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Opinion

Both Japan and Iran were once called ‘The Land of the Sun’

■ Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WHEN US President Donald Trump said the day before yesterday, “Let’s make Iran great again,” I was reminded of what happened to Japan after World War II. Japan once adopted a policy of direct military colonialism towards its neighbors, invading vast territories in the Asia-Pacific, including China, Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Burma, and Thailand.

In 1941, during World War II, Japanese aircraft launched massive strikes on Pearl Harbor, inflicting heavy losses on the United States. However, Washington recovered, entered the war with overwhelming force, and after acquiring nuclear weapons, retaliated against Japan, leading to its unconditional surrender. In the past two days, the US Army dealt the Iranian regime a major blow, widely seen as a prelude to its eventual downfall. When President Trump says, “Let’s make Iran great again,” he is indicating the significant changes expected in Iran and the region in the near future. Over the past 48 years, Tehran could have been in a much better position if it had invested its resources in internal development instead of spending over \$3.6 trillion on nuclear and missile programs, and nearly \$1.5 trillion on proxy groups it established in

Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, while pushing its own people to the brink of starvation. Experience has shown that the slogan of “exporting the revolution” was a misguided venture that alienated Iran from its neighbors, the Islamic world, and the international community. Moreover, Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear bomb has provoked global concern. As we highlighted yesterday, even friendly countries will reject this. How can it be acceptable for Iran to possess nuclear weapons when it promotes slogans that violate the UN Charter and international treaties, and its officials openly threaten to annihilate a nation? In the past, the Japanese emperor was regarded as a demigod, revered and sanctified by the Japanese people. This is similar to the current status of the Iranian Supreme Leader, who holds absolute authority

and cannot be questioned. He alone makes decisions without discussion or opposition. When Japan was forced to surrender, the emperor himself announced it over the radio, and it was the first time his people and the world had ever heard his voice. It is true that the religious doctrines of the old Japanese regime and the current Iranian regime differ. Both are based on unrealistic principles regarding fate or political outcomes. However, they are similar

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Follow me on:
@Ahmedaljarallah
Ahmed aljarallah
ahmed@aljarallah.com

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aljarallah.com



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq
Vehicles cautiously navigate through a dense dust storm blanketing a Kuwait highway on Monday.

Dust storms in Kuwait to ease after Thursday

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Dusty and windy weather is expected to persist across Kuwait until Thursday evening, according to Dirar Al-Ali, Director of the Meteorological Department. Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is currently experiencing the effects of India’s seasonal depression, which is bringing in a hot, dry air mass and moderate to strong northwesterly winds. These conditions are causing widespread dust and significantly reduced visibility, especially in open areas. Wind speeds are forecast to range from 25 to 50 kilometers per hour, pushing sea waves above six feet. The winds are expected to intensify further on Tuesday and Wednesday, reaching speeds between 35 and 65 kilometers per hour. As a result, horizontal visibility could drop below 1,000 meters and may disappear entirely in some exposed regions. Daytime temperatures will remain extremely hot and dusty, with highs between 44°C and 46°C. Night-time temperatures are expected to stay warm, ranging from 30°C to 33°C. Dust is likely to settle gradually during the evenings. Al-Ali noted that conditions should begin to improve and winds will ease starting Thursday evening, bringing some relief to residents after several days of challenging weather.

Death toll rises to 25

Kuwait condemns terror attack on church in Syria

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait expressed on Monday its utter condemnation and denunciation of the terror attack that targeted a Church in Syria, leading to several casualties. A statement by the Foreign Ministry reflected Kuwait’s unwavering stance against all acts of violence and terror, expressing in this regard deep condolences to the Syrian government, people, and families of the victims. It also wished swift recovery for those wounded in the attack. Meanwhile, the death toll from an attack on a church in Syria has gone up to 25, state media said Monday. The attack Sunday on the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox church during a Divine Liturgy in Dweil’a near Damascus was the first of its kind in Syria in years, and comes as Damascus under its de facto Islamist rule is trying to win the support of minorities. As President Ahmad al-Sharaa struggles to exert authority across the country, there have

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Education ministry streamlines exit permits for expat teachers

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: In response to the report that the newspaper published earlier regarding the delay in issuing exit permits to expatriate teachers, the Ministry of Education issued a circular to the directors general of educational districts and the Religious Education Department director on the need to update the procedures for approving the exit permit certificate for expatriate workers in schools. The circular, approved by acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public

Education Affairs Mansour Al-Dhafiri, stated that the ministry -- after contacting the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and updating the electronic system data -- decided to approve the issuance of exit permits through the integrated system, for implementation in all educational districts. The ministry confirmed that no school departure form will be accepted unless it is approved electronically through the system. It explained that exit permit approval will be through the school administrations and technical directorates, in accordance with approved

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Day by Day

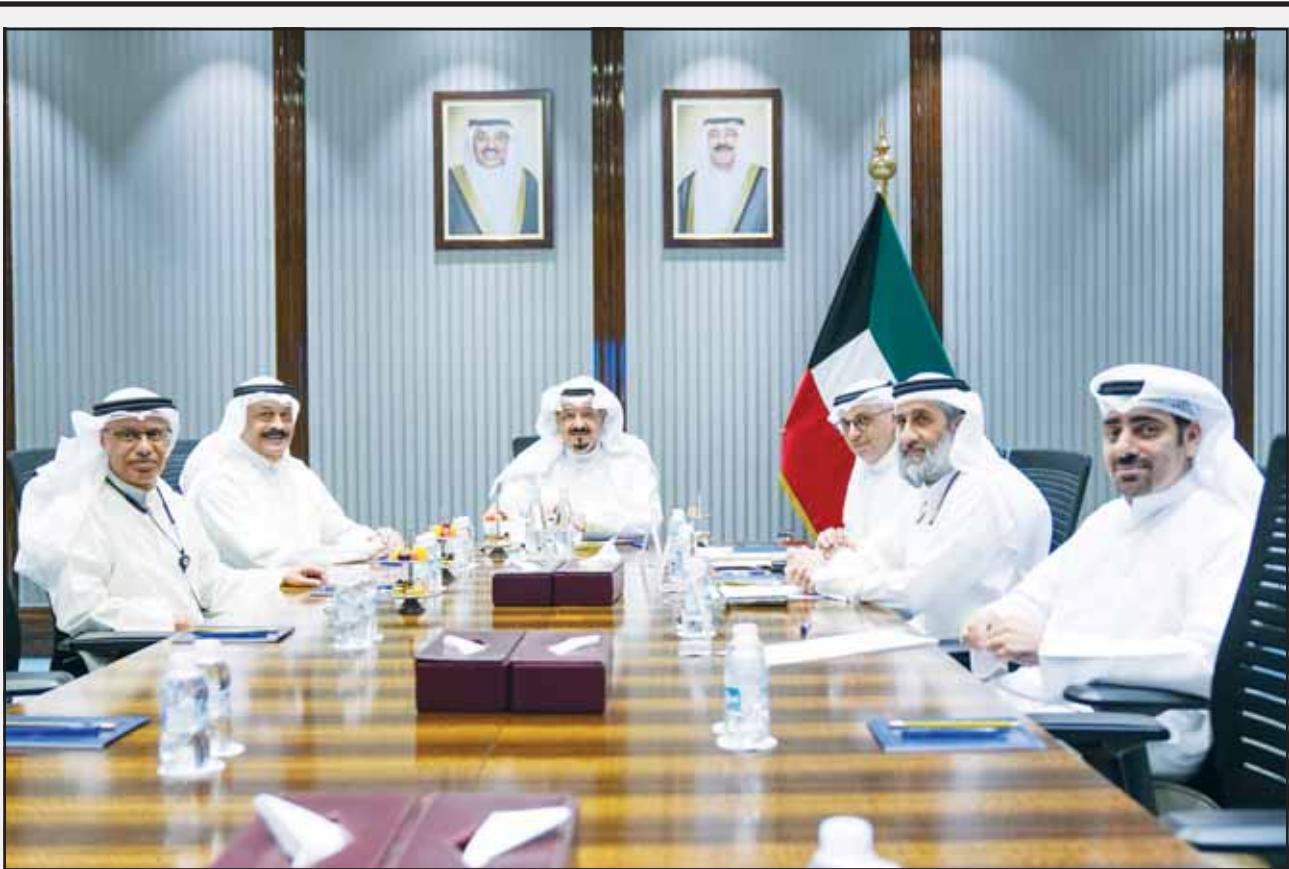
Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company has entered the coffee shop market, where you can enjoy a cup of coffee at a lower price than other coffee shops. The company pays no rent or other expenses. Long live competition. The coffee shop owners are upset. ... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

WORLD ON EDGE AS MIDDLE EAST BOILS

Iran launches attack on US base in Qatar

French Embassy in Kuwait sounds alarm over Iran-Israel tensions



HH the PM chairs a meeting at Bayan Palace to review Kuwait’s strategic energy and water projects. PM Diwan photo

Kuwait urges swift, on-schedule completion

PM reviews strategic energy and water projects

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting, Monday, to review the latest progress on the country’s strategic energy and water desalination projects at Bayan Palace. The discussions focused on key future ventures including Shagaya and Al-Abdal-

iya renewable energy projects, as well as Al-Zour North (phase 1 and 2), Al-Khiran Phase 1, Al-Nuwaiseeb phase 1, Subiya expansion power plants. His Highness the Prime Minister stressed the importance of harnessing all resources and overcoming obstacles to ensure they are accomplished within the timeframe, express-

ing the appreciation for the national efforts led by Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and other involved bodies. The meeting was attended by Head of the Prime Minister’s Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizim, and senior ministry officials.

- Diplomacy key to crisis resolution, says EU envoy
- Omani ambassador thanks Kuwait for repatriation support
- Calls for de-escalation amid missile exchange

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Iran said Monday night that it attacked American forces stationed at Qatar’s Al Udeid Air Base.

The announcement was made on state television as martial music played. A caption on the screen called it “a mighty and successful response by the armed forces of Iran to America’s aggression.” The attack came shortly after Qatar closed its airspace as a precaution amid threats from Iran. Explosions boomed Monday night in Qatar, home to a major U.S. air base, shortly after its airspace was closed due to Iranian threats of retaliation after American forces pounded its nuclear sites. Witnesses said they saw what appeared to be missiles in the skies over the country.

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Strait of Hormuz risk alarms Kuwaiti economists

Kuwait urged to diversify amid war uncertainty

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The United States of America has entered the Israeli-Iranian war; raising tensions in the region, creating a state of ambiguity, and opening the door wide to new challenges for the global economy in general and the Kuwaiti economy in particular. Kuwaiti economists have stressed the need to learn economic lessons from the current war and work hard to diversify sources of income; so that the Kuwaiti economy does not remain vulnerable to the risks of geopolitical tensions, which could pose a challenge to an econo-

my dependent on a single commodity -- oil -- taking into consideration the growing fear of seaports closure. In separate interviews with the newspaper, they warned that the continuation of the war for more than a month will negatively impact the economies of Kuwait and neighboring countries, primarily due to the decline in inter-regional trade and maritime shipping. They underscored the importance of expanding agri-

culture, livestock and the food industry; as well as increasing storage of goods that could last for many years in preparation for any emergency. Economic expert and former Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yahya Al-Sumait asserted that the escalation of the war between Israel and Iran and the entry of the United States as a party to the conflict will affect the national economy, especially since the country relies on imports and exports, not only of oil but of all other products. At the same time, he expects the situation to calm down by the beginning of next month, as the free world will not accept the continuation of

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8 Watani Investment Company’s funds outperform Kuwaiti, GCC conventional equity peers year-to-date



9 National Investments Company expands regionally with first office at DIFC to serve a wider client base

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:14	Asr	15:24
Sunrise ..	04:49	Maghrib ..	18:51
Zohr	11:50	Isha	20:23

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Very hot and dusty with moderate to fresh strong at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h.			
By Night: Hot to rather hot and dust will subside gradually			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	47	34	
Kuwait Airport	47	28	
Abdaly	47	27	
Jahra	47	30	
Salmiyah	42	33	
Ahmadi	42	30	
Nuwaisib	47	31	
Wafra	46	29	
Salmiyah	45	26	
Managish	48	28	

Other Voices

They are not criminals, but victims ... let us open doors of rehabilitation, not prisons

By Mohammad Alfathan

Drugs are no longer just a phenomenon – they have become an imminent threat that endangers the present and future of our youth. They silently infiltrate our neighborhoods, schools, and at times even our homes, through cunning and deceptive methods.

In Kuwait, it is no longer acceptable to remain silent about how easily this scourge spreads, nor to ignore the magnitude of the disaster it causes on every level: health, psychological, security, and social. How many young lives have been ruined, how many families torn apart, and how many crimes committed – because of a fatal dose, a hallucinogenic pill, or even just a “curi-

ous first try” that spiraled into devastating addiction?

Despite all this, we cannot discuss this issue without acknowledging the relentless efforts of the Ministry of Interior, which wages a daily battle against drug traffickers. The Ministry has made significant strides in seizing large quantities of narcotics and tracking down dealers without pause. These efforts deserve our full support and appreciation – the battle is tough, the enemy ever-changing, and their methods are constantly evolving, but our security forces’ determination is stronger.

Still, we must realize that this battle is not the responsibility of law enforcement alone. There is a vital

humanitarian and social dimension to this crisis, just as important as the security one. The addict – yes, the addict – is ultimately a victim, not a criminal in every case. A victim of weakness, neglect, bad influence, or even a deadly sense of emptiness.

That is why establishing specialized and modern rehabilitation centers for addicts has become a national, humanitarian, and moral necessity. Centers that offer treatment, not punishment; rehabilitation, not exclusion. Facilities that rebuild the human being from within – welcoming addicted young men and women, and reminding them that they still matter – to their families, their communities, their faith, and their nation.

Our society, in turn, must be a source of support – not judgment. A shelter, not a whip. We must embrace those who fall, not push them deeper into the abyss. It is our duty to pave the road back, to plant hope in the hearts of those who have lost it, and to affirm that mistakes can be corrected – and that the past should not dictate the future.

In the end, one truth remains crystal clear: There can be no security without awareness, no awareness without solidarity, and no solidarity without a genuine societal will to combat this plague through every means possible --- education, prevention, treatment, and legislation.

KTS jubilant over annulment of teaching staff ‘biometrics’

Why ‘good job’ bonus not sanctioned for supervisors?

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: President of Kuwait Teachers Society (KTS) Hamad Al-Houli said the decision to cancel the calculation of tardiness in the fingerprints attendance system for the teaching staff -- issued Monday by Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei -- is the major demand of teachers and those working in the educational

field due to its negative impact, as it has directly impacted the competency assessments of teachers and created confusion in the educational field.

On the other hand, as part of its ongoing efforts to demand for the rights of those working in the educational field; the society contacted acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, Administrative Affairs and Administrative Development Mansour Al-Dhafiri regarding the failure to include the excellent performance bonus for acting general supervisors and first subject supervisors

in the administrative staff lists, as it is the annual practice and in accordance with the relevant regulations.

It affirmed that general supervisors and first supervisors receive bonuses within the administrative body’s designated period.

The society also pointed out the ambiguity of the mechanism for entering assignments for technical supervisors and the actual work days, especially during the current period when job performance evaluation reports are being prepared. It added there is a defect in the system for calculating the actual work days for technical supervisors, which may affect their job performance evaluation.

HH Amir congratulates Duke of Luxembourg on Nat’l Day

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of congratulations to the Duke of Luxembourg, Grand Duke Henri on his country’s National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished Grand Duke Henri good health and well-being, and the Duchy of Luxembourg and its friendly people all progress and prosperity.

Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of

congratulations to the Duke of Luxembourg, Grand Duke Henri on his country’s national day.

His Highness the Crown Prince wished Grand Duke Henri good health and well-being, and the Duchy of Luxembourg and its friendly people all progress and prosperity.

Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of congratulations to the Duke of Luxembourg, Grand Duke Henri on his country’s national day.

Professionals to join market: Dr Iqbal

Flow of Pakistani medics to Kuwait to continue – envoy

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait Zafar Iqbal expressed pride in the strong and active Pakistani community residing in Kuwait stressing that Pakistanis around the world continue to contribute significantly to their homeland through remittances, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, Iqbal affirmed that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia remain the largest sources of remittances to Pakistan due to their sizeable Pakistani populations.

He was quick to add though that Kuwait also plays a vital role. “Between July 2024 and April 2025 alone, Pakistan received \$718 million in remittances from Kuwait. If this figure is divided by the number of Pakistanis here -- estimated at 93,000 -- Kuwait ranks first globally in terms of remittances per capita from Pakistani communities abroad. This



Dr. Zafar Iqbal

is the highest per capita remittance rate among all countries with Pakistani expatriates,” he added, citing publicly available data from the State Bank of Pakistan.

He then explained that population estimates used for these calculations were provided by the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and that the comparison strictly focused on remittances from Pakistani communities; not other nationalities such as Indians, Bangladeshis or Egyptians.

On the possible arrival of additional Pakistani healthcare workers, he confirmed that “the deployment of Pakistani medical and healthcare personnel to Kuwait is an ongoing process. We continue to provide support based on the staffing needs communicated by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health.”

When asked about the status of visa issuance for Pakistanis, Iqbal stated that “as of May 1, visa procedures for Pakistani nationals have been facilitated. We look forward to seeing more professionals from Pakistan join the Kuwaiti labor market and meet the needs of local companies.”



KUNA photo
Commander of Kuwait Naval Forces Rear Admiral Saif Al-Hamlan meets UK's Senior Defence Advisor for the Middle East and North Africa, Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren.

Kuwait, UK discuss military ties

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Commander of Kuwait Naval Forces Rear Admiral Saif Al-Hamlan discussed on Sunday with the UK’s Senior Defence Advisor for the Middle East and North Africa, Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren,

issues of mutual interest.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defence said that the meeting, held at Mohammad Al-Ahmad Naval Base, featured friendly discussions and an exchange of views on shared military matters.

Al-Ghali given additional duties

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah recently issued a ministerial decision assigning Director of the Elderly Department Abdulrahman Al-Ghali to

carry out the duties of acting Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Welfare Sector Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari while the latter is on leave in addition to his original tasks, reports Al-Anba daily.

Other Voices

Question: Why does the West defend Israel?

By Ahmad alsarraf

IN a 2014 article published by “Middle East Transparent” that was recently republished, Mohammad Al-Hashemi offers a perspective with notable revisions.

He wrote, “Arabs often repeat two naive narratives to explain the West’s bias in favor of Israel. The first claims Israel is merely a colonial outpost of the West and the second views it as the West’s “infidel thorn” aimed at undermining Islam.”

According to Al-Hashemi, the truth is more complex. While the West’s deep-seated guilt over the Holocaust, committed by the Nazis, does play a role, it alone cannot fully explain the scale and intensity of the West’s unwavering support for Israel.

Therefore, the explanation lies in the following facts, which many Arabs find difficult to grasp:

1. The political elites who founded and shaped the State of Israel aligned their interests with the West, not the Soviets. As a result, they built their institutions on Western, secular, democratic, and liberal foundations, embracing freedoms such as women’s rights, a free economy, peaceful transfers of power, and an independent judiciary.

2. Israel’s pursuit of technological and industrial excellence has elevated its status in the developed world, making it a valuable strategic partner due to its meaningful contributions to global innovation and cultural advancement.

3. Israel has succeeded in forging strong alliances with major powers, including NATO, and maintains a deeply rooted strategic partnership with the United States.

4. In contrast, the West often views many of Israel’s regional adversaries as repressive, authoritarian regimes that are openly hostile to the values and principles of Western democracy.

This is in addition to the authoritarian powers that have dominated Palestinian decision-making since 1948, without a constitution, parliament, functioning institutions, or any peaceful transfer of power.

Al-Hashemi concluded his article by asserting that the West supports Israel because it sees it as an ally and a democratic, parliamentary, multi-party, and liberal state with peaceful transitions of power, European-style institutions, and a high level of technological and industrial development.

In contrast, Israel is surrounded by dictatorial regimes ruled by small circles of power, many of whose leaders specialize in destruction and violence, openly express hatred for the West and the United States, and carry out acts of terrorism such as bombings, stabbings, and vehicular attacks in major Western capitals, while calling for the annihilation of the State of Israel.

I believe I know the author of the article, as

he is Kuwaiti, but he prefers to remain anonymous for personal reasons. I do not feel obligated to name him, even though my relationship with him and others has recently been strained due to our positions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I find it difficult to understand their unconditional moral support for Israel and their failure to condemn its repeated crimes. Perhaps it stems from their hatred of Hamas or their attachment to wealth. However, no one with a shred of dignity or reason, who is genuinely engaged in public affairs, can adopt such a dismissive stance that casts doubt on the legitimacy of Palestinian rights.

I agree with the author that Israel is an oasis of security, the only democracy in the region, a haven for inventors, and a homeland for brilliant minds. This stands in contrast to Palestine and several other Arab countries, whose dire and disappointing conditions I have written about extensively in hundreds of articles.

However, none of this blinds me to the reality of Palestinian rights. If a thousand of the world’s top scientists, doctors, inventors, and Nobel Prize winners, Jews or otherwise, came to my home, claimed ownership, and forcibly evicted me, would I be expected to accept it simply because they are accomplished individuals, embrace a Western lifestyle, support democracy, and have the backing of the developed world?



email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw



KFF photo
Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Lt Gen Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi receives Director General of the National Emergency, Crisis, and Disaster Management Authority of the United Arab Emirates H.E. Ali Rashid Al-Neyadi.

Kuwait & UAE discuss ways to boost crisis management ties

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Lieutenant General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi received Director General of the National Emergency, Crisis, and Disaster Management Authority of the United Arab Emirates H.E. Ali Rashid Al-Neyadi, along with his accompanying delegation, on Monday morning.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the meeting took place at the KFF headquarters in the presence of the Head of the National Cybersecurity Center Eng. Abeer Al-Awadhi, as well as several

senior officers of KFF.

The two sides discussed ways to strengthen cooperation and integration in the fields of emergency, crisis, and disaster management. They highlighted the importance of enhancing collaboration, exchanging expertise, and maintaining continuous coordination to strengthen preparedness and ensure rapid and effective responses to various challenges.

A range of topics of mutual interest related to crisis and disaster management were also discussed during the meeting.

Homes supplied safe water: MEW

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has confirmed that the water supplied to homes undergoes rigorous round-the-clock testing to ensure the highest standards of quality and safety, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources from the ministry.

Sources affirmed that this water fully complies with international specifications. They said water samples are regularly collected from various distribution networks and production facilities and analyzed in the state-of-the-art laboratories of the ministry.

LOCAL

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Khomeinism'... until when?

No to extremist ideology

"THE war between Iran and Israel has brought to light many contradictions and a deep sense of political, religious, and national confusion," columnist Dr. **Khalid Ahmad Al-Tarrah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Iran remains deeply entrenched in the ideology of the Khomeini revolution and its constitution. On the other hand, Israel is no less extreme in its outright rejection of a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict."

"While strong criticism of Iran is justified from Gulf, Arab, and Islamic perspectives, this does not imply support for Israel's military actions. Rather, it calls for a frank, pragmatic political analysis that views the current situation through a realistic lens."

"We, as Gulf peoples who are neighbors to the land of the Khomeini revolution, did not interfere in the Iranian people's decision to establish a religious state. Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf states respected that choice. However, Tehran did not stop at its so-called Islamic revolution."

"A realistic and pragmatic assessment must take into account Iran's continued interference in the region through its involvement in Lebanon by creating the terrorist group Hezbollah, its support for the brutal Assad regime in Syria, its arming of the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, and its backing of the Houthi militias in Yemen. These actions were aimed to control the fate of the Middle East, spread political instability, and remotely orchestrate terrorism."

"I would like to highlight the role of hardline Iranian religious authorities in fabricating justifications for interfering in the internal affairs of Gulf states under the guise of supporting the so-called oppressed, and in turning the Hajj pilgrimage into an occasion for inciting unrest."

"Iranian diplomacy has abandoned the principles of the Vienna Convention in favor of the constitution of the Khomeini revolution. It has rejected the language of dialogue and dismissed the Gulf and Arab consensus on the Durra gas field and Kuwait's sovereign right to its natural resources. Tehran has also exploited its influence in Iraq to interfere with the Abdullah Port agreement and hinder its implementation."

"Despite this, the Gulf Cooperation Council states did not hesitate to condemn the Israeli attack on Iran and launched an active political and diplomatic initiative aimed at promoting regional security and stability, and at sparing the Iranian people the devastation of war."

"The Iran nuclear deal must be recalled after the initial agreement in Lausanne. Instead of prioritizing the basic needs of the Iranian people, Tehran moved ahead with the S-300 missile deal with Russia in 2015 and continued to channel resources into fueling Houthi terrorist operations and other regional conflicts."

"It is also important to note that during the Gulf War, Israel and the United States agreed not to respond militarily to Saddam Hussein's regime. Iraq escalated its missile attacks on Israel after invading Kuwait, yet Tel Aviv honored its commitment to Washington by not retaliating, ensuring that the international focus remained on liberating Kuwait."

"I am not interested in debating religious beliefs, but I firmly oppose 'Khomeinism' and reject all forms of extremist religious ideology, whether Sunni, Shiite, or political Islam. What we need is a moderate Arab and Islamic perspective on the Iranian-sponsored terror in the region, and a critical, realistic political analysis that does not shy away from identifying the true source of unrest, tension, and terrorism, which is Khomeinist Iran."

"A realistic vision reinforces our responsibility to protect our societies and future generations from destructive developments, harmful superstitions, and sectarian fanaticism."

