



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

O state of the new era, how wonderful it is to establish justice

FROM the very beginning, we supported the purification of national identity by revoking the citizenship of individuals who committed forgery, engaged in bribery, or held dual nationalities in violation of Kuwaiti law. As this is a matter of sovereignty, it faced no public opposition, and was rightfully left to the discretion of the ruler.

The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef has given this issue his full attention, addressing it in several meetings and press conferences, where he stressed that no one would be treated unjustly. Observers of public affairs and newspaper columnists have praised this initiative, affirming that Kuwait, throughout its history, has never been a place for injustice.

When certain privileges were restored to those whose citizenship had been revoked in accordance with Article 8 of the relevant law, it was welcomed as good news. This was followed by another positive step, which was the return of their passports. This eased much of their hardship and marked the beginning of a way out of the tunnel of suffering.

However, these measures did not extend to those whose citizenship was revoked under the "meritorious acts" clause. This group is small in number but holds a prestigious place in society. They have made several significant contributions in various fields and have served Kuwait with distinction. Many among them have been officially honored by the state for their achievements in science, culture, and the arts, with some even receiving high-level accolades and numerous awards.

Since decisions to revoke citizenship fall under sovereign authority, their validity or accuracy is not open to public debate.

Nevertheless, an important question remains - Would it not be reasonable to allow these individuals to retain the privileges they once received upon acquiring Kuwaiti citizenship, particularly as many of them continue to contribute meaningfully in their professional, medical, artistic, and cultural fields and serve Kuwait with dedication?

Wouldn't it be better to continue extending these privileges, at least temporarily, until they are able to manage their affairs and secure alternative citizenship?

This group does not impose a financial or material burden on the state. On the contrary, they are truly an added value to Kuwait's international standing. Their situation calls for empathy, as they have no other homeland to turn to. It would be both fair and humane to treat them differently from others, especially

considering they have committed no crimes against honor or integrity.

It is true that among those whose citizenships were revoked, some had acquired them through fraud, bribery, or other illicit means. Some are implicated in serious crimes, including a recently uncovered drug trafficker who fraudulently obtained Kuwaiti citizenship. Only God knows how many lives were affected by this individual. Many citizens fell victim to addiction because of his actions. Such criminals, and those who aided, bribed, or participated in the forgery, fully deserve to be held accountable.

However, there is an important distinction between such offenders and those who were granted citizenship in recognition of their honorable service to Kuwait. Among this latter group are doctors who have worked to treat addicts, as well as intellectuals, artists, and university professors who have played a vital role in educating the public about the dangers of drug use and addiction.

Combating drugs is not limited to security measures or judicial actions alone. It is a comprehensive system that begins with education, public awareness, and preventive outreach, while also shedding light on the deceptive tactics employed by criminals.

The law provides for three levels of trial to ensure that the scales of justice remain balanced. Those whose citizenship was revoked, having originally acquired it due to exceptional contributions, may be treated in line with this legal principle. This would mean allowing them to retain the benefits associated with citizenship until the Grievance Committee, formed under the direction of His Excellency the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, issues a final decision on their case. Should the committee choose to reinstate their citizenship, they would have suffered no undue loss and would continue their service to Kuwait.

We affirm once again that we are today living in an era of justice, where the rights of the wronged are being restored. There would be no harm in His Excellency Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah showing compassion toward this vital group, as these individuals have significantly contributed to Kuwait and continue to do so.

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Kuwait steps up Muharram security checks

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Senior police officers and KFF personnel during their visit to one of the 'Husseiniyas' set up in a girls school in the Salwa area. Security has been tightened at Shiite places of worship during Muharram, especially the first ten days leading to Ashura.

Silver steals gold's spotlight in Kuwait

White metal becomes middle-income choice

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Despite the luster of gold even in times of crises, this appeal extends to all precious metals, including silver.

A number of precious metal traders in Mubarakia Market said they expected a silver price hike due to the Israeli-Iranian war. Silver jewelry sellers in the market disclosed that the price per gram now ranges from 360 to 400 fils, excluding the 'workmanship' fee -- an increase of about 11 percent compared to the previous prices. They added that if the 'workmanship' fee is included, the price ranges from KD1.5 to KD2. They attributed the recent increase in the price of 'white metal' to the remarkable increase in demand among citizens due to the regional developments. They stated that some



Redha



Franji



Hussein Ali



Bou Yaacoub

people buy silver as an alternative to gold, whose price has increased dramatically.

Furthermore, a group of investors prefers to store silver, along with gold, to benefit from a small profit margin or as a guarantee against the decline in paper currencies; amid price increase expectations due to the escalation of tension in the region.

Amir Franji, a silver shop manager, told the newspaper that silver prices have increased from 360 to 400 fils per gram last month, with expectations of further price increases in the coming days due to the ongoing tensions between Iran and Israel.

He confirmed the high demand for silver, especially since it is an alternative to gold for middle-income earners. "Purchasing gold jewelry is currently beyond the means of the not so well-off, with the price of a 21-karat reaching nearly KD30 per gram. Nevertheless, investing in silver is completely different from investing in gold, as anyone

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Relatives of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip mourn their deaths at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, Saturday, June 28, 2025. (AP)

60 killed across Gaza

Kuwait denounces deadly West Bank violence by Israeli settlers

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed the State of Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of the Israeli settlers attacks on a number of villages and cities in the occupied West Bank.

The terrorist attack targeted the village of Kafr Malik, east of Ramallah, and resulted in a number of Palestinian martyrs and wounded.

In a statement, the ministry affirmed that the recurrence of such practices would undermine the prospects for peace and drag the region into further violence and chaos.

It called for halting these violations and ensuring international protection for Palestinian civilians under humanitarian law.

The Ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's firm support for a Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Saudi Arabia denounces Jewish settlers' violence against civilians in W. Bank

Meanwhile, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the continued violence perpetrated by Jewish settlers under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank.

Citing the deadly unprovoked attacks on residents of Kafr Malik village to the east of Ramallah, the Ministry reiterated in a statement on Friday the Kingdom's condemnation of all forms of violence against unarmed civilians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including camps of displaced persons.

The Kingdom stresses the need to exert all efforts to provide protection for Palestinian civilians and enable the Palestinian people to exercise all their legitimate rights, the Saudi Press Agency quoted the statement as saying.

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New oversight rules in place to ensure transparency

Kuwait reaffirms humanitarian role with charity work reboot

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait's Humanitarian and Charitable Work Regulatory Committee decided to resume donations and funding of charitable projects inside and outside the country, reflecting Kuwait's pioneering role in humanitarian work.

The decision was made during First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah chairing of the committee, with the participation of representative of relevant government entities.

The decision would boost efforts of charitable organizations to meet with international standards,

guarantying governance and transparency, and allowing donors to track their finances.

It also allows those working in this sector to implement their programs in accordance with specific regulatory procedures set by the Ministry of Social Affairs, ensuring that aid reaches those who deserve it.

Speaking to KUNA on this matter on Saturday, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Relief Society, said that the decision to resume donations and charitable work reflects the wise leadership's commitment to Kuwait's pioneering humanitarian work.

Al-Saleh expressed his gratitude to all members of the committee and the supporting official institutions for their efforts.

In a similar statement to KUNA, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Humanitarian Excellence Association, Dr. Khaled Al-Subaihi, renewed the association's commitment to its principles and values, appreciating the trust of donors.

For his part, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Safa Humanitarian Charitable Society, Mohammad Al-Shaya, praised the decision of the committee, saying it reflects Kuwait's humanitarian leading position.

GCC envoys in US discuss Gulf unity boost

WASHINGTON, June 28, (KUNA): Ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries discussed on Friday latest developments in the Gulf region, and ways to enhance cooperation.

This came during a meeting held at Kuwait Embassy in Washington,

where Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikhha Al-Zain Al-Sabah invited her Gulf counterparts.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on the latest developments and discussed ways to enhance cooperation in line with shared priorities and aspirations.

The meeting was attended by Saudi Ambassador Princess Reema bint Bandar, UAE Ambassador Yousef Al-Otaiba, Omani Ambassador Talal Al-Rahbi, Bahraini Ambassador Sheikh Abdullah bin Rashid, and Qatari Ambassador Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad.



Director General of the General Administration of Customs, Fatima Al-Qallaf, during the meeting in Brussels.

Kuwait retains WCO audit seat until 2026

BRUSSELS, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait's membership in the World Customs Organization (WCO) Audit Committee was voted on for an additional year, until July 2026.

This came during Kuwait's participation, represented by the General Administration of Customs, in the 145th/146th WCO Council meeting, held in Brussels, Belgium, from June 26 to 28, 2025.

The achievement came in recognition of Kuwait's efforts in digital transformation and enhancing transparency and customs governance.

A statement by the Kuwait's General Administration of Customs, received by KUNA, said that the meeting discussed topics including promoting digital transformation and artificial intelligence

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8 KFH launches Fahad, Kuwait's first AI-powered virtual employee



9 Warba Bank receives GRI Index stamp for sustainability report

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:16	Asr	15:25
Sunrise ..	04:51	Maghrib ..	18:51
Zohr	11:51	Isha	20:24

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Very hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.			
By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly			
Weather			
wind to southwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	48	37	
Kuwait Airport	48	29	
Abdaly	49	29	
Jahra	49	32	
Salmiyah	45	35	
Ahmadi	43	30	
Nuwaisib	47	32	
Wafra	47	27	
Salmiyah	47	29	
Managish	49	31	



Opening of the 10th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors in Beijing.

KUNA photo

Chinese Premier affirms economic openness as Kuwait officially joins AIIB

BEIJING, June 28, (KUNA): The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) announced on Friday Kuwait's full membership during the opening of the 10th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors in Beijing.

In his opening remarks, Chinese Premier Li Qiang praised the development of the AIIB since its founding in 2015, describing it as a new model for financial

governance and multilateral cooperation.

For his part, Kuwait's Ambassador to China Jasem Al-Najem, expressed Kuwait's keenness to play an active role in the bank, leveraging its expertise in financing development projects.

Al-Najem also emphasized that this step strengthens Kuwait's international

partnerships, especially in the areas of infrastructure, energy, and transportation.

AIIB, established in 2014, finances sustainable infrastructure projects in Asia and beyond and has approximately 103 members from around the world.

Fool-proof security at 'Husseiniyas'



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef on an inspection tour of several Husseiniyas.



Securitymen thoroughly checking visitors to Husseiniyas.



Shiite Muslims listening to a sermon at one of the Husseiniyas.

Interior minister leads inspection tours

By Munif Nayerf

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef conducted an inspection tour on Friday evening of several Hussainiyas and mourning ceremonies in various parts of Kuwait.

The tour was part of ongoing efforts to monitor se-

curity and organizational preparations for the month of Muharram, with the aim of ensuring full readiness.

Accompanied by security and National Guard leaders, Sheikh Fahad was briefed on the implemented security plan and the coordination efforts with relevant authorities, including civil defense, emergency medical services, and the traffic control system.

Meanwhile, Major General Abdullah Saffah, the Assistant Undersecretary for Special Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior, conducted an inspection tour of several schools hosting Shiite mourning ceremonies during the month of Muharram.

Accompanied by the Director-General of the Special

Forces Brigadier General Dakhil Al-Dakhil, Major General Saffah reviewed the security and safety measures in place. The inspection focused on assessing security readiness in coordination with relevant authorities to ensure the highest levels of protection and comfort for the worshippers.

In addition, the acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Ali Al-Adwani, conducted a field tour on the second day of Muharram of several Hussainiyas throughout Kuwait.

The tour was part of ongoing efforts to monitor the implementation of the Ministry of Interior's security and organizational plan to secure religious rituals during this month.

Major General Al-Adwani reviewed the readiness of security teams deployed at the sites, as well as the deployment of patrols and checkpoints.

He emphasized the importance of enhancing coordination among relevant sectors and increasing preparedness to ensure the safety of citizens and residents, as well as the smooth flow of entry and exit.

Major General Al-Adwani praised the high level of discipline and efforts exerted by security personnel in carrying out their field duties, stressing the importance of maintaining this level of seriousness and efficiency as a reflection of the ministry's readiness and capability to secure religious rituals.

Other Voices

Are you a morning lark or a night owl?

By Ahmad alsarraf

Sleep is an essential and vital part of our lives, no less important than breathing, eating, or drinking. It is not just rest, but sleep is an active and complex process during which physiological and neurological changes occur that are crucial for maintaining our physical and mental health and overall well-being.

Sleep plays a major role in repairing and regenerating damaged tissue, especially during deep sleep. It also helps build muscle and triggers the secretion of growth hormones necessary for cell regeneration. During sleep, the body produces proteins called cytokines, which are vital in fighting infection and inflammation.

Sleep also supports cardiovascular health by regulating blood pressure and heart rate. Chronic sleep deprivation increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

Consequently, lack of sleep weakens the immune system, making the body more susceptible to diseases and viruses. It also contributes to weight gain by increasing cravings for high-calorie foods and leads to insulin resistance, which raises the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Sleep is the time when the brain processes information acquired during the day, transferring memories from short-term to long-term storage. This is a vital process for learning and information consolidation.

Getting enough sleep improves concentration and decision-making, and helps regulate brain chemicals that control emotions and mood.



alsarraf

Sleep deprivation can cause anxiety, depression, stress, and severe mood swings. Sleep needs vary by age: infants require 12 to 16 hours, children about 12 hours, adolescents 8 to 10 hours, and adults 7 to 9 hours.

We are all naturally programmed to wake up at certain times, but this schedule can be easily adjusted. Some people wake up with or before sunrise and perform their best early in the day, while others are most productive late at night.

A 2022 study published on the Insider website identified the following types of sleepers:

1. Morning Larks: People with high energy early in the day.
2. Evening Larks: Their peak activity occurs from late morning to early evening.
3. Sedentary Larks: They wake up, then sleep again, waking up later, with productivity starting late.
4. Swifts: Individuals who remain constantly alert throughout the day.
5. Wild Hens: Those who often feel constantly tired.

Who are the happiest or luckiest? Morning people tend to report greater happiness and life satisfaction, partly because most of society operates on an early morning schedule.

Night owls often score higher on intelligence tests and demonstrate faster mental processing, but they struggle in schools and workplaces that start early.

Studies show that creative ideas often increase late at night, likely due to fewer distractions and more mind wandering.

Ultimately, most people don't fit neatly into one category. In daily life, we encounter many types of people. Some inspire us, while others create an atmosphere of complaints, criticism, jealousy, and negativity. These individuals can't stand others' happiness, seek out faults, and belittle success, but they are often unwilling to change themselves. It is best to avoid such people whenever possible.



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'Husseiniya' congregations held in 57 schools

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Husseiniya congregations were held on the first and second nights of Muharram, commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, Peace be Upon Him, and reaffirming commitment to the values upon which his immortal revolution was founded that represented a model of sacrifice, redemption and the defense of truth.

The Husseiniya congregations this year were held in 57 schools in various districts to accommodate participants and provide a suitable and safe environment for commemorating the occasion.

Preparations were conducted at the highest level of coordination between the Ministry of Interior,

National Guard and all other concerned government agencies. The Ministry of Interior provided its security personnel to ensure smooth traffic flow and secure the sites surrounding the schools, while other government teams provided technical and medical support.

The schools were fully prepared and organized, with supervisory teams for internal organization, and active participation by volunteers who contributed to the organization, guidance and service of the participants. In the sermons delivered by a number of preachers, they emphasized that the revolution of Imam Hussein (Peace Be Upon Him) was not a passing event; as it rather carried within it the meanings of patience, courage, justice and commitment. They pointed out that Imam Hussein (PBUH) sacrificed his blood, his family, and everything he owned so

that the banner of Islam would remain raised high and that truth would prevail.

They stressed that the love of Imam Hussein (PBUH) is a love of justice, goodness and dignity and that those who embrace these values are acting in accordance with their sound human nature.

At the conclusion of the sessions, the participants expressed their deep gratitude to all government agencies, especially the ministries of Interior and Health, which contributed to the success of these sessions and provided security and comfort for the participants. They appreciated the tremendous efforts exerted to ensure smooth organization of the sessions, reflecting the image of cohesion between the State and community institutions in supporting religious events.

'From virtual to real world'

'Databases vital to fight cyber crimes in region'

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Director General of the Criminal Investigation General Department at the Interior Ministry Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Hassan has stressed the importance of databases, particularly criminal data and biometric fingerprints, in combating cybercrime in Arab countries, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) when he chaired the 20th Arab Conference of the Directors of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Evidence Agencies at the headquarters of the Secretariat General of the Arab Interior Ministers Council in Tunisia, Al-Hassan confirmed that the conference is following up the proposals adopted in previous conferences in a bid to intensify Arab efforts to combat cyber-crimes.

Al-Hassan pointed out that these crimes are the mother of all crimes; as they encompass all crimes occurring in some countries like drugs, human trafficking, domestic violence and all types of crimes that spread from social media and the virtual world to the real world.



Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani meets President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Lorenzo Fontana.

'Kuwait strategic ally of Italy'

PARIS, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani spoke with the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Lorenzo Fontana, at the Chamber's headquarters in Rome recently.

A statement by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Rome said that both sides discussed bilateral relations during the meeting and ways of strengthening them in an array of fields.

The President of the Chamber of Deputies expressed his gratitude for the historic relations his country has with Kuwait to say that

Kuwait is considered an "important strategic ally of Italy," given the strong political, diplomatic, economic, defense, and cultural relations that unite the two sides.

Fontana also praised Kuwait's ambitious economic vision, which aims to diversify sources of income and implement major development projects, as he emphasized that this vision opens up broad horizons for Italian companies to contribute to implementing these projects and enhance economic cooperation between the two countries.

Abu Khalid, Kuwait needs your acumen, your voice

“IN a recent press conference, Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani made a striking statement: ‘Qatar defended Iran.’ This reflects Doha’s official stance—and, more broadly, a common Gulf position.” Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

“But such positions must now be reassessed in light of recent events. The Iranian attack on Qatar was not just an isolated incident—it echoed memories of Saddam Hussein’s betrayal of Kuwait, a country that had once stood firmly by his side. Yet, despite this support, he invaded it. The lesson is clear: trust in unstable neighbors comes at a high cost.

“The Arab world united in condemning both the Israeli and American bombings of Iran. However, Iran’s own aggression—whether through its assault on Qatar, its bombing of HH the Amir of Kuwait’s motorcade in the past or its attempted coup in Bahrain—cannot be overlooked. These are not theories; they are facts. The region has suffered enough from political groups in Iraq and Iran that undermine peace.

“This is why the Gulf states must now turn inward, embrace their unity, and rally around their leadership. We must stand together. And in doing so, we remember the efforts of HH the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad—may Allah have mercy on him—who, despite his frail health, worked tirelessly to mend the rift between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. He understood that Gulf unity is not a luxury, but a necessity.

“Today, we also remember one of his distinguished protégés—His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, ‘Abu Khalid’. A true son of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah embodies the values of honor, diplomacy and service. This moment calls for his leadership in foreign policy—because now, more than ever, Kuwait needs experienced statesmen.

“This is not to diminish the efforts of His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah and incumbent Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya. But the gravity of today’s geopolitical landscape demands seasoned diplomats—those who know the region, its intricacies and its dangers.

“I am not a poet, so I will not offer verses. But I can say this: when we entrust Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled with directing Kuwait’s foreign policy—under the wise guidance of His Highness the Amir—we are restoring Kuwait to its rightful place as a leader in regional diplomacy.

“Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled’s credentials speak for themselves. He studied under the great late leaders Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah and Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. He rose through the ranks—from ambassador to Foreign Affairs Minister—building strong international relationships and managing crises with calm and competence, including the COVID-19 pandemic, during which he ensured the safe return of Kuwaitis from abroad.

“Today, as regional tensions fluctuate and the Gulf’s interests risk being sidelined in negotiations between America and Iran, Kuwait must have a seat at the table. Geography cannot be changed—Iran will always be our neighbor—but diplomacy can shape the nature of that relationship. It must be navigated with care, wisdom and foresight.

“That is why this moment belongs to you, Abu Khalid. Kuwait needs your leadership. The region needs your voice. This is your time.”

Also:

“What we are saying here is not meant to gloat over Iran’s current situation. On the contrary, we have consistently wished the best for the country and have repeatedly advised it to open its economy to investment, whether Arab, European, or American, so that it could prosper economically, improve its citizens’ standard of living, and become a more advanced nation. However, Iran chose to ignore this advice, and eventually faced war,” columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

“In a previous article, I mentioned the possibility of a military coup in Iran that could overthrow the current regime. In fact, some foreign analyses now suggest that regime change in Iran may be imminent. Israeli attacks targeted important infrastructure, including Evin Prison, the Iranian Red Crescent headquarters, the offices of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Corporation, and the national power grid. These actions have contributed to political and economic turmoil, further deepening the crisis for the Iranian people.

“Among the examples where airstrikes contributed to the collapse of governments are the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 during the Kosovo War and the NATO-imposed no-fly zone over Libya in 2011 during its civil war. Currently, there is no strong internal uprising in Iran comparable to those seen in Yugoslavia or Libya. As is often the case, the Iranian people are likely to rally around their leadership when their country is under attack and their national dignity is perceived to be wounded. However, if the economic hardships, already strained by decades of U.S. sanctions, continue to worsen, the potential for protests remains.

“Over the past 30 years, Iran has experienced several waves of unrest, including the student protests of 1999, the Green Movement in 2009, the 2017–2018 protests, the fuel protests of 2019–2020, and the Mahsa Amini demonstrations of 2022–2023. Regime change could result from a widespread popular

uprising if living conditions deteriorate significantly. The 1979 revolution itself followed a long period of economic and social decline.

“Such a scenario is not impossible. Continued Israeli attacks could push hardline factions within Iran to stage a military coup, replacing the current government with a military dictatorship, possibly by removing the president and establishing a military council or a military-led authority.

“However, this outcome would likely not serve the interests of either Israel or the United States, as it could lead to the emergence of a more extremist regime, one potentially more determined to pursue nuclear weapons development. Iran’s full compliance with American demands and commitment to political reform could take months of sustained Israeli or American airstrikes. In an extreme scenario, Israel might even resort to detonating a nuclear warhead to force Iran into submission.

“If airstrikes intensify, Iranian leaders may decide that surrender is the only option to ensure the survival of the Islamic Republic. As a result, Tehran could make significant concessions to preserve the regime.

“A prominent historical example of this is Ayatollah Khomeini’s 1988 decision to accept the ceasefire that ended the Iran-Iraq War, following years of resistance. Khomeini famously described the decision as “more deadly than drinking poison.” If mounting Israeli or American pressure compels the current Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, to make a similar choice, he may ultimately follow Khomeini’s path, and opt to “drink the poisoned chalice” rather than risk the fall of the regime.”

□ □ □

“Recently, unofficial reports have circulated about the potential abolition of several government agencies, including the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the Municipal Council, and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR).” Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Furaih, a former board member of PAAAFR, wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

“PAAAFR was established in 1983 under Law No. 94, following an initiative by farmers who submitted a proposal to His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. Despite PAAAFR’s accomplishments since its inception, I believe administrative shortcomings have hindered its potential, ultimately weakening PAAAFR’s positive impact on the agricultural sector.

“A notable example of this occurred in 1986, when PAAAFR introduced mandatory technical specifications for greenhouses in agricultural reserves as a condition for receiving government support. Farmers strongly opposed these specifications, arguing that they did not serve agricultural development but rather hindered it.

“To address the concerns, it was agreed to form a committee comprising farmer representatives and PAAAFR experts to review and revise the specifications, similar to the process used in developing international standards.

“Unfortunately, this agreement was never implemented. As a result, many greenhouses fell into disrepair or were abandoned. Only those built in accordance with international standards have remained resilient and productive, even after 43 years.

“If PAAAFR is to be restructured or reformed on modern scientific and practical foundations, I believe it is necessary to adopt several proposals I have previously put forward in earlier articles. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Implement reliable international standards that farmers must comply with, with the Industrial Bank responsible for supervising both the design and implementation processes.
2. Modernize the agricultural collection and marketing system. The current system for collecting and displaying agricultural produce in Kuwait is outdated, relying heavily on manual labor and traditional methods. The solution lies in establishing centralized facilities for collection, cleaning, and packaging, aligned with market requirements, similar to the vegetable packing center in Abu Dhabi.
3. Establish a world-class nursery for ornamental agriculture with modern, mechanized specifications. This requires creating an integrated nursery that reduces dependence on intensive labor while supplying streets and parks with a diverse range of flowers and plants, following the model of Dubai Municipality’s nurseries.
4. Provide high-quality feed at affordable prices. This can be accomplished by establishing a feed factory with a production capacity of 100 tons per hour for meeting the needs of poultry and livestock farmers with optimal quality and minimal cost. It would also reduce losses caused by manual handling, which currently results in approximately ten percent feed waste daily.
5. Benefit from regional research expertise by collaborating with Gulf research centers and universities that partner with leading international institutions in the field of protected agriculture. Such cooperation would allow Kuwait to benefit from advanced knowledge and improve local agricultural practices.

“In conclusion, we are now presented with a real opportunity to reassess the state of agriculture in Kuwait and work toward realizing future goals for a green, sustainable, and productive environment.”

— Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh/
Simi K. Kutty



Adel Al-Kharafi

Captagon drug bust leads to arrest of man with ‘forged’ Kuwaiti citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Ministry of Interior announced that the Criminal Security Sector, represented by the Drug Control General Department (DCGD), seized a large quantity of drugs estimated at approximately one million Captagon pills, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry explained that DCGD received accurate information about the suspect’s activities in smuggling and distributing narcotics. A tight security ambush was set up, leading to the arrest of the suspect in possession of a large quantity of Captagon Capt. The suspect resisted arrest but was subdued and detained without injuries.

During a search of the suspect’s residence, forged documents were discovered, revealing that he had illegally obtained Kuwaiti citizenship. The ministry confirmed that a joint team from DCGD and the Nationality Affairs Investigations Department was formed to complete investigations into the forged citizenship case and to take the necessary legal action against the suspect.

‘Time and effort’ New judicial fees move to take effect early July

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait has issued a decision to introduce new judicial fees for the Experts Department, covering six categories based on the time and effort required to carry out assignments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision sets a fee of KD 30 for inspection sessions and KD 20 for expert attendance at court sessions. These fees will be increased by 100 percent in cases where the value of the report’s subject exceeds KD 500,000.

The decision will come into effect in early July.

Article 1 of the decision outlines the following judicial fees for expert services:

- KD 10 for each session held by the expert at the headquarters of the General Experts Department or any of its branches to carry out the assignment.
- KD 5 for each procedural session held by the expert without requiring the presence of the parties.
- KD 30 for inspection sessions conducted at the dispute site or for sessions held to review documents outside the department’s headquarters.
- KD 20 for the expert’s appearance in court to discuss the report.
- KD 15 for travel expenses.
- KD 20 for filing the report.

Article 2 - The fees outlined in Article 1, clauses A, B, C, and D will vary based on the number of experts assigned to the committee. These fees shall be doubled (100%) in cases where the value of the report’s findings exceeds KD 500,000.

Article 4 - If an assignment requires specialized expertise from outside the General Department of Experts, the matter shall be referred to the court, which will determine the appropriate fees and expenses.

The decision also sets fees for assignments based on the type of property or case as follows:

- Category A - KD 100 for assignments related to private residences or residential units located in private, model, investment, chalet, or commercial areas.
- Category B - KD 250 for assignments related to residential or commercial complexes.
- Category C - KD 200 for assignments related to industrial plots, agricultural plots, or areas designated for investment housing or commercial use.

Article 6 of the decision repeals Resolution No. 232/2017.

Article 7 mandates the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice to implement this resolution, effective July 1.

Expat arrested for stashing 3,800 liquor bottles in abandoned cars



Locally produced liquor found in abandoned cars. Al-Seyassah photos

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: An expatriate has been taken into custody for allegedly hiding 3,828 bottles of alcoholic beverages inside several abandoned vehicles located in a dirt lot in Mahboula, according to a security source.

The arrest was carried out by officers from the Ahmadi Security Directorate, specifically the Fahaheel Area Command under the Fintas Police Station. Authorities report that the individual was not only trafficking alcohol but also using the derelict vehicles as makeshift storage units for a locally produced liquor.

The operation followed intelligence indicating the suspect’s involvement in alcohol manufacturing and distribution. Upon investigation, security forces discovered the large quantity of liquor bottles concealed within the parked vehicles.

This arrest is part of the broader efforts led by the Public Security Sector, under the direction of Assistant Undersecretary for Sector Affairs, Major General Hamad Al-Munifi. It reflects ongoing patrol initiatives and heightened security presence across various regions aimed at combating illegal activities.



The liquor trafficker

Jail, fine in nationality fraud

Defendant caught fleeing at border

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

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Criminal Court sentenced a Saudi national to seven years in prison with hard labor and fined him KD336,000 for forging a naturalization application in collaboration with a Kuwaiti citizen.



Fire engulfed many apartments before being extinguished. KFF photo

No injuries in Salmiya apartment blaze: KFF

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Firefighters from Salmiya and Al-Bidaa fire stations controlled a fire that broke out in an apartment building in Salmiya on Thursday afternoon.

In a press statement, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) confirmed that the firefighting teams extinguished the fire in record time. The fire incident did not result in any injuries.

Red signal violated

Student dies, sister in ICU, seriously injured

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: A Kuwait University student died in a horrific traffic accident on the internal road at Sabah Al-Salem University City (Shadadiya) which also caused serious injuries to her sister, reports Al-Jarida daily.

A security source told the daily that the Operations Unit in the Ministry of Interior received information about a collision and rollover accident at the university. Officers from the Farwaniya Governorate Traffic Department, Shadadiya Fire Department and emergency police units were immediately dispatched to the scene. According to the source, traffic patrols discovered that two vehicles collided at an intersection causing one of them to overturn. The impact led to the death of a young woman and left her sister, who was with her, severely injured.

The source added that security personnel arrested the other driver involved in the accident, who is also a citizen and a university student. Firefighters recovered the victim’s body, which was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department while emergency medical teams transported the injured woman to the hospital. Investigators in the Farwaniya Governorate requested footage from the Security and Safety Department at Sabah Al-Salem University City to assist their inquiry. Surveillance cameras confirmed that one of the vehicles ran a red light at the intersection, resulting in the tragic accident.

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Kuwait TV wins four awards at Arab radio & television festival



Part of the festival award ceremony.

Al-Mutairi credits national talent and leadership support

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi expressed pride in Kuwait Television winning four awards at the 25th Arab Radio and Television Festival held in Tunis.

In a statement to KUNA on Friday, Al-Mutairi congratulated all teams behind the award-winning programs, including producers, presenters, technicians, and administrators, praising their creative efforts in deliver-



Honoring the winners of the 25th Arab Radio and Television Festival in Tunisia.

ing high-quality content that reflects Kuwait's cultural and media identity.

He credited political leadership's support for the achievements, saying they align with the Ministry's policy to boost national media production and reflect its commitment

to responsible, balanced, and ethical content.

He also commended the participating media teams for their professional performance, reaffirming the Ministry's dedication to supporting national media talent and advancing the media sector in line with the state's future vision.

The 25th Arab Radio and Television Festival was held in the Tunisian capital from June 23 to 26, organized by the Arab States Broadcasting Union under the slogan "A Space for Encounter and Creativity," with wide participation from Arab media organizations.

Kuwait TV won two gold awards in the variety and entertainment category and in the television cultural program category, as well as two others in the television program exchange competition.

Education ministry's union lauds successful end to academic year

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The employees union of the Ministry of Education extended its sincere congratulations to Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei and all members of the ministry on the successful conclusion of the 2024/2025 academic year, marked by the announcement of high school results characterized by fairness, integrity, and discipline, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement, the union affirmed that this year's educational, administrative, and organizational achievements were made possible thanks to the clear vision of the ministry's leadership and the dedicated efforts of teams in all educational districts, schools, and technical and administrative sectors.

'Our children are not just numbers'

Kuwait leads GCC call to defend children in Gaza

NEW YORK, June 28, (KUNA): The Gulf Cooperation Council group of states urged stronger accountability for systematic violations against children in conflict zones, especially in Gaza Strip.

Speaking on behalf of the group at the UN Security Council's annual debate on children in armed conflict, Kuwait's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Faisal Al-Enezi emphasized the importance of Resolution 1612 (2005) in improving international protection for children.

There is a 25 percent annual rise in grave violations of children's rights in conflict zones, with over 41,000 cases being documented in the last year, he regretted.

Al-Enezi highlighted the need of adhering to international humanitarian law and safeguarding the protection of children in armed conflicts. He expressed concerns about the impact of explosive weapons on

children and the alarming 35% increase in sexual violence cases against minors, urging for legal accountability and adequate support for victims.

The Gulf Group emphasized the importance of humanitarian access for children and the need for sustained international support to protect them, he said.

Ambassador Al-Enezi welcomed the inclusion of Israeli occupation forces in the UN report as vital for accountability and called for maintaining the integrity of monitoring mechanisms. "Our children are not just numbers; they are the essence of our future," emphasizing a collective responsibility to address ongoing violence against them and strengthen protective systems," he went on.

The Gulf Cooperation Council remