exception of India and inbound flights to Kuwait between 15 August and 7 September 2025.

Paul Carroll, Chief Commercial Officer of Jazeera Airways, said: “Our Payday promo - J9PAYDAY is part of our commitment to offering travelers more value and flexibility. With 15% off fares across most of our network, it’s the ideal time to book that long-awaited trip – whether it’s a family holiday, a cultural escape, or a beach break. With the affordable fares, passengers can even plan multiple breaks this summer to a variety of exciting destinations. We continue to listen to our customers and create seasonal offers that not only save them money but also open up new travel possibilities across our growing network.”

Bookings can be made at [www.jazeeraairways.com](http://www.jazeeraairways.com), through the Jazeera App, or by calling 177. Promo code J9PAYDAY must be used to avail the offer.

## Company joins roundtable hosted by KDIPA and The Business Year

# Zain drives digital innovation to power the future of Kuwait’s energy sector

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Zain participated in a roundtable discussion hosted by the global media group The Business Year, in collaboration with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA). The event brought together senior leaders from the energy and finance sectors, representatives of global corporations, and international partners to explore the future of digital and sustainable energy in Kuwait.

The session featured the participation of KDIPA Director General Sheikh Dr. Mashaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Zain Kuwait’s Chief Enterprise Business Officer, Hamad Al-Marzouq, who highlighted Zain’s role as a strategic partner in advancing the digital transformation of Kuwait’s vital sectors, particularly the energy sector.

During the session, Al-Marzouq stated: “At Zain, we believe that the future of Kuwait’s energy sector is rooted in digital innovation, and that our role as a strategic partner goes beyond providing technical solutions. It is about building genuine partnerships that help enhance operational efficiency and deliver long-term sustainability.”



Zain TBY Roundtable 2025 group photo

He added: “By leveraging our advanced network and expertise in artificial intelligence and data analytics, we work closely with leading national energy companies to accelerate digital transformation across various environments, including refineries and large-scale industrial facilities, with a focus on improving safety, enhancing efficiency, and supporting environmental objectives.”

Al-Marzouq concluded: “We remain fully committed to supporting the New

Kuwait 2035 Vision by empowering vital sectors with advanced technologies and strengthening collaboration across public and private sectors. We are proud to play a role in building a sustainable digital economy that aligns with the nation’s aspirations and reinforces Kuwait’s position as a regional hub for energy and innovation.”

The roundtable, titled Empowering Energy Transformation, focused on the pivotal role of the energy sector in supporting Kuwait’s vision to become a

thriving regional business hub, with a strong focus on attracting investment.

The session also explored the importance of local and international partnerships, recent discoveries, and emerging technological advancements in shaping the future of the sector, and the role of the oil and gas industry in driving the transition toward a low-carbon economy that supports Kuwait’s national sustainability goals.

Zain continues its long-standing partnership with The Business Year, based in London, to support the hosting of such valuable gatherings, as the company strongly believes in the vital role these platforms play in fostering dialogue, exchanging ideas, and enabling innovation across various market sectors.

Zain also commends the significant efforts of KDIPA in improving Kuwait’s business environment, driving economic diversification, enhancing competitiveness, and positioning Kuwait as an attractive global financial and investment hub. The company reaffirms its commitment to supporting these efforts as a proud representative of the Kuwaiti private sector in contributing to the nation’s New Kuwait aspirations.

Trump administration nixes rules on fairness, community input and resilience

# New HUD policy slashed equity safeguards



Hurricane Helene caused extensive damage to homes in North Carolina in 2024. (AP)

‘The memo does away with the civil rights certifications, fair housing assessments, environmental standards and citizen advisory groups that have long been mandatory for the recipients of disaster recovery funds?’

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

By Ivis García  
Texas A&M University

Imagine that a hurricane has destroyed your home. The roof is gone. The floors are flooded. Your family’s belongings are ruined. When this happens, you can apply for federal disaster aid, hoping for a lifeline. For many low-income families and other people of modest means, funding for that aid is often channeled to the states through the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program. Known as CDBG-DR, this program mainly provides funding to repair and rebuild homes belonging to people of low-to-moderate income who either have no insurance at all or whose coverage falls short of what is needed to making housing safe again. When homes are damaged

beyond repair or located in areas where it’s too dangerous to rebuild because of the likelihood of future bouts of flooding in the same place, the CDBG-DR program can help pay for residents to move somewhere else that is less prone to disasters. In both cases, it covers costs that the Federal Emergency Management Agency does not pay for. But in 2025, with hurricane season underway, the rules for who gets help and how it’s distributed have changed significantly. As an urban planner who has researched disaster recovery efforts, I’m alarmed by Memorandum 2025-02. The memo changes the rules for nearly US\$12 billion in disaster recovery funding approved by Congress for disasters occurring in 2023 and 2024. And HUD is implementing these changes early in the process, before any of this money has been distributed. The memo does away with the civil rights certifications, fair housing assessments, environmental standards and citizen advisory groups that have long been manda-

tory for the recipients of disaster recovery funds. Civil rights certification means that CDBG-DR grantees must verify that disaster aid will be distributed without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, age, disability status, or other characteristics known as “protected classes.” Without this certification, there’s no formal process to ensure disaster aid is distributed fairly. Fair housing obligations are assessments of whether middle- and lower-income families, people of color or people with disabilities can find safe, affordable housing without facing any discrimination. In addition, HUD no longer requires detailed demographic reporting on who is applying for or receiving aid. This includes information such as gender, race, age, disability status and the language someone speaks. Another change is that HUD’s updated disaster recovery guidelines no longer require economic development funds to emphasize people of modest incomes or their communities. Under the new rules, any business hit by a disaster can

get recovery funds. It doesn’t matter how much money the owners make, as long as they can show that the disaster affected them. And several important environmental protections have been rolled back. HUD previously mandated that disaster recovery projects comply with federal building standards. Those codes are tougher than the local housing codes. These included rules for building homes higher off the ground to avoid future flooding and using stronger construction methods to withstand extreme weather events. Without them, new construction may be less durable and less safe - especially in areas hit hard by hurricanes or other natural disasters. Strong energy efficiency standards help keep long-term utility costs low and reduce pressure on power grids during extreme weather events. They also make rebuilt homes more sustainable by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. HUD has also removed a requirement for the nonprofits, local governments and other recipients of CDBG-DR grants to create and

convene citizen advisory groups. That change took effect on March 24, 2025. These groups, which have long made it easier for local communities to have a say regarding federally funded disaster recovery efforts, have played an important role in making sure those efforts reflect the needs and priorities of local residents - especially those most affected. While eliminating this step may make it easier and faster for local governments to spend the recovery funds allocated for their communities, it also means there’s less opportunity for their own communities to influence how those funds are spent. Without that input, recovery efforts fail to resolve the real challenges people are facing. The White House’s 2026 budget proposal retains the HUD program that distributes disaster recovery grants while eliminating the related Community Development Block Grant program, which helps people experiencing homelessness and also funds everything from child care to services for older people. I’m concerned about how CDBG-DR grants will be distributed, apart from the program’s changes. HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development, which administers the CDBG-DR program, is slated to lose 84% of its staff, according to widespread media reports published earlier this year. The Trump administration is also calling for cutting HUD’s staff, and President Donald Trump’s proposed 2026 budget would cut the agency’s entire budget in half. In its March 25 HUD memo, the Trump administration framed these policy changes as a way to streamline recovery efforts and provide greater flexibility in the use of federal disaster funds. The memo also asserted that the changes were needed for compliance with executive orders that banned the use of diversity, equity and inclusion criteria and hiring practices that the administration considers to be discriminatory. But critics of the policy rollbacks, including the National Low Income Housing Coalition, which advocates affordable housing, worry that removing long-standing safeguards could weaken the CDBG-DR program’s core mission of equitably distributing aid and building resilient communities. The standards and community input systems HUD has abandoned, the coalition says, have historically helped ensure that disaster recovery funds reach the people who need them most. (AP)

Breakthrough could lower carbon footprint of everyday materials

# Chemists harness light to revolutionize chemical manufacturing

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

By Arindam Sau  
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‘One big challenge is that after a molecule absorbs a photon, it only has a tiny window of time before that energy fades away or gets lost.’

Manufactured chemicals and materials are necessary for practically every aspect of daily life, from life-saving pharmaceuticals to plastics, fuels and fertilizers. Yet manufacturing these important chemicals comes at a steep energy cost. Many of these industrial chemicals are derived primarily from fossil fuel-based materials. These compounds are typically very stable, making it difficult to transform them into useful products without applying harsh and energy-demanding reaction conditions. As a result, transforming these stubborn materials contributes significantly to the world’s overall energy use. In 2022, the industrial sector consumed 37% of the

world’s total energy, with the chemical industry responsible for approximately 12% of that demand. Conventional chemical manufacturing processes use heat to generate the energy needed for reactions that take place at high temperatures and pressures. An approach that uses light instead of heat could lower energy demands and allow reactions to be run under gentler conditions - like at room temperature instead of extreme heat. Sunlight represents one of the most abundant yet underutilized energy sources on Earth. In nature, this energy is captured through photosynthesis, where plants convert light into chemical energy. Inspired by this process, our team of chemists at the Center for Sustainable Photoredox Catalysis, a research center funded by the National Science Foundation, has been working on a system that uses light to power reactions commonly used in the chemical manufacturing industry. We published our results in the journal Science in June 2025. We hope that this method could provide a more economical route for creating industrial chemicals out of fossil fuels. At the same

time, since it doesn’t rely on super-high temperatures or pressures, the process is safer, with fewer chances for accidents. The photoredox catalyst system that our team has developed is powered by simple LEDs, and it operates efficiently at room temperature. At the core of our system is an organic photoredox catalyst: a specialized molecule that we know accelerates chemical reactions when exposed to light, without being consumed in the process. Much like how plants rely on pigments to harvest sunlight for photosynthesis, our photoredox catalyst absorbs multiple particles of light, called photons, in a sequence. These photons provide bursts of energy, which the catalyst stores and then uses to kick-start reactions. This “multi-photon” harvesting builds up enough energy to force very stubborn molecules into undergoing reactions that would otherwise need highly reactive metals. Once the reaction is complete, the photocatalyst resets itself, ready to harvest more light and keep the process going without creating extra waste.

Designing molecules that can absorb multiple photons and react with stubborn molecules is tough. One big challenge is that after a molecule absorbs a photon, it only has a tiny window of time before that energy fades away or gets lost. Plus, making sure the molecule uses that energy the right way is not easy. The good news is we’ve found that our catalyst can do this efficiently at room temperature. Our work points toward a future where chemicals are made using light instead of heat. For example, our catalyst can turn benzene - a simple component of crude oil - into a form called cyclohexadienes. This is a key step in making the building blocks for nylon. Improving this part of the process could reduce the carbon footprint of nylon production. Imagine manufacturers using LED reactors or even sunlight to power the production of essential chemicals. LEDs still use electricity, but they need far less energy compared with the traditional heating methods used in chemical manufacturing. As we scale things up, we’re also figuring out ways to harness sunlight directly, making

the entire process even more sustainable and energy-efficient. Right now, we’re using our photoredox catalysts successfully in small lab experiments - producing just milligrams at a time. But to move into commercial manufacturing, we’ll need to show that these catalysts can also work efficiently at a much larger scale, making kilograms or even tons of product. Testing them in these bigger reactions will ensure that they’re reliable and cost-effective enough for real-world chemical manufacturing. Similarly, scaling up this process would require large-scale reactors that use light efficiently. Building those will first require designing new types of reactors that let light reach deeper inside. They’ll need to be more transparent or built differently so the light can easily get to all parts of the reaction. Our team plans to keep developing new light-driven techniques inspired by nature’s efficiency. Sunlight is a plentiful resource, and by finding better ways to tap into it, we hope to make it easier and cleaner to produce the chemicals and materials that modern life depends on. (AP)

editor’s choice



## Deaf duo share their vision for inclusive storytelling

# Marlee Matlin tells her story in an intimate documentary

LOS ANGELES, June 21, (AP): When American Masters approached Marlee Matlin about doing a documentary, Matlin had one name in mind to direct: Shoshannah Stern.

Like Matlin, Stern is deaf. She also hadn't directed before. But Matlin, who herself became the first deaf person in the Directors Guild of America just a few years ago, was certain she was up to the task.

The resulting film, "Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore" is an intimate look at her life: Growing up in a hearing family; winning the best actress Oscar at 21 for her first movie role in "Children of a Lesser God," which film critic Rex Reed at the time called a "pity vote"; what she's described as an abusive romantic relationship with her co-star, the late William Hurt, which he denied; getting sober; and her experiences in an industry not equipped to accommodate deaf actors.

It's also an evocative portal into the world of the deaf community that uses groundbreaking techniques and sound design to put American Sign Language (ASL) and visual communication first. The film opened in select theaters Friday.

While Matlin told much of her story in the memoir "I'll Scream Later," on some level it wasn't a completely satisfactory experience. Before the #MeToo movement, its revelations were not treated entirely seriously in the media. But a documentary also provided an opportunity.

"We communicate visually," she said.

Matlin and Stern spoke though translators to The Associated Press about the "CODA" effect, making the doc on their terms, and why they hope Reed sees this film. Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity. AP: Shoshanna, what was your approach?

Stern: I had never seen a deaf person direct an episode of TV or film. Never. I thought, what does that



Actor Marlee Matlin, (left), and director Shoshannah Stern pose for a portrait to promote 'Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore' on Wednesday, June 11, in New York. (AP)

even look like? I didn't realize until I took the job that really the whole form of documentary as we know it is really rooted in sound, in the assumption that people

will be speaking and they can speak. I thought, what are we going to do when we're using American Sign Language? I have to reframe a whole form of documentary. We have to be able to see what a visually-based documentary is going to look like.

We wouldn't do justice to Marlee's life if I had forced this form that really wasn't rooted in the way that she experienced this life. And that was exciting to do. Scary for some people out there, but I never felt scared in making this documentary because she believed in me.

Matlin: If I had had a hearing director approach me to do this project, we could have done a very good job, but that person would not have seen me in the same way. They would not have the same lens as a deaf person.

AP: What were some techniques you used to spotlight the deaf experience?

Stern: I did want to film with captions in mind, so I made sure that we did have a wider frame. We figured out visual voiceover with a split screen that we added. We did this little surgery with words and syllables in one of the scenes where we mixed them all around to be able to bring people into how Marlee experiences conversations and the world. We wanted to make this documentary an immersive experience for the audience members, a sensory experience to help them understand.

AP: "CODA" felt like a big moment, but in the years since it won the Oscar, have you seen things change?

Matlin: "CODA" certainly was a milestone and respected by so many people in the industry. It tackled a lot of things that both deaf and hearing people or audiences can identify with. I love the fact that they burnt in the captions. That you can't just turn it off.

And I hoped that all the love we received and the three Academy Awards that we got would make a difference. It was honored on so many other levels too

as well, whether we're talking about (director) Sian (Heder) or you're talking about Troy (Kotsur) or the SAG award which was just a dream come true, specifically of mine. I took that opportunity to specifically address that that we "exist," that we want to be actors just like you, we want to be directors, we want to be producers, we want to be hair and wardrobe stylists. We want to work in all levels of production. So "CODA" really elevated that conversation about how much we wanted to be part of the industry. But for some reason it didn't really break open the door as wide as I would have thought. Yet we just don't give up. We are persistent. Because it is what it is. We are working on our own levels to make changes.

Stern: Marlee said something really brave when we were at Sundance. She said, "It won't last." The moment, yes, in the moment. But I don't know if we have movement.

Matlin: There's so many stories that we can tell, so many stories that you can put up on screen, so many stories that we can put on stage.

I'd like to see action because I've been hearing that, "Yes, we have to do this" or "I will do this," but it's been 40 years. I don't want to sound like I'm complaining. I just want to make sure that we put our money where our mouth is.

I go back to that comment about Rex Reed. I wonder if he would ever see this film. I'd love to see if he has the balls to make a comment and say, "Oh look, I realize I might have said something wrong."

That's just one example of the things I'd like to see happen. And maybe the people who interviewed me over the years. I don't want you to misunderstand me, I have a great deal of respect for them. But specifically, I am calling out Rex Reed. So, you know, sorry but not sorry.

### Variety

**NEW YORK:** The sixth week of the Sean "Diddy" Combs' sex trafficking trial was shortened by a holiday and a juror's illness as prosecutors nearly concluded their case, setting the stage for a one- or two-day defense presentation next week.

In the trial's first five weeks, jurors repeatedly heard testimony about drug-fueled marathon parties described as intense gatherings by one of Combs' ex-girlfriends and as "hotel nights" by another. In the sixth week, they were shown about 20 minutes of video recordings from these day-long events.

Combs, the founder of Bad Boy Entertainment, has pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking

ing and racketeering conspiracy charges in the trial, which continues Monday.

Here are key moments from the past week:

Jurors largely kept their reactions muted when they were shown about 20 minutes of recordings made by Combs of his then-girlfriends interacting with male companions at the elaborately staged "parties" or "hotel nights."

Prosecutors say the events were proof of trafficking and racketeering conspiracy charges because Combs coerced his employees, associates, and even his girlfriends to recruit and arrange flights for workers while his team obtained drugs, stocked hotel rooms with baby oil, candles, and liquor, and delivered cash. (AP)

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**PARIS:** A year after it captivated crowds during the Paris Olympics, a centerpiece of the summer Games is making a comeback.

The iconic helium-powered balloon that attracted myriads of tourists during the summer Games has shed its Olympic branding and is now just called the "Paris Cauldron." It is set to rise again into the air later Saturday, lifting off over the Tuileries Garden.

Around 30,000 people are expected to attend the launch, which coincides with France's annual street music festival - the Fete de la Musique, the Paris police prefecture said.

And it won't be a one-time event. After Saturday's flight, the balloon will lift off into the sky each summer evening from June 21 to Sept. 14, for the next three years. (AP)

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**TOKYO:** Three scholars have been awarded the 2025 Kyoto Prize in recognition of their great achievements in the fields of advanced technology, basic sciences and arts and philosophy, respectively, the Inamori Foundation announced Friday.

Japanese mathematical engineer Shun-ichi Amari won the Kyoto Prize in Advanced Technology for "pioneering contributions to opening up theoretical foundations of artificial intelligence and establishment of information geometry," thereby proposing many important theories, according to a citation by the Inamori Foundation.

The Kyoto Prize in Basic Sciences was given to British developmental biologist Azim Surani for his "discovery of genomic imprinting in mammals and elucidation of its molecular mechanisms," thereby making contributions to foundational scientific insights across a broad spectrum of life science fields.

US psychologist Carol Gilligan was awarded the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy for having established a new academic foundation to address global issues related to care while "pointing out the distortions and limitations of conventional psychological theories by analyzing women's thoughts and behaviors." (AP)

### Film



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Ralph Fiennes, (from left), Jodie Comer and Alfie Williams in a scene from '28 Years Later.' (AP)

Boyle's gritty film mixes coming-of-age story with apocalypse

## Zombie pandemic rages on in '28 Years Later'

LOS ANGELES, June 21, (AP): Most movies are lucky to predict one thing. Danny Boyle's 2002 dystopian thriller "28 Days Later" managed to be on the cutting edge of two trends, albeit rather disparate ones: global pandemic and fleet-footed zombies.

Add in Cillian Murphy, who had his breakout role in that film, and "28 Days Later" was unusually prognostic. While many of us were following the beginnings of the Afghanistan War and "American Idol," Boyle and screenwriter Alex Garland were probing the fragile fabric of society, and the potentially very quick way, indeed, horror might come our way.

Boyle always maintained that his undead - a far speedier variety of the slow-stepping monsters of George A. Romero's "The Night of Living Dead" - weren't zombies, at all, but were simply the infected. In that film, and its 2007 sequel "28 Weeks Later" (which Juan Carlos Fresnadillo helmed), the filmmakers have followed the fallout of the so-called rage virus, which emptied London in the first film and brought soon-dashed hopes of the virus' eradication in the second movie.

Like the virus, the "28 Days Later" franchise has proven tough to beat back. In the new "28 Years Later," Boyle and Garland return to their apocalyptic pandemic with the benefit of now having lived through one. But recent history plays a surprisingly minor role in this far-from-typical, willfully shambolic, intense scattershot part three.

The usual trend of franchises is to progressively add gloss and scale. But where other franchises might have gone global, "28 Years Later" has remained in the UK, now a quarantine region where the infected roam free and survivors - or at least the ones we follow - cluster on an island off the northeast of Britain, connected to mainland by only a stone causeway that dips below the water at high tide.

Boyle and cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle, who innovatively employed digital video in "28 Days Later," have also turned to iPhones to shoot the majority of the film. Boyle, the "Slumdog Millionaire," "Trainspotting" filmmaker, is an especially frenetic director to begin with, but "28 Years Later" is frequently gratingly disjointed.

It's a visual approach that, taken with the story's tonal extremes, makes "28 Years Later" an often bumpy ride. But even when Boyle's film struggles to put the pieces together, there's an admirable resistance to being anything like a cardboard cut-out summer movie.

The recent event that hovers over "28 Years Later" is less the COVID-19 pandemic than Brexit. With the virus quarantined on Britain, the country has been severed from the European continent. On the secluded Holy Island, 12-year-old Spike (Alfie Williams, a newcomer with some sweetness and pluck) lives with his hunter father, Jamie (Aaron Taylor-Johnson), and bedridden mother, Isla (Jodie Comer).

The scene, with makeshift watchtowers and bows and ar-



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Jodie Comer, (left), and filmmaker Danny Boyle on the set of '28 Years Later.' (AP)

rows for weapons, is almost medieval. Jamie, too, feels almost like a knight eager to induct his son into the village's ways of survival. On Spike's first trip out off the island, his father - nauseatingly jocular - helps him kill his first infected. Back inside the village walls, Jamie celebrates their near scrapes and exaggerates his son's coolness under pressure. Other developments cause Spike to question the macho world he's being raised in.

"They're all lyin', mum," he says to his mother.

After hearing of a far-off, supposedly deranged doctor whose constant fires mystify the townspeople, Spike resolves to take his mother to him in hopes of healing her unknown illness. Their encounters along the way are colorful. Ralph Fiennes plays the doctor, orange-colored when they encounter him; Edvin Ryding plays a Swedish NATO soldier whose patrol boat crashed offshore. Meanwhile, Comer is almost comically delusional, frequently calling her son "Daddy."

And the infected? One development here is that, while some remain Olympic-worthy sprinters, other slothful ones nicknamed "Slow-Lows" crawl around on the ground, rummaging for worms.

Buried in here are some tender reflections on mortality and misguided exceptionalism, and even the hint of those ideas make "28 Years Later" a more thoughtful movie than you're likely to find at the multiplex this time of year. This is an unusually soulful coming-of-age movie considering the number of spinal cords that get ripped right of bodies.

It's enough to make you admire the stubborn persistence of Boyle in these films, which he's already extending. The already-shot "28 Days Later: The Bone Temple" is coming next near, from director Nia DaCosta, while Boyle hopes "28 Years Later" is the start of trilogy. Infection and rage, it turns out, are just too well suited to our times to stop now.

"28 Years Later," a Sony Pictures release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong bloody violence, grisly images, graphic nudity, language and brief sexuality. Running time: 115 minutes. Two stars out of four.

Streaming service stands for artists’ rights

Music platform Deezer adds AI song tags in fight against fraud

LONDON, June 21, (AP): Music streaming service Deezer said Friday that it will start flagging albums with AI-generated songs, part of its fight against streaming fraudsters.

Deezer, based in Paris, is grappling with a surge in music on its platform created using artificial intelligence tools it says are being wielded to earn royalties fraudulently.

The app will display an on-screen label warning about “AI-generated content” and notify listeners that some tracks on an album were created with song generators.

Deezer is a small player in music streaming, which is dominated by Spotify, Amazon and Apple, but the company said AI-generated music is an “industry-wide issue.” It’s committed to “safeguarding the rights of artists and songwriters at a time where copyright law is being put into question in favor of training AI models,” CEO Alexis Lanternier said in a press release.

Deezer’s move underscores the disruption caused by generative AI

systems, which are trained on the contents of the internet including text, images and audio available online. AI companies are facing a slew of lawsuits challenging their practice of scraping the web for such training data without paying for it.

According to an AI song detection tool that Deezer rolled out this year, 18% of songs uploaded to its platform each day, or about 20,000 tracks, are now completely AI generated. Just three months earlier, that number was 10%, Lanternier said in a recent interview.

AI has many benefits but it also “creates a lot of questions” for the music industry, Lanternier told The Associated Press. Using AI to make music is fine as long as there’s an artist behind it but the problem arises when anyone, or even a bot, can use it to make music, he said.

Music fraudsters “create tons of songs. They upload, they try to get on playlists or recommendations, and as a result they gather royalties,” he said.

Musicians can’t upload music



This undated photo provided by Deezer shows the music streaming service logo. (AP)

directly to Deezer or rival platforms like Spotify or Apple Music. Music labels or digital distribution platforms can do it for artists they have contracts with, while anyone else can use a “self service” distribution company.

Fully AI-generated music still accounts for only about 0.5% of total streams on Deezer. But the company said it’s “evident” that fraud is “the primary purpose” for these songs because it suspects that as many as seven in 10 listens

of an AI song are done by streaming “farms” or bots, instead of humans.

Any AI songs used for “stream manipulation” will be cut off from royalty payments, Deezer said.

AI has been a hot topic in the music industry, with debates swirling around its creative possibilities as well as concerns about its legality.

Two of the most popular AI song generators, Suno and Udio, are being sued by record companies for copyright infringement, and face allegations they exploited recorded works of artists from Chuck Berry to Mariah Carey.

Gema, a German royalty-collection group, is suing Suno in a similar case filed in Munich, accusing the service of generating songs that are “confusingly similar” to original versions by artists it represents, including “Forever Young” by Alphaville, “Daddy Cool” by Boney M and Lou Bega’s “Mambo No. 5.”

Major record labels are reportedly negotiating with Suno and Udio for compensation, according

to news reports earlier this month.

To detect songs for tagging, Lanternier says Deezer uses the same generators used to create songs to analyze their output.

“We identify patterns because the song creates such a complex signal. There is lots of information in the song,” Lanternier said.

The AI music generators seem to be unable to produce songs without subtle but recognizable patterns, which change constantly.

“So you have to update your tool every day,” Lanternier said. “So we keep generating songs to learn, to teach our algorithm. So we’re fighting AI with AI.”

Fraudsters can earn big money through streaming. Lanternier pointed to a criminal case last year in the US, which authorities said was the first ever involving artificially inflated music streaming. Prosecutors charged a man with wire fraud conspiracy, accusing him of generating hundreds of thousands of AI songs and using bots to automatically stream them billions of times, earning at least \$10 million.

Variety

**LONDON:** In a new production of “Evita,” one of the biggest moments isn’t on the stage.

Midway through the show, **Rachel Zegler**, playing Argentine first lady Eva Perón, emerges onto an exterior balcony at the London Palladium and sings “Don’t Cry for Me, Argentina,” to whoever is passing by below. The performance is streamed back on video to the audience inside.

News has spread quickly since the show began previews this week, and hundreds have gathered outside the historic venue in London’s West End theaterland to enjoy the free serenade by the “Snow White” star. (AP)

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**NEW YORK:** Carol Kaye, a prolific and revered bassist who played on thousands of songs in the 1960s including hits by the Beach Boys, Simon & Garfunkel and Barbra Streisand, told The Associated Press on Friday that she wants no part of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

“I’ve declined the rhof. Permanently,” the 90-year-old Kaye said in an email to the AP. She said she has sent a letter to the Hall saying the same thing.

Her remarks come two days after a Facebook post - since deleted - in which she said “NO I won’t be there. I am declining the RRHOF awards show.” (AP)

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**BARCELONA, Spain:** Chinese animated blockbuster “Ne Zha 2” hit the big screens across Spain on Friday, with a local industry insider saying the film could open a door to Chinese culture for Spanish audiences.

The Cines Filmmax Gran Via cinema complex in Barcelona is among hundreds of cinemas scheduled to screen the film from Friday through Monday, according to Enlight Media, its film’s main producer.

“For an ancient culture like that of China, which has a very rich mythology that we don’t know, this can open a door to learning about it in an entertaining way,” said Camilo Tarrazon, co-CEO of the Cines Filmmax Gran Via, in an interview with Xinhua. (Xinhua)

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**LONDON:** Grammy-winning singer Chris Brown pleaded not guilty Friday to a charge related to the serious beating of a music producer with a bottle in a London nightclub in 2023.

Brown, 36, wearing a blue suit, white shirt and black-rimmed glasses, was arraigned in London’s Southwark Crown Court on one count of attempting to unlawfully and maliciously cause grievous bodily harm with intent.

Brown’s friend and fellow musician Omololu Akinlolu, 39, who performs under the name “Hoody Baby,” pleaded not guilty to the same charge. (AP)

Fashion



A model wears a creation as part of the men’s Dolce & Gabbana Spring-Summer 2026 collection, that was presented in Milan, Italy, Saturday, June 21. (AP)

90-year-old designer recovering at home

Giorgio Armani skips Milan Fashion Week shows

MILAN, June 21, (AP): Giorgio Armani will not be present to take his bows as usual after the upcoming Emporio Armani and Giorgio Armani runway shows during Milan Fashion Week, his fashion house announced Friday.

The designer is “currently recovering at home,” the fashion house said in a brief statement that offered no details about his condition.

Armani, 90, is marking 50 years of his eponymous fashion house this year. He turns 91 on July 11.

“Although he cannot be there in person, he will closely follow every phase of the shows,” the state-

ment said. His longtime collaborator and head of menswear design, Leo Dell’Orco, will give the closing bows.

The Spring-Summer 2026 Emporio Armani menswear collection will be previewed on Saturday during Milan Fashion Week. The Giorgio Armani menswear collection is scheduled to close the mostly



Armani

menswear shows on Monday.

The statement said that Armani had worked “with his usual dedication” on the new collections.

Known for his strong work ethic, Armani even spent his 90th birthday at work. During his first live show after pandemic lockdowns, Armani in June 2021 showed off a long scar from surgery to his left arm due to a fall during a visit to the cinema soon after winter pandemic restrictions were lifted.

Nonetheless, he managed to help prepare for that menswear show as well as an Armani Prive couture collection.

Music

Healing with music

Palmer turns heartache into empowering album

NEW YORK, June 21, (AP): A sheer dress silhouetting a black body suit, Usher’s signature crowd interaction and a tweet from her child’s father: that concoction created a nearly two-week social media frenzy starring Keke Palmer back in 2023. Now, the multi-hyphenate creative has channeled that experience into her new album, “Just Keke.”

“It was tough ... I didn’t even realize I was in such grief,” said the 31-year-old about the fallout of her extremely public breakup with her ex, Darius Jackson. “I get to put that same emotion into a song, and I get tell those people that’s been watching me since I was nine ... what’s going on in a way that it can translate.”

Following 2023’s “Big Boss,” her third solo studio project, out now, is an 18-track visual album conceptualized and directed by Palmer and her team. Tayla Parx, who’s written for Alicia Keys, Justin Bieber and Dua Lipa, handled the bulk of the writing and executive produced with Palmer. The storyline follows Palmer musically navigating celebrity, motherhood and self-reflection. But her vulnerability about her well-publicized relationship drama is the album’s throughline.

“That’s what artistry is ... mine is about transmutation, it’s about bringing closure,” said Palmer, who’s usually mum about her romantic relationships. “I have to address something that I would never address, especially nothing on an intimate level - that’s just so not me. But I knew that I had to because now that it’s become public, it’s become a part of my work, and I have to respond to it as such. And that just caused me to have to grow.”

While attending Usher’s popular Las Vegas residency in 2023, the Emmy winner danced closely with the music icon during his routine audience interaction segment. Social videos of the interaction prompted a viral tweet from Jackson, her ex-boyfriend and child’s father, criticizing her attire, writing, “It’s the outfit tho... you a mom.”

While he was quickly admonished online, the conversation eventually moved beyond social media to articles and think pieces tackling subjects ranging from patriarchy, women’s attire, and having children before marriage.



Keke Palmer appears at the Fashion Trust US Awards on April 8, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Standout tracks on “Just Keke” include “My Confession” - a tongue-in-cheek interpolation of Usher’s hit “Confessions, Pt. II” - as well as the previously released “125 Degrees” and “Off Script.” She passionately belts out her love on the ballad “Unless It’s You,” while “Misunderstood” finds her asking, “Don’t you see me throwing out a life-line? / You too busy pinning me the bad guy / Maybe we ain’t doing what we should / or maybe we’re just misunderstood.”

“What the project, I think, speaks to as well is just like reclamation,” said the “Nope” star, admitting the album could reignite criticism about her personal life. “I’m just Keke, hate it or love it. This is me, this is my story, this is how I see things, I see my life ... the whole point of it, too, is making peace with just saying what you got to say and letting it be that.”

While Palmer’s mic is still hot, she’s extremely booked and busy on Hollywood lots: a sequel to “One of Them Days,” and she stars with Eddie Murphy and Pete Davidson in “The Pickup” from Prime Video in August. The “Akeelah and the Bee” actor will lead Peacock’s upcoming TV adaptation of Mel Brook’s “The ‘Burbs,” and she’ll join the team on “Spaceballs 2” with original stars Bill Pullman and Rick Moranis, the latter a reclusive ‘80s and ‘90s star who’s since largely stayed out of Hollywood.

Suga officially discharged

All BTS members complete military service

SEOUL, South Korea, June 21, (AP): Suga, a rapper and songwriter in the global K-pop sensation BTS, has been discharged from South Korea’s mandatory military service, marking the official return of all seven members from their enlistment duties.

The label confirmed that Suga completed his alternative service duties on Wednesday after using up his remaining leave. His official discharge date is Saturday.

BTS’ management agency, Big Hit Entertainment, had said earlier that no events were planned for Suga’s release out of concern for overcrowding.

It is a momentous occasion for fans of the K-pop group BTS. The seven singers of the popular K-pop band plan to reunite as a group sometime in 2025 now that they’ve

finished their service.

Last week, BTS superstars RM and V were discharged from South Korea’s military after fulfilling their mandatory service. Jimin and Jung Kook were discharged a day later. All four were enlisted in December 2023.

Six of the group’s seven members served in the army, while Suga fulfilled his duty as a social service agent, an alternative form of military service.

Jin, the oldest BTS member, was discharged in June 2024. J-Hope was discharged in October.

In South Korea, all able-bodied men aged 18 to 28 are required by law to perform 18-21 months of military service under a conscription system meant to deter aggression from rival North Korea.

The law gives special exemp-

tions to athletes, classical and traditional musicians, and ballet and other dancers if they have obtained top prizes in certain competitions and are assessed to have enhanced national prestige. K-pop stars and other entertainers aren’t subject to such privileges.

However, in 2020, BTS postponed their service until age 30 after South Korea’s National Assembly revised its Military Service Act, allowing K-pop stars to delay their enlistment until age 30.

There was heated public debate in 2022 over whether to offer special exemptions of mandatory military service for BTS members, until the group’s management agency announced in October 2022 that all seven members would fulfill their duties.



Members of South Korean K-pop band BTS, V, SUGA, JIN, Jung Kook, RM, Jimin, and J-Hope (from left to right), pose for photographers ahead of a press conference to introduce their new single ‘Butter’ in Seoul, South Korea, May 21, 2021. (AP)

Children, elderly at risk

# How to stay cool in heat wave...even without AC

NEW YORK, June 21, (AP): The first big heat wave of 2025 has arrived, coinciding with the official start of summer.

More than 40 million people in the US were under heat alerts Friday, according to the National Weather Service. Temperatures in the Midwest are expected to crest well into the 90s Fahrenheit (30s Celsius) this weekend. Triple-digit highs could pop up in New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Denver. The peak will likely hit the East Coast early next week.

Meanwhile, British health officials are also issuing heat warnings for the UK.

Climate change has been exacerbating heat waves, and the problem isn't going away any time soon. An increasingly hot planet - due largely to burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas - means already hot regions are getting worse.

Heat doesn't just mean canceled events. It also poses a health risk, especially for children, older people and those with certain health conditions.

So here are some tips to stay safe.

When does heat become dangerous?

The answer depends on more than the temperature. The most detailed measurement is called the wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT), which includes temperature, humidity, cloud cover and wind. The heat index, which measures temperature and humidity, is less descriptive but easier to find on weather apps. Both explain why a shaded soccer field on a 90 degree F day (32 degree C) in arid Phoenix may be less risky than an exposed park on an 80 degree F (27 degree C) day in soupy Little Rock.

Just based on heat index, NOAA has a chart that calculates how dangerous prolonged exposure can be. For example, a day where temperatures reach 96 degree F (36 degrees C) and 45% humidity would fall into the "danger" category for prolonged exposure or strenuous activity.

The WBGT threshold isn't exact, but recent research suggests that even some young, healthy people can't endure hours of exposure to high heat and humidity.

How to cool down

Overnight lows can be a particularly dangerous part of a heat wave, said

Ashley Ward, director of the Heat Policy Innovation Hub at Duke University.

"Your body needs a reprieve," she said. "You don't get that overnight, we start the next day at a deficit." Heat can worsen labor productivity and lead to more visits to the emergency room.

"When we have overnight temperatures that don't drop below 75 degrees" F (24 degrees C), she said. "You start to see some pretty extraordinary outcomes with respect to heat illness and heat stroke, and even mortality."

Ward's answer: Find air conditioning. That might be at home, but she said census data overcounts how many people have access.

If you can't afford to cool the whole house, Ward said, create a "cool corner" and sleep there, so your body is prepared to tackle the next day.

Evaporative or "swamp" coolers can help in dry heat, but they increase humidity and can make it more difficult to cool down. In humid places, just use a fan.

If you don't have air conditioning, find public places that do, including movie theaters, malls and libraries. Some communities set up cooling centers.

Depending on where you live, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program can help you buy a window air conditioning unit, according to the National Council on Aging. Some local nonprofits and civic organizations can also help you access one if cost is a burden.

Knowing heat illness symptoms

Heat illness symptoms can vary by person, Venkat said. Medications or underlying conditions can also make it harder to regulate body temperature or notice you're getting too hot.

Early trouble signs include heavy sweating, muscle cramps and headache. That's when you stop what you're doing and cool yourself off - for example, by splashing yourself with cold water or finding an air conditioned space.

As heat exhaustion sets in, new symptoms arrive, including faster heart rate and dizziness. Next comes heat stroke, which can include confusion, slurred words and fainting. Ward said that's when to call 911.

"Don't be embarrassed to call 911 or go to urgent care when you think you might have overdone it in the heat," he said.

## Concerns over youth vaping

# US top court backs vape firms in FDA legal battle

WASHINGTON, June 21, (AP): The Supreme Court sided with e-cigarette companies on Friday in a ruling making it easier to sue over Food and Drug Administration decisions blocking their products from the multibillion-dollar vaping market.

The 7-2 opinion comes as companies push back against a yearslong federal regulatory crackdown on electronic cigarettes. It's expected to give the companies more control over which judges hear lawsuits filed against the agency.

The justices went the other way on vaping in an April decision, siding with the FDA in a ruling upholding a sweeping block on most sweet-flavored vapes instituted after a spike in youth vaping.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids called the majority decision disappointing, saying it would allow manufacturers to "judge shop," though it said the companies will still

have to contend with the Supreme Court's April decision.

The current case was filed by R.J. Reynolds Vapor Co., which had sold a line of popular berry and menthol-flavored vaping products before the agency started regulating the market under the Tobacco Control Act in 2016.

The agency refused to authorize the company's Vuse Alto products, an order that "sounded the death knell for a significant portion of the e-cigarette market," Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote in the majority opinion.

The company is based in North Carolina and typically would have been limited to challenging the FDA in a court there or in the agency's home base of Washington. Instead, it joined forces with Texas businesses that sell the products and sued there. The conservative 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals allowed the lawsuit to go forward, finding that anyone whose business is hurt by the FDA decision can sue.



This photograph shared by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on X platform shows him participating in a yoga session to mark International Day of Yoga at Visakhapatnam, in Andhra Pradesh state, India, Saturday, June 21. (AP)

## Indians stretch, breathe to mark Int'l Day of Yoga

Tens of thousands of people across India stretched in public parks and on sandy beaches Saturday to mark the 11th International Day of Yoga.

The mass yoga sessions were held in many Indian states, where crowds attempted various poses and practiced breathing exercises. Indian military personnel also performed yoga in the icy heights of Siachen Glacier in the Himalayas and on naval ships anchored in the Bay of Bengal.

Similar sessions were also held in countries including Malaysia and Indonesia.

"I feel that yoga keeps us spiritually fit, mentally fit and helps us manage stress. That's why I feel that people should take out at least 30 minutes every day for yoga to keep themselves fit," said Rajiv Ranjan, who participated in an event in the Indian capital of New Delhi.

Yoga is one of India's most successful cultural exports after Bollywood. It has also been enlisted for diplomacy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has harnessed it for cultural soft power as the country takes on a larger role in world affairs.

Modi persuaded the U.N. to designate the annual International Day of Yoga in 2014. The theme this year was "Yoga for One Earth, One Health."

Modi performed yoga among a seaside crowd in the southern city of Visakhapatnam city, and said "yoga leads us on a journey towards oneness with world." Amid a checkerboard of yoga mats cover-

ing the beach, Modi took his spot on a mat and did breathing exercises, backbends and other poses.

"Let this Yoga Day mark the beginning of yoga for humanity 2.0, where inner peace becomes global policy," he said.

As Modi has pushed yoga, ministers, government officials and Indian military personnel have gone on social media to show themselves folding in different poses.

In the capital, New Delhi, scores of people from all walks of life and age groups gathered at the sprawling Lodhi Gardens, following an instructor on stage.

"Yoga for me is like balancing between inner world and outer world," said Siddharth Maheshwari, a startup manager who joined the event. (AP)

## Free classes help the poor battle stress

# Yoga provides mental clarity, hope to struggling communities in Zimbabwe

CHITUNGWIZA, Zimbabwe, June 21, (AP): It's before sunrise on a Saturday and a small group has gathered at Socialite Bar in on the outskirts of Zimbabwe's capital. Instead of nursing hangovers, they sit with eyes closed and bodies in meditative poses on the bare floor.

It's an unlikely setting for a yoga class. In Zimbabwe, the practice is rare and mostly found in the wealthy suburbs. Yet it is quietly taking root here in a beer tavern in Chitungwiza, a low-income town 30 kilometers (18 miles) outside the capital, Harare.

The initiative is led by Actions Winya, a yoga instructor who saw how economic hardship and social pressures were damaging the mental health of people in his hometown.

"Yoga is expensive ... but we also got humans in the ghetto. They need mental wellness," said Winya, who usually teaches in affluent areas, charging between \$30 and \$100 a month. That's an impossible cost for most, especially in a country where many survive through informal jobs.

Since 2023, Winya has been offering free weekend classes to some of those hardest hit by Zimbabwe's economic problems.

The sessions have become a source of relief for people navigating relentless challenges. Authorities acknowledge a growing societal crisis worsened by drug abuse, domestic violence and poverty, compounded by a shortage of public health services and therapists.

"I am a coach, so they bring the stuff that they face within families (to me). This is where we come in and say, 'Guys, come and try yoga, it can help somehow,'" Winya said.

Yoga, an ancient Indian practice, has become a multibillion-dollar industry and a daily ritual for millions around the world. The United Nations over a decade ago designated June 21 as International Day of Yoga.

In Africa, other countries like Kenya and South Africa are introducing yoga to poorer communities, with the Indian government promoting its spread across the continent.

Inside the tavern in Zimbabwe, mellow music played as about a dozen participants moved through poses. They had no mats, just a cold brick floor, but plenty of determination for inner peace. One mother tried to stay focused as her toddler dashed around, disrupting her poses.

For 47-year-old John Mahwaya, the practice has been transforming. A father of four, he also supports relatives in the countryside, a responsibility he said once weighed heavily on his mental health.

"My head was always spinning. I thought I was losing my mind, and the stress started causing back pains," he said. "Yoga helps me relax and clear my mind. I sleep peacefully these days."

He said many Zimbabwean men bottle up their emotions, afraid to show weakness in a highly patriarchal society that prizes toughness.

"We focus on physical fitness, forgetting the mind," he said. "We suffer slowly, but what suffers first is the mind, and from there, it becomes a slow death."

Edinah Makosa, 24, joined the class earlier this year and said it gave her hope.

"I used to be depressed a lot. You know, for people my age, our main stressors are unemployment and relationships," she said.

"Yoga changed my mindset. I used to think negatively all the time. Now I have started selling beauty products to earn a living. As for romance, well if it works, it works; if it doesn't, it doesn't. I no longer stress about men. I go with the flow."

As they practiced, the sounds of township life seeped in. Taxi drivers shouted for passengers. Vendors pushed carts, calling out to potential customers.

"We need a proper environment and studio. But we are trying," Winya said.

For participants like Mahwaya, the location didn't matter nearly as much as the healing.

"We need to promote yoga in the communities because everyone has a mind. And fitness of the mind is the responsibility of everyone, regardless of where you live," he said.

## Malnutrition

# Gaza war takes toll on kids: UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 21, (Xinhua): Hostilities in Gaza trigger aid access restrictions and drive up child malnourishment rates, said the world body on Friday.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said the 5,100-plus children between 6 months and 5 years of age admitted for acute malnutrition treatment in May represented a nearly 50 percent increase compared to April, and a 150 percent hike compared to February when a ceasefire was in effect and aid was entering the strip in significant quantities.

UNICEF said that in the first five months of this year, more than 16,700 children, or an average of 112 each day, were admitted for malnutrition treatment in Gaza. Each one of these cases is preventable. The food, water and nutrition treatments these children desperately need are being blocked from reaching them.

The fund called on Israel to urgently allow the large-scale delivery of life-saving aid through all border crossings. The agency said it has been distributing what little nutrition supplies it has and can bring into Gaza. Outside Gaza's borders, the equivalent of 1,000 truckloads of health, nutrition and other supplies were waiting to be delivered.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that out of the 21 requests to coordinate humanitarian movements inside Gaza, 12 were approved and facilitated by the Israeli authorities, including for the dispatch of fuel to the north, the retrieval of solid waste and the distribution of medical supplies.

Five other attempts, including for water trucking and road repair, were denied. Organizers canceled the remaining four.

OCHA said while no fuel has been allowed into Gaza for 16 weeks, the United Nations was able to retrieve fuel from the Al Tahreer station in Rafah on Wednesday. A limited amount of that fuel was delivered on Thursday to public utilities in southern Gaza, enabling desalination plants, water trucking services and sewage pumping stations to continue operations.

Humanitarian partners reported that the delivery brought vital relief, although fuel instability and shortages limit operations, resulting in reduced hours and capacity.

## UK MPs approve 'right to die' bill

LONDON, June 21, (AP): UK lawmakers on Friday approved a bill to allow terminally ill adults in England and Wales to choose to end their lives, taking it one step nearer to becoming law.

The vote backing what is generally termed "assisted dying" - sometimes referred to as "assisted suicide" - is potentially the biggest change to social policy in the U.K. since abortion was partially legalized in 1967.

Members of Parliament voted 314-291 to back the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill following an impassioned debate. The majority of 23 was less than the 55 when they last voted on the issue in November, meaning that some lawmakers changed their minds in the intervening months.

Since November, the bill has been scrutinized, leading to some changes in the proposed legislation, which has been shepherded through Parliament by Kim Leadbeater, the Labour lawmaker who proposed the bill.

"I appreciate it's a huge moment for the country," she told Sky News after the vote. "It was a huge sense of relief because this is the right thing to do."

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# Crusaders win Super Rugby title for 13th time

Chiefs lose in final for third straight year

**CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, June 21, (AP): The Crusaders won the Super Rugby title for the 13th time by edging the Chiefs 16-12 on Saturday for their 32nd straight win in home playoffs.**

The Hamilton-based Chiefs lost in the final for the third straight year and for the second time to the Crusaders by a margin of five points or less.

The Crusaders clung to a one-point lead for 33 minutes, from just before half-time until the 71st minute when flyhalf Riehan kicked a penalty for the only points of the second half. They then held on under immense pressure to clinch their victory.

The win was especially poignant for the Crusaders, who won only four matches last year in one of their worst-ever seasons, ending their run of seven-straight titles. They were also playing for the last time in the "temporary" stadium that has been their home ground since their former headquarters was destroyed in the 2011 Christchurch earthquake.

The Crusaders' kicking game was superb and they dominated the contest in the air, particularly through fullback Will Jordan. They kept Chiefs' flyhalf Damian McKenzie under wraps and their defense was superb, though the Chiefs scored first-half tries through prop George Dyer and fullback Shaun Stevenson.

The Crusaders scored a try through veteran hooker Codie Taylor and led 13-12 at halftime with a conversion and two penalties to Reihana.

"Where we were at the end of last year, the start of this year we had a mountain to climb," said Jordan, who won his seventh Super Rugby title. "Everyone had to dig deep and it hasn't been easy."

"It's taken some long hours, some hard conversations but we just ground it out tonight in front of our fans."

The Chiefs were stifled for long periods by the Crusaders' smothering defense. While they disrupted the Crusaders' lineout, they were under pressure at scrums and they weren't able to create the space their backs needed in the second half.

"It was a classic final, two great teams going at it and a small margin," Chiefs captain Luke Jacobson said. "The Crusaders did really well to win the halfway and play at the right end of the field."

"I felt we had some good attack when we got into their half, we put some good pressure on them but we just didn't play enough footy down there."

The Crusaders started the match applying pressure on the Chiefs inside their 22. When the Chiefs finally got possession, they had 24 phases inside the Crusaders' 22 before McKenzie knocked on.

The Crusaders conceded two early scrum penalties, then the Chiefs conceded two as the set piece began untidily.

Crusaders captain David Havili was shown a yellow card in the 12th minute after a head clash with Chiefs winger Emoni Narawa. From the resulting penalty, the Chiefs kicked into the corner, won the lineout and midfielder Quinn Tupaea had two strong carries before Dyer scored under the posts.

Taylor broke away from a disintegrating maul in the 26th minute and dashed more than 20 meters down the narrow left flank to score. Reihana's conversion leveled the score at 7-7 and the Crusaders led for the first time in the 28th minute when a Reihana penalty. Another penalty made the score 13-7.

The Chiefs hit back just before halftime with a try to Stevenson who scored in the right corner after 16 phases.

Germany and Japan share third place

## Georgia storms to first mixed team victory at World Judo Champ'ships



Members of the bronze medalist team Germany pose during the awarding ceremony after the mixed teams final between Georgia and South Korea at the IJF Judo World Championships 2025 in Budapest, Hungary. (Xinhua)

**BUDAPEST, June 21, (Xinhua):** In the gold medal battle between two first-timers, it was Georgia who lifted the trophy in the mixed team event by winning 4-1 over South Korea at the 2025 World Judo Championships at the Papp Laszlo Arena.

Asian champion Lee Seung-yeob of South Korea started high and earned the full ippon in the men's +90 kg which brought the first point for his team before Georgia fought back and showed its power in the next competitions.

In the women's 57kg clash, Georgia's newly-crowned world champion Eteri Liparteliani dominated the game by winning a massive Tani-otoshi over 2024 world champion Huh Min. Mikheili Bakhbakhshvili



Mikheili Bakhbakhshvili (back) of Georgia and Bae Donghyun of South Korea compete during the mixed teams final between Georgia and South Korea at the IJF Judo World Championships 2025 in Budapest, Hungary. (Xinhua)

took the upper hand with a sumi-gaeshi over his South Korean rival Bae Dong-hyun in the men's

-73kg contest.

Mariam Tchanturia continued Georgia's winning streak in the

women's -70kg and Lasha Bekauri sealed the victory by scoring an ippon over Kim Jong-hoon in the men's -90kg.

"I'm so happy because I did the double, double world champion! I am very happy to be the first world champion and want to be the first Olympic champion too," said Liparteliani, 25, who is now the first and only Georgian woman to win a world championship among all Olympic sports.

Germany and Japan shared the third place on the mixed team podium.

The eight-day World Judo Championships featured individual and mixed team events as Japan topped the medal standings with six golds, four silvers, and four bronzes from individual competitions.

'Nuno has made a great impact'

## Forest extends manager deal after European qualification

**NOTTINGHAM, England, June 21, (AP):** Nottingham Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo has been rewarded with a contract extension for leading the club to its first European qualification for almost 30 years.

The 51-year-old Nuno signed a three-year deal to stay at the City Ground until at least 2028, the Premier League club said on its website Saturday.

"Nuno masterminded an incredible 2024-25 season for Forest, guiding the club to its highest league finish in 30 years and thus qualifying for UEFA European competition for the first time since 1995-96," the club said.

Nuno's team enjoyed away wins over Liverpool and Manchester United, and strung together the club's longest top-flight winning streak since 1967.

Forest was on course for Champions League qualification after beating Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 away in April, but only one more win in the last five games meant it had to settle for seventh place. Only the top five qualified for Europe's premier competition.

Forest had to settle for the third-tier Conference League competition - and will learn its playoff-round opponent when the Aug. 4 draw is made.

Club owner Evangelos Marinakis remonstrated with Nuno on the field after a 2-2 draw with Midlands rival Leicester dented its Champions League hopes.

The club later said that Marinakis' concern was about the handling of injured player Taiwo Awoniyi.

On Saturday, Marinakis only had words of praise.

"Nuno has made a great impact and performed very well during his time with us so far," the Greek businessman said. "He has demonstrated that he maximizes player performance and is



Nottingham Forest's head coach Nuno Espirito Santo reacts during the English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham and Nottingham Forest at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. (AP)

an expert at developing players, whilst also embedding our young talent into the first team set-up."

Nuno, who previously managed Wolves and Tottenham, took over at Forest from the fired Steve Cooper in December 2023 and helped the team avoid relegation on the final day of the season.

"I am delighted to be able to continue our journey at this fantastic football club," the manager from the island country of São Tomé and Príncipe said of his contract extension. "Since we arrived at Forest, we have worked extremely hard to create a special bond between the players, the fans and everyone at the club, which helped us achieve great things last season."

First-ever victory

## Lions shocked by Pumas in pre-Australia tour 'setback'

**DUBLIN, June 21, (AP):** First, the good news for the British and Irish Lions: They didn't appear to suffer any tour-ending injuries against Argentina.

The bad news: They lost to Argentina 28-24 in the warmup to their nine-game tour of Australia.

The result, humbling for now, will be regarded as a minor setback, maybe even an inspiration, if the Lions go on and win the three-test series against the Wallabies.

The Lions led the Pumas for only 12 minutes in the entire match and had two prime attacking chances in the last four minutes. But their lineout maul was stopped in its tracks, then a Lions penalty in front of the posts was overturned due to a neck roll by Tadhg Beirne.

Despite a training camp in Portugal intended to solidify combinations, and featuring nine English starters, the Lions still appeared less cohesive and determined than Argentina, which was missing a dozen front-liners and had only two proper training sessions.

The Pumas beat the Lions for the first time in their history, a milestone that dates back to 1910. They also warmed up the 2005 Lions in Cardiff, and suffered heartbreak when Jonny Wilkinson landed a penalty in the 87th minute for a 25-25 draw.

No draw this time. The Pumas were ruthless with their chances and matched the Lions with three tries. Two tries from inside their own 22 were the game's highlights.



Lions' Bundee Aki drives forward as he runs on to score a try during the Rugby Union international match between the British and Irish Lions and Argentina, at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin. (AP)

## Bach's pay package trails far behind soccer's elected leaders

**GENEVA, June 21, (AP):** The International Olympic Committee paid its president Thomas Bach \$350,000 in income and expenses in 2024, his final full year in office.

The sum included a salary-like payment - or "indemnity" in Olympic language - of 275,000 euros (\$317,000), according to its annual report. That is a relatively small figure compared to soccer bodies that, like the IOC, are based in Switzerland and count annual revenue in billions.

Bach on Monday will formally hand over to president-elect Kirsty Coventry, who will start an eight-year initial term as the Olympic body's first female leader, and first from Africa.

The IOC has classed the 71-year-old Bach as a volunteer on a full-time executive mission who "should not have to finance activities related to his function from his personal

savings."

Bach's earnings were less than 10% of what soccer gives its top elected officials.

FIFA paid its president Gianni Infantino \$5.2 million in taxable salary and bonus last year, plus other expenses. He is also among the 109 IOC members and can claim \$7,000 each year for office costs and \$450 daily allowance when on Olympic business.

UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin received almost \$4.3 million in taxable income last year, including \$300,000 from FIFA as one of its vice presidents.

It is unclear if the 41-year-old Coventry will be a salaried president of the IOC instead of officially a volunteer. The two-time Olympic champion in swimming left her job as sports minister of Zimbabwe after winning the seven-candidate IOC election in March.

The presidential indemnity likely will be reviewed later this year, the IOC said Friday.

Bach's annual payment has been decided by the IOC's ethics commission on the stated principle "the president should not financially benefit from his position."

The German lawyer held a series of business consultancies and board of director seats before being elected in 2013 to lead the IOC.

The IOC paid Bach 225,000 euros (\$259,000) in 2020. It rose to 275,000 euros (\$317,000) in the year of his re-election, 2021, then was frozen for the rest of his second term of four years until reaching the maximum 12 years in office.

International sports bodies have typically published details of leadership pay as part of governance reforms, particularly after corruption scandals in soccer.

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## Uganda names provisional squad for African Nations Championship

**KAMPALA, June 21, (Xinhua):** The Federation of Uganda Football Association (FUFA) has named a provisional squad ahead of the CAF African Nations Championship (CHAN).

Newly appointed coaches of the team, Fred Muhumuza and Morley Byekwaso, on Saturday named a 41-man squad that is expected to start preparations on June 23.

Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania will co-

host the Championship slated to run from August 2-30, which was originally meant to take place last year but was rescheduled to 2025.

The Uganda Cranes are placed in Group C alongside Niger, Guinea, South Africa and Algeria and will play their group matches at the Mandela National Stadium in Kampala.

Eight players who helped Viper SC win the 2024-25 Uganda Premier League

including Allan Okello and Milton Karisa are among the provisional squad.

Uganda will be making their seventh appearance in the CHAN tournament strictly for national teams consisting of players playing in their national league competitions.

The Uganda Cranes have failed to reach the CHAN knockout stage in their last six appearances in Sudan, South Africa, Rwanda, Morocco, Cameroon and

Algeria.

Provisional Squad

Goalkeepers: Joel Mutakubwa, Hanington Ssewalunyo, Crispus Kusima, Mugolofa Mutwalibu, Denis Kiggundu  
Defenders: Gavin Kizito, Lazaro Bwambale, James Begisa, David Owori, Herbert Achayi, Gideon Odongo, Enock Walusimbi, Nichoals Mwere, Jacob Okao, Ronald Otti, Arnold Odong, Rogers Torach, Hilary Mukundane Midfield-

er: Marvin Youngman, Joel Sserunjogi, Emmanuel Wasswa, Elvis Ngondwe, Regan Mpande, Saidi Mayanja, Ronald Ssekiganda, Abdu Karim Watambala, Enock Ssebagala, Jerome Kirya, Allan Okello, Aslam Ssemakula  
Forwards: Milton Karisa, Shafik Nana Kwikiriza, Usama Arafat Kiza, Emmanuel Anyama, Yunus Sentamu, Charles Lwanga, Ivan Ahimbisibwe, Balden Ogama, James Bogere, Patrick Kakande.

Dream edges Mystics

# Bueckers scores 21 in return to Connecticut as Wings outlast Sun

UNCASVILLE, Conn., June 21, (AP): Paige Bueckers had 21 points and seven assists in the former UConn star's return to Connecticut, fellow rookie Aziaha James scored all of her season-high 17 points in the second half, and the Dallas Wings beat the Connecticut Sun 86-83.

NaLyssa Smith scored 12 points and Li Yueru added 11 points and nine rebounds, both season highs, for the Wings.

The game featured 12 lead changes and 10 ties, the last of which came when the Sun's Aneeshah Morrow scored in the lane to make it 62-62 with 1:18 left in the third quarter. James answered 26 seconds later with a floater that gave Dallas the lead for good.

Morrow made a driving layup that trimmed Connecticut's deficit to 76-73 with three minutes to play, but Arike Ogunbowale hit a 3-pointer and then made two free throws before Dijonai Carrington made a layup with 45.8 seconds left that gave the Wings a 83-76 lead.

**Dream 92, Mystics 91**

In College Park, Allisha Gray scored 18 points to lead all five Washington starters in double figures and Mystics beat Atlanta.

Brianna Jones scored 14 points for Atlanta (9-4) and Rhyné Howard had 13 points and six assists. Jordin Canada added 11 points and Brittney Griner scored 10.

Emily Engstler made a basket in the lane with 31.7 seconds remain-



Seattle Storm guard Skylar Diggins (4) drives against Las Vegas Aces guard Jackie Young (0) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Las Vegas. (AP)

ing and, after Jones missed a layup, Brittney Sykes was fouled on a 3-point shot with 0.1 seconds left but missed the second of three free throws.

Sykes - who went into the game shooting 80% on 9.5 foul shots per game, most in the WNBA - finished 10 of 11 from the free-throw line.

Shakira Austin made 13 of 17 from the field and finished with a career-high 28 points and 10 rebounds for Washington (5-8). Sykes had 21 points and eight assists and Sonia Citron scored 17.

**Storm 90, Aces 83**

In Las Vegas, Nneka Ogwumike had 25 points and 12 rebounds, Skylar Diggins added 24 points and six assists and Seattle beat Las Vegas.

Gabby Williams had 18 points and 12 rebounds for her first career double-double, and Erica Wheeler scored 10 of her 17 points in the fourth quarter for Seattle (8-5).

Jackie Young led the Aces (5-7) with 22 points and A'ja Wilson, who returned from a three-game absence (concussion protocol), added 22 points and 14 rebounds. Rookie Aaliyah Nye scored a season-high 13.

The Aces have lost three straight for the first time this season and just the second since the Storm swept Las Vegas in the best-of-five 2020 WNBA Finals.

# Bangladesh plays it safe and settles for draw with Sri Lanka in rain-affected test



Bangladesh's Nayeem Hasan plays a shot during the fifth day of the first cricket test match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Hossain Shanto pressed complete second century

**GALLE, Sri Lanka, June 21, (AP): Bangladesh missed out on a rare victory away from home when its series-opening cricket test against Sri Lanka ended in a draw on the rain-affected final day Saturday.**

After a prolonged rain break that saw the morning session curtailed to just 80 minutes, there was a window - 50 overs - still wide enough to force the issue. The visitors led by 251 runs. The stage was set. But they opted for the conservative route.

Najmul Hossain Shanto pressed on to complete his second century of the match - a personal milestone for the captain, but a potentially costly one for the team.

By the time the declaration came at 285-6, Bangladesh had consumed nearly an hour more

of precious time - and momentum.

Shanto's feat was historic. Only 14 other men in the long annals of test cricket have scored hundreds in each innings on two separate occasions. Shanto previously achieved the double-ton trick against Afghanistan in 2023.

Bangladesh, chasing only its second test win over Sri Lanka in 27 attempts, may rue this as the one that got away. The hosts had their backs to the wall for just over a session and while they lost wickets and had to negotiate some sharp turn and bounce, they were never truly cornered.

Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan removed first-innings centurion Pathum Nissanka with a peach that dipped and turned. Taijul Islam chimed in with a tidy burst, accounting for Lahiru Udara, Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal.

Bangladesh has won only seven away tests. The day also marked a poignant farewell.

Mathews bowed out of the test arena. He fell for 8, caught off bat-pad, and each Bangladeshi fielder made a beeline to salute a fine career. A man for all seasons, Mathews had captained Sri Lanka to its maiden series win in England in 2014 and wore the whites 119 times for his country.

As Sri Lanka looks ahead to the second test in Colombo, it must now confront two pressing questions. Who fills the Mathews-sized void in the middle order - a space occupied by experience and resilience for over 15 years? And is it time to reconsider Prabath Jayasuriya's role? The left-arm spinner, once a revelation, has struggled of late, and his solitary wicket in this match did little to silence the murmurs.

For Bangladesh, reinforcements arrive in the form of Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who missed the Galle test because of illness. His return adds depth especially on tracks where finger spinners often dictate proceedings.

# Pogba on Al-Ittihad's radar

RIYADH, June 21: Media reports have revealed a new opportunity for French midfielder Paul Pogba to return to football next season, with Saudi Pro League side Al-Ittihad showing serious interest.

According to transfer market specialist Santi Aouna, while AS Monaco made a strong bid to sign Pogba during the summer transfer window, Al-Ittihad has recently emerged as a major contender in the race for his signature.

"Al-Ittihad returned to the forefront a few days ago, beginning preliminary talks with Pogba," Aouna reported. However, he added that despite the interest, the Saudi champions have yet to take official steps toward signing the player, citing internal issues at the club as a reason for the delay.

Pogba has not played competitively since September 3, 2023, due to off-field issues and injury setbacks. Still, his recent social media activity has fueled speculation about a comeback. A series of posts on Instagram, showing



Paul Pogba

the 2018 World Cup winner in top form and training while wearing a Boca Juniors shirt, attracted significant attention and sparked enthusiasm among fans - particularly those of the iconic Argentine club.

The potential move to Saudi Arabia would mark a new chapter for Pogba, who continues to draw global attention despite his extended absence from the pitch.

## Best of the Rest

**Sakamoto to retire after winter Oly:** Kaori Sakamoto, the three-time figure skating world champion, will retire after next year's 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina, she said Friday.

The 25-year-old Japanese star won an Olympic bronze medal in the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing and took the silver medal in the world championships in March with gold to American Alysa Liu.

Sakamoto acknowledged that age is catching up with her.

"I feel like I have less than a year left," the Japanese news agency Kyodo quoted her as saying in Kobe, Japan. "I'll be 29 at the following Olympics (in 2030), which is out of the question. I'll try to bring things to a close the year I turn 26. (AP)

**SEA Karate Championship concludes:** The 12th Southeast Asia Karate Federation Championship concluded Thursday in Brunei.

Vietnam topped the medal table with 28 gold, 31 silver, and 17 bronze medals. Indonesia ranked second with 11 gold, nine silver, and 24 bronze, followed by Thailand and Malaysia. Host nation Brunei earned one gold, one silver, and seven bronze medals.

The three-day championship, held in Brunei for the first time, drew more than 400 athletes from 10 Southeast Asian countries and regions, competing across various age divisions. (Xinhua)

**Burling joins Luna Rossa:** Three-time America's Cup champion Peter Burling has joined Luna Rossa ahead of the 2027 regatta off Naples, the Italian team announced.

Burling left Team New Zealand in April after nearly a decade in which he steered his home boats to three consecutive America's Cup trophies.

Luna Rossa said Burling "is ready to contribute both in sailing performance and technical development as the team gears up for the next America's Cup campaign."

Barring a change in protocol concerning team changes, Burling likely won't be able to be aboard Luna Rossa and will have to remain on shore.

Luna Rossa CEO Max Sirena praised Burling's "exceptional sailing talent and his sportsmanship."

"Even though his exact role has yet to be defined, he will certainly be part of the sailing team, reinforcing Luna Rossa's core leadership group and contributing to key areas of our development program," Sirena said. (AP)

## First face-to-face meeting with Trump priority for new president

# Coventry starts work with strong IOC and challenges for Los Angeles Games

GENEVA, June 21, (AP): The world Kirsty Coventry walks into Monday as the International Olympic Committee's first female and first African president is already very different to the one she was elected in three months ago.

Take Los Angeles, host of the next Summer Games that is the public face and financial foundation of most Olympic sports.

The city described last week as a "trash heap" by U.S. President Donald Trump is preparing to welcome teams from more than 200 nations in July 2028. Most of the 11,000 athletes and thousands more coaches and officials who will take part in the LA Olympics will have seen images of military being deployed against the wishes of city and state leaders.

A growing number of those athletes' home countries face being on a Trump-directed travel ban list - including Coventry's home Zimbabwe - though Olympic participants are promised exemptions to come to the U.S. Several players from Senegal's women's basketball team were denied visas for a training trip to the U.S., the country's prime min-



In this file photo, Kirsty Coventry reacts after she was announced as the new IOC President at the International Olympic Committee 144th session in Costa Navarino, western Greece. (AP)

ister said.

A first face-to-face meeting with Trump is a priority for the new IOC president, perhaps at a sports event. Welcome to Olympic diplomacy, the outgoing IOC president Thomas Bach could reasonably comment to his political protégé Coventry.

The six Olympic Games of Bach's 12 years were rocked by Russian doping scandals and mil-

itary aggression, Korean nuclear tensions, a global health crisis and corruption-fueled Brazilian chaos.

Still, Coventry inherits an IOC with a solid reputation and finances after a widely praised 2024 Paris Olympics, plus a slate of summer and winter hosts for the next decade. Risks and challenges ahead are clear to see.

For the two-time Olympic champion swimmer's first full day as president Tuesday she has invited the 109-strong IOC membership to closed-doors meetings about its future under the banner "Pause and Reflect."

"The way in which I like to lead is with collaboration," said Coventry, who was sports minister in Zimbabwe for the past seven years, told reporters Thursday.

Many, if not most, members want more say in how the IOC makes decisions after nearly 12 years of Bach's tight executive control. It was a theme in manifestos by the other election candidates, and the runner-up in March, IOC vice president Juan Antonio Samaranch, will lead one of the sessions.

"I like people to say: 'Yes, I had a say and this was the direction that we went,'" Coventry said. "That way, you get really authentic buy-in."

In an in-house IOC interview, Coventry also described how she wanted to be perceived: "She never changed. Always humble, always approachable."

That could mean more member input, if not an open and contested vote, to decide the 2036 Olympics host.

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Esperance de Tunis' Mohamed Ben Ali heads the ball away for Los Angeles FC's Denis Bouanga during the Club World Cup Group D soccer match between Los Angeles FC and ES Tunisie in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

# Sports

## Bayern, Flamengo reach Club World Cup last 16

### Esperance keeps hopes alive

**NEW YORK, June 21, (Xinhua):** Bayern Munich and Flamengo booked their places in the last 16 of the FIFA Club World Cup with wins over Boca Juniors and Chelsea, while Benfica boosted its hopes of advancing after routing Auckland City.

Esperance also kept alive its knockout-stage chances by edging past Los Angeles FC, which joined Auckland in exiting the tournament.

In Philadelphia, Brazil's Flamengo moved three points clear at the top of Group D after recovering from a goal down to overcome Chelsea 3-1.

Portuguese winger Pedro Neto put Chelsea ahead when he capitalized on Wesley Franca's miscued clearance to dribble almost half the length of the pitch before calmly shooting past Argentine goalkeeper Agustin Rossi.

Flamengo equalized just after the hour through Bruno Henrique, who tapped home after Gonzalo Plata flicked on Gerson's cross.

The Rio de Janeiro outfit suddenly had the momentum, and Henrique turned provider three minutes later as his header set up Danilo to volley home at the far post.

Chelsea was reduced to 10 men in the 68th minute after Nicolas Jackson was shown a straight red card for a studs-up challenge on Lucas Ayrton.

Wallace Yan put the result beyond doubt by playing a slick one-two with Plata before firing in from the edge of the six-yard box.

"We always believed that we had a chance," Flamengo manager Filipe Luis said afterwards. "I'm very proud because after our mistake in giving away the first goal, we didn't drop our heads. We continued to play the same way. We gave our all until the end and that warms my heart." In Orlando, Angel Di Maria and Leandro Barreiro scored twice apiece as Benfica romped to a 6-0 victory over Auckland City.

Benfica initially struggled to breach the New Zealand club's five-man defense but Di Maria broke the deadlock from the penalty spot just before halftime.

It was all one-way traffic thereafter, despite a two-hour delay due to a storm alert. Vangelis Pavlidis, Renato Sanches, Barreiro and Di Maria were all on target in the second half as Benfica registered its first win of the tournament.

The Portuguese side is now second in Group C with four points while Auckland City is last with 16 goals conceded in two matches.

"This is the longest game of my career," Benfica head coach Bruno Lage said. "A special thanks to our fans, who have been here for five hours supporting the team. We played as well as we could. The [hot] temperature made it very difficult."

In Nashville, Tunisia's Esperance kept alive its hopes of reaching the next stage with a 1-0 victory over Los Angeles FC.

Youssef Belalil handed his side the lead in the 70th minute when he pounced on a loose ball in the area and drilled a low shot that deflected in off the left leg of goalkeeper Hugo Lloris.

Esperance is now third in Group D and will need to beat Chelsea in Philadelphia on Tuesday to progress to the knockout phase. Los Angeles FC is fourth, having failed to pick up a point so far and with no chance of progressing.

In Miami, France international midfielder Michael Olise scored late as Bayern



Boca Juniors' goalkeeper Agustin Marchesin, second from left, Carlos Palacios, center, and Bayern Munich's Leon Goretzka reach for the ball during the Club World Cup Group C soccer match between Bayern Munich and Boca Juniors in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

Munich kept its perfect record intact with a 2-1 win over Argentine side Boca Juniors.

Harry Kane opened the scoring for the Bundesliga champion when he intercepted a defensive clearance and fired low into the far corner with his weaker left foot.

Uruguayan forward Miguel Merentiel equalized by running onto Alan Velasco's through ball and ghosting past Josip Stanisic before clinically finishing past

Manuel Neuer.

Olise restored Bayern's lead six minutes from time with a fizzing drive from distance after Kane's clever layoff.

While the German club is assured of a place in the next round, Boca will need to defeat Auckland City by a hefty margin on Tuesday to have any chance of advancing.

### Al-Arabi opts not to renew Khaba's contract

## Kuwait Club renews contracts of key players, Hamdan set to join Al-Ramtha from Al-Arabi

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: Jordanian media reports indicate that Hassan Hamdan, defender for Al-Arabi and the Jordan national team, is close to completing a move to Al-Ramtha. Hamdan has established himself as one of Jordan's standout defenders in recent years, earning a regular place in both his club and national team lineups.

Al-Ramtha fans have fueled speculation, widely sharing Hamdan's photos on social media, suggesting the deal is in its final stages.

Despite Al-Arabi chairman Abdulaziz Ashour previously stating that all "Green" players remain under long-term contracts, and Hamdan himself affirming his commitment to the club last week, interest in the player has surged following reports of a cancelled agreement between clubs.

Al-Ramtha, who finished fourth in the Jordanian Pro League last season, is actively rebuilding its squad after a two-year transfer ban, targeting quality reinforcements in all areas.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club has renewed the contracts of key players Reda Hani and Mohammed Fareeh for another season. Both players were instrumental in the club's successful 2023-24 season, contributing to Kuwait's domestic treble: the Zain Premier League, Crown Prince Cup, and Super Cup.

Moroccan forward Hamza Khaba, who spent the last two seasons with Al-Arabi, is expected to return to his homeland. The player is in advanced talks with Royal Army Club (FAR



In this file photo, players vie for the ball during a league game.

Rabat), despite receiving an offer from Saudi side Al-Qadsiya.

Al-Arabi has opted not to renew Khaba's contract, paving the way for his move back to the Moroccan league, which he reportedly prefers at this

stage in his career.

At Al-Nasr's board has confirmed the continuation of Tunisian coach Jamil Belkacem for another season. Belkacem, who joined the team last September following the departure of

Kuwaiti coach Dhafer Al-Adwani, has been entrusted with leading the team's upcoming campaign.

Meanwhile, midfielder Bandar Al-Barazi has officially exited Al-Nasr and signed with Kazma SC.

### Huge fee could climb to \$156 million

## A new adventure: Wirtz joins Liverpool from Leverkusen

LONDON, June 21, (AP): Liverpool delivered a huge statement of intent after winning the Premier League title by signing Germany star Florian Wirtz from Bayer Leverkusen.

The transfer fee could climb to 116 million pounds (\$156 million), which would make the 22-year-old Wirtz the most expensive player in the history of British soccer.

"I feel very happy and very proud," Wirtz told the official Liverpool website. "Finally it's done and I was waiting for a long time."

"I'm really excited to have a new adventure in front of me. This was also a big point of my thoughts: that I want to have something completely new, to go out of the Bundesliga and to join the Premier League."

"I will see how I can perform there. I hope I can do my best. I spoke also with some players who played there and they told me that it's perfect for me and every pitch is perfect, you can enjoy every game. I'm really looking forward to playing my first game."

Liverpool, determined to keep moving forward despite securing a record-breaking 20th English top-flight title, splashed out a club record to bring in not only one of the best players from Germany, but one of the top youngsters in the world.

Wirtz has been a key first-team player for Leverkusen since he was 17. He was the outstanding attacking player in the team that won the Bundesliga and German Cup in 2023-24 without losing a game, and is a regular in Ger-



In this file photo, Leverkusen's Florian Wirtz in action during Bundesliga game between Leverkusen and Augsburg. (AP)

many's national team.

It's why Liverpool was ready to pay a guaranteed 100 million pounds, plus 16 million pounds in potential add-ons. Wirtz had two years left on his contract, giving Leverkusen leverage in negotiations.

The Premier League record for an initial fee was set when Chelsea signed Enzo Fernandez from Benfica for 106.7 million pounds (\$131.4 million at the time) in 2023, before the London club agreed to pay up to 115 million pounds (\$146 million at the time) for midfielder Moises Caicedo from Brighton later that year.

Liverpool manager Arne Slot arrived last summer and signed just one outfield player - forward Federico Chiesa - for the 2024-25 season.

Chiesa barely played and the Reds won the league by 10 points, after which Slot and some of his players - including Virgil van Dijk - spoke about there being big plans for this transfer window.

Having already signed right wing back Jeremie Frimpong from Leverkusen for a reported 35 to 40 million euros (\$39.7 million to \$45.4 million), Liverpool has returned to the German club to take Wirtz, who rejected an opportunity to join Bayern Munich - a Bundesliga rival which has long pursued him.

One obstacle to that move was the size of the fee Leverkusen wanted. Another was concern over how Wirtz might fit into the same lineup as Jamal Musiala, Germany's other standout

young attacking midfielder.

Losing Wirtz leaves Leverkusen and its new coach, Erik ten Hag with an even bigger rebuild following the departure of Xabi Alonso for Real Madrid.

Just after his 17th birthday, Wirtz became the youngest player in Leverkusen's history when he made his debut against Werder Bremen in May 2020, in an empty stadium at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A month later he was the youngest player to score in Bundesliga history, though that record has since been topped.

Wirtz's versatile attacking midfield play was a vital ingredient in Alonso transforming Leverkusen into a team that could win the Bundesliga and German Cup without losing a game.



Players fighting for the ball.

### Kazma set to take on Sulaibikhat

## Quarterfinal stage of Cup concludes

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 21: The eighth and final quarterfinal matches of the 57th Kuwait Handball Federation Cup will wrap up today at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex.

Kazma is set to take on Sulaibikhat at 5:00 pm, followed by Burhan vs. Qadsia at 6:30 pm.

Kazma, last season's league runner-up and Group B leader, was exempted from the preliminary round due to its strong performance. Sulaibikhat earned its place in the quarterfinals after defeating Al-Arabi 32-29, while Burhan advanced with a 35-33 win over Khaitan. Qadsia secured its spot by beating Fahheel 33-24.

The semifinals, scheduled for next Wednesday, will feature two matchups:

The winner of Kuwait vs. Al-Qurain will face the winner of Yar-mouk vs. Al-Salmiya.

The winners of today's matches

### Best of the Rest

**Muniain leaves San Lorenzo:** Former Spain international midfielder Iker Muniain raised the prospect of retirement on Friday after parting ways with Argentine club San Lorenzo.

The 32-year-old had been tied to the Buenos Aires club until December but exercised an option to terminate the contract early, citing personal reasons.

"I'm here to announce that I'm leaving San Lorenzo but a little piece of me will stay here forever," Muniain told a news conference in Buenos Aires, adding that he would need time to think about his future.

"This is the first time I've considered quitting playing. There is a good chance that this will happen, and I'll be giving it some more thought." Muniain made 26 appearances across all competitions for San Lorenzo, scoring four goals and providing one assist, after joining the club on a free transfer from Athletic Bilbao last September. (Xinhua)