"In this context, I want to stress the importance of launching a diplomatic initiative to ensure that the Iranian embassy in Kuwait adheres to the Vienna Convention, refrains from inciting division, and ceases its support for the so-called 'questionnaire' promoted by Samir Arshadi."

"I also believe it would be both important and constructive to hold a referendum among the Iranian people to ask a simple but pressing question - 'Khomeinism... until when?'"

"Many have asked me to what extent the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Higher Education are aware of or concerned about Samir Arshadi's questionnaire. My answer is simple - I have no idea."

Also:

"Not all smiles are the same, and official positions do not always brighten every face. Some individuals, in the course of their duties, bring a human dimension that turns a meeting into an unforgettable experience. This was exactly what I encountered during my meeting with the UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi. Kuwaiti writer **Jaber Al-Tamimi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily."

"Al-Neyadi did not hide behind diplomatic courtesy or the constraints of protocol. Instead, he came across as a true statesman with a warm spirit, a genuine, natural smile reflecting a friendly nature free of pretense, and a sociable demeanor that effortlessly bridges distances and honors those around him without making them feel flattered."

"Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Al-Neyadi is that, for him, relationships are not mere tasks to be completed but bridges to be built. Ambassador Al-Neyadi acts not just as a representative of his country, but as an embodiment of an ethical approach to political engagement that blends humility and dignity with firmness and refined taste."

"In every gathering, attendees listen attentively to his words, not because his voice is loud, but because his conversation is profound, persuasive, and calming. Those who smile often should never be underestimated. I quickly realized that behind his cheerful demeanor lies a sharp, well-informed mind, not only in politics but also in economics, development indicators, and everything related to the future of nations."

"One day, I asked Ambassador Al-Neyadi about the secret behind his country's

remarkable development leaps. I was surprised by the response of an expert, not just a diplomat. He spoke with the confidence of someone who understands every angle, backing his insights with data rather than slogans. He highlighted promising sectors, explained the impact of investing in people, and detailed the qualitative economic transformations his country has witnessed, thanks to wise leadership that places the citizen at the heart of its vision."

"Ambassador Al-Neyadi did not rely on notes or prepared statements; instead, he answered precisely from memory. It became clear to me that this man represents his country not only through his presence but through his deep understanding, pride, and genuine belief in what he shares."

"Ambassador Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi reminds us that politics can be conducted with a smile, not with claws, and that successful diplomacy goes beyond signing agreements, but it is reflected in noble conduct, attentive listening, and the honor of representing one's country on the world stage."

"I left my meeting with him convinced that I had been in the presence of a wise man who embodies his country's sophistication and high values, not merely someone who conveys its voice."

"American novelist Kate Douglas Wiggin once said, 'There is a kind of magic in going far away and returning transformed.' This is exactly what happened to me and my beloved family during our visit to the enchanting and radiant sister country, the Sultanate of Oman," Kuwaiti writer **Sheikha Hessa Al-Hamoud Al-Salem Al-Sabah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This trip, which included a comprehensive program, was a precious gift from the virtuous lady Hind Al-Bahr to her grandchildren and to my grandchildren, Nasser and Hessa. She is a noble woman, a heroine, and a freedom fighter who, along with many other Kuwaiti women, wrote an honorable chapter in the history of resistance against Saddam's brutal invasion. My heartfelt thanks, respect, and appreciation go to her."

"The truth is that this trip with my daughters, Sheikha Raheel and Sheikha Sarah, and my grandchildren, Nasser and Hessa, was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Eid Al-Adha with our brothers in the beloved Sultanate of Oman, which is known as the 'Paradise of the Gulf' for its stunning landscapes of valleys, plains, and lush greenery."

"We stayed at the international Shangri-La Resort, thoughtfully chosen by the esteemed Mrs. Hind Al-Bahr. Coincidentally, it is also our favorite place whenever we visit Oman, thanks to the resort's exceptional staff who provide outstanding service and build genuine relationships with guests, inspiring them to return again and again."

"Out of loyalty and gratitude to my beloved son, the late Sheikh Nasser Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah (May he rest in peace, forgive our shortcomings, and avenge him and all the martyrs), the resort management was thoughtful in providing his favorite food and drink as a tribute to his memory. He used to be actively involved in various marine conservation efforts."

"One of the resort's most remarkable features, reflecting its noble and impactful humanitarian role, is its employment of wonderful young people with disabilities, a compassionate gesture that honors their resilience and strong will."

"Truly, the success of any tourist resort depends on the excellence of its staff. My sincere thanks and deep appreciation go to the resort's management for their outstanding service and hospitality, which made us feel right at home."

"In the Sultanate of Oman, one cannot help being awestruck by the abundance of historical and recreational sites, each telling a story of civilization, antiquity, and tolerance. Among these are the world-famous Salalah Nature Reserve, the stunning Sultan Qabous Mosque, Al-Alam Palace, the National Museum, the vast Wahiba Sands, and the historic Nizwa Fort, which served as the country's capital from the eighth to the twelfth centuries and was a center of science and knowledge during that time."

"The country boasts countless historical landmarks and breathtaking natural landscapes. My journey was made even more memorable by the company of two former officers - one served in the Royal Air Force and the other in the Royal Navy. These men, who once guarded the nation's borders, are living embodiments of its history and heritage. They have my deepest appreciation and respect."

"Perhaps the most remarkable feature of our sisterly Sultanate of Oman is its religious tolerance, despite the diversity of Islamic sects. The Ibadi sect is predominant, with smaller communities of Sunni and Shiite Muslims. However, the Omani constitution criminalizes sectarianism in religious discourse, allowing followers of all sects to live together in genuine harmony, a quality sadly lacking in many other Arab societies."

"On my way back to Muscat Airport, I met Omani pilot Hussein Abdulkhaleq, the man behind the famous video in which he spoke to the control tower officers at Kuwait Airport after the 26th Gulf Cup. On behalf of the Omani people - both leadership and citizens - he expressed heartfelt thanks to the Kuwaiti people for their warm hospitality. His gracious and courteous words reflected the noble character of the brotherly Omani people and the deep historical ties between Kuwait and Oman."

"Still at Muscat Airport, my eyes fell upon the esteemed Lady Safaa Al-Hashem, sitting quietly and serenely, as if resting after an honorable parliamentary campaign in Abdullah Al-Salem Hall. My greetings and deepest appreciation go to her, and to all the honorable people of our beloved country."

"I conclude my article by praying to God to grant us security and safety, to guide our leaders toward what is best for the country and its people, and to spread peace and stability throughout our Gulf and the entire world. And, God willing, we will return to the Sultanate of Oman, God's paradise on earth."

— Compiled by **Mahmoud Attiyeh/Simi K. Kutty**



Representatives of various authorities who conducted the raids.

KFF finds several violations in Al-Jahra bachelor homes

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The relevant authorities, including the Public Authority for Manpower and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, in coordination with the Kuwait Fire Force, recently carried out an inspection campaign in the Jahra area. The initiative focused on bachelor accom-

modations to verify compliance with fire safety and occupational safety regulations, reports Al-Seyassah.

During the campaign, several violations were identified, and legal action was taken against properties that failed to meet the required technical and safety standards.



Bunk-bed accommodation



The establishment is sealed.

KFF shuts many shops violating safety rules

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) carried out an inspection campaign in Sharq on Sunday evening in cooperation with several government entities, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, Kuwait Municipality, and the Public Authority for Manpower.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the campaign, which was aimed to identify buildings and facilities that violate fire safety and prevention regulations, was led by the Director of Capital Fire Prevention Sector Brigadier General Mohammed Yousef Ahmed.

It resulted in violations and the administrative closure of several establishments due to their failure to meet the safety requirements of KFF, as well as regulations from other participating authorities.

Co-op manager faces fine in funds scandal

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Criminal Court imposed a fine of KD 5,000 on the manager of a cooperative society, appointed by administrative decision, after convicting him of intentionally harming shareholders' funds and causing financial losses exceeding KD 72,000.

This case is considered one of the most prominent financial and administrative violations within the cooperative sector.

According to the case file, the defendant had rented out 48 chalets at a tourist resort for a total of KD 56,160 without consulting the shareholders or verifying their willingness to use them. It later realized that the shareholders did not use the chalets, which led to huge financial losses for the cooperative society.

The case documents revealed administrative violations, including the unjustified removal of several employees from the fingerprint system and the appointment of new employees despite the cooperative society having no need for them. This was deemed a waste of human and financial resources.

After receiving complaints from shareholders, the Ministry of Social Affairs immediately formed a specialized investigation committee. The committee reviewed documents, contracts, and administrative and financial records, and found that the manager had committed serious violations. Based on the committee's report, the case was referred to the Public Prosecution, which conducted investigations and subsequently referred the accused to court.



Destruction caused by the fire .

Fire wrecks 3 vehicles

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Fire engulfed three vehicles, part of a canopy, and a home garden in Riqqa on Sunday evening.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), firefighters from Mangaf and Fahaeel fire stations rushed to the location and brought the fire under control before it spread further. No injuries were reported.

Mobile groceries lifted

Many food items origin & dates tampered with

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced that inspection teams, in coordination with the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), uncovered a warehouse belonging to a food distribution company where the country of origin was being altered on various food items, including dried shrimp, nuts, spices, and legumes, in quantities exceeding 23 tons, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Expiry dates were also found to have been tampered with, and a huge amount of expired products was seized. The ministry confirmed that legal action is being taken against the company.

□ □ □

Groceries lifted: The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality announced that the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department of Ahmadi Municipality has removed seven mobile grocery vehicles for not being stationed at their designated locations as specified in their licenses, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The vehicles were transferred to municipal custody in Khairan and Nuwaiseeb.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) affirms that the misuse of government resources or public funds for personal gain is a punishable crime under the law, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Nazaha's Awareness and Education Supervisor Dr. Hussein Al-Sabbagh explained in a video posted on Nazaha's official X account that employees must avoid any conflict between their personal interests and their professional duties. If a conflict of interest arises, the employee should refrain from making any related decisions and must report the conflict immediately.

Death sentence for killer upheld

Move to clear cases backlog

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Court of Cassation, headed by Judge Sultan Boursli, on Sunday upheld the death sentence imposed on the killer of Ahmed Al-Jalal -- a citizen.

Based on the psychiatric report submitted to the court; it was declared that the defendant was aware of his actions, so he is legally responsible for them.

During the trial, Attorney Hussein Al-Asfour demanded maximum penalty for the defendant; indicating the psychiatric report proved beyond reasonable doubt that the perpetrator was sane and aware of his crime, and that he did not benefit from any excuse or mitigating circumstance.

In its pleadings before the Criminal Court, the Public Prosecution -- represented by Deputy Director of the Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Prosecutions Nasser Al-Masbahi -- stated that the defendant "deliberately took an innocent life without justification and devoid of humanity. He also deprived the victim of his most sacred right -- the right to life."

In the grounds for the first-instance ruling, the court stated that "the defendant deliberately killed the victim by stabbing him with a knife with the intention to take his life, causing injuries described in the forensic report that led to his death. He also deliberately assaulted the other victim, Jaber Sheikh, in a physical manner, as proven in the investigations."

The court stated this is one of the most

heinous crimes known to mankind, as it foreshadows criminal behavior dominated by evil factors that necessitate general deterrence, achievement of justice, and proper implementation of the rule of law.

The court convicted the defendant of the two charges against him, as amended; and decided to punish him in accordance with articles 149 and 160 of the Penal Code and Article 1/172 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

□ □ □

Move to clear backlog: Justice Minister Judge Nasser Al-Sumait announced that the Civil Service Council has approved the request of the Ministry of Justice to form 10 judicial committees to deal with the backlog of more than 81,000 appeals at the Court of Cassation.

In a press statement on Sunday, Al-Sumait revealed this initiative is part of the commitment of his ministry to support the judiciary and improve its efficiency. He explained that the committees will help the Court of Cassation manage the large volume of appeals systematically, ensuring consistent and stable judicial operations.

He said this is in compliance with the directive of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to improve work mechanisms and expedite dispute resolution, indicating the aim is to reinforce justice and boost public confidence in the judicial system.

He affirmed the ongoing collaboration of the ministry with the relevant bodies to provide technical, human and logistical support to enable the judiciary to fulfill its duties effectively and meet the expectations of the political leadership and society for a just and efficient judiciary.

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Deputy Foreign Minister with UK's Senior Defence Adviser to the Middle East.

Kuwaiti Deputy FM receives UK's Senior Defence Advisor for MENA

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Sunday the UK's Senior Defence Advisor for the Middle East and North Africa, Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, on the occasion of his visit to the country.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the meeting included discussions on ways to enhance bilateral relations and strengthen cooperation between the two countries, in addition to the latest developments on regional and international scenes.

KOC extends major tender to expand southern oil capacity

Deadline pushed to July 22 for construction

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has extended the deadline for bids on a significant Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) tender.

This tender, which includes the construction and installation of the third Oil Separation Gathering Center and third Water Injection Station in South Kuwait, is now due on July 22 instead of June 22.

Sources told the newspaper that this tender is a strategic component of KOC's broader initiative to develop oil fields in the southern part of the country. They said this development is crucial due to the abundant oil reserves in the South, and its need for enhance-

ments to ensure sustained and increased production.

The southern region houses Kuwait's most vital and largest oil fields, including the second-largest field in the world -- Burgan, along with its associated fields like Maqwa and Al-Ahmadi, as well as the Managish and Umm Qadir fields.

In addition, the Al-Julaia offshore field, discovered in January 2025, is located in the South. It boasts of estimated reserves of approximately 800 million barrels of medium-density oil and 600 billion cubic feet of associated gas.

KOC's objective in building the third water injection station is to boost its production capacity in the southern region. Water injection is a key technique that significantly aids oil extraction from reservoirs, utilizing high-pressure technologies to seal any voids in wells.

Sources confirmed that KOC intends to implement Gathering and Separation Center 3 and Water Injection Station 3 to connect

the company's oil fields through an extensive network. "This network will facilitate the feeding of oil from the gathering centers, ensuring that processing operations are carried out in a consistent and nearly uniform manner, especially with the interconnected wells," they added.

The company intends to issue several major tenders throughout 2025 to increase the production capacity of all oil and gas fields, including those in the northern regions. Production enhancement in the northern fields is being achieved through the agreements that KOC reached with international companies.

Despite a decline in production in recent years, the Burgan field remains robust and continues to be one of the world's richest oil fields. Kuwait will depend on it for many years to come. KOC is working hard to restore full production to its previous level of around 2.4 million barrels per day -- an increase from its current production of about 1.7 million barrels per day.

Platform enables video calls for housing transactions

PAHW launches e-service for elderly, disabled

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Eng. Abdullatif Al-Mishari has launched a unique electronic service -- the first of its kind among government e-services -- as it eases the completion of transactions for the elderly and people with severe disabilities without the need to visit the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

Deputy Director General for Public Relations and Development and PAHW spokesperson Omar Al-Ruwaeh said in a statement on the sidelines of the launching ceremony that the service aims to enable the elderly and people with severe disabilities to complete their housing transactions without the need to visit PAHW.

He explained this is done through video confer-

encing technology on the Sahel government application.

He indicated that the service enhances the efforts of the authority towards digital transformation, especially since it greatly contributes to the elimination of paperwork and reliance on the new electronic mechanism.

He stated that PAHW has trained employees in the Citizen Service Department-Visual Communication Division to process transactions and handle incoming appointments through Sahel once the beneficiaries submit their applications, relying on government electronic connectivity to complete transactions

He said the service will be developed and the number of beneficiaries will be expanded after the implementation of the first phase and a study of its results and the positive outcomes are achieved.

He added the launching of this service is in compliance with the directives of the Council of Ministers and the minister to develop electronic services and provide smart solutions that facilitate transactions for citizens and meet their housing needs efficiently.



Al-Mishari

PACI calls on 591 residents to update their addresses to avoid KD 100 fine

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has called on 591 individuals to update their residential addresses within one month by either visiting PACI headquarters or using the Sahel application.

PACI published the names of these individuals in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Yaum, confirming that their addresses were removed due to declarations by real estate owners or because their buildings were demolished.

It warned that failure to update their information will result in a fine of KD 100 per person, in accordance with Article 33 of Law No. 32/1982.



KFAED photo
Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development illuminated in blue.

KFAED lights up HQ in blue to show solidarity with refugees worldwide

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) announced that its headquarters has been illuminated in blue to show solidarity with refugees worldwide, highlighting its humanitarian commitment and emphasizing the importance of international cooperation in supporting refugees.

In a press statement issued recently, KFAED's Acting Director General Waleed Al-Bahar affirmed that Kuwait and KFAED play a significant role in assisting refugees globally, working closely with United Nations agencies and international organizations dedicated to refugee affairs and human rights.

He explained that KFAED maintains strong partnerships with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN-

HCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It also collaborates with the Children's Cancer Center in Lebanon, the King Hussein Cancer Foundation in Jordan, and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

Kuwait has long been keen to adopt and implement various initiatives to support refugees worldwide, reflecting its deep-rooted legacy of generosity and humanitarianism.

On this occasion, Al-Bahar affirmed that KFAED will continue its efforts to assist refugees and improve their living and health conditions through effective development and humanitarian partnerships, in coordination with its international and regional partners.

Completion set for January 2026

PART advances key rainwater drainage project in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) continues the implementation of the contract for the construction and maintenance of the rainwater drainage network in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is part of an ambitious national plan aimed at strengthening water infrastructure and mitigating the risks of seasonal rains. Work on this project began on Jan 5, 2025 with a 365-day implementation period and a contract value of KD4.488 million. Contract delivery is scheduled for Jan 4, 2026.

According to the technical report issued by the authority for the month of May, the completion rate of the project has reached 52.34 percent; asserting this is a remarkable progress in implementing the engineering phases as per the timetable. Excavation using heavy equipment was completed in the first phase, reinforcing steel works for the roof were implemented in the third phase, reinforced concrete was completed in the fourth phase, moisture insulation was implemented for the roofs and walls, and work stations and steel structures were prepared. Shutter and reinforcing steel works are underway for the walls, as well as the external insulation layers, which are considered the

first line of defense against water leaks.

Sources informed the daily that the project is not limited to a tank and a sewer, as it includes advanced technologies, such as micro-tunneling to avoid the existing oil pipelines within the scope of work. They said the project will include a 1,230-meter-long main reservoir with a capacity of 52,000 cubic meters; a 92-meter-long sewer and a 102-meter-long micro-tunnel. It will also be connected to two existing reservoirs to enhance hydraulic integration. It has six implementation phases, ranging in length from 92 to 500 meters, to ensure optimal engineering gradation in handling and distributing water, sources explained.

Sources affirmed this project is a vital component of the State's plan to fortify rainwater drainage networks; particularly in new residential areas, such as South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, which now require radical solutions to adapt to seasonal climate change and keep pace with rapid urban expansion.

Sources pointed out that improving the efficiency of water infrastructure is no longer an option, but a necessity. "This project is essential in building a more flexible, effective and sustainable integrated network," they added.

PAM reports 648 complaints in April

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Domestic Labor Recruitment Regulatory Department of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) released its statistics for the month of April, revealing that the number of registered domestic labor recruitment offices in Kuwait has reached 486, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The report explained that a total of 648 complaints were received during the month, six new operating licenses were issued, 28 licenses were renewed, four license cancellation requests were submitted, 26 licenses were suspended, and suspension was lifted on 24 licenses.

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Continued from Page 1

Both Japan

in their combat doctrine. Today, Iranian elites, both inside and outside Iran, discuss the potential future of this vast country with its large population, outstanding capabilities, and abundant natural resources. Iran could one day match Japan in economic and developmental terms.

That is why the late US President Harry Truman’s 1945 decision to force Japan’s surrender was, in fact, an opportunity for Japan to reclaim its status as the “Land of the Rising Sun” in invention and innovation, eventually becoming the world’s second-largest economy after the United States for a long time.

Iran was also known as the “Land of the Sun”. The image of a lion and sun once adorned the banner of the Iranian imperial regime. It was a great country by all standards, until the current regime came to power and isolated Iran from the world.

History, it seems, repeats itself with different events and people. One recurring lesson is that “revolutionary Iran” may soon become a part of the past. In the near future, Iran could once again become a great nation. Will the pillars of the current regime recognize these signs? Or will they persist in their stubbornness until someone else replaces them?

Education ministry

authorities, without the need to refer to other districts or entities. “Each entity will bear responsibility for the accuracy and validity of the procedures,” it added.

It called for full compliance with the new mechanism and the avoidance of using paper forms. It also emphasized the need to adhere to the administrative hierarchy and follow the steps outlined in the procedures manual for issuing an exit permit certificate attached to the circular.

The electronic mechanism consists of specific steps, including entering employee data, specifying the type and date of the permit, submitting the application for approval by the direct supervisor, and then final approval by the employer through the system. The mechanism also provides electronic follow-up forms to control departure and return times.

Al-Dhafiri instructed all departments to prioritize the issue and deal with it urgently to ensure the full implementation of the mechanism, prevent violations related to attendance and departure, and enhance integrity and administrative discipline in schools.

Kuwait condemns

been concerns about the presence of sleeper cells of extremist groups in the war-torn country.

The ministry and most witnesses said a gunman entered the church, and started firing at the people there before detonating his explosive vest.

SANA, citing the Health Ministry, said 63 other people were wounded in the attack. Father Fadi Ghattas told The Associated Press after the attack that some 350 people were praying at the church.

The United States, the European Union and governments across the Middle East condemned the attack, decrying it as a terrorist attack.

Widespread denunciation followed across the region and internationally. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi also condemned the attack, emphasizing the GCC’s unwavering support for Syria in the face of terrorism. He called for enhanced regional and international cooperation to support Syria, while expressing sympathy to the victims’ families and wishing the wounded a speedy recovery.

Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Abul-Gheit joined the chorus of condemnation, voicing deep concern over the targeting of civilians in a place of worship. Abul-Gheit highlighted the persistent threat posed by terrorist groups, particularly ISIS (Daesh), and the destabilizing effects of ongoing insecurity. He expressed hope that the Syrian government would succeed in countering such threats and reaffirmed the Arab League’s solidarity with Syria, supporting efforts for a peaceful transition that ensures the rights and aspirations of all Syrians.

The European Union also issued a statement strongly condemning the attack on Mar Elias Church in Damascus, which claimed numerous lives. The EU extended its deepest condolences to the victims’ families, describing the assault as “heinous and cowardly violence against Christians,” and underscored that such acts are attacks on all Syrians. The statement called for intensified efforts to combat terrorism and reiterated the EU’s support for the Syrian people and transitional authorities in ensuring security and non-discrimination for all citizens.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took to social media to denounce the “heinous” explosion, offering condolences to the Syrian government, people, and bereaved families. Erdogan pledged that Turkiye would not permit instability in Syria and reaffirmed his country’s support for the Syrian people.

Egypt’s Foreign Ministry also condemned the attack, expressing sincere condolences to the victims’ families and wishing the injured a swift recovery. The ministry reiterated Egypt’s rejection of all forms of terrorism and violence and called for greater regional and international efforts to safeguard global security and stability.

Kuwait urged

the war and its disastrous repercussions for people and the global economy.

Economic expert and head of the Accounting Department at Kuwait Uni-

versity Dr. Sadiq Al-Bassam pointed out that the only benefit to the national economy from the Iran-Israel war is the rise in the price of oil, which leads to increased State revenues. “However, the negative repercussions affect many other areas, foremost of which is the possibility of higher commodity prices if the war is prolonged or the Strait of Hormuz is closed,” he disclosed.

Al-Bassam emphasized the need to learn lessons from current events in order to diversify the country’s resources, while expanding the strategic reserve for non-perishable goods to five years. He thinks six months is insufficient, especially since Kuwait is in a highly sensitive region.

He also stressed the importance of expanding livestock, agriculture and the food industry to prevent any crisis should the war continue.

Abdullah Al-Gharib, advisor for international organizations affairs at Kuwait Journalists Association, stated that the continuation of the war has negative repercussions for the national economy; including the suspension of Kuwaiti oil exports if vital ports through which tankers pass are closed. This is especially true given that Iran, in the midst of this war, is still threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, he added.

He warned that the closure of vital ports will affect the buying and selling of food products, because the continuation of the war for more than a month will affect food supplies; prompting food traders to raise prices.

He said the situation could lead to a halt in flights, which will lead to numerous economic disasters, especially since commercial aviation transports many daily food products to Kuwait.

Economic expert Ahmed Al-Khashnam reiterated that the current war has negative and positive repercussions for the national economy. He explained that the continuation of the war will inevitably lead to an increase in oil prices to more than \$100, which will naturally benefit the country’s oil resources more than expected. “However, the war could also negatively affect the economy if the Strait of Hormuz and other seaports are closed. This will be a greater disaster, as the Kuwaiti economy relies primarily on oil resources,” he asserted.

He believes that the situation requires the formation of a crisis management entity to resolve all problems which arise suddenly, such as this war, and might continue for long periods and potentially exhaust the economies of the Gulf states. He said the current war is affecting the global economy as a whole, not just the oil-rich Gulf states; indicating that its negative effects include a decline in all types of investments, which will lead to a decline in the profits of commercial companies that rely primarily on imports and exports.

“Furthermore, the war will lead to the flight of foreign capital or a reduction in its income. The situation is not limited to the warring countries alone, as it extends to neighboring countries, leading to a decline in trade exchange and the volume of intra-trade. This will result in a decline in commercial activity, which will raise wheat prices, as it happened in the Russia-Ukraine war. I hope the Israeli-Iranian war will stop soon,” he added.

Iran launches

There was no immediate acknowledgment from Qatari authorities of an attack.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge an attack. However, its President Masoud Pezeshkian wrote on the social platform X just before the explosions: “We neither initiated the war nor seeking it. But we will not leave invasion to the great Iran without answer.”

Qatar closed its airspace amid Iranian threats to retaliate against the United States over its bombing of three Iranian nuclear sites early Sunday.

Earlier in the day, Israel expanded its war against Iran to include targets associated with the country’s struggling theocracy, striking the gate of a Tehran prison notorious for holding political activists and hitting the headquarters of the military force that suppressed recent protests.

In the past, Iran has threatened American forces at Al Udeid Air Base, which hosts the forward headquarters of the U.S. military’s Central Command. Qatar, across the Persian Gulf from Iran, maintains diplomatic relations with Iran and shares a massive offshore natural gas field with Tehran.

Earlier in the day, plumes of thick smoke rose over Tehran, Israel was attacked with yet another barrage of Iranian missiles and drones. The persistent fire has become a reality for civilians in both countries since Israel started the war to target Tehran’s rapidly advancing nuclear program.

On the 11th day of the conflict, Israel said it attacked “regime targets and government repression bodies in the heart of Tehran,” but Israeli officials insisted they did not seek the overthrow of Iran’s government, their archenemy since the country’s 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The Israeli military warned Iranians that it would continue to attack military sites around Tehran over “the coming days” as its focuses has shifted to symbolic targets as well. The military issued the warning on the social platform X, though Iranians are struggling to access the outside world as an internet shutdown has crippled the country.

The latest strikes unfolded only hours after President Donald Trump openly raised the possibility himself after just a day earlier inserting America into the war with its unprecedented stealth-bomber strike on three Iranian nuclear sites.

“If the current Iranian Regime is unable to MAKE IRAN GREAT AGAIN, why wouldn’t there be a Regime change???” he asked on his Truth Social website.

White House press secretary Karo-

line Leavitt later described Trump as “simply raising a question.” However, suggestions of overthrowing the Iranian government drew new anger from Tehran, which insists it will not negotiate at this time and is threatening to retaliate directly against either American troops or interests in a Mideast already inflamed by the still-raging Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

In the Tehran strikes, Israel blew open a gate at Evin prison. Iranian state television shared black-and-white surveillance footage of the strike at the facility known for holding dual nationals and Westerners often used by Iran as bargaining chips in negotiations with the West.

Evin also has specialized units for political prisoners run by the paramilitary, all-volunteer Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The facility is the target of both U.S. and European Union sanctions.

There were no immediate reports of casualties in Iran or significant damage, though the semiofficial Tasnim news agency said there had been a power cut reported outside of Tehran following the Israeli strikes.

Iranian state television also aired footage it described as being shot inside Evin, with prisoners under control inside the facility. However, the Washington-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran expressed worry about the condition of prisoners there.

“Many families of current detainees have expressed deep concern about the safety and condition of their loved ones held inside the prison,” it said.

Meanwhile, Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait Anne Koistinen affirmed her belief that diplomacy is the key to resolving conflicts, stressing that the European Union will continue to support all diplomatic efforts aimed at easing tensions and achieving a lasting solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. She also emphasized that this issue can only be resolved through a negotiated agreement.

In an interview with the daily, Ambassador Koistinen said the European Union is closely following the developments in the region.

She referred to a recent statement by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas issued on behalf of all 27 member states of the European Union. The statement expressed the European Union’s deep concern over the dangerous escalation following Israeli strikes on Iran, and Tehran’s response.

Ambassador Koistinen explained that the European Union is firmly committed to regional security and stability, and called on all parties to uphold international law, exercise maximum restraint, and avoid actions that could trigger serious consequences, such as the potential leakage of radioactive materials.

The European Union unequivocally believes Iran must not be allowed to develop or possess a nuclear weapon, and is concerned about the latest International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, which led the IAEA Board of Governors to conclude that Iran is not complying with its legally binding nuclear safeguards obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Despite these concerns, the European Union believes lasting security can only be achieved through diplomacy, not military confrontation.

Meanwhile, the French Embassy in Kuwait urged French citizens, who are currently in the region, to maintain a high level of vigilance and avoid demonstrations and gatherings.

In a security alert posted on its X account Monday, the embassy pointed out the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East, stating: “Depending on developments in the region, and due to the closure of airspace in a number of countries in the region; flight cancellations, delays or postponements may occur. It is advisable to contact the airline in advance to check the flight status and find alternatives if necessary.”

It added that a guide is also available on the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior website, containing useful information in the event of a crisis or emergency.

It then called on French residents in Kuwait to register with the French Citizens Abroad Registry, and for those who have already registered, to update their contact information if necessary through the service-public.fr website, completing the ‘address of residence abroad’ field and writing the area code in the ‘street’ field.

It also called for abstention from travel in the coming days to Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Syria; indicating that French citizens currently in transit in these countries should register on the ‘Ariane Thread’ platform of the French Foreign Ministry.

It advised regular monitoring of developments by visiting the website of the French Embassy in Kuwait and reviewing official travel advice.

In addition, Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi announced that the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the country continues to monitor the return of its citizens from the Islamic Republic of Iran through the borders of the State of Kuwait.

In a press statement Monday, Al-Kharousi disclosed that the number of departing individuals exceeded 100 -- majority of whom are Omani citizens, and some are citizens of sisterly and friendly countries.

He expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior and other concerned authorities in Kuwait for their efforts and assistance, which have had a significant impact on the speed and ease of the citizens’ departure.

Crown Prince, PM extend heartfelt sympathy

Kuwait’s Amir condoles with Saudi King over demise of Prince Faisal bin Khaled

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Monday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz, expressing sorrow over the passing of Prince Faisal bin Khaled bin Mohammad Al-Saud and praying for Allah’s mercy upon the deceased.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a similar cable, offering heartfelt condolences and prayers.

Likewise, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conveyed his sympathies to King Salman over the prince’s demise.

MoSA enhances transparency with Audit Bureau cooperation

Ministry achieves zero abstentions in oversight

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah said her ministry is keen on cooperating with the State Audit Bureau (SAB) by responding to all inquiries through official correspondence, along with the supporting documents and other necessary attachments.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Huwailah affirmed that the ministry’s collaboration with the bureau aims to uncover violations or irregularities and to develop corrective mechanisms that align with applicable laws and regulations. She revealed that SAB personnel are granted access to integrated systems to review the accuracy and legitimacy of employee allowances and bonuses; thereby, ensuring full transparency.

She stressed that all sectors in the ministry put importance on the comments of SAB, which they consider a critical oversight tool for improving performance and to uphold the integrity of administrative and financial practices. She confirmed that these comments are addressed through a structured and transparent mechanism. “We officially receive comments from the relevant oversight authorities, after which, dedicated working groups are formed from the appropriate departments to scrutinize each comment. These teams analyze root causes, devise corrective action plans, and immediately implement solutions in



Dr. Al-Huwailah

coordination with the concerned authorities. Detailed reports outlining the responses are then submitted to SAB,” she elaborated.

She reiterated the unwavering commitment of the ministry to guarantee transparency, accountability and constructive cooperation with regulatory bodies to protect public interest and improve service delivery.

She pointed out the remarkable progress of the ministry in terms of financial oversight in the last period; indicating this was achieved through strict compliance with regulations, enhanced governance, stronger internal monitoring, and continuous evaluation of the performance of all sectors. “In recent years, we focused on developing financial and administrative compliance standards and responding to oversight feedback, all while reinforcing the achievement of broader goals related to transparency and efficiency,” she stated.

She confirmed the steady and tangible improvement in oversight performance indicators. “In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, the ministry recorded 2,515 comments and 87 instances of abstention. These figures dropped to 1,904 comments and 50 abstentions in fiscal 2023/2024. In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, comments further declined to 746 and no abstentions were recorded. So far this year, the ministry has received only 111 comments, again with zero abstentions -- marking the second consecutive year with no such cases,” she added.

She attributed these improvements to a comprehensive set of internal reforms; such as the formation of specialized follow up teams, organization of workshops, modernization of oversight processes, and proactive way of dealing with every recorded comment.

“These advancements reflect the ministry’s commitment to a governance-driven and institutional approach to public service. They also demonstrate our teams’ dedication towards continuous improvement, which will positively affect service quality and ensure alignment with national goals,” she concluded.

GCC insurance system takes effect in July, employers urged to settle dues

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Public Institution for Social Security has notified all private sector employers who hire citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and are subject to the provisions of the Insurance Protection Extension System that, starting from the beginning of July, the provisions of the Unified Insurance Protection Extension System for GCC Citizens will come into effect, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The institution referred to Article 91 of Social Insurance Law No. 61/1976, which specifies the calculation of additional charges for employers who delay the payment of contributions owed for GCC national employees.

It urged employers to take the necessary steps and promptly settle any outstanding debts within the legally prescribed deadlines to avoid incurring additional charges on overdue contributions.



Exclusive launch ceremony at Lulu Hypermarket, Al Rai.

Lulu Kuwait launches premium cherries from valleys of Kashmir

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Premium cherries from Jammu & Kashmir have officially made their debut in Kuwait, with a special launch event held at Lulu Hypermarket, Al Rai. The occasion was graced by the presence of Shri Sanjay K. Muluka, Deputy Chief of Mission, Indian Embassy to Kuwait, and Shri Davinder Punj, Second Secretary/PPS (Commerce), Indian Embassy to Kuwait, along with senior management from Lulu Hypermarket -- highlighting the growing availability of premium Indian products in the Kuwaiti market.

The hand-picked Kashmiri cherries, renowned for their deep red color and exceptional sweetness, are now available across all Lulu Hypermarket stores in Kuwait. To celebrate this launch, Lulu Hypermarket has announced exclusive promotional offers on these cherries, alongside a wide selection of exotic Indian fruits and products such as Rambutan, Dragon Fruit, Mango-steen, Java Plum, Pulasan, and more.

This milestone marks a significant chapter in the journey of Indian agri-exports, reflecting the rising global demand for high-quality produce from the Himalayan region. The shipment, comprising premium-grade cherries cultivated in Kashmir, showcases India’s ongoing commitment to expanding its international footprint and creating new opportunities for farmers in Jammu & Kashmir.

The introduction of Kashmiri cherries to the Kuwaiti market is expected to benefit both consumers and producers -- offering fresh, top-quality fruit to customers while supporting the livelihoods of Indian farmers.

Customers are invited to visit Lulu Hypermarket outlets across Kuwait to enjoy these special offers and savor the unique flavors of India’s exotic produce.

America

1 woman killed, 9 hurt in S. Carolina shooting: One woman was killed and at least nine others were wounded during a shooting at a Juneteenth celebration in South Carolina, authorities said.

More than 100 law enforcement officers and rescue workers responded Saturday night to the outdoor event in Anderson, South Carolina, according to the sheriff's office. No arrests had been reported by Sunday afternoon.

Laporshia Janae Gray Cobb, 35, died from a gunshot wound to the abdomen, according to the county coroner's office. Nine others were taken to area hospitals, two with severe injuries.

Juneteenth is a federal holiday celebrated annually on June 19 to commemorate the end of slavery in the US following the American Civil War. Similar events hosted in Anderson over the past five years have occurred without major incident, officials said.

Investigators don't believe the shooting was politically motivated. Several hundred people had gathered throughout the day on Saturday to celebrate, Anderson County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman **Shale Remien** said. Later that night, a group of people began fighting in the parking lot, and that escalated into the shooting, officials said. Detectives are continuing to investigate, officials said. (AP)



Remien

6 dead after boat capsizes on Lake Tahoe: Six people were confirmed dead and two others were missing after a boat capsized on Lake Tahoe in California during a powerful weekend thunderstorm that whipped up high waves, officials said.

The US Coast Guard and the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office responded Saturday afternoon to D.L. Bliss State Park following reports of 10 people in the water, officials

said. Two people were rescued and taken to a hospital.

Winds of about 30 knots and swells of up to 8 feet (2.5 meters) were reported around the time the 27-foot (8-meter) gold Chris-Craft vessel flipped over near the lake's south-west edge, Coast Guard officials said.

Rescue workers and divers searched the area Saturday evening and resumed their search Sunday morning. Video obtained by KCRA-TV showed moored boats at a nearby marina crashing into one another amid strong gusts. The extent of the damage wasn't immediately known Sunday. (AP)

Gunman killed in Michigan shooting: The man who opened fire outside a Michigan church filled with worshippers before he was struck by a vehicle and then fatally shot by security staff had attended services there a couple of times in the last year and his mother is a member, police said.

Several people can be seen carrying or directing children to duck down and move away in a livestream video of the Sunday morning service at CrossPointe Community Church in Wayne. "C'mon, everybody to the back," a woman calls out. The woman, who was initially crouching between two rows of seats, stands and waves an arm. "Please, everyone come to the back!"

People, some of them ducking their heads, rush out as others can be heard yelling "Go!" and "Come on!"

A loud crack is heard and people can be heard crying out as those remaining run and walk quickly out of sight.

The gunman, identified as Brian Anthony Browning, 31, did not have any previous contacts with local police or a criminal history, but may have been suffering a mental health crisis, the Wayne Police Department said in a news release. Churchgoers spotted the gunman driving recklessly and then saw him exit his car wearing a tactical vest and carrying a rifle and a handgun, police Chief Ryan Strong said at an evening news conference.

The man began firing as he approached the church, striking one person in the leg. A parishioner driving a pickup truck hit the man and the church security team locked the front doors and exchanged gunfire with the man, police said. At least two staff members shot him, Strong said. About 150 people were inside the church at the time. (AP)

GOP tax bill would ease regulations on gun silencers, some rifles and shotguns

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP): The massive tax and spending cuts package that President Donald Trump wants on his desk by July 4 would loosen regulations on gun silencers and certain types of rifles and shotguns, advancing a long-time priority of the gun industry as Republican leaders in the House and Senate try to win enough votes to pass the bill.

The guns provision was first requested in the House by Georgia Rep. Andrew Clyde, a Republican gun store owner who had initially opposed the larger tax package. The House bill would remove silencers - called "suppressors" by the gun industry - from a 1930s law that regulates firearms that are considered the most dangerous, eliminating a \$200 tax while removing a layer of background checks.

The Senate kept the provision on silencers in its version of the bill and expanded upon it, adding short-barreled, or sawed-off, rifles and shotguns.

Republicans who have long supported the changes, along with the gun industry, say the tax infringes on Second Amendment rights. They say silencers are mostly used by hunters and target shooters for sport. "Burdensome regulations and unconstitutional taxes shouldn't stand in the way of protecting American gun owners' hearing," said Clyde, who owns two gun stores in Georgia and often wears a pin shaped like an assault rifle on his suit lapel.



Gun silencers are on display at the Sig Sauer booth at the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show in Las Vegas on Jan 19, 2016. (AP)

Democrats are fighting to stop the provision, which was unveiled days after two Minnesota state legislators were shot in their homes, as the bill speeds through the Senate. They argue that loosening regulations on silencers could make it easier for criminals and active shooters to conceal their weapons.

"Parents don't want silencers on their streets, police don't want silencers on their streets," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

The gun language has broad support among Republicans and has received little attention as House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., and Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., work to settle differences within the party on cuts to Medicaid and energy tax credits, among other issues. But it is just one of hundreds of policy and spending items included to entice members to vote for the legislation that could have broad implications if the bill is enacted within weeks, as Trump wants.

New York City uses ranked choice voting in its Democratic mayoral primary

NEW YORK, June 23, (AP): New York City is using ranked choice voting in its Democratic mayoral primary election Tuesday, a system that takes some explaining, even for New Yorkers who have used it before.

Voters' understanding of how ranked choice works could play a role in which candidate comes out on top in a race that features former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, progressive upstart Zohran Mamdani and several other current and former public officials, including City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams and City Comptroller Brad Lander, who was arrested last week at an immigration court.

The system is based on a simple premise: Democracy works better if people aren't forced to make an all-or-nothing choice with their vote.

Rather than pick just one candidate, voters get to rank several in order of preference. Even if a voter's top choice doesn't have enough support to win, their rankings of other candidates still play a role in determining the victor.

The system is more complex than a traditional election, making it tough to forecast a winner. It could also take longer to get results.

In New York City's version, voters get to rank up to five candidates, from first to last, on the ballot.

If one candidate is the first choice of a majority of voters - more than 50% - that person wins the race outright, just like in a traditional election. If nobody hits that threshold, ranked choice analysis kicks in.

Vote tabulation is done by computer in rounds. After the first round, the candidate in last place - the candidate ranked No. 1 by the fewest amount of people - is eliminat-

ed. The computer then looks at the ballots cast by people who ranked that candidate first, to see who they ranked second. Those people's votes are then redistributed to their second choices.

That process then repeats. As more candidates are eliminated, voters' third, fourth and even fifth choices could potentially come into play. Rounds continue until there are only two candidates left. The one with the most votes wins.

Eleven candidates are on the ballot in the Democratic mayoral primary. Incumbent Mayor Eric Adams isn't one of them. He's a Democrat but is running as an independent. The Republican Party has already picked its nominee, Guardian Angels founder Curtis Sliwa.

The computerized process of tabulating votes takes little time, but it doesn't start right away.

Polls close at 9 p.m. Tuesday. Within a few hours, preliminary results should give a picture of how the candidates are doing based on voters' first choices.

The ranked choice tabulations, however, won't start until July 1 because the city needs to wait for the arrival of mail-in ballots.

The July 1 tabulation could potentially give a clear picture of who won, but the result won't be official. Further rounds of ranked choice analysis will be done as additional absentee ballots come in until the board certifies the election July 15. This will be the second time New York City has used ranked choice in a mayoral primary. The first time, in 2021, things went haywire when elections officials neglected to clear test data from the tabulation program.



The New York City Democratic Mayoral Primary Debate at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in the Gerald W. Lynch Theater on June 12, in New York City. (AP)



Firefighters battle a large wildfire burning in Karyes village, on the eastern Aegean island of Chios, Greece on June 22. (AP)

Firefighters battle major wildfire on Greek island of Chios

Greek authorities sent new evacuation notifications for two areas near the main town of the eastern Aegean island of Chios Monday morning, as firefighters struggled to control a major wildfire raging on the town's outskirts for a second day.

The fire department said 190 firefighters were battling the blaze Monday. They were backed up by 35 vehicles, five helicopters and two water-dropping planes. Strong winds in the area since Sunday have hampered firefighting efforts.

Push alerts have been sent to mobile phones in the area urging people to evacuate a total of 16 villages, settlements and neighborhoods on the outskirts of Chios town since the blaze broke out on Sunday.

The fire started in three separate locations. Authorities have sent a specialist fire department arson investigation team to the island to look into the causes.

Wildfires are frequent in Greece during its hot, dry summers, but authorities have said climate change has been fueling bigger and more frequent blazes. (AP)

Europe

Slovenia extends border controls: The Slovenian government announced on Sunday that it is extending temporary controls on its internal Schengen borders with Croatia and Hungary for another six months, citing heightened security concerns, including an increased threat of terrorism.

Under the new decision, the border controls, which were first introduced on Oct. 21, 2023, will now remain in place until Dec. 21 this year. The previous extension was set to expire on Saturday.

Slovenian Interior Minister **Bostjan Poklukar** said the move was prompted by the worsening security situation in the Middle East, the on-going conflict in Ukraine, the "complicated situation" in the Western Balkans, and an elevated terrorism threat level across several European Union countries.

He noted that security conditions in these regions have deteriorated since the last extension of border checks.

Despite the extension, the government assured the public that the additional measures would not disrupt travel during the upcoming summer holiday season, as only targeted checks would be carried out. In October 2023, Slovenia introduced border controls shortly after Italy imposed similar checks on its border with Slovenia. Both countries have since renewed the measures multiple times.

According to the Slovenian authorities, 5,781 illegal border crossings were recorded in the first four months of 2025, representing a decrease of nearly 60 percent compared to the same period last year. Applications for international protection also fell by almost 50 percent during the same



Poklukar

period. (Xinhua)

Superyacht completes final journey: A British-flagged luxury superyacht that sank off Sicily last year, killing UK tech magnate Mike Lynch and six others, completed its final trip to the Sicilian port of Termini Imerese Sunday, a day after recovery crews finalized the complex operation to lift it out of the water.

The white top and blue hull of the 56-meter (184-foot) Bayesian, covered with algae and mud, was kept elevated by the yellow floating crane barge off the port of Porticello, before being transferred to Termini Imerese, where it docked in the early afternoon.

On Monday, the delicate recovery operation will be concluded, as the vessel will be transported to shore and settled in a specially built steel cradle. Then it will be made available for investigators for further examinations to help determine the cause of the sinking. (AP)

Greenland celebrates National Day: Greenlanders celebrated National Day, the Arctic island's biggest summer festival, on Saturday to mark the solstice with songs, cannon salutes and dances under 24 hours of sunlight.

Revelers across the semi-autonomous Danish territory, which is also coveted by US President Donald Trump, honored the longest day of the year north of the equator, where the solstice marks the start of astronomical summer, with a march through their hometowns waving flags and participating in a seal hunting competition.

The national holiday was declared in 1985, following a referendum on home rule six years earlier, with the inaugural raising of the red-and-white Greenlandic flag. As the sun came out, locals gathered for the day of festivities, visiting friends and families, eating and dancing together.

Greenland's roughly 56,000 inhabitants look forward to the midnight sun each year from May 25 to July 25, before the long, dark winter reappears. (AP)

Hundreds protest in The Hague against NATO, days before Dutch city hosts alliance summit

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, June 23, (AP): Hundreds of people protested Sunday against NATO and military spending and against a possible conflict with Iran, two days before a summit of the alliance in The Hague that is seeking to increase allies' defense budgets. "Let's invest in peace and sustainable energy," Belgian politician Jos d'Haese told the crowd at a park not far from the summit venue.

Although billed as a demonstration against NATO and the war in Gaza, protesters were joined by Iranians who held up banners saying "No Iran War," the day after the United States launched attacks against three of Iran's nuclear sites.

"We are opposed to war. People want to live a peaceful life," said 74-year-old Hossein Hamadani, an Iranian who lives in the Netherlands. Look at the environment. "Things are not good. So why do we spend money on war?" he added.

The Netherlands is hosting the annual meeting of the 32-nation alliance starting Tuesday, with leaders scheduled to meet Wednesday.



Security patrol around the perimeter of the venue ahead of the upcoming NATO summit in The Hague, Netherlands on June 23. (AP)

NATO to be excluded from a 5% of GDP defense spending target, days before the military alliance's leaders will gather at a summit. Prime Minister **Pedro Sánchez** said on Sunday.

"Spain will, therefore, not spend 5% of its GDP on defense, but its participation, weight and legitimacy in NATO remain intact," Sánchez said in a televised address.

Sánchez said that Spain would be able to keep its commitments to the 32-nation military alliance by spending 2.1% of GDP on defense needs.

In letters exchanged on Sunday between NATO Secretary-General **Mark Rutte** and Sánchez, Spain was granted the exemption and the language around the 5% spending target was made to no longer include "all allies," Sánchez said.

Russian attacks on Ukraine kill at least 14 people as Zelenskyy travels to UK

KYIV, Ukraine, June 23, (AP): Russian drones and missiles killed at least 14 civilians and injured several dozen others in Ukraine in overnight attacks, local officials said Monday, with nine deaths reported in the capital, Kyiv, where an apartment building partially collapsed.

The attacks came as Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy began a visit to the United Kingdom, where he met privately with King Charles III. Russia fired 352 drones and decoys overnight, as well as 11 ballistic missiles and five cruise missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Air defenses intercepted or jammed 339 drones and 15 missiles before they could reach their targets, a statement said.

A Russian ballistic missile strike destroyed a high school later in the day in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, killing two staff, authorities said. No children were on the premises due to the summer vacation, said Zelenskyy, who described the strike as "absolutely insane."

The strikes came nearly a week after a Russian attack killed 28 people in Kyiv, 23 of them in a residential building that collapsed after a direct missile hit. Russia has also hit civilian areas with long-range strikes in an apparent attempt to weaken Ukrainian morale. Russian forces have been trying to drive deeper into Ukraine as part of a summer push along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, though the Institute for the Study of War said progress has failed to make significant gains.



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire in an apartment building after Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on June 23. (AP)

"Russian forces are largely relying on poorly trained infantry to make gains in the face of Ukraine's drone-based defense," the Washington-based think tank said late Sunday.

Zelenskyy said preliminary data indicated that Russian forces used North Korean missiles in the Kyiv strike. He described Russia, North Korea and Iran, which has provided drones to Russia, as a "coalition of murderers."

Eleven ministers named

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung picks first civilian defense chief in 64 years

SEOUL, South Korea, June 23, (Agencies): South Korean President Lee Jae Myung nominated a five-term liberal lawmaker as defense minister Monday, breaking with a tradition of appointing retired military generals.

The announcement came as several prominent former defense officials, including ex-Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun, face high-profile criminal trials over their roles in carrying out martial law last year under then-President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was indicted on rebellion charges and removed from office.

Ahn Gyu-back, a lawmaker from Lee’s Democratic Party, has served on the National Assembly’s defense committee and chaired a legislative panel that investigated the circumstances surrounding Yoon’s martial law decree.

Yoon’s authoritarian move involved deploying hundreds of heavily armed troops to the National Assembly and election commission offices in what prosecutors described as an illegal attempt to shut down the legislature and arrest political opponents and election officials.

That sparked calls to strengthen civilian control over the military, and Lee promised during his election campaign to appoint a defense minister with a civilian background.

Since a 1961 coup that brought military dictator Park Chung-hee to power, all of South Korea’s defense ministers have come from the military - a trend that continued even after the country’s democratization in the late 1980s.

While Ahn will face a legislative hearing, the process is likely to be a formality, since the Democrats hold a comfortable majority in the National Assembly and legislative consent isn’t required for Lee to appoint him. Among Cabinet appointments, Lee only needs legislative consent for prime minister,



Ahn Gyu-back, South Korean defense minister nominee, leaves his office at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea on June 23. (AP)

Seoul’s nominal No. 2 job.

“As the first civilian Minister of National Defense in 64 years, he will be responsible for leading and overseeing the transformation of the military after

its mobilization in martial law,” Kang Hoon-sik, Lee’s chief of staff, said in a briefing.

Ahn was among 11 ministers nominated by Lee on Monday, with long-time diplomat Cho Hyun selected as foreign minister and five-term lawmaker Chung Dong-young returning for another stint as unification minister - a position he held from 2004 to 2005 as Seoul’s point man for relations with North Korea.

Former Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun was named to lead the foreign ministry, while Chung Dong-young was nominated as unification minister.

All the minister nominees are subject to confirmation hearings in the National Assembly.

Lee’s approval rating hit about 70 percent last week, a weekly poll showed Monday.

Support for Lee, who took office on June 4, reached 73.4 percent last week, while the negative assessment on Lee’s conduct of state affairs stood at 23.6 percent, according to computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) by local pollster Flower Research.

The ruling liberal Democratic Party’s approval score recorded this year’s high of 53.7 percent, 28.5 percentage points higher than the conservative opposition People Power Party’s 25.2 percent.

Support rate for both the minor left-leaning Rebuilding Korea Party and the minor rightist New Reform Party logged 4.2 percent last week.

The pollster’s separate survey of automated response system (ARS) showed that Lee’s approval rating came to 69.1 percent last week.

Both the CATI and the ARS surveyed 1,006 voters from Friday to Saturday. They had plus and minus 3.1 percentage points in margin of error with a 95-percent confidence level.

Japan marks 80th 'versary of Battle of Okinawa

Japanese PM Ishiba cancels trip for NATO summit

TOKYO, June 23, (Agencies): Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has canceled his scheduled visit to the Netherlands for the upcoming NATO summit due to various circumstances, the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Monday.

Ishiba originally planned to attend the NATO summit from June 24 to 26. Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya will now represent Japan at the summit and participate in NATO-related events.

Iwaya is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with foreign counterparts from the Group of Seven and other nations to discuss key international issues, according to the ministry.

Japan is not a NATO member, but has been invited to the military alliance’s summits since 2022.

Also:

TOKYO: Okinawa marked the 80th anniversary of the end of one of the harshest battles of World War II fought on the southern island.

With global tensions escalating, its governor said on Monday it is the Okinawan “mission” to keep telling the tragic history and its impact today.

The Battle of Okinawa killed a quarter of the island’s population, leading to a 27-year US occupation and a heavy American troop presence to date.

Gov **Denny Tamaki**, noting the escalating global conflicts and nuclear threats, made a resolve to contribute to



Participants offer a silent prayer during a memorial ceremony at the Peace Memorial Park in Itohan, Okinawa, southern Japan on June 23, as Japan marked the 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa. (AP)

global peace studies, disarmament and the preservation of war remains. “It is our mission, as those living in the present, to preserve and pass on the reality and lessons to future generations.”

US troops landed on the main Okinawa island on April 1, 1945, beginning a battle in their push toward mainland Japan.

The Battle of Okinawa lasted nearly three months, killing some 200,000 people - about 12,000 Americans and more than 188,000 Japanese, half of them Okinawan civilians including

students and victims forced into mass suicides by Japan’s military.

Okinawa was sacrificed by **Japan’s** Imperial Army to defend the mainland, historians say. The island group remained under US occupation until its reversion in 1972, two decades longer than most of Japan.

Monday’s memorial was held at the **Mabuni Hill in Itohan City**, where the remains of most of the war dead reside.

Prime Minister **Shigeru Ishiba** was in a hot seat when he attended Monday’s ceremony.

Thailand announces measures to crack down on Cambodia-based cybercrime

BANGKOK, June 23, (AP): Thailand’s Prime Minister announced heightened measures to crack down on cybercrime that target neighboring Cambodia, including barring travel by casino tourists and cutting internet services to Cambodian military and security agencies.

Relations between the countries have deteriorated following an armed confrontation May 28 in which one Cambodian soldier was killed in a relatively small, contested territory.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra said Monday that officials will tighten border restrictions by stopping cars and individuals attempting to cross into Cambodia with exceptions for students, medical patients or others who need to purchase essential goods.

Thailand will block tourists who intend to visit Cambodia’s casinos and impose stricter screening measures on air passengers who wish to fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia, to gamble. She did not elaborate on how authorities will separate casino tourists from people visiting the country for other types of tourism.

Cambodia has blocked internet services, electricity and fuel supplies from Thailand in response to the border dispute, which could have economic implications for both nations.

The average monthly imports of gasoline and other fuel to Cambodia from Thailand is 85,426 metric tons (94,166 tons), which is 30% of all na-



A couple rides on a motorcycle after filling gasoline at a PTT, (Petroleum Authority of Thailand), outside Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Monday, June 23, 2025. (AP)

tional imports. The average monthly liquid natural gas import from Thailand is 1,848 metric tons (2,037 tons), which is 4% of the national total, according to the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce.

Also:

BANGKOK: Over 2 metric tons of crystal methamphetamine has been seized from a tourist boat near a pier in **Eastern Thailand** before it was smuggled out of the country, local authorities said Monday.

Eight men were arrested Saturday in **Rayong** province for allegedly at-

tempting to smuggle the nearly 2.4 metric tons (2.6 tons) through the southern border, officials said. They did not elaborate on the intended destination or the drugs’ origin.

If sold abroad, the drugs are estimated to be worth over 3 billion baht (\$90.8 million), Thailand’s Department of Special Investigation said.

The drugs were packed in plastic bags disguised as corn flour packages. Each contained about one kilogram. Authorities said they also seized a van and a truck believed to be involved in the drug smuggling.

Lat/Am

Death toll rises to 3 after Brazil torrential rains:

The death toll from this week’s torrential rains and flooding in Brazil’s southern state of Rio Grande do Sul has risen to three, with one person still missing, civil defense authorities said Friday.

The state, which borders Argentina and Uruguay, had endured the worst climate disaster in its history in May and June 2024, when flooding killed at least 184 people, left over 20 missing, and submerged 90 percent of its territory.

According to the latest report from the Civil Defense, the third confirmed fatality occurred in the municipality of Sapucaia do Sul due to storm-related flooding as rivers overflowed across much of the state.

At least 6,000 people have been evacuated in multiple cities, including Canoas, the largest municipality neighboring the state capital, Porto Alegre. Brazil’s president is **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**.

Local officials reported damage to infrastructure in at least 98 municipalities as a result of the heavy rains and floods. Several cities have declared a state of emergency.

The most critical area remains along the Taquari River, where at least 17 municipalities have suspended school and public activities. (Xinhua)



Lula

Judge to order Garcia’s release before trial: A federal judge in Tennessee plans to order the release of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, whose mistaken deportation to El Salvador has become a flashpoint in President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown, while he awaits a federal trial on human smuggling charges.

But Abrego Garcia is not expected to go free because US Immigration and Customs Enforcement will likely take him

into custody and possibly try to deport him.

In a ruling on Sunday, US Magistrate Judge Barbara Holmes denied the US government’s motion to keep Abrego Garcia in detention before his trial. She scheduled a hearing for Wednesday to discuss the conditions of his release.

The US government has already filed a motion to appeal the judge’s decision and is asking the judge to stay her impending release order.

Abrego Garcia pleaded not guilty on June 13 to smuggling charges that his attorneys have characterized as an attempt to justify his mistaken deportation in March to a notorious prison in El Salvador after the fact. That hearing was the first chance the Maryland construction worker had in a US courtroom to answer the Trump administration’s allegations.

The smuggling charges stem from a 2022 traffic stop for speeding in Tennessee during which Abrego Garcia was driving a vehicle with nine passengers. Although officers suspected possible smuggling, he was allowed to go on his way with only a warning.

A federal indictment accuses Abrego Garcia of smuggling throughout the US hundreds of people living in the country illegally, including children and members of the violent MS-13 gang. The investigation was launched weeks after the Supreme Court ordered the administration to facilitate his return from El Salvador amid mounting public pressure.

Holmes acknowledged in her ruling Sunday that determining whether Abrego Garcia should be released is “little more than an academic exercise” because ICE will likely detain him. But the judge wrote that the government failed to prove that Abrego was a flight risk, that he posed a danger to the community or that he would interfere with proceedings if released.

“Overall, the Court cannot find from the evidence presented that Abrego’s release clearly and convincingly poses an irredeemable danger to other persons or to the community,” the judge wrote.

The acting US attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee, Rob McGuire, argued on June 13 that the likely attempt by ICE to try to deport him was one reason to keep him in jail. (AP)



Aujene Cimanimpaye, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, gives food to her family at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Turkana County, Kenya on June 4. (AP)

Angola reaffirms support for DR Congo refugees

LUANDA, June 23, (Xinhua): The Angolan Migration and Foreigners Service (SME) on Friday pledged to continue supporting refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are settled in the Lovua refugee camp in the northern province of Lunda Norte, even after the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) closes its operations in the country.

In a press release for World Refugee Day, the SME said that efforts to regularize the refugees’ status in Angola will continue.

The SME said that its top priority is issuing personal identification documents to refugees in the Lovua camp, which are essential for promoting the refugees’ dignity, legal protection and socioeconomic integration.

“The government of Angola thus reaffirms its commitment to the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility, promoting lasting solutions for refugees in accordance with national legislation and international conventions to which the country is a party,” the statement said.

Speaking at the World Refugee Day

event, Emmanuelle Mitte, the UNHCR representative in Angola, said that other nations should follow Angola’s example so that people forced to flee their countries due to political, military, and ethnic conflicts can find refuge, safety, hope and welcome.

At the end of May, the UNHCR announced that, due to financial constraints, it will begin closing its offices in Angola starting in the final quarter of this year.

Angola hosts more than 56,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sierra Leone’s President Bio to be next ECOWAS chairman with region in turmoil

ABUJA, Nigeria, June 23, (AP): Sierra Leone’s President Julius Maada Bio was chosen on Sunday to be the next chairman of the West African economic bloc, ECOWAS.

The Economic Community of West African States, known as ECOWAS, was founded in 1975, and is facing challenges due to rising violence, member departures and economic disturbances.

In a statement following Sunday’s announcement, Bio promised to prioritize democracy, security cooperation, economic integration and institutional credibility.

“We are still confronting insecurity in the Sahel and coastal states, terrorism, political instability, illicit arms flow and transnational organized crimes continue to test the resilience of our nations and the effectiveness of our institutions,” he said.

Bio is currently serving his second term as president after a contested election two years ago in the coastal West African country.

He was president when ECOWAS imposed severe sanctions on Niger



Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio, left, speaks during the ECOWAS meeting, in Abuja, Nigeria on June 22. (AP)

following a coup two years ago. Niger cited the sanctions as one of the reasons for leaving the bloc. Sierra Leone

was one of the countries that supported a military intervention in the country in 2023.

Africa

Algeria stand collapse kills 3, injures 81: Three people died and 81 were injured following the collapse of a stand after soccer club Mouloudia Club d’Alger won a ninth league title, Algerian authorities said Sunday.

An earlier toll was one dead and 50 injured but two fans subsequently died from their injuries following Saturday’s incident at the Stade Olympique du 5 Juillet 1962, according to a statement issued by the country’s Ministry of Health.

Algeria President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** offered his condolences.

According to the website La Gazette du Fennec, a security barrier broke just as fans were getting ready to celebrate the title following a goalless draw between MC



Tebboune

Alger and NC Magra. (AP)

□ □ □

Burundi court validates ruling party victory: The Burundian Constitutional Court on Friday validated results of the June 5 legislative elections, during which the ruling party won all the seats.

“The Constitutional Court analyzed the report sent by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) on the provisional results in legislative elections and found it genuine. The Court also analyzed complaints filed by four parties on what they called irregularities, but found them baseless and with no evidence,” said Valentin Bagorikunda, president of the Constitutional Court, in a public hearing.

Participants in the public hearing included senior officials, CENI members, diplomats and representatives of civil society organizations that monitored the elections.

However, the four parties, whose complaints about alleged irregularities during the legislative elections were rejected, boycotted the session. (Xinhua)

Boursa closes higher, index gains 52 points

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Monday's trading session on a positive note, with the general index climbing 52.16 points, or 0.65 percent, to close at 8,053.65. Trading activity was robust, as 652.2 million shares changed hands through 32,695 transactions, generating a total turnover of 106 million

Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$345.9 million). The Main Market Index posted the strongest gains, rising 90.82 points, or 1.30 percent, to 7,075.24. This performance came on the back of 482.1 million shares traded in 23,628 deals, with a value of 50.2 million dinars (about \$163.8 million).

NBK, BBY see higher tax burden

Kuwaiti bank ratings unaffected by domestic minimum top-up tax

By Fitch Ratings

DUBAI/LONDON, June 23: Kuwaiti banks' Viability Ratings were unaffected by the domestic minimum top-up tax (DMTT) for multinational companies operating in Kuwait, which took effect on 1 January 2025, Fitch Ratings says.

Fitch does not expect the tax to pressure affected banks' internal capital generation or capital ratios as it is small relative to their risk-weighted assets and common equity Tier 1 capital. However, it may challenge some banks' profitability or slow their expansion outside Kuwait.

The DMTT aims to support fiscal revenue by ensuring that multinational companies operating in Kuwait, including those headquartered there, pay an effective tax rate of at least 15% on their consolidated operations.

It applies to large multinational companies (annual consolidated revenue of EUR750 million or more in at least two of the four previous fiscal years) with entities in jurisdictions with a tax rate of 15% or less (provided such entities have at least EUR10 million revenue and EUR1 million profit).

The DMTT is calculated as the amount needed, if any, to raise the effective tax rate on groups' entities operating in Kuwait to a minimum of 15%.

Some items are excluded from the top-up tax base, such as a portion of income attributable to certain payroll costs and tangible assets – as well as intra-group dividends and capital gains, to avoid double-counting.

The 2.5% national labour support tax and 1% zakat no longer apply to affected companies, but

1% contributions to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences are continuing.

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) and its largest subsidiary, Boubyan Bank (BBY), had the most significant increases in their effective tax rates.

Income tax was 16.3% of NBK's consolidated operating profit before tax in 1Q25 (BBY: 13.9%), compared with 9.2% in 1Q24 (BBY: 4.5%). The group is present in several jurisdictions, generating most of its income with an effective tax rate below 15%, including in Kuwait (before the top-up tax), Bahrain and the UAE.

Kuwait Finance House also had an increase (1Q25: 19.2%; 1Q24: 16.2%) due to its operations in Kuwait and Bahrain, but the increase was less pronounced than for NBK and BBY because of the bank's engagement in countries with tax rates above 15%, including Egypt, Turkiye and the UK.

The impact on Burgan Bank was immaterial in 1Q25 due to income exclusions, such as interest paid on additional Tier 1 capital, intra-group dividends and income related to certain payroll costs and tangible assets.

It is not clear whether the DMTT will be implemented at Burgan Bank or its parent, Kuwait Projects Company Holding, which has a 64% stake in Burgan Bank and meets the threshold for DMTT implementation due to its size and diversified geographical presence.

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank, Kuwait International Bank and Warba Bank do not meet the thresholds for DMTT and were therefore unaffected by it.

Business

Delivers +15.65% net returns in first 5 months

Watani Investment Company's funds outperform Kuwaiti, GCC conventional equity peers year-to-date

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Equity funds managed by Watani Investment Company secured leading positions among the best-performing Kuwaiti and GCC conventional equity funds during the first five months of 2025.

In May, Watani Kuwait Equity Fund delivered a net return of 3.81%, outperforming all conventional Kuwaiti equity funds on a monthly basis. The fund also posted a cumulative net return of 15.65% over the first five months of 2025, securing the top position among Kuwaiti conventional equity funds based on year-to-date performance.

The Watani Kuwait Equity Fund aims to achieve long-term capital growth by primarily investing in equities listed

on Boursa Kuwait. Its management team employs advanced risk management frameworks, while emphasizing in-depth fundamental market research to identify and invest in high-potential opportunities.

Additionally, Watani Gulf Equity Fund also outperformed all conventional GCC equity funds listed on Boursa Kuwait since the beginning of the year, delivering net returns of 2.77% over the first five months of 2025.

The Fund aims to achieve long-term capital growth by investing in shares of companies across the GCC. It follows an active investment strategy aiming to allocate and diversify assets across the region's various markets.

Performance of Conventional Kuwait Equity Funds		
The Fund	Net Returns in May 2025 (%)	Net Returns in the First 5 Months of 2025 (%)
Watani Kuwait Equity Fund	3.81%	15.65%
KAMCO Investment Fund	2.75%	11.92%
Wafra Equity Fund	2.92%	9.81%
Coast Investment Fund	1.06%	8.14%
Markaz Investment and Development Fund	0.60%	5.90%
Al Wataniya Fund	1.21%	11.77%
Al Ahli Kuwaiti Fund	3.65%	15.49%
Markaz Mumtaz Fund	1.60%	7.30%
Al-Raed Investment Fund (KIC)	3.73%	14.38%
Al-Rouyah (KMEFIC)	2.50%	11.10%

Performance of Conventional GCC Equity Funds		
The Fund	Net Returns in May 2025 (%)	Net Returns in the First 5 Months of 2025 (%)
Watani Gulf Equity Fund	-1.74%	+2.77%
Al-Ahli Gulf Fund	-1.29%	-0.48%
Markaz GCC Momentum Fund	-2.60%	-2.90%

Strategic partner of CyberSHE in collaboration with WiCSME

Zain continues to empower female talent in STEM and cybersecurity

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Zain announced its strategic partnership with the hands-on training program CyberSHE, launched by the Women in CyberSecurity Middle East (WiCSME) at the Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST). The program aims to empower women and bridge the gender gap in cybersecurity by equipping young women with the skills and confidence needed to excel in this fast-growing field.

This partnership falls under the umbrella of Zain's Women in Tech initiative, which is dedicated to developing female talent in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It represents a core pillar in the company's corporate sustainability strategy and reflects its ongoing efforts to promote diversity, inclusion, and the empowerment of national youth in digital and technological skills.

Zain delivered a special session, sharing its experience in cybersecurity and innovation. The session showcased the company's leading practices and success stories that contribute to building a more secure and inclusive digital environment, while also offering participants practical insights to help them enter the job market with confidence and readiness.

CyberSHE aims to train 1,500 women across the region over the next three years through an intensive training experience that includes technical workshops, soft skill development, mentorship programs, and internationally accredited certifications aligned with real-world job requirements in this vital sector.

The program's goals align with Zain's strategic vision to empower talent, accelerate digital literacy, and cultivate a workplace environment built on innovation and sustainable growth. These goals are embodied in the company's Innovation Nation initiative, which has resulted in numerous successful projects over the past years and continues to cement Zain's leadership in driving Kuwait's innovation and digital transformation.

Zain's support reflects its strong commitment to advancing women's



Group photo of program participants.



The initiative aims to bridge the gender gap in cybersecurity.



The partnership falls under Zain's Women in Tech initiative.

roles in technology and cybersecurity, and aligns with its broader efforts to support the innovation ecosystem in Kuwait. These efforts include its recent support of the Kuwait CyberChamps Competition for school students, its long-standing partnership with CODED Academy for programming education, and other key initiatives designed to prepare a

skilled digital generation ready to shape the future of the national economy.

Many of Zain's initiatives focus on youth and education, in response to the accelerating shift in both the economy and educational landscape toward digital fields. That's why the company has made the development of digital and coding skills among

youth a top priority.

Through its support for a wide range of programs and initiatives, Zain is committed to equipping the next generation of local talent with the skills demanded by modern job markets, skills such as programming, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital transformation applications, and more.

Raise awareness on coral reef protection

Warba Bank launches interactive experience with Scientific Center

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: As part of its ongoing environmental initiatives and commitment to sustainability, Warba Bank has partnered once again with the Scientific Center of Kuwait to launch an innovative educational and interactive experience on the "Fayez" app titled: "Protecting Kuwait's Coral Reefs." The initiative aims to raise environmental awareness within the community and highlight the importance of preserving Kuwait's marine ecosystem.

The experience uses augmented reality technology to take participants on a virtual adventure across three coral islands in Kuwait, where they collect waste to help protect coral reefs from pollution. This is one of the first digital experiences in the region to employ interactive technology in encouraging positive environmental behaviors, especially among youth.

Commenting on the initiative, Head of the Digital Group at Warba Bank, Nasser Maher Al-Mutawa, stated: "We are proud of our ongoing partnership with the Scientific Center. Today, we are launching a creative and educational experience that enhances environmental awareness in a fun and engaging way. At Warba Bank, we believe protecting the environment begins with awareness, and this initiative gives all members of society the opportunity to understand the challenges facing Kuwait's marine environment and play a part in preserving it."

Al-Mutawa also emphasized Warba's commitment to building partnerships that merge environmental awareness with digital innovation: "This collaboration with the Scientific Center presents a unique opportunity to deliver an impactful experience that brings the public closer to marine life in a responsible and realistic way."

On his part, the Deputy General Manager for Visitors Engagement at the Scientific Center, Mohammad Al-Sanousi, said: "We are proud of this purposeful partnership with Warba Bank, which harnesses technologies like augmented reality to build environmental awareness among youth. This initiative reflects our mission to provide inspirational learning experiences that engage visitors in understanding local environmental challenges and motivate them to take part in protecting coral reefs and marine life in Kuwait."

Participants who complete the experience through the "Fayez" app will be eligible for daily and weekly rewards,



Nasser Al-Mutawa



Mohammad Al-Sanousi

including free tickets and memberships at the Scientific Center, which grant access to the center's new expansion. The experience is available to all users, Warba Bank customers and the general public, by downloading the Faiz app from mobile stores.

This collaboration is part of Warba Bank's broader sustainability strategy focused on supporting high-impact community and environmental initiatives and encouraging active public participation in building a more conscious and sustainable future.

Warba Bank remains committed to embedding environmental sustainability into its institutional strategy. Past initiatives include offsetting carbon emissions from employee travel by supporting renewable energy projects in Africa, sponsoring environmental awareness campaigns targeting children and youth, and collaborating with local organizations to promote marine conservation. The bank also continues to invest in digital transformation to reduce paper and energy consumption, reinforcing its vision of a more sustainable future for generations to come.

Gulf Bank offers 10 essential tips to help travelers stay safe and informed during and after their trip

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Consistent with its commitment to advancing financial literacy across all segments of society, Gulf Bank continues to support the "Diraya" awareness campaign. The bank actively shares educational and informative content through its social media channels, official website, and various media platforms to keep customers well-informed and empowered.

As summer approaches and the

travel season begins, Gulf Bank has shared a set of essential tips to help customers use their banking cards securely while taking full advantage of the bank's services. Key recommendations include:

■ If your card is lost or stolen, immediately block it through the mobile app or by contacting customer service.

■ When using ATMs, cover the keypad with your hand while entering

your PIN and avoid accepting assistance from strangers if you experience any issues.

■ Ensure your credit limits are sufficient and regularly monitor your account balance.

■ Never share your PIN or One-Time Password (OTP) with anyone.

■ Always verify the details in the OTP message, including the merchant's name and the payment amount, before authorizing a trans-

action.

■ Confirm the payment amount before entering your PIN during any transaction.

■ Keep track of your spending and card usage during travel by using the Gulf Bank's mobile application.

■ Contact the customer service center immediately if you encounter any card-related issues.

■ It is always recommended to pay in the local currency of the country

you are visiting.

■ Upon returning from travel, change your PIN and carefully review all your card statements. Report any discrepancies to the bank immediately.

Since 2021, the Central Bank of Kuwait, in partnership with the Kuwait Banking Association, has launched the "Diraya" public awareness campaign. This initiative seeks to educate bank customers

about essential banking services, improve their ability to conduct secure transactions, and promote financial inclusion and economic stability.

The campaign also focuses on informing customers about their rights and responsibilities, promoting the advantages of electronic financial transactions, and offering guidance to help avoid risks and ensure cybersecurity.



Khaled Waleed Al Falah, Chairman of National Investments Company

As part of its ambitious expansion strategy and to strengthen its presence in leading global financial hubs, National Investments Company (NIC) has announced the launch of its first regional office in the United Arab Emirates, specifically at the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC). This step supports NIC's vision to cement its position as a leading provider of integrated investment services across the region and comes after securing official approvals from the Dubai Financial Services Authority.

DIFC is recognized as a prominent global financial platform, offering its services across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. This strategic location

- NIC has succeeded in earning market trust by consistently achieving success since its establishment
- The new office will enable us to extend our comprehensive services to a wider base of clients both within and beyond the region

provides NIC with a valuable base for expanding into new markets, delivering innovative financial solutions that meet the needs of a broad range of local and international clients, and reinforcing its leading position in the regional investment management sector.

International Financial Presence

On this occasion, **Mr. Khaled Waleed Al Falah**, Chairman of National Investments Company, stated that the opening of the company's first regional office in DIFC represents a pivotal milestone in NIC's regional expansion strategy. He emphasized that the move reflects the company's comprehensive investment vision, aimed at expanding operations and strengthening its global presence through the delivery of high-quality,

efficient, and innovative services. AlFalah emphasized that establishing a presence in DIFC, one of the region's

“**Al Falah**

We aim to deliver added value through a professional team with deep expertise and broad knowledge of financial markets

”

most prominent financial hubs, will allow NIC to serve a wider client base from both within and beyond the region. He added that the company will leverage DIFC's trusted and competitive investment environment to offer a comprehensive suite of innovative financial solutions.

He further noted that this expansion demonstrates the strong position NIC has achieved both locally and regionally, building on its long-standing track record of accomplishments, commitment to governance and transparency, and ability to adapt to market developments while offering flexible solutions that meet clients' diverse expectations.

AlFalah concluded by stating that this expansion will further solidify NIC's role as a regional investment powerhouse with international reach, deliver-

ing real added value through a highly experienced team with deep financial market expertise. He reaffirmed the company's continued commitment to delivering world-class services that position NIC as a trusted investment partner across Kuwait and the wider region.

Strategic Expansion

Mr. Fahad Abdulrahman AlMukhaizim, Board Member and CEO of National Investments Company, expressed his pride in launching the company's subsidiary at DIFC. He noted that this milestone reflects NIC's commitment to providing financial and investment services that adhere to the highest standards of quality and excellence. The expansion into Dubai, he added, positions the company within one of the region's most advanced financial ecosystems, enhancing its ability to support regional and international operations efficiently.

AlMukhaizim explained that operating at DIFC offers NIC a strategic advantage by granting access to diverse

“**AlMukhaizim**

It marks a key milestone in NIC's expansion strategy to bridge regional markets with global investment opportunities

”

- Positioning ourselves in the heart of the regional financial ecosystem enhances the outreach of our strategic services to neighboring and emerging markets

- This step reinforces our competitive edge and broadens our client base through innovative investment solutions tailored to meet evolving market needs

markets across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. It also strengthens the company's ability to build strong relationships with regional and international financial institutions, helping bridge regional markets with global investment opportunities through a new platform offering a wide range of investment solutions.

He emphasized that this move is not merely a geographic expansion but a launchpad for a new phase of institutional growth. NIC aims to entrench its presence in financial decision-making centers and provide financial solutions that are responsive to market changes and aligned with client expectations for performance and diversity. The company's five-year strategic plan focuses on four main objectives, with regional



Fahad Abdulrahman AlMukhaizim, Board Member and CEO of National Investments Company

expansion and client acquisition at the forefront.

AlMukhaizim concluded by affirming that the coming phase will see a series of well-planned expansion steps aimed at enhancing the company's competitiveness in the investment landscape. He emphasized that NIC will remain focused on meeting current client needs while expanding its target base through innovation and the delivery of flexible, high-value investment services – building sustainable relationships based on trust, professionalism, and tangible results.



Johair Marafi with the participants at the event.

ABK strengthens engagement with female clients through a unique flower arrangement workshop

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: As part of its ongoing strategy to enhance engagement with its female clients and empower them to showcase their creative talents, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) organized a distinctive workshop titled “Art of Flower Arrangement”, in collaboration with Angle Flowers, held at the Radisson Blu Hotel, with the participation of several esteemed clients. The workshop aimed to introduce participants to the fundamentals of flower arranging, explore different types of flowers, and demonstrate methods for arranging and wrapping them. A detailed practical session was also provided on how to create complete floral bouquets, along with expert tips on selecting the most suitable flower types for various occasions.



Marafi

On this occasion, **Johair Marafi**, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, stated that the event aligns with the Bank's continued efforts to strengthen communication channels with clients and offer interactive platforms for self-expression and skill development, thereby supporting and empowering women on both personal and professional levels.

For its part, Angle Flowers expressed pride in collaborating with ABK for this initiative, highlighting that the partnership reflects its commitment to community engagement and empowering women to



Part of the workshop.

explore and develop their diverse talents.

In conclusion, Marafi emphasized the Bank's dedication to organizing more interactive workshops and cultural activities aimed at enriching client experiences and fostering long-term loyalty – further reinforcing ABK's competitive position in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 46 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi,

and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk.kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

5th PPP MENA Forum returns to shape the future of public-private partnerships in region

DUBAI, UAE, June 23: The much-anticipated 5th PPP MENA Forum is set to take place from 10th to 11th September 2025 at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers, Dubai, solidifying its position as the region's premier platform for public-private collaboration, investment, and policy transformation.

As the Middle East continues its ambitious journey toward economic diversification and infrastructure expansion, this year's forum comes at a critical inflection point – bringing together over 400 stakeholders from across government, finance, development, and industry.

Organized by Great Minds Event Management Company, the forum will welcome decision-makers, investors, project owners, EPC contractors, and sector specialists for two days of high-level dialogue and strategic networking. With participation from over 150 government representatives and 40 global speakers, the forum will explore the future of PPPs across core sectors including energy, healthcare, real estate, logistics, transportation, and digital transformation.

The 2025 edition will shine a spotlight on key sectors such as renewable energy, water, digital infrastructure, logistics, smart city planning, healthcare, and education – providing a well-rounded outlook on PPP models that create long-term impact. Special sessions will also be dedicated to women leadership in infrastructure, municipal-level partnerships, and global best practices for PPP governance.

Under the theme “Driving progress from MENA to the World,” the event will delve into emerging policies, procurement reform, investment strategies, and successful case studies that are shaping the next generation of PPPs in the region.

Leila Masinaei, Managing Partner at Great Minds Event Management, said, “The 5th edition of the PPP MENA Forum is more than just a conference – it's a catalyst for transformation. With governments accelerating infrastructure development and social investments across the region, this platform allows for high-value engagement between public entities and private partners who are eager to drive mean-



Top & above: Photos from the 4th PPP MENA Forum.

ingful progress. We are proud to provide a space where strategy meets execution and where the future of PPPs in MENA is actively being shaped.”

Nasser Massoud, MENA PPP Forum Chairman, said, “As we approach the 5th MENA PPP Forum, the region stands at a pivotal juncture. With hundreds of PPP projects announced in pipelines, valued at billions of dollars, the momentum is undeniable. At the same time, procurement policy changes require a novel approach to delivering these projects in an affordable and sustainable way. This forum will delve into examples of successes and challenges, while exploring the transformative changes in procurement policies that will impact the nature of partnerships and project structures going forward. It is an opportunity to harness collective expertise, drive innovation, and forge partnerships that will define the future of infrastructure and service delivery in the MENA region and beyond.”

This year's forum will explore a range of strategic themes including driving economic growth through infrastructure and utility-focused PPPs, maximizing social impact in sectors such as education, healthcare, sports, and community services, and showcasing sector-specific

developments across energy, transport, and smart cities. The agenda will also address the optimization of procurement dynamics with an emphasis on digital and service-based PPP models, while offering key insights into regional investment outlooks and upcoming projects across MENA markets.

The 5th PPP MENA Forum is supported by a distinguished lineup of speakers, strategic partners and sponsors whose contributions help elevate the regional dialogue on infrastructure and development. Key supporters include INFRA, TRIBE, Plenary, Affinitext and other industry leaders whose commitment underscores the importance of cross-sector collaboration in shaping the future of public-private partnerships across the region.

The PPP MENA Forum continues to grow in importance as a trusted knowledge-sharing platform, reinforcing the critical role of PPPs in delivering efficient, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure across the region. With a highly targeted audience profile, the PPP MENA Forum is designed to translate vision into viable action. It also provides a launchpad for new partnerships and cross-border ventures that are pivotal to the region's sustainable growth trajectory.

Charts an aggressive growth plan within India and globally to expand its presence to 15 countries

Malabar Gold & Diamonds crosses 400 showrooms globally, aims to increase turnover to over \$9 billion

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally, proudly celebrates a major global milestone with the launch of its 400th showroom. The showroom was inaugurated by M.P. Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, in the presence of O. Asher, Managing Director – India Operations; K.P. Veerankutty, Group Executive Director; Salish Mathew, Group Chief Marketing Officer; P.K. Siraj, Head – Retail Operations (Rest of India); N.K. Jishad, Regional Head – North; and other senior management team members, customers & well-wishers.

This landmark expansion was marked by the opening of a new showroom at Noida, India, reinforcing the brand's rapid global expansion.

The launch of Malabar's 400th showroom is part of a broader, ambitious growth strategy aimed at deepening Malabar's presence across India and globally. With a current turnover of USD 7.36 Billion and presence in 13 countries, the brand is targeting an exponential increase in revenue to USD 9 Billion and to open 60 showrooms expanding its presence to 15 countries and 22 States and 3 Union Territories India in the current FY.

As Malabar scales its retail footprint, it remains committed to generating employment, with plans to expand its global workforce to nearly 27,250 management team members: further solidifying its status as one of the world's most trusted and responsible jewellery brands.

Mr. M.P. Ahammad, Chairman of Malabar Group, stated, “We are thrilled to mark the opening of our 400th showroom in Noida. This milestone is a testament to our growth ambitions and marks a significant step in our ever-expanding footprint across India and globally in the journey to be the No. 1 global jewellery retailer. I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to all our customers, management team members, shareholders and other stakeholders for their contributions in making this occasion truly significant. We have a comprehensive business strategy in place targeting expanding with 60 new showrooms and manufacturing units, aiming for a turnover of USD 9 Billion in the current financial year, and committing an investment of over USD 600 Million to drive growth.”

“We remain committed to redefining the jewellery shopping experience in a responsible and ethical manner while ensuring the utmost care and protection for our customers and their interests with every purchase. Our expansion will create additional 3,500 direct employment opportunities, in addition to supporting the large jewellery manufacturing ecosystem. Our operations are built on a foundation of complete transparency and strict com-



400th showroom inauguration.

pliance in addition to collaborating with trade bodies, financial houses, government regulators to make sure that our global operations are robust, trustworthy, and beyond reproach” commented Mr. Abdul Salam KP, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group.

“We are the largest jewellery retailer crafting, promoting, and selling jewellery that is an intersection of Indian art, culture, heritage, and tradition to a global audience across 13 countries and an ambitious expansion plan is in place which involves strengthening our retail presence in existing regions with more showroom launches, as well as charting expansion into new countries such as New Zealand and Ireland in the current financial year, increasing our total presence into 15 countries”, commented Mr. Shamal Ahmed, Managing Director – India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Adding to this, Mr. Asher O., Managing Director – India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said, “Malabar Gold & Diamonds is making great strides across India, which remains our biggest market and opportunity, and we have clear plans in place to continue the growth momentum. We will be strengthening our presence within existing and new states and union territories reaching a total of 22 States and 3 Union Territories by end of this financial year.

With a presence in 13 countries and a team of over 25,000 professionals, Malabar Gold & Diamonds serves more than 15 million customers annually. The brand offers over 1,00,000 jewellery designs with exclusive jewellery collections and continues to expand its global footprint with a strong focus on quality, design, and customer satisfaction.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is guided by its set of ‘Malabar Promises’, which include 100% value on gold and diamond exchange, transparent pricing, certified diamonds and gemstones, assured lifetime maintenance, and ethically sourced jewellery. These promises further reinforce Malabar Gold & Diamonds' vision of becoming the world's most preferred jeweller, blending traditional artistry with modern innovation to deliver an elevated, luxurious shopping experience for every customer.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) initiatives have been the primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, with 5% of net profits set aside towards such initiatives in each country of operations. The key focus is in the areas of Health, Hunger Free World, Housing, Education, Women Empowerment & Environment.

As a responsible brand, Malabar Group launches ‘The Hunger Free World’ initiative in 2022, envisioning a world free of hunger. Presently, the program operates numerous kitchens across India and Africa, providing around 70,000 nutritious meals daily across 81 locations.

The Group also established 716 micro learning centers across India to provide basic education to impoverished children and facilitate their transition into formal schooling. So far 32,049 children have been enrolled in these centres, where they receive one year of foundational education to help them return to or begin formal education. Children who graduate high school will receive support for higher studies on campuses across various states, with additional scholarships available to girls as part of the Group's commitment to women's empowerment.

The ‘Grandma Home’ is another project by Malabar Group, which provides free accommodation to needy and destitute women. Currently, homes have been set up in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, with plans to establish similar facilities in Kerala, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, and Mumbai.

The ESG goals of Malabar Group are periodically strengthened to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization.

Asia markets slip, defense stocks gain on Middle East tensions

Oil volatile, shares mixed after US strikes Iranian nuclear sites

BANGKOK, June 23, (AP): Global markets appeared to take the U.S. strike against nuclear targets in Iran in stride as investors watched Monday to see how Iran will react.

The price of oil initially jumped more than 2%, fell and then regained about half that much. U.S. stock futures edged lower and share benchmarks in Europe and Asia also were mostly lower.

The attacks on three Iranian sites raised the stakes in the war between Israel and Iran and left questions about what remains of Tehran’s nuclear program. It also increased the possibility that Iran might retaliate, potentially disrupting shipping through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, a waterway through which much of the world’s crude oil passes.

The big unknown is what Iran will do, analysts said.

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, was up 1.2% at \$77.91 per barrel. U.S. benchmark crude climbed 1.3% to \$74.79.

The future for the S&P 500 was little changed, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.1%. Treasury yields were steady.

In Europe, Germany’s DAX lost

0.5% to 23,230.54 and the CAC 40 in Paris fell 0.6% to 7,541.25. Britain’s FTSE 100 shed 0.2% to 8,761.53.

Overall, there was no sign of panic. “I believe what we are thinking is or the thinking is that it is going to be a short conflict. The one big hit by the Americans will be effective and then we’ll get back to sort of business as usual, in which case there is no need for an immediate, panicky type of reaction,” said Neil Newman, managing director of Atris Advisory Japan.

The conflict began with an Israeli attack against Iran on June 13 that sent oil prices yo-yoing and rattled other markets.

Closing off the Strait of Hormuz would be technically difficult but it could severely disrupt transit through it, sending insurance rates spiking and making shippers nervous to move without U.S. Navy escorts. As a major oil producer, Iran may be reluctant to close down the waterway, which is used to transport its own crude, mostly to China. Oil is a major revenue source for the regime.

“The situation remains highly fluid, and much hinges on whether Tehran opts for a restrained reaction or a more



Trader Robert Gasparino works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Tuesday, June 10, 2025. (AP)

aggressive course of action,” Kristian Kerr, head of macro strategy at LPL Financial in Charlotte, North Carolina, said in a commentary.

Speaking to Fox News on Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said disrupting traffic through the strait would be “economic suicide” and

would elicit a U.S. response.

“I would encourage the Chinese government in Beijing to call them about that because they heavily depend on the Strait of Hormuz for their oil,” Rubio said.

When asked about that at a routine briefing in Beijing, Chinese Foreign

Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told reporters in Beijing that “China is willing to strengthen communication with Iran and relevant parties to continue playing a constructive role in promoting de-escalation” of the conflict.

“The Persian Gulf and its adjacent waters are important international channels for cargo and energy trade. Maintaining security and stability in this region serves the common interests of the international community,” he said.

Tom Kloza, chief market analyst at Turner Mason & Co said he expects Iranian leaders to refrain from drastic measures and oil futures to ease back after the initial fears blow over.

Disrupting shipping would be “ a scorched earth possibility, a Sherman-burning-Atlanta move,” Kloza said.

Writing in a report, Ed Yardeni, a long-time analyst, agreed that Tehran leaders would likely hold back.

“They aren’t crazy,” he wrote in a note to investors Sunday. “The price of oil should fall and stock markets around the world should climb higher.”

Other experts weren’t so sure.

Countries are not always rational actors and Tehran could lash out for

political or emotional reasons, said Andy Lipow, a Houston analyst who has covered oil markets for 45 years.

“If the Strait of Hormuz was completely shut down, oil prices would rise to \$120 to \$130 a barrel,” Lipow said. That would translate to about \$4.50 a gallon at the pump and hurt consumers in other ways, he said.

Much of East Asia depends on oil imported through the strait. Taiwan’s Taixei fell 1.4% while the Kospi in South Korea slipped 0.2%.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 edged 0.1% lower, with gains for defense contractors, oil companies and miners helping to make up for broad losses.

“The U.S. strike on Iran certainly is very good for defense equipment,” Newman of Atris Advisory said, noting that both Japan and South Korea have sizable military manufacturing hubs.

Australia’s S&P/ASX fell 0.4%.

Hong Kong’s Hang Seng regained lost ground, climbing 0.7%, while the Shanghai Composite index picked up 0.7%.

In currency dealings, the U.S. dollar rose to 147.82 Japanese yen from 146.66 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1464 from \$1.1473.

Luxury sector braces for slowdown, not meltdown

MILAN, June 23, (AP): Global sales of personal luxury goods are “slowing down but not collapsing,” according to a Bain & Co. consultancy study released Thursday.

Personal luxury goods sales that eroded to 364 billion euros (\$419 billion) in 2024 are projected to slide by another 2% to 5% this year, the study said, citing threats of U.S. tariffs and geopolitical tensions triggering economic slowdowns.

“Still, to be positive in a difficult moment - with three wars, economies slowing down, inequality at a maximum ever - it’s not a market in collapse,” said Bain partner and co-author of the study Claudia D’Arpizio. “It is slowing down but not collapsing.”

Alongside external headwinds, luxury brands have alienated consumers with an ongoing creativity crisis and sharp price increases, Bain said. Buyers have also been turned off by recent investigations in Italy that revealed that sweatshop conditions in subcontractors making luxury handbags.

Sales are slipping sharply in powerhouse markets the United States and China, the study showed. In the U.S., market volatility due to tariffs has discouraged consumer confidence. China has recorded six quarters of contraction on low consumer confidence.

The Middle East, Latin America and Southeast Asia are recording growth. Europe is mostly flat, the study showed.

This has created a sharp divergence between brands that continue with strong creative and earnings growth, such as the Prada Group, which posted a 13% first-quarter jump in revenue to 1.34 billion euros, and brands like Gucci, where revenue was down 24% to 1.6 billion euros in the same period.

Gucci owner Kering last week hired Italian automotive executive Luca De Meo, the former CEO of Renault, to mount a turnaround. The decision comes as three of its brands - Gucci, Balenciaga and Bottega Veneta - are launching new creative

directors.

Kering’s stock surged 12% on news of the appointment. D’Arpizio underlined his track record, returning French carmaker Renault to profitability and previous roles as marketing director at Volkswagen and Fiat.

“All of these factors resonate well together in a market like luxury when you are in a phase where growth is still the name of the game, but you also need to make the company more nimble in terms of costs, and turn around some of the brands,” she said.

Brands are also making changes to minimize the impact of possible U.S. tariffs. These include shipping directly from production sites and not warehouses and reducing stock in stores.

With aesthetic changes afoot “stuffing the channels doesn’t make a lot of sense,” D’Arpizio said.

Still, many of the headwinds buffeting the sector are out of companies’ control.

“Many of these (negative) aspects are not going to change soon. What can change is more clarity on the tariffs, but I don’t think we will stop the wars or the political instability in a few months,” she said, adding that luxury consumer confidence is tied more closely to stock market trends than geopolitics.

President of Italian luxury brand association Altgamma Matteo Lunelli underlined hat the sector recorded overall growth of 28% from 2019-2024, “placing us well above pre-pandemic levels.”

While luxury spending is sensitive to global turmoil, it is historically quick to rebound, powered by new markets and pent-up demand.

The 2008-2009 financial crisis plummeted sales of luxury apparel, handbags and footwear from 161 billion euros to 147 billion euros over two years. The market more than recovered the losses in 2010 as it rebounded by 14%, with an acceleration in the Chinese market. Similarly, after sales plunged by 21% during the pandemic, pent-up spending powered sales to new records.



Demonstrators march shouting slogans against the Formula 1 Barcelona Fan Festival in downtown Barcelona, Spain, Wednesday, June 19, 2024, during residents protest against mass tourism. (AP)

Record 747 mln visitors push Europe hotspots to the brink

Locals push back as iconic destinations drown in tourists

MADRID, June 23, (AP): Suitcases rattle against cobblestones. Selfie-snappers jostle for the same shot. Ice cream shops are everywhere. Europe has been called the world’s museum, but its record numbers of visitors have also made it ground zero for concerns about overtourism.

Last year, 747 million international travelers visited the continent, far outnumbering any other region in the world, according to the U.N.’s World Tourism Barometer. Southern and Western Europe welcomed more than 70% of them.

As the growing tide of travelers strains housing, water and the most Instagrammable hotspots in the region, protests and measures to lessen the effects of overtourism have proliferated.

Here’s a look at the issue in some of Europe’s most visited destinations.

Among factors driving the record numbers are cheap flights, social media, the ease of travel planning using artificial intelligence and what U.N. tourism officials call a strong economic outlook for many rich countries that send tourists despite some geopolitical and economic tensions.

Citizens of countries like the U.S., Japan, China and the U.K. generate the most international trips, especially to popular destinations, such as Barcelona in Spain and Venice in Italy. They swarm these places seasonally, creating uneven demand for housing and resources such as water.

Despite popular backlash against the crowds, some tourism officials believe they can be managed with the right infrastructure in place.

Italy’s Tourism Minister Daniela Santanchè said she thinks tourism flows at crowded sites such Florence’s

Uffizi Galleries that house some of the world’s most famous artworks could be better managed with AI, with tourists able to buy their tickets when they book their travel, even months in advance, to prevent surges.

She pushed back against the idea that Italy - which like all of its Southern European neighbors, welcomed more international visitors in 2024 than its entire population - has a problem with too many tourists, adding that most visits are within just 4% of the country’s territory.

“It’s a phenomenon that can absolutely be managed,” Santanchè told The Associated Press in an interview in her office on Friday. “Tourism must be an opportunity, not a threat - even for local communities. That’s why we are focusing on organizing flows.”

Countries on the Mediterranean are at the forefront. Olympics-host France, the biggest international destination, last year received 100 million inter-

national visitors, while second-place Spain received almost 94 million - nearly double its own population.

Protests have erupted across Spain over the past two years. In Barcelona, the water gun has become a symbol of the city’s anti-tourism movement after marching protests have spritzed unsuspecting tourists while carrying signs saying: “One more tourist, one less resident!”

The pressure on infrastructure has been particularly acute on Spain’s Canary and Balearic Islands, which have a combined population of less than 5 million people. Each archipelago saw upwards of 15 million visitors last year.

Elsewhere in Europe, tourism overcrowding has vexed Italy’s most popular sites including Venice, Rome, Capri and Verona, where Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet” was set. On the popular Amalfi Coast, ride-hailing app Uber offers private helicopter and boat rides in the summer to beat the crowds.



These are Gucci bags in the window of a Gucci store in Pittsburgh on Jan. 30, 2023. (AP)

Superconducting processor revolutionizes medical imaging in China

China races to turn quantum computing into industrial solutions

HEFEI, June 23, (Xinhua): In a significant stride toward practical quantum computing, a Chinese startup has successfully deployed its superconducting quantum processor to improve the accuracy of breast cancer screenings, showcasing the technology’s potential to revolutionize medical diagnostics.

The breakthrough came from Origin Quantum, a Hefei-based startup, which harnessed the parallel processing power of its “Origin Wukong” quantum computer to analyze medical images with unprecedented speed.

This pioneering work is indicative of China’s growing capability in translating quantum computing advancement into practical solutions. In an ambitious drive, the nation seeks to foster an industrial ecosystem of the future amid the global quantum computing race.

The Chinese government work report early this year called for the estab-

lishment of a growth mechanism for investment in future industries, including quantum technology, bio-manufacturing, embodied intelligence and 6G.

The national policy guideline spurred a swift market response with entities transforming frontier, lab-based research into operational technologies with tangible impact.

By tapping into the unique strengths of quantum technology, Origin Quantum’s innovative approach in processing medical imaging data, developed in collaboration with Bengbu Medical University, resulted in a dramatic reduction of misdiagnosis and missed cases.

“The system enhances mammogram screening accuracy on current noisy intermediate-scale quantum computers, enabling high-precision and rapid classification of both healthy images and lesion malignancy,” said Xie Zongyu, a physician from the univer-

sity’s First Affiliated Hospital.

“Our ultimate goal is to establish a quantum intelligent diagnostic system,” Xie added.

Real-world uses

In March, a team of Chinese scientists unveiled Zuchongzhi 3.0, a 105-qubit superconducting quantum processor prototype with speed gains in the quadrillions over leading supercomputers for one specific task, showcasing capabilities that surpass those of classical supercomputers.

However, lab advances like this remain niche demonstrations with minimal real-world impact. Over the coming five years, global quantum scientists are aiming to pinpoint a handful of practical quantum applications -- like quantum chemistry and drug discovery, now largely bolstered by supercomputers and AI algorithms.

A growing number of Chinese tech

companies, including Origin Quantum, are gearing up to make their mark in this field.

“Computational chemistry can partly predict interactions between drug molecules and target proteins. But classical computers have difficulty in accurately predicting complex large molecules,” said Guo Guoping, chief scientist of Origin Quantum that launched the molecular docking software QDock.

“In theory, quantum computers can screen potential compounds and simulate complex reactions to break the computational bottleneck in drug discovery,” Guo added.

AceMapAI, a Suzhou-based biotech company, is working with partners including Tencent Quantum Lab to explore the potential of quantum computing in drug molecular dynamics simulation, and drug screening and

optimization.

Zhao Xuejiao, deputy director of Anhui Quantum Computing Engineering Research Center, said that the complex computational problems in China’s biopharmaceutical industry will provide a broad application scope for quantum computing.

A Shanghai-based startup is also experimenting with applying quantum algorithms to the massive computations in smart cities.

TuringQ introduced this month a quantum-inspired solution for Autonomous Valet Parking (AVP) that significantly reduces parking wait time and enhances efficiency.

AVP is capable of autonomously navigating routes and parking accurately.

The firm’s solution has already been deployed in a large commercial parking lot.

The algorithm cuts the average cus-

tomers search time from 19.8 minutes under traditional manual scheduling to about 5.5 minutes when the parking space vacancy rate is only 5 percent.

The application of quantum algorithms in the financial sector has become a significant area. Beijing Quantum firm QBoson, the Postal Savings Bank of China and China Mobile jointly designed a quantum algorithm-based bank teller scheduling solution.

QBoson’s quantum computer conducted a full search of the extremely large solution space and found the global optimum within milliseconds.

“Quantum computing companies design algorithms based on feedback from those with computational bottlenecks before testing them on quantum machines,” said Dou Mengnan, vice president of Origin Quantum. “This model creates a sustainable industrial ecosystem.”

Actress-singer performs national anthem before Game 7

Thunder fan Chenoweth takes center court at NBA final

OKLAHOMA CITY, June 23, (AP): At 4-foot-11, Kristin Chenoweth always wanted to play basketball. It never happened, but she still made it to the NBA Finals.

The award-winning actress, singer, Oklahoma native, Oklahoma Hall of Fame inductee and unabashed Thunder fan sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" before Game 7 of the title series between the Thunder and the Indiana Pacers on Sunday night.

Chenoweth's performance aired live on ABC shortly before tipoff of the season's final game.

She has performed on some of the biggest stages in the world - but doing the anthem for a Thunder game gives her butterflies.

"Let me just say, if they had anxiety medication for Thunder fans, I'd be taking it," Chenoweth, dressed in a Thunder sweatshirt, told The Associated Press after her soundcheck at the arena on Sunday.

Chenoweth's Thunder fandom has been no secret since the franchise's early years, though she also has professed at times to liking the Los Angeles Lakers and New York Knicks as well. That said, the Thunder are clearly her top choice - so much so that she once told the Tulsa World she spent three hours bedazzling a Thunder hat. She went to Oklahoma City University after growing up in Broken Arrow, about 115 miles northeast of where the Thunder play.

And her 8-year-old dog's name is Thunder. She even dressed the pup up once in a Thunder outfit.

"I never miss a game unless I'm on stage," Chenoweth said. "I was a cheerleader in high school in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and I loved football, but my favorite was basketball. I like how much of a team player you've got to be. ... And this is my team."



Kristin Chenoweth sings the national anthem before Game 7 of the NBA Finals basketball series between the Indiana Pacers and the Oklahoma City Thunder Sunday, June 22, in Oklahoma City. (AP)

Chenoweth has sung the anthem at a few Thunder games in the past, sometimes alone and at least once with children from her Chenoweth Broadway Bootcamp. That camp is part of the arts and education fund that she founded to cultivate "young artistic expression by enriching children's lives through

the power of education, entertainment and experience."

"I've had some pretty big moments in my life in the entertainment field, but this one, I don't know why, makes me nervous," Chenoweth said. "I just am very honored that they asked. And I'm proud of these kids. I mean, we have come so far. Of course I want us to win. When the NFL has hired me for the anthem, you remain neutral. But the NBA didn't hire me for this, so I'm Thundering it up."

And the anthem - which the soprano finished with her own flair - is a tough song to perform, she said. Singing the words written by Francis Scott Key about the defense of Fort McHenry is a duty she takes seriously.

"Actually thinking about what he saw, it's really important for me to remember the words and talk about what they meant then and what they mean to us now," Chenoweth said.

Chenoweth won a Tony Award in 1999 for best featured actress in a musical for her role in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." She received two Tony nominations for best leading actress in a musical, one in 2004 for playing Glinda in "Wicked" - she lost to co-star Idina Menzel - and the other in 2015 for playing 1930s Hollywood diva Lily Garland in "On the Twentieth Century."

And in 2009, she won an Emmy for best supporting actress in a comedy series for her work on ABC's "Pushing Daisies." She returns to Broadway this fall, playing Jackie Siegel in "The Queen of Versailles."

"I still have the desire," Chenoweth said. "I think really what inspires me lately is young talent. I'm seeing and watching and learning from them. Hopefully they're learning from me. And there's nothing better than watching a budding talent whether it's basketball or a singer, an artist, it's my jam. What keeps me going right now is other people inspiring me to do what I love."

Variety

ABUJA, Nigeria: The Netherlands on Thursday returned 119 artifacts looted from Nigeria, including human and animal figures, plaques, royal regalia and a bell.

The artifacts, known as the Benin Bronzes and mostly housed in a museum in the city of Leiden, were looted in the late 19th century by British soldiers.

In recent years, museums across Europe and North America have moved to address ownership disputes over artifacts looted during the colonial era. They were returned at the request of Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

During the handover ceremony in Edo State, **Oba Ewuare II**, the monarch and custodian of Benin culture, described the return of the artifacts as a "divine intervention." The Benin Bronzes were returned at the request of Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

The restitution is a testament to the power of prayer and determination, the monarch said.

The Dutch government is committed to returning artifacts that do not belong to the country, said Marieke Van Bommel, director of the Wereld Museum.

Olugbile Holloway, the commission's director, said the return of 119 artifacts marks the largest single repatriation to date and that his organization is working hard to recover more items looted during colonial times.

Nigeria formally requested the return of hundreds of objects from museums around the world in 2022. Some 72 objects were returned from a London museum that year while 31 were returned from a museum in Rhode Island. (AP)

VERSAILLES, France: Dressed in their finest baroque costumes and signature masks, guests danced the night away at the Palace of Versailles.

On Saturday night, the Great Masked Ball brought together 2,500 costumed revelers, who partied until dawn from the iconic Orangerie to the Ballroom Grove, an amphitheater of greenery laid out in the grandiose gardens designed by André Le Nôtre.

This year's theme - Animal is the Future - fused dance performances, DJ sets, and vibrant visuals, captivating a crowd required to be fully costumed and masked to gain entry and entertain themselves. (AP)

ASTANA: Exchanges between news agencies in China and Central Asia serve as an essential channel for implementing the China-Central Asia Spirit, according to Qiu Xiaqi, vice president of the China Public Diplomacy Association.

Such exchanges, including the China-Central Asia News Agency Forum held Sunday in Astana, inject sustained vitality into the China-Central Asia Spirit and represent a key pillar of China's public diplomacy, Qiu said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

"The essence of state-to-state relations lies in people-to-people ties," Qiu said, noting that the China-Central Asia Spirit, a high-level strategic consensus, needs to be translated into tangible, relatable experiences that resonate with the people of all relevant countries.

He described the forum as a "convergence engine" that brings together both official discourse and grassroots narratives.

"Cooperation blueprints formulated at the governmental level need to be interpreted and vividly communicated by the media and think tanks so that they reach the broader public," Qiu explained. "These efforts transform grand visions into practical projects and compelling human stories." High-quality dialogue is a powerful means to build mutual trust and lay a solid foundation for bilateral relations and public opinion, he said. (Xinhua)

Film



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Mason Thames in a scene from 'How to Train Your Dragon.' (AP)

'Elio' marks a new low for Pixar

'How to Train Your Dragon' tops US box office

NEW YORK, June 23, (AP): Neither Pixar nor zombies were enough to topple "How to Train Your Dragon" from the No. 1 slot at North American box offices over the weekend. The Universal Pictures live-action remake remained the top film, bringing in \$37 million in ticket sales in its second weekend, despite the sizeable new releases of "Elio" and "28 Years Later." , according to studio estimates Sunday. "How To Train Your Dragon" has rapidly amassed \$358.2 million worldwide.

Six years after its last entry, the Dean DeBlois-directed "How To Train Your Dragon" has proven a potent revival of the DreamWorks Animation franchise. A sequel is already in the works for the \$150 million production, which remakes the 2010 animated tale about a Viking boy and his dragon.

Pixar's "Elio" had a particularly tough weekend. The Walt Disney Co. animation studio has often launched some of its biggest titles in June, including "Cars," "WALL-E" and "Toy Story 4." But "Elio," a science fiction adventure about a boy who dreams of meeting aliens, notched a modest \$21 million, the lowest opening ever for Pixar.

"This is a weak opening for a new Pixar movie," said David A. Gross, who runs the movie consulting firm FranchiseRe. "These would be solid numbers for another original animation film, but this is Pixar, and by Pixar's remarkable standard, the opening is well below average."

"Elio," originally set for release in early 2024, had a bumpy road to the screen. Adrian Molina - co-director of "Coco" - was

replaced mid-production by Domee Shi ("Turning Red") and Madeline Sharafian. Back at Disney's D23 conference in 2022, America Ferrera appeared to announce her role as Elio's mother, but the character doesn't even exist in the revamped film.

Disney and Pixar spent at least \$150 million making "Elio," which didn't fare any better internationally than it did in North America, bringing in just \$14 million from 43 territories. Pixar stumbled coming out of the pandemic before stabilizing performance with 2023's "Elemental" (\$496.4 million worldwide) and 2024's "Inside Out 2" (\$1.7 billion), which was the company's biggest box office hit.

Lowest

"Elemental" was Pixar's previously lowest earning film, launching with \$29.6 million. It rallied in later weeks to collect nearly half a billion dollars at the box office. The company's first movie, "Toy Story," opened with \$29.1 million in 1995, or \$60 when adjusted for inflation. It remains to be seen whether "Elio's" decent reviews and "A" from CinemaScore audiences can lead it to repeat "Elemental's" trajectory.

With most schools on summer break, the competition for family audiences was stiff. Disney's own "Lilo & Stitch," another live-action remake, continued to pull in young moviegoers. It grossed \$9.7 million in its fifth weekend, bringing its global tally to \$910.3 million. .

"28 Years Later" signaled the return of another, far gorier franchise. Director Danny Boyle reunited with screenwriter

Alex Garland to resume their pandemic apocalypse thriller 25 years after "28 Days Later" and 18 years after its sequel, "28 Weeks Later."

The Sony Pictures release opened with \$30 million. That was good enough to give Boyle, the filmmaker of "Slumdog Millionaire" and "Trainspotting," the biggest opening weekend of his career. The film, which cost \$60 million to make, jumps ahead nearly three decades from the outbreak of the so-called rage virus for a coming-of-age story about a 12-year-old (Alfie Williams) venturing out of his family's protected village. Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Jodie Comer and Ralph Fiennes co-star.

Reviews have been good (90% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) for "28 Years Later," though audience reaction (a "B" CinemaScore) is mixed. Boyle has more plans for the zombie franchise, which will next see the release of "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple" next year from director Nia DaCosta.

"28 Years Later" added another \$30 million in 59 overseas markets.

After its strong start last weekend with \$12 million, A24's "Materialists" held well with \$5.8 million in its second weekend. The romantic drama by writer-director Celine Song and starring Dakota Johnson, Pedro Pascal and Chris Evans has collected \$24 million so far.

Next weekend should also be a competitive one in movie theaters, with both "F1," from Apple and Warner Bros., and Universal's "Megan 2.0" launching in cinemas.

'WUCHANG' aims to make a worldwide impact

Chinese AAA role-playing game eyes global release

CHENGDU, June 23, (Xinhua): Riding the wave of global interest ignited by "Black Myth: Wukong," another Chinese-developed AAA role-playing game, "WUCHANG: Fallen Feathers," is now set to step onto the international stage.

Developed by Chengdu Lingze Technology Co., Ltd. based in Chengdu, capital of southwest China's Sichuan Province, "WUCHANG: Fallen Feathers" is set for global release on July 24. The game soared to the top of Steam's China best-seller chart on its pre-order debut this April and ranked eighth worldwide, drawing significant attention from players around the globe.

Set in a mythic world inspired by ancient Chinese legends, "WUCHANG: Fallen Feathers" invites players to step into the shoes of a lone female warrior, embarking on a journey through towering mountains, ancient temples and forgotten ruins, in a quest to uncover lost memories and hidden truths.

The game draws heavily from the ancient Shu civilization, a prominent culture in southwest China known for its distinctive bronze masks and archaeological sites such as Sanxingdui, according to Guo Xinyi, CFO of Lingze Technology.

To authentically bring this world to life, the development team at Lingze Technology conducted six years of extensive field research, including 3D scanning at dozens of cultural and historical sites -- like the Anyue Stone Carvings and Taoping Village in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture. The result is a vivid recreation of these ancient landmarks within the game.



'WUCHANG: Fallen Feathers' poster

Drawing inspiration from classical texts such as "The Classic of Mountains and Seas," the developers also integrated regional myths and local legends to craft a unique and immersive cultural atmosphere.

The developers view the project as a fusion of gameplay and cultural narrative, ensuring it is both captivating and firmly grounded in Chinese tradition.

"We wanted to make a game that is, above all, fun to play," said Xia Siyuan, CTO and game producer at Lingze Technology. "We believe that only when players truly enjoy the game will they be motivated to explore the cultural sto-

ries behind it."

"The ancient Shu civilization was a natural foundation for us to build this world upon," Xia added. "We want the world to see that Chinese culture is full of creative potential."

"WUCHANG: Fallen Feathers" is set to launch on major global platforms, including Steam, Epic Games Store, PlayStation 5 and Xbox, the studio said. Industry insiders see the game as a potential milestone in China's push to expand its footprint in the global AAA gaming market.

AAA games, typically defined as requiring a lot of money, a lot of time and a lot of resources, are high-cost, high-quality, large-scale single-player titles. The market has long been dominated by developers from countries such as Japan, the United States and France.

The upcoming release of "WUCHANG: Fallen Feathers" is part of a broader trend toward diversification and rising quality in China's gaming industry.

Other highly anticipated Chinese titles include "Showa American Story," "Lost Soul Aside" and upcoming downloadable content for "Black Myth: Wukong."

China is the world's largest gaming market, with domestic sales revenue surpassing 325 billion yuan (about 45.3 billion U.S. dollars) in 2024.

Also, the 2024 China gaming industry report showed that China had 674 million gamers, while domestically developed games achieved overseas sales of 18.56 billion dollars last year, indicating the increasing international influence of Chinese games.

Famed sculptor’s art featured in public spaces worldwide

Arnaldo Pomodoro, creator of iconic spheres, dies

ROME, June 23, (AP): Arnaldo Pomodoro, one of Italy’s most prominent contemporary artists whose bronze spheres decorate iconic public spaces from the Vatican to the United Nations, has died at age 98, his foundation said Monday.

Pomodoro died at home in Milan on Sunday, the eve of his 99th birthday, according to a statement from Carlotta Montebello, director general of the Arnaldo Pomodoro Foundation.

Pomodoro’s massive spheres are instantly recognizable: shiny, smooth bronze globes with clawed



Pomodoro

out interiors that Pomodoro has said referred to the superficial perfection of exteriors and the troubled complexity of interiors.

In a note of condolences, Italian Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli said Pomodoro’s “wounded” spheres “speak to us today of the fragility and complexity of the human and the world.”

The Vatican’s sphere, which occupies a central place in the Pigna Courtyard of the Vatican Museums, features an internal mechanism that rotates with the wind. “In my work I see the cracks, the eroded parts, the destructive potential that emerges from our time of disillusionment,” the Vatican quoted Pomodoro as saying about its sphere.

The United Nations in New York received a 3.3-meter (10 foot, eight inch) diameter “Sphere Within Sphere” sculpture as a gift from Italy in

1996. The UN sphere has refers to the coming of the new millennium, the UN said: “a smooth exterior womb erupted by complex interior forms,” and “a promise for the rebirth of a less troubled and destructive world.” Pomodoro said of it.

Other spheres are located at museums around the world and outside the Italian foreign ministry, which has the original work that Pomodoro created in 1966 for the Montreal Expo that began his monumental sculpture project.

Pomodoro was born in Montefeltro, Italy, on June 23, 1926. In addition to his spheres, he designed theatrical sets, land projects and machines. He had multiple retrospectives and taught at Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley and Mills College, according to his biography on the foundation website.



A spherical bronze sculpture by Italian artist Arnaldo Pomodoro, is seen outside the Italian Foreign Ministry Farnesina building, in Rome, Saturday, July 22, 2006. (AP)

Fashion



A model wears a creation as part of the men's Giorgio Armani Spring-Summer 2026 collection. (AP)



A model presents creation as part of the men's Prada Spring-Summer 2026 collection in Milan, Italy, June 22. (AP)



Models wear creations as part of the men's Giorgio Armani Spring-Summer 2026 collection, that was presented in Milan, Italy, Monday, June 23. (AP)



Models wear creations as part of the men's Prada Spring-Summer 2026 collection, in Milan, Italy, June 22. (AP)



A model wears a creation as part of Giorgio Armani Spring-Summer 2026 collection. (AP)

Prada moves from aggression to grace

Simon Cracker focuses on upcycled designs in Milan

MILAN, June 23, (AP): Simon Cracker’s collection for next summer is an expression of exasperation with a world of un-informed “experts,” and as an antidote the Italian upcycled brand has distilled its focus to singular, spotlight garments, paired with a Simon Cracker new uniform.

For designers Filippo Biraghi and Simone Botte, up-cycling is the lexicon they use to tell the story. This season’s was titled: “The devil in the details.”

They took inspiration for their ironic and disproportionate details from the Belgian designer Martin Margiela, adding to the garments oversized buttons that were actually facsimile copies, huge safety- and clothespins and giant zipper pulls. “We didn’t copy Margiela. We tried to use the same language,” Biraghi said.

The basic Simon Cracker co-ed uniform for Spring-Summer 2026 was a simple square T-shirt fashioned from jersey stock that they saved and reconditioned after it became waterlogged in flooding. The T-shirts, each with a big care label sewn on the front, were paired with tailored black shorts.

The uniforms were backdrops for the real stars: A blazer with multiple crumpled arms that unfurled on the runway into dramatic trains. A triplicate of belted trousers tiered to make super low-waisted streetwear. Shirts sewn

on dress fronts, with the arms tied behind the waist. A frenzy of shirts that become a ruffled skirt. Three pleated skirts layered to form a strapless tiered dress.

Each garment, made of clothes that had been in some way discarded, had its own architecture, and its own story.

Biraghi said that the designers have come up with a “recipe” for some core garments, including the Siamese T-Shirt he was wearing. It was made out of two T-shirts, one forming the sides with the arms, the second contributing the front and back panels. The idea is put out some identifiable pieces, while maintaining the uniqueness of each garment that is core to the brand.

“Our niche wants unique pieces. It is not the herd that interests us. Fewer but more devoted,” Botte said.

Prada

With global tensions escalating, Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons want to change the conversation to something gentle, calm and nice with their menswear collection for next summer, previewed during Milan Fashion Week on Sunday.

“We tried to make a change of tone, from powerful to gentle, calm,” Prada said after the show. “Basically, the opposite of aggression, power, nastiness.”

“Sometimes it is good to reflect, and be a bit more calm,” added Simons, her co-creative director.

In that vein, the pair’s latest menswear collection recalled childish innocence, opening with short shorts that were more precisely elasticized briefs, with pleated pockets, worn with a sturdy, sure-footed shoe and black sock and a crisp white buttoned-down shirt with a naive print of a sun and waves.

Paired

These panty-shorts were paired also with leather coats, long cotton shirts or fringed knitwear that give men access to the pant-less look already embraced by some female celebrities.

A more serious double-breasted suit was worn with the sleeves pushed up in a get-to-work gesture layered over track jackets. Track pants with a side stripe or straight, cropped cotton trousers otherwise anchored the looks with leather jackets, car coats or knitwear.

Urban looks ensembles paired with backpacks and flip-flops, on the verge of the getaway. Light, summer looks were finished with loafers. Nothing was completely office, and nothing was completely beach. The silhouette was deliberately unstructured, and the color palette broad

and undefined.

Gray, black, khaki and navy were offset by red, sky blue, lime green and turquoise and purple, monochromes mixing casually, as if to say, any way you want.

“We wanted everything to be human in its dimension, to be light and fresh and colorful,” Simons said.

There was humor, even whimsy, in bright cone-shaped woven raffia hats that recalled a shuttlecock, some with strands of raffia feathering over the eyes as if a shade. In the spirit of change, the showroom was left deliberately raw, with concrete and orange beams exposed and sunlight streaming through the high windows. Childlike daisy-shaped rugs were the only decoration.

While the colorful headgear and floral accents put a smile on people’s faces, news that the US had entered Israel’s war with Iran on Sunday cast a somber mood.

“We are always very aware of that,” Prada said. “Good luck to everyone.”

Outside the Prada Foundation showroom, hundreds of fans screamed for the arrival of Asian pop group TransFormProject, South Korean actor Lee Do-hyun and Japanese singer Sana. Also on hand were English-Ghanaian rapper Stormzy, NBA star Anthony Edwards and actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Harris Dickinson.



Cypriot lyricists Adamos Peratikos, 41, left, and Antonis Papaioannou, 43, battle it out live on stage in the centuries-old duel known as ‘tsiattista’ at the Pentecost Festival in Cyprus’ southern coastal town of Larnaca, Sunday, June 8. (AP)

LARNACA, Cyprus, June 23, (AP): Lyrical duelists in Cyprus spit rhymes in head-to-head contests, keeping alive a tradition known as “tsiattista” that emerged centuries before the likes of Kendrick Lamar and Drake.

Konstantinos Christou Grilias and Adamos Peratikos are among a new group of poets in this Mediterranean country who battle it out live on stage to the rhythms of the lute and fiddle. The battles are fierce, but you won’t find any Kendrick-Drake style beef. Tsiattista made UNESCO’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011.

The similarities with American hip-hop diss songs and battle rap are many: two duelists using their wits and turns of phrase to boast how superior they are, giving opponents a schooling in an onslaught of lyrical beatdowns. It’s complete with assertive gestures and the hands-behind-the-back patience of the poet waiting to pounce.

“Even if you’d been a paramedic, I’d send you to hospital with a heart attack,” Peratikos told one adversary - a line with more snap in the Cypriot Greek dialect, whose syntax is akin to ancient Greek. Grilias dissed his opponent as a lightweight and a laughingstock.

The audience of hundreds along a seaside promenade murmured in approval.

Tsiattista battles which have been around since at

least the end of the 19th century, are undergoing a bit of a revival, thanks to performers like Grilias and Peratikos.

“We urge other kids who like it to come along to safeguard this institution,” said Peratikos, 41. “The goal isn’t about awards, the goal is to keep tradition alive.”

The 44-year-old Grilias said he’s never really delved into the world of Kendrick Lamar or Jay-Z.

“Honestly, I’ve never listened to rappers. They told me that they battle in their own language, in their own way,” Grilias said as he prepared for a tsiattista duel at the peak of a festival for the Orthodox Christian Pentecost.

“Rappers don’t know where Cyprus is,” he added.

The new group of performers, known as tsiattistaes, started to replace the older generation about 15 years ago at the premier competition in Larnaca during the annual Pentecost festival known as Kataklysmos, said ethnomusicologist Nicoletta Demetriou, who is director of the island nation’s Music Archive.

The new generation includes women, though few participate because of lingering social exclusion, Demetriou said.

The current tsiattista format of a two-verse rhyme with a total of 15 syllables was developed in the late 18th to early 19th century, evolving from the introduc-

tion of the rhyming verse to the Greek-speaking world in the 15th and 16th centuries, Demetriou said. It draws on a tradition of poets matching wits from the times of Pericles in ancient Greece.

The structure and musical accompaniment are simple, so that the rhymes are clear and understandable for both the audience and the adversary.

Contests can address a range of themes, but the underlying premise is to determine who’s the best at the diss.

“It’s usually a fight, meaning ‘I’d clobber you, kill you, bury you,’” Grilias said. “But I believe the public likes more a bit of humor, too.”

For contestants, it’s about who shows up ready, can stay cool and make the fewest mistakes in front of a crowd.

“Truth is, you’re stressed, you’re under pressure,” Grilias said, and “the person who can best handle this has the advantage.”

One useful strategy is guessing how to get into your opponent’s way of thinking, predicting possible responses to your lines, Peratikos said.

He dismissed AI technology as incapable of coming up with effective rhymes in the Cypriot Greek dialect.

“There are words that we’ve heard but we don’t even know, so there’s no way artificial intelligence does,” Peratikos said.

‘Tsiattista’ poets revive ancient rap contests

Cyprus’ lyrical duelists trade rhymes in live battles

‘Connect’ to educate public on painful skin disease

Kuwait Dermatology Society launches campaign to raise awareness on ‘hidradenitis suppurativa’

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Kuwait Society of Dermatologists (KSD) launched a comprehensive national campaign on Saturday under the slogan “Connect” (Wasel) to raise awareness about hidradenitis suppurativa (HS), a chronic and painful skin disease that significantly impacts the quality of life of those affected, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

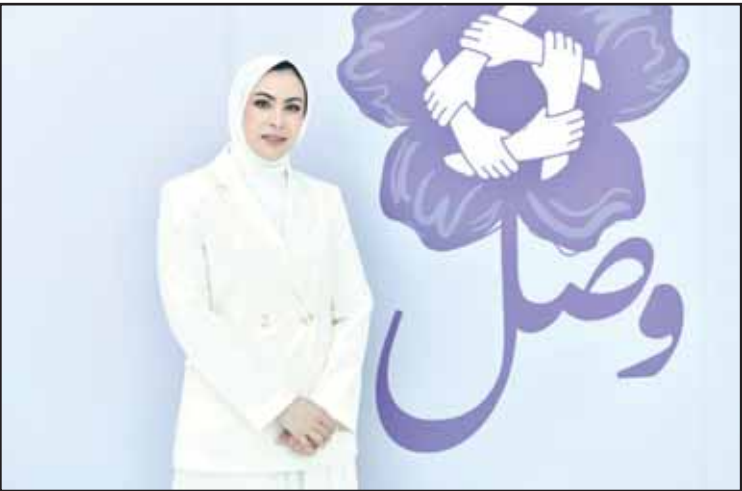
In a press statement, Secretary of KSD and Head of the Dermatology Department at Farwaniya Hospital Dr. Abeer Al-Bazali explained that the campaign will run for an entire month

and include various activities at the hospitals and health centers of the Ministry of Health, as well as several ministries and government agencies. The initiative aims to raise community awareness and provide support to patients.

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a chronic condition that affects hair follicles and is characterized by painful lumps and recurring abscesses, which can develop into oozing and chronic wounds. The disease imposes a significant physical and psychological burden on patients.

The campaign aims to break the psychological and social barriers faced by patients, as well as provide both medical and emotional support to patients and their families through education and counseling.

The campaign includes a variety of activities and events, such as awareness workshops and lectures held in hospitals and health centers, targeting both patients and healthcare professionals. It also involves field visits to several government institutions, organized in cooperation with various state entities.



KUNA photo Secretary of the Kuwait Society of Dermatology and Head of the Dermatology Department at Farwaniya Hospital, Dr. Abeer Al-Bazali.

‘Most diets provide sufficient protein’

You probably do not need foods with added protein: nutritionists

NEW YORK, June 23, (AP): The human body needs protein. Proteins carry out countless functions inside cells and they are vital for the growth, repair and maintenance of muscles, bones and skin. And with food companies rolling out high-protein versions of a huge range of foods, including milkshakes and granola bars - and even pancakes and popcorn - you might be tempted to think you need to add more to your diet.

But nutritionists say that if you are getting enough food, you are probably getting enough protein.

“Adding protein to foods is very beneficial - for the profits of that food,” said Federica Amati, nutrition lead at Imperial College London and head nutritionist at the health science company ZOE. “It is not based on health, it is not backed by science.”

The amount of protein you need depends on your age, weight and personal nutritional needs and it is especially important for children and older adults to make sure they eat protein-rich foods. Here’s what to know about how much protein you need and how to ensure you’re getting it from the best sources.

Protein is so critical that your body knows how to make it

Protein is a macronutrient, or a basic kind of food like fat or carbohydrates that your body needs to function. There are thousands of proteins, assembled from smaller molecules called amino acids - most of which can be made by the body.

“Because protein is so important, our body has adapted really well to making sure that it can reassemble and change the building blocks of these amino acids to make sure we have what we need, as long as we’re eating adequate amounts of food,” Amati said.

Still, the body can’t make all the amino acids, so some must come from food.

If you aren’t starving, you are probably getting plenty of protein.

The World Health Organization recommends that healthy adults get



A Thai peanut, vegetable and tofu bowl is displayed for a photograph in Coronado, Calif., on April 29, 2017. (AP)

about 0.4 grams of protein per pound of body weight (0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight). That’s roughly 60 grams for men and 50 grams for women per day, based on body weights of 165 pounds (75 kilograms) for men and 143 pounds (65 kilograms) for women.

In most rich countries, the average adult gets far more, Amati said. Protein deficiencies are mostly seen in malnourished people on subsistence diet in poorer countries, she said.

Bridget Benelam, a nutritionist with the British Nutrition Foundation, said it was important to get protein from different foods, like dairy, fish, beans, nuts, vegetables and meat. She said studies suggest vegetarians and vegans have lower protein intake than meat and fish eaters, but that their average protein levels are still OK.

Having some protein at every meal is also a likely a good idea. “It appears to be better for preserving muscle function if you have some protein throughout the day, rather than just having it all in one meal,” Benelam said.

Protein can be found in a huge range of food

Plant-based sources of protein in-

clude foods such as beans, lentils, peas, nuts, seeds, tofu, tempeh and meat substitutes. Fish, meat, poultry, eggs and dairy foods such as milk and yogurt are also good sources of protein. Amati said that proteins from animal-based sources may be easier for the body to break down compared to plant-based proteins, which tend to have more fiber.

“If you eat a piece of beef, you’re getting protein and things like zinc and iron, but you’re also getting more saturated fat,” she said. In comparison, Amati said eating protein-rich foods like chickpeas or beans also provides the body with fiber, something that’s lacking in most of our diets.

You probably don’t need to buy products with added protein

“Unless you have a specific health issue that requires you to have more protein, most people in countries like the US and the UK do not need more,” said Benelam of the British Nutrition Foundation.

Amati, of Imperial College London, said people should scrutinize the ingredient list of protein-enriched products to make sure they aren’t loaded with sugar and fat.

‘Anxious pets need calm, understanding’

In stressful times, our anxiety can rub off on pets – here’s how to help

NEW YORK, June 23, (AP): In this age of heightened anxiety, many of us turn to our pets for emotional support. But is our behavior increasing our furry friends’ fears?

The answer isn’t simple, says Frankie Jackson, a veterinary nurse and animal behavior consultant, and the owner of Canine Counseling in Smyrna, Georgia. She said she’s seen an increase in anxiety among her animal and human clients, but that it’s hard to unwind the cause and effect.

“Dogs are incredibly responsive to our expressions, our body language and our scent,” she says. “There is a feedback loop - the owners are nervous; the dog gets nervous. Our cortisol levels rise and fall in tandem.”

Dr. Becky Peters, a veterinarian and owner of Bath Veterinary Hospital in Bath, New York, has also noticed a link between the anxiety of pets and their owners, particularly in the exam room.

“If owners try to over comfort them - lots of ‘you’re OK!’” in anxious voices, the animals do get more anxious. If we stay calm and quiet, they do too,” Peters says.

Peters attributes much of the rise in pet anxiety to the social upheaval of the COVID years. Many animals who were acquired during the pandemic had limited opportunities to socialize with other people and pets during their peak developmental stages. After COVID, pets who were used to having their family at home experienced separation anxiety as their owners returned to work and school.

“A lot of pet anxiety comes from changes to their households,” Peters says. “It can also occur from a lack of routine and structure and not enough physical activity.”

Other components that could contribute to our pets’ anxiety include unmet needs, past trauma and insufficient open spaces.

“We are asking our dogs to live in a world that isn’t made for them,” she says.

Low-level stress responses in dogs, such as eating less and excessive self-grooming, are forms of communication that precede lunging and barking, Jackson says. Trying to solve reactive behaviors through obedience training without addressing the root cause can



This undated photo released by Dr. Becky Peters, a veterinarian and owner of Bath Veterinary Hospital in Bath, N.Y., shows Peters with her dog, (AP)

make dogs’ anxiety worse.

“It’s important to understand what the dogs are saying and why they’re behaving the way they are. Manners and life skills are important, but it won’t create happy dogs,” Jackson says.

Anxiety in cats can be harder to spot, according to Jackson, because they’re hard-wired to hide it. While dogs seek out their support people, cats don’t feel safe expressing their vulnerability. Urinating in the house, scratching, hiding under the bed and overgrooming can be signs that your kitty is anxious.

If your animal companion is suddenly acting out or on a licking binge, Jackson advises seeing a veterinarian to rule out a medical cause, such as pain or allergies.

Veterinarians can also prescribe anti-anxiety medication and complementary treatments to promote sleep and relaxation. Peters recommends supplements for her canine clients including probiotics and the amino acids l-theanine and tryptophan (yes, the turkey coma one).

For cats, she suggests using a product like Feliway that diffuses calming pheromones into the air.

A dog’s breed might also play a part in developing anxiety. Peters says that while every dog is different, the more

active herding and working breeds like shepherds and border collies can become anxious and destructive without an outlet for their energy.

“Herding breeds need space to run and jobs to do,” she says.

When Tacoma, Washington, resident Shelani Vanniasinkam got her Australian shepherd puppy, Roo, she didn’t know about the breed’s reputation for anxiety. Her previous dog had been an easygoing husky who enjoyed pats from strangers and visits to the dog park. She quickly realized Roo was not that type of dog.

“He had a lot more needs than we anticipated,” Vanniasinkam says. “We couldn’t leave him alone for more than 30 minutes.”

Vanniasinkam and her husband, Jesus Celaya, reached out to a local pet behavioralist, but it became clear that Roo’s anxiety was so acute he needed medication before he could start behavior training.

Medication can be important in behavioral treatment, but it shouldn’t be the only approach, says Peters. She usually suggests that her clients try training and routine modification first, unless their pet is causing harm to themselves or others.

“If I’m going to use meds, it’s part of a greater process,” Peters says.

Roo’s veterinarian put him on Fluoxetine, or “doggie Prozac,” an antidepressant commonly given to anxious pets. He also prescribed Trazodone, another antidepressant, for particularly stressful events, such as trips to the vet or a night of fireworks.

After starting his medication, Roo received eight months of behavior training, during which Vanniasinkam and her husband not only changed their own approach to dog parenting but also set boundaries with friends and family. They limited Roo’s interaction with other dogs, asked people to stop using their doorbell and requested that others ignore Roo when he barks.

Now, when they want to take Roo for off-leash play, they book time at a local Sniffspot, which Vanniasinkam describes as “an Airbnb for anxious and reactive dogs.” The company, which launched in 2016, allows homeowners to rent out their yards or property by the hour for solo, off-leash play or doggie playdates.

Nearly 5 mln at risk of hunger in Yemen: UN

ADEN, Yemen, June 23, (Xinhua): Three United Nations agencies warned on Sunday that nearly 5 million people in Yemen’s southern provinces face food insecurity, with conditions expected to deteriorate further without urgent intervention.

In a joint statement, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said that without immediate and sustained assistance, an additional 420,000 people could fall into severe food insecurity between September and February 2026. That would bring the total number of severely food-insecure people to 5.38 million - more than half the population in Yemen’s southern regions.

The agencies cited a combination of factors driving the crisis, including prolonged economic decline, sharp depre-

ciation of the Yemeni currency, continued conflict, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

They called for urgent, large-scale humanitarian support to prevent communities from sliding deeper into hunger, to safeguard access to essential services, and to create economic and livelihood opportunities for affected populations.

The warning comes as Yemen’s currency suffers one of its steepest declines in history. The riyal recently weakened to around 2,750 per US dollar in the southern port city of Aden and other government-controlled areas. Yemen has been mired in conflict since late 2014, when the Iran-aligned Houthi group seized several northern provinces, forcing the internationally recognized government to flee the capital Sanaa. The conflict escalated in 2015 after a Saudi-led coalition intervened to restore the government.

Bangladesh reports 36 COVID cases and 5 deaths

DHAKA, June 23, (Xinhua): Bangladesh recorded its highest single-day toll of five COVID-19 deaths this year on Sunday, bringing the tally to 29,515 since the start of the pandemic, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said.

The statistics showed 36 new cases of COVID-19 in the country in the past 24 hours as of 8:00 a.m. local time Sunday.

Bangladesh has reported 433 COVID-19 cases and 16 deaths so far this year, the DGHS said.

Amid a fresh rise in COVID-19 infections in several neighboring countries, the Bangladeshi interim government

has asked people to refrain from traveling to those destinations unless absolutely necessary.

The DGHS has instructed relevant departments to enhance health screening and surveillance measures at all ports to contain the spread of the infection.

Meanwhile, a 52-year-old man from southeastern Cambodia’s Svay Rieng province had died of H5N1 human avian influenza, becoming the fifth human death from the virus so far this year, the Ministry of Health said in a press statement on Saturday.

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Lee wins 3rd major with steady finish at KPMG Women’s PGA Championship



Minjee Lee holds the trophy after winning the Women’s PGA Championship golf tournament in Frisco, Texas.(AP)

Bradley surges to Travelers victory

FRISCO, Texas, June 23, (AP): Minjee Lee went into the final round of the KPMG Women’s PGA Championship with a four-stroke lead and took a glance at every leaderboard she saw on the course. Even after some early bogeys, she stayed on top all day on the way to her third major title.

Lee closed with a 2-over 74 while maintaining at least a two-stroke lead throughout the final round. Her 4-under 284 total was three strokes ahead of Auston Kim and Chanettee Wannasaen, the only other players to finish under par at wind-swept Fields Ranch East at PGA Frisco.

Lee, the 29-year-old Australian who is a Texas resident, living in nearby Irving, got her 11th career win. She joined Karrie Webb (seven) and Jan Stephenson (three) as the only women from Australia to win three majors.

While Lee had three bogeys in a four-hole stretch midway through the front nine, playing partner Jeeno Thitikul, the world’s No. 2-ranked player, bogeyed both par 5s that are among the first three holes. Still in search of her first major, Thitikul hit her first shot Sunday into the right rough on the way to a 75 to finish at 1 over 289, tied for fourth with Chisato Iwai (71).

Lee, ranked 24th, took home \$1.8 million of the record \$12 million purse, which was up from \$10.4 million a year ago and matched the U.S. Women’s Open for the most prize money. She also got \$1.8 million for her four-stroke win in the 2022 U.S. Women’s Open.



Keegan Bradley reacts to making birdie putt to a tie for the lead on the ninth hole during the final round of the Travelers Championship golf tournament at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Conn. (AP)

Kim and Wannasaen both shot 68, the best rounds of the day and matching the best of the tournament after only two 68s combined in the first three rounds. Kim was bogey-free, but had only pars after three consecutive birdies to wrap up her front nine.

Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley rallied from three shots behind with four holes to play and birdied the 18th hole before a delirious home crowd Sunday for a 2-under 68 to win the Travelers Championship.

The victory only strengthened the case for Bradley to bring his clubs to Bethpage Black for the September matches against Europe. He moved to No. 9 in the standings.

And he wound up beating Tommy Fleetwood, who scored the clinching point for Europe at Marco Simone two years ago.

One shot behind Fleetwood going to the 18th hole, Bradley stuffed his approach to just under 6 feet below the hole. Fleetwood, looking like this might be the time he wins a PGA Tour title, came up some 50 feet short and took three putts for bogey and a 72.

Bradley kept his feet planted when the putt dropped and shook his fist. New England’s favorite son delivered a stunner at the TPC River Highlands, capping off the finish in oppressive heat with a 35-foot birdie putt on the 15th and the 6-footer at the end.

It was crushing for Fleetwood, the 34-year-old from England who has built a reputable record around the world but is 0 for 84 in regular PGA Tour events.

Miguel Angel Jimenez won the Kaulig Companies Championship for his fourth PGA Tour Champions victory of the season, rallying to force a

playoff and beating Steven Alker with a 20-foot birdie putt on the second extra hole.

Two strokes down after playing partner Alker birdied the par-5 16th, Jimenez made a 10-foot birdie putt on the par-4 17th and an 18-footer on the par-4 18th.

Tied for the lead entering the round at Firestone South, the 61-year-old Jimenez and 53-year-old Alker each shot 2-under 68 to finish at 10-under 270. Stewart Cink was third at 8 under after a 66.

Myles Creighton of Canada won the Wichita Open a day after shooting an 11-under 59, closing with a 68 for a one-stroke victory over Emilio Gonzalez.

Creighton won his second Korn Ferry Tour title, finishing at 17-under 263 at Crestview Country Club. On Saturday, he became the 15th player in tour history to shoot a sub-60 round and the second of the week.

Gonzalez finished with a 66.

Adrien Dumont de Chassart opened with a 59. He closed with a 65 to tie for fifth at 13 under.

Casandra Alexandra made eagle on the last hole to close out a 10-under 62, giving the South African a two-shot victory in the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open on the Ladies European Tour.

James Morrison won his first Challenge Tour title in more than 10 years when he closed with an even-par 70 and beat Max Kennedy with a par on the first playoff hole to win the Blot Play9 in France.

Hibiki Iriya closed with an even-par 72 and sailed to a four-shot victory in the Nichirei Ladies on the Japan LPGA.Seunghui Ro rallied with a 6-under 66 and then defeated Dayeon Lee (72) with a birdie on the first playoff hole to win The Heaven Masters on the Korea LPGA.

Organizers challenge estimates

Court of auditors estimates \$6.8b public spending for Paris Olympics

PARIS, June 23, (AP): France’s court of auditors provided Monday the first official estimate of public spending tied to the 2024 Paris Olympics, with the global public expenditure estimated at nearly six billion euros (\$6.8 billion).

The Cour des Comptes said in its preliminary report, which was published ahead of the 2030 Winter Olympics also awarded to France, that the spending includes 2.77 billion euros for the event organization and 3.19 billion euros for infrastructure investments.

Paris 2024 organizers challenged the estimates in comments attached to the report. They notably said that some expenditures which predated the event and will continue afterward can’t be attributed to Games. They also said that attributing major investments to the Olympics, despite being unrelated projects launched long before, is unjustified.

“Through its methodological choices, the Court has in fact declined to examine the only question that would meaningfully inform public debate: how much public money would have been saved if the Games had not been held in Paris?,” said Tony Estanguet, the former head of the organizing committee.

“It is undeniable that this amount would be far less than the 6 billion euros currently cited by the court. The organizing committee, as it already stated during the contradictory procedure, estimates that this figure does not exceed 2 billion euros, while the expected economic benefits of the Games are said to represent three to five times that amount,” he added.

The Cour des Comptes insisted that its progress report is based on data available as of March 31, 2025, and does not claim to draw final conclusions.

“The report does not include, due to unavailable data, any analysis of the positive or negative effects of the Games on economic activity or tax revenues, nor an assessment of tax expenditures related to their organization,” the Cour said in a summary statement. “On this last point, the tax authorities informed the Court that no overall estimate is currently planned. This position is unsatisfactory, and the Court calls on the State to begin this evaluation without delay.”



In this file photo, passengers in the back of a taxi film themselves as they leave the Eiffel Tower, decorated with the Olympic rings ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Serie B playoff suspended: Fireworks and seats thrown onto the pitch prompted a playoff between Sampdoria and Salernitana to stay in Serie B to be suspended midway through the second half.

The incidents involving Salernitana fans occurred after Sampdoria had taken a 2-0 lead Sunday in Salerno, putting it ahead 4-0 on aggregate.

The match will now likely be awarded as a 3-0 victory to Sampdoria according to league disciplinary measures - meaning Sampdoria should remain in Serie B while Salernitana will likely be relegated to Serie C.

Sampdoria has never been relegated to Serie C in its 79-year history and earlier this season brought back some players from its golden years in the 1990s to manage the squad out of crisis.

Salernitana was in Serie A in 2023-24.

Salernitana and Sampdoria finished 16th and 17th, respectively, in the Serie B standings this season. (AP)

Knighton at CAS for appeals: United States sprinter Erriyon Knighton went to court Monday to defend his claim he was contaminated in a positive doping test case that risks a ban from the next world championships.

A two-time Olympic finalist in the 200 meters aged just 21, Knighton was cleared to run at the Paris Summer Games last year only after an American tribunal ruled he was not at fault for the positive test for trenbolone, a steroid used in livestock farming.

The World Anti-Doping Agency and track and field’s Athletics Integrity Unit have challenged that ruling in combined appeals to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

CAS has scheduled the appeal hearing for two days and said a verdict is likely within several weeks.

The U.S. track and field national championships start July 31 in Eugene, Oregon. They are trials to pick the U.S. team for the 2025 worlds that open Sept. 13 in Tokyo.

Knighton’s attorney Howard Jacobs suggested last year Knighton could be “collateral damage” in an ongoing feud between WADA and the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, fueled by how a case of alleged contamination of Chinese Olympic swimmers was handled by the global watchdog. (AP)

Aces beat cold-shooting Fever to end 3-game skid

Thornton scores 21 as Valkyries hand Sun sixth consecutive loss

SAN FRANCISCO, June 23, (AP): Kayla Thornton had 21 points and eight rebounds, Tiffany Hayes scored 14 points on Sunday night and the Golden State Valkyries beat the Connecticut Sun 87-63.

Connecticut (2-12) has lost six straight.

Laeticia Amihere had 10 points and a career-high 12 rebounds - her first career double-double - for Golden State (7-6). The Valkyries, who beat Caitlin Clark and the Indiana Fever 88-77 on Thursday, have won five of six. The Sun’s 63 points were the fewest Golden State has allowed in a game this season.

Chloe Bibby scored 11 points, Veronica Burton added 10 and Stephanie Talbot grabbed a season-high 10 rebounds to go with six points and four assists.

Golden State set a franchise record for points in a quarter with 36 - including 14 by Thornton - in the second. The Valkyries made 10 of 18 from the field and 12 of 14 from the free-throw line, where Thornton was 7 of 7, and turned four offensive rebounds into seven second-chance points. Connecticut scored 12 points of 4-of-16 shooting in the quarter and trailed 59-32 at halftime.

Aces 89, Fever 81

In Las Vegas, A’ja Wilson scored 24 points in a battle with cold-shooting Caitlin Clark to lead the Aces to victory over the Indiana Fever and stop a three-game Las Vegas skid.

Wilson, the reigning MVP, was one of five Aces in double figures. Jackie Young scored 19 points and Chelsea Gray finished with 18.

Aliyah Boston scored 26 points for the Fever, including 18 in the first half. Clark, last season’s Rookie of the Year, had 19 points and 11 assists but shot just 1 of 10 from 3-point range. She’s 1 for 17 from deep over her last two games.

Kelsey Mitchell added 20 points for Indiana.

Wilson and Clark struggled early, combining to shoot 2 of 15 midway through the second quarter.

The game was even at 69-69 in the fourth quarter when the Aces outscored Indiana 9-2 to go ahead for good.

The Aces (6-7), who won their second WNBA championship in a row just two years ago and expected to contend again this season, entered having lost five of six. Beating the Fever (6-7) could get Las Vegas heading in the right direction. Indiana is 2-3 over its last five.

Storm 89, Liberty 79

In Seattle, Nneka Ogumike scored 26 points on 12-of-17 shooting, Skylar Diggins added 20 points and the Seattle Storm beat the defending WNBA champion New York Liberty.

Seattle (9-5) has won three games in a row and six of seven.

New York (10-3) has lost back-to-back road games and three of four overall. The Liberty committed a season-high 21 turnover, which Seattle converted into 22 points.

Gabby Williams had 12 points, a career-high 10 assists, six rebounds and four steals. Williams had her first career double-double last time out in a 90-83 win over Las Vegas on Friday.

Williams nearly had the ball stripped

but secured it and nearly threw it away but Ogunmike made a finger-tip catch and hit a 3 just before the shot clock expired to give Seattle an 85-79 lead with 1:30 left in the game.

Mystics 91, Wings 88 OT

In Washington, rookie Sonia Citron scored a season-high 27 points, including the go-ahead 3-pointer with 12.2 seconds left in overtime, Shakira Austin added 21 points and the Washington Mystics beat the Dallas Wings.

Citron made 9 of 13 from the field, hit a career-best four 3-pointers and had a season-high 11 rebounds. Fellow rookie Kiki Iriafen had 19 points and seven rebounds to go with career highs of six assists and five steals for the Mystics (6-8). Sug Sutton added 15 points.

Austin got the ball in the post and kicked it out to Citron for a wide open tiebreaking corner 3 with 12.2 seconds remaining.

Dream 93, Sky 80

In College Park, Rhyne Howard scored 22 points, Allisha Gray added 19 and Brianna Jones had 13 points and 11 rebounds to help the Atlanta Dream beat the Chicago Sky.

Rookie Te-Hina Paopao hit a career-high five 3-pointers and tied her season high with 16 points for Atlanta and Naz Hillmon scored 12.

Angel Reese had 10 points, 19 rebounds, four assists and three steals for the Sky, a day after finishing with nine points and a career-low two rebounds in a 107-86 loss to Phoenix. Ariel Atkins scored a season-high 29 points and Elizabeth Williams added a season-best 16.

Houston giving up Brooks, Green and six future picks

KD traded to Rockets in blockbuster deal with Suns

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP): The Houston Rockets are acquiring 15-time All-Star and four-time Olympic gold medalist Kevin Durant from the Phoenix Suns in a blockbuster deal struck Sunday, a person with knowledge of the agreement told The Associated Press.

The Rockets are giving up Dillon Brooks, Jalen Green and six future picks - including the No. 10 selection in Wednesday’s opening round of this year’s draft - according to the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the deal was still pending NBA approval.

It ends weeks of speculation about where Durant would end up. Many teams were involved at various times, including Miami and Minnesota, but in the end Phoenix accepted the Rockets’ offer.

ESPN first reported the trade.

Fans learned of the news while Durant was on stage in New York at Fanatics Fest NYC, and when they began reacting, Durant started smiling broadly.

“We’re gonna see, man,” Durant said from the stage. “We’re gonna see.”

Boardroom, the ever-growing media company that Durant and his business partner, Rich Kleiman, co-founded in 2019, teams up with Fanatics on a number of projects. The panel that Durant was set to appear on there Sunday was called “Global Game Changers.”

He certainly figures to change the game for the Rockets.

Houston finished No. 2 in the Western Conference in the regular season, albeit 16 games behind No. 1 Oklahoma City. It now adds a two-time champion to its young core as it looks to make another jump next season.

Durant averaged 26.6 points this season, his 17th in the NBA - not counting one year missed because of injury. For his career, the 6-foot-11 forward is averaging 27.2 points and seven rebounds per game.

The move brings Durant back to the state of Texas, where he played his one year of college basketball for the Longhorns and was the college player of the year before going as the No. 2 pick in the 2007 draft by Seattle.

Houston will become his fifth franchise, joining the SuperSonics (who then became the Oklahoma City Thunder), Golden State, Brooklyn and Phoenix. Durant won his two titles with the Warriors in 2017 and 2018,



In this file photo, Phoenix Suns forward Kevin Durant gestures during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)

and last summer in Paris he became the highest-scoring player in U.S. Olympic basketball history and the first men’s player to be part of four gold-medal teams.

Durant is a four-time scoring champion, a two-time Finals MVP and one of eight players in NBA history with more than 30,000 career points, joining the club on Feb. 11.

Durant is under contract next season for roughly \$50 million before becoming a free agent in 2026.

His departure from the Suns was expected and ends a disappointing 2 1/2 years in the desert. Durant never enjoyed consistent team success despite being part of a trio that included star guards Devin Booker and Bradley Beal.

Durant was acquired by the Suns from the Brooklyn Nets in a four-team trade-deadline deal in 2023, just days after new owner Mat Ishbia bought the team for roughly \$4 billion. Phoenix gave up a lot to acquire the then-34-year-old, sending young standouts Mikal Bridges and Cam Johnson, along with four future first-round picks, to Brooklyn.

US wins Group D with unbeaten record



Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Madu, left, makes a header over Trinidad and Tobago's Justin Garcia during a CONCACAF Gold Cup soccer match in Las Vegas. (AP)



Costa Rica's Manfred Ugalde kicks the ball away from Mexico's Raul Jimenez during a CONCACAF Gold Cup soccer match in Las Vegas. (AP)

Mexico advances to quarterfinals as Group A winner

ARLINGTON, Texas, June 23, (AP): Patrick Agyemang scored a tiebreaking goal in the 75th minute, and the United States overcame Matt Freese's goalkeeping gaffe to beat Haiti 2-1 on Sunday night and win its CONCACAF Gold Cup group with a 3-0 record.

Malik Tillman put the U.S. ahead in the 10th minute with his third goal of the tournament but Freese, who has displaced Matt Turner, highlighted the Americans' goalkeeping issues a year ahead of the World Cup with a botched clearing attempt that led to Louicius Don Deedson's 19th-minute goal.

After Tillman came close three times in the second half, Agyemang scored after taking a long pass from John Tolkin. Agyemang touched the ball past goalkeeper Johnny Placide and slotted into an open net for his fifth international goal and second of the tournament.

The U.S., which opened with victories over Trinidad and Tobago and invited guest Saudi Arabia, won its group for the 17th time in 18 Gold Cups. The Americans have 43 wins, one loss and five draws in group play, going 3-0 for the seventh time.

Using largely a B team in the tournament, the Americans advanced to a quarter-final against Costa Rica next Sunday in Minneapolis.

Haiti finished third in Group D on goal difference ahead of Trinidad and Tobago, which was eliminated when it wasted a lead in a 1-1 draw against the Saudis.

The Gold Cup is the last competitive test for the 16th-ranked Americans ahead of the World Cup. As co-hosts, the U.S., Mexico and Canada get automatic berths.

In front of a sparse crowd of 20,918 at the 80,000-seat home of the Dallas Cowboys, one of next year's World Cup venues, Tillman scored when he headed the ball inside the far post from Brenden Aaronson's cross.

Freese blundered when took a back pass from Tim Ream and tried to play the ball to Tolkin with his left foot. The ball went straight to Don Deedson, who took a touch and scored inside the far post.

American midfielder Tyler Adams started after being slowed by turf toe, among four changes by coach Mauricio Pochettino, and got a yellow card for a late sliding tackle on Duckens Nazon about 25 seconds in.

Mexico tied Costa Rica 0-0 to win Group A of the CONCACAF Gold Cup and will play Saudi Arabia in the quarterfinals.

Mexico's Santiago Giménez appeared to score on a bicycle kick in the fourth minute of second-half stoppage time but the goal was disallowed by Guatemalan referee Mario Escobar following a video review.

Giménez appeared to be offside when Luis Chávez lofted the ball into the penalty area after exchanging taps with Carlos Rodríguez on a free kick. Orlando Galo's headed clearance attempt went in front of the goal to Giménez, who overhead kick beat goalkeeper Keylor Navas, plus-three to plus-two.

Mexico, unbeaten in 10 Gold Cup matches against Costa Rica, finished even with the Ticos at seven points but won the group on goal difference.

"We're growing, although not at the speed I'd like," Mexico coach Javier Aguirre said. "It was a good game for us that didn't end with a victory. We're happy with the performance. I have nothing to reproach my players for."

El Tri, which defeated the Dominican Republic and Suriname in their first two matches, will play Saudi Arabia on Saturday at Glendale, Arizona, while the Costa Ricans will face the United States the following day in Minneapolis.

Costa Rica will be missing four regular starters. Forward Manfred Ugalde, who has three goals in the tournament, and midfielder Carlos Mora are suspended for yellow-card accumulation. Defender Ariel Lassiter has a fractured left hand and forward Warren Madrigal a broken left leg.

"It was a difficult match, we said so beforehand. It was very close, and we knew it would be that way," Costa Rica coach Miguel Herrera said. "We still have things to fix, but we have a very good team, for me the best in the region."

Ugalde, assessed a yellow card against the Dominican Republic, received another yellow in the 83rd for charging into Rodríguez and elbowing him near the center circle. The two yellows result in a one-game suspension.

Mexico had 70% possession and had a 13-5 advantage in shots, including 4-0 in shots on target.

Costa Rica's Alonso Martínez put a 25-yard shot off the crossbar while falling in the 67th.

Blaney, Buescher and Elliott complete the top five

Briscoe holds off Hamlin to win at Pocono

LONG POND, Pa., June 23, (AP): Chase Briscoe got the cold facts when the third-generation driver's career took an unexpected turn, leaving his lame-duck NASCAR team for the sport's most coveted available seat with powerhouse Joe Gibbs Racing.

The message was clear at JGR - home of five Cup driver titles and a perennial contender to win another one.

"You don't make the playoffs," Briscoe said, "you don't race in this car anymore."

The Toyotas were better at JGR, sure. So were the championship standards set by Joe Gibbs and the rest of the organization.

"It's been a lot of work," Briscoe's crew chief James Small said. "From where he came from, there wasn't much accountability. Nobody was holding his feet to the fire. That's probably been a big wake-up call for him."

Briscoe's eyes are wide open now, a first-time winner for JGR and, yes, he is indeed playoff bound.

Briscoe returned to victory lane Sunday at Pocono Raceway, stretching the final drops of fuel down the stretch to hold off Hamlin for his third career Cup victory and first with his new race team.

"I've only won three races in the Cup Series, right? But this is by far the least enjoyable just because it's expected now," Briscoe said. "You have to go win. Where at SHR, you really felt like you surprised the world if you won."

Briscoe raced his way into an automatic spot in NASCAR's playoffs with the win and gave the No. 19 Toyota its first victory since 2023 when Martin Truex Jr. had the ride. Briscoe lost his job at the end of last season at Stewart-Haas Racing when the team folded and he was tabbed to replace Truex - almost a year to the day for his win at Pocono - in the four-car JGR field.

Hamlin, who holds the track



Chase Briscoe celebrates with a burnout after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Pocono Raceway in Long Pond, Pa. (AP)

record with seven wins, appeared on the brink of reeling in Briscoe over the final, thrilling laps only to have not enough in the No. 11 Toyota to snag that eighth Pocono win.

"It was just so hard to have a guy chasing you, especially the guy that's the greatest of all time here," Briscoe said.

Briscoe made his final pit stop on lap 119 of the 160-lap race, while Hamlin - who returned after missing last week's race following the birth of his son - made his final stop on 120. Hamlin's team radioed to him that they believed Briscoe would fall about a half-lap short on fuel - only for the first-year JGR driver to win by 0.682 seconds.

"The most nervous I get is when two of our cars are up front," Gibbs said.

Gibbs now has Hamlin, Bell and Briscoe in the playoff field.

"It's definitely more work but it's because they're at such a high level," Briscoe said. "Even racing with teammates that are winning has been a big adjustment for me."

Briscoe, who won an Xfinity Series race at Pocono in 2020, raced

to his third career Cup victory and first since Darlington in 2024.

Briscoe has been on bit of a hot streak, and had his fourth top-10 finish over the last six races, including a seventh-place finish in last week's ballyhooed race in Mexico City.

He became the 11th driver to earn a spot in the 16-driver field with nine races left until the field is set and made a winner again of crew chief James Small. Small stayed on the team through Truex's final winless season and Briscoe's winless start to this season.

"It's been a tough couple of years," Small said. "We've never lost belief, any of us."

Hamlin finished second. Ryan Blaney, Chris Buescher and Chase Elliott completed the top five.

Briscoe, raised a dirt racer in Indiana, gave JGR its 18th Cup victory at Pocono.

"I literally grew up racing my sprint car video game in a Joe Gibbs Racing Home Depot uniform," Briscoe said. "To get Coach in victory lane after them taking a chance on me, it's so rewarding truthfully. Just a big weight off

my shoulders. I've been telling my wife the last two weeks, I have to win. To finally come here and do it, it has been a great day."

The race was delayed 2 hours, 10 minutes by rain and the conditions were muggy by the time the green flag dropped. Briscoe led 72 laps and won the second stage.

Briscoe wrote before the race on social media, "Anybody going from Pocono to Oklahoma City after the race Sunday?" The Pacers fan - he bet on the team to win the NBA title - wasn't going to make it to Game 7 of the NBA Finals.

He'll certainly settle for a ride to victory lane.

Carson Hocevar made a clean pass of Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and two feuding drivers battled without incident on restarts as they appeared to race in peace after a pair of recent wrecks on the track threatened to spill into Pocono.

Stenhouse's threat to beat up his racing rival after last weekend's race in Mexico City but cooler heads prevailed back in the United States. Hocevar finished 18th and Stenhouse 30th.

There was a minor scare on pit road when AJ Allmendinger struck a tire in the carrier's hand with his right front side and sent it flying into the ribs of another team's crew member in the pit ahead of him. Jonpatrik Kealey, the rear tire changer on Shane van Gisbergen's race team, was knocked on all fours but finished work on van Gisbergen's pit stop.

Bubba Wallace, Michael McDowell and Riley Herbst all had their races spoiled by brake issues.

"It was a scary feeling for sure," Herbst said. "I was just starting to get tight, just a bad adjustment on my part. Getting into (turn) one, the brakes just went to the floor. A brake rotor exploded and I was along for the ride."

NASCAR heads to Atlanta. Christopher Bell won the first race at the track this season in March.

Wang Qi clinches historic medal at Rhythmic Gymnastics junior worlds

SOFIA, June 23, (Xinhua): Chinese rhythmic gymnast Wang Qi won a silver medal in the ball event at the third FIG Junior World Championships, becoming the first Chinese athlete to reach the podium at the junior worlds.

Wang advanced to the finals in both the ball and ribbon events after placing third in each of the qualifiers. In the ball final, she delivered an outstanding performance to score 25.950, earning the highest artistry score of 9.700 among all finalists. Akmaral Yerekesheva of Kazakhstan claimed gold with a score of 26.150, posting the highest difficulty mark of 10.200. Nita Jamagidze of Georgia took bronze with 25.550.

Yerekesheva continued her dominance in the ribbon final with a leading score of 26.400. Lina Heleika of Egypt and home

favorite Magdalena Valkova finished second and third, respectively. Wang narrowly missed the podium, falling just 0.150 points short of Valkova.

Wang told Xinhua that she had matured significantly through the competition. "I was quite nervous, since this was my first junior worlds and it was very competitive. It was so pity that I made some mistakes in the qualifiers of the hoop and the clubs." However, she said the finals were the most thrilling part of the experience. "Luckily I prepared well mentally. The medal was a great inspiration for me, it showed me where I should work on in the future." More than 350 gymnasts from around 70 countries and regions participated in the competition for athletes aged 14 to 15, which began on Wednesday.

Best of the Rest

Feyi-Waboso suspended: England will debate the worth of taking Immanuel Feyi-Waboso on its Americas tour next month after the winger received a two-match suspension.

Feyi-Waboso was sent off during the England XV's 26-24 loss to a France XV on Saturday at Twickenham.

He caught Antoine Hastoy in the head with a swinging right arm in an attempted first-half tackle. His yellow card was upgraded on review to a 20-minute red card.

A World Rugby disciplinary hearing

confirmed it was a dangerous tackle and suspended Feyi-Waboso for both of England's tests in Argentina on July 5 and 12.

He will be available for the test against the United States on July 19 in Washington, D.C., if he completes World Rugby's tackle school.

Saturday's game was Feyi-Waboso's first action since December, when he dislocated his shoulder. He missed the Six Nations and a possible place in the British and Irish Lions squad. England is set to name its touring squad on Monday.

France lock Cameron Woki, who was sent off in the same game for an illegal clearance, will have his hearing on Tuesday. (AP)

Barrett retained as All Blacks captain for France series

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, June 23, (AP): Coach Scott Robertson has retained Scott Barrett as captain for New Zealand's three-test series against France next month, ignoring calls to promote star back-rower Ardie Savea.

Barrett's reappointment was certain when it was revealed that Robertson's 35-man squad would be announced Monday in the tiny North Island town of Rahu at the Coastal Rugby Club to which all three Barrett brothers belong.

Beauden and Jordie Barrett also were named in the squad - midfielder Jordie was included despite spending the last northern season in Ireland with European Champions Cup semifinalist Leinster.

Savea was voted Super Rugby player of the year after he led Moana

Pasifika to their best-ever season in the tournament. But Robertson remained loyal to Barrett, with whom he has a strong bond. Barrett wasn't Crusaders captain when they won Super Rugby on Saturday for the 13th time.

"Scott's leadership is hugely valued in this group and well complemented by Ardie and Jordie," Robertson said. "They will play a vital role along with the wider player leadership group in supporting the transition of the new players into the environment and imparting their experience to ensure the squad is set up for success."

The squad, read out by former All Blacks captain and current New Zealand Rugby chairman David Kirk, includes five new caps.

They were Chiefs hooker Brodie McAlister and prop Ollie Norris,

Highlanders lock Fabian Holland, Hurricanes flanker Du'Plessis Kirifi and Highlanders center Timoci Tavatavanawai.

Holland joins Scott Barrett, Tupou Vaa'i and Patrick Tuipulotu among the second-rowers. Kirifi, the Hurricanes captain who has been the best jackal among New Zealand teams this season, is included among back-rowers with Savea, Samipeni Finau, Wallace Sitiiti and Luke Jacobson.

Tavatavanawai was picked in the midfield along with Anton Lienert-Brown, Jordie Barrett, Rieko Ioane, Quinn Tupaea and Billy Proctor. Tupaea returns to the All Blacks squad for the first time since 2022 after recovering from a knee injury.

"For the five uncapped players this is a particularly special day," Robertson said. "These players have

all impressed us with their talent and work ethic and have earned their opportunity."

New Zealand: Hookers: Codie Taylor, Samisoni Tauke'i'aho, Brodie McAlister. Props: Ethan de Groot, Tamaiti Williams, Ollie Norris, Tyrel Lomax, Fletcher Newell, Pasilio Tosi. Locks: Scott Barrett, Fabian Holland, Patrick Tuipulotu, Tupou Vaa'i. Loose forwards: Samipeni Finau, Ardie Savea, Du'Plessis Kirifi, Wallace Sitiiti, Luke Jacobson. Scrumhalves: Noah Hotham, Cortez Ratima, Cameron Roigard. Flyhalves: Beauden Barrett, Damian McKenzie. Midfielders: Anton Lienert-Brown, Jordie Barrett, Rieko Ioane, Quinn Tupaea, Billy Proctor, Timoci Tavatavanawai. Outside backs: Caleb Clarke, Will Jordan, Ruben Love, Sevu Reece.

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NEWS



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) shoots against Indiana Pacers center Myles Turner (33) during the first half of Game 7 of the NBA Finals basketball series in Oklahoma City. (AP)

Sports

Thunder completes rebuild with NBA title

Gilgeous-Alexander named Finals MVP, Pacers lose Haliburton and Game 7

OKLAHOMA CITY, June 23, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander walked off the court for the final time this season, collapsed into the arms of coach Mark Daigneault, and finally smiled.

It was over. The climb is complete. The rebuild is done. The Oklahoma City Thunder are champions.

The best team all season was the best team at the end, bringing the NBA title to Oklahoma City for the first time. Gilgeous-Alexander finished off his MVP season with 29 points and 12 assists, and the Thunder beat the Indiana Pacers, who lost Tyrese Haliburton to a serious leg injury in the opening minutes, 103-91 in Game 7 of the NBA Finals on Sunday night.

"It doesn't feel real," said Gilgeous-Alexander, the Finals MVP. "So many hours. So many moments. So many emotions. So many nights of disbelief. So many nights of belief. It's crazy to know that we're all here, but this group worked for it. This group put in the hours, and we deserve this."

Jalen Williams scored 20 points and Chet Holmgren had 18 for the Thunder, who finished off a season for the ages. Oklahoma City won 84 games between the regular season and the playoffs, tying the 1996-97 Chicago Bulls for the third most in any season.

Only Golden State (88 in 2016-17) and the Bulls (87 in 2015-16) won more.

It's the second championship for the franchise. The Seattle SuperSonics won the NBA title in 1979; the team was moved to Oklahoma City in 2008.



Oklahoma City Thunder players celebrate after winning the NBA basketball championship with a Game 7 victory against the Indiana Pacers in Oklahoma City. (AP)

There's nothing in the rafters in Oklahoma City to commemorate that title.

In October, a championship banner is finally coming. A Thunder banner.

"They behave like champions. They compete like champions," Daigneault said. "They root for each other's success, which is rare in professional sports. I've said it many times, and

now I'm going to say it one more time. They are an uncommon team and now they're champions."

The Pacers led 48-47 at the half, even after losing Haliburton to what his father said was an Achilles tendon injury about seven minutes into the game. But they were outscored 34-20 in the third quarter as the Thunder built

a 13-point lead and began to run away. "Deflated, but proud of everything we've accomplished," Pacers guard TJ McConnell said.

Benedict Mathurin had 24 points and 13 rebounds for Indiana, which is still waiting for its first NBA title. The Pacers, who were 10-15 after 25 games and were bidding to be the first team in

NBA history to turn that bad of a start into a championship, had leads of 1-0 and 2-1 in the series, but they simply didn't have enough in the end.

Home teams improved to 16-4 in NBA Finals Game 7s. And the Thunder became the seventh champion in the last seven seasons, a run of parity like none other in NBA history.

Pacers forward Pascal Siakam was part of the Toronto team that won in 2019, Thunder guard Alex Caruso was part of the Los Angeles Lakers team that won in the pandemic "bubble" in 2020, Milwaukee won in 2021, Golden State in 2022, Pacers forward Thomas Bryant and Denver prevailed in 2023, and Boston won last year's title.

Al Ain and Wydad Casablanca exit

City & Juventus reach Club World Cup knockouts as Real Madrid moves closer

NEW YORK, June 23, (Xinhua): Manchester City and Juventus reached the last 16 of the FIFA Club World Cup on Sunday while Real Madrid moved closer with a gritty win over Pachuca despite playing nearly the entire match with 10 men.

Pachuca, Al Ain and Wydad Casablanca joined previously eliminated Auckland City, Ulsan, Urawa Red Diamonds and Los Angeles FC in exiting the tournament in the United States.

In Philadelphia, 20-year-old Turkish international forward Kenan Yildiz scored twice as Juventus routed Morocco's Wydad Casablanca 4-1 to clinch a knockout phase spot with a game to spare.

Abdelmounaim Boutouil gifted the Italian club the lead with a sixth-minute own goal and Yildiz doubled the advantage by thumping a 20-yard effort into the top-right corner.

Thembinkosi Lorch narrowed the deficit, lifting a shot over goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio after Nordin Amrabat's defense-splitting pass.

The impressive Yildiz made it 3-1 as he wrong-footed Boutouil before calmly side-footing into the far corner.

Serbian striker Dusan Vlahovic put the result beyond doubt by converting a 94th-minute penalty after being fouled by Guilherme Ferreira.

Juventus now has six points from its two games, while Wydad is eliminated irrespective of its last group-stage fixture against Al Ain.

"It was a different kind of match,



Al Ain's Abdoul Karim Traore, left, and Manchester City's Nico Gonzalez fight for the ball during the Club World Cup Group G soccer match between Manchester City and Al Ain in Atlanta. (AP)

also because of the [early] kick-off time, and the tempo was lower," Juventus manager Igor Tudor said afterwards. "They had prepared for us as well. We scored early, which helped us. But in football, you never know, you always have to stay alert."

"I'm never calm, not even at 3-1 or 4-1. I always see danger. Credit to the boys, two good wins. Tonight they'll have an evening off and a dinner out. They've earned it. Now we prepare for City, which will be a great challenge," he added.

In Charlotte, Real Madrid registered

its first win of the tournament with a 3-1 defeat of Mexican side Pachuca.

The Spanish giants were reduced to 10 men in the seventh minute after Raul Asencio was shown a straight red card for pulling down Salomon Rondon when the Venezuela international was through on goal.

Despite the numerical disadvantage, Real Madrid took the lead through Jude Bellingham, who charged into the box after Fran Garcia's pass before lashing low into the far corner.

Arda Guler doubled the lead with

a clinical finish after combining with Gonzalo Garcia, and Federico Valverde made it 3-0 by volleying home at the far post following Brahim Diaz's lofted pass.

Pachuca pulled one back through Elias Montiel's deflected strike 10 minutes from time.

The victory lifted Real Madrid to the top of Group H with four points, while Pachuca is last and cannot advance to the next stage.

"We had to defend with one less player in a low block, and in that situation, you have to know how to suffer and have the humility to find the right moment," Real Madrid manager Xabi Alonso said.

"We weren't able to show what we've been working on, but the defensive line held strong, and we had good periods of possession. We took a lot of positives from the game, especially the three points."

In Atlanta, Ilkay Gundogan struck twice as Manchester City trounced Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates 6-0.

Claudio Echeverri, Oscar Bobb, Rayan Cherki, and Erling Haaland were also on target - the latter from the penalty spot - as City secured its place in the next round.

Al Ain had only 26% of the possession and managed only one shot on target, sealing its early exit from the competition. "We spoke a lot before the game about how to maintain our pressure so that we could score the goals that we did," Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said.

Kazma and Qadsia complete Handball Cup last four lineup

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Kazma and Qadsia have secured the final two spots in the semifinals of the Handball Federation Cup, which will take place tomorrow (Wednesday) at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Sports Complex.

Kazma booked its place with a commanding 41-31 win over Sulaibikhat, while Qadsia advanced by edging out league runner-up Burgan 30-28 in a tightly contested quarterfinal. In the semifinal stage, Kazma (the Orange team) will face Qadsia (the Yellow team), while Kuwait Club takes on Al-Salmiya in the other matchup.

The winners of these two clashes will move on to the final of the 57th edition of the prestigious Cup, scheduled for next Saturday.

Kuwait Club leads the all-time title count with 14 championships, includ-



Players in action during the Handball Association Cup match in Kuwait.

ing an impressive streak of the last 11 consecutive titles. Al-Arabi follows with 10 titles, while Kazma and Al-Salmiya each have 8. Qadsia has claimed 7 titles, with Khaitan (4), Al-Fahaheel (3), and Al-Sulaibikhat (2) rounding out the historical winners list.

'IOC in the best of hands'

Coventry begins 8-year reign

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, June 23, (AP): The first female and first African president of the IOC, Kirsty Coventry was inaugurated in the role Monday on the organization's 131st birthday with praise that the Olympic movement was "in the best of hands."

Coventry, a two-time Olympic gold medalist in swimming for Zimbabwe, finally and formally takes office Tuesday aged just 41 after decisively winning a seven-candidate election in March to succeed Thomas Bach.

Coventry cited her family including her two young daughters as "my rocks, my inspiration" to lead the International Olympic Committee through the next eight years including the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

"You are my constant reminders of why we do what we do every single day," Coventry said, addressing six-year-old Ella seated near the front of the ceremony.

"You are a constant reminder of why this movement is relevant, why it needs to change, why we need to embrace the new ways," the new president said. "And you will be a constant reminder for many years to come on the decisions that we all take together."

Coventry said Olympic leaders were "guardians of a platform ... to inspire, to change lives, to bring hope."

Bach's voice had cracked with emotion minutes earlier as he handed over a symbolic key to the presidency to his protégé in Olympic politics.

The 71-year-old German lawyer, an Olympic champion in team fencing in 1976, leaves after the maximum 12 years in an office he said was now in



IOC President Thomas Bach, right, and President-elect Kirsty Coventry pose during the handover ceremony of the IOC Presidency at Olympic House in Lausanne, Switzerland. (AP)

the "best of hands" with Coventry. "I believe with all my heart that the Olympic movement is ready for the future," said Bach, adding he had "given all I could" to the IOC and the games.

The ceremony took place in a temporary building in the gardens of Olympic House designed in the style of the Grand Palais in Paris that hosted fencing and taekwondo at the Summer Games last year.

A steamy, humid day at the IOC's lakeside modern headquarters saw a sudden downpour of rain minutes before the scheduled start. It forced Bach and Coventry to shelter under a shared umbrella as they walked from the villa that was the former Olympic home.

'Ronaldo nears new deal to remain at Al-Nassr'

RIYADH, June 23: Saudi media reports have confirmed that Al-Nassr Club has reached a final agreement with Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo to extend his contract for an additional season.

According to the Saudi newspaper Al-Riyadhiyah, the routine procedures for the renewal are expected to be completed soon, following a mutual agreement between Ronaldo and the Al-Nassr management. The extension will keep the legendary striker with the club beyond his current deal, which began in January 2023.

Sources indicate that the renewal negotiations aim to add one more year to Ronaldo's contract, with his future beyond that - particularly after the 2026 FIFA World Cup - to be evaluated based on his playing ambitions and physical condition.

Al-Riyadhiyah previously reported four months ago that both Al-Nassr and Ronaldo's representatives had agreed in principle to a one-year extension, with the potential for further discussions once the new deal nears its end.

Ronaldo, who joined Al-Nassr on a free transfer, has already made an impact at the club by leading them to the 2023 King Salman Cup for Arab Clubs title. He has also become a central figure in the Saudi Pro League's international growth.

While the financial terms of the new contract have not been officially disclosed, sources suggest that it is likely to mirror his current deal, reportedly valued at euro 200 million per year - placing him among the highest-paid athletes globally.



In this file photo, Cristiano Ronaldo shoots the ball during a league game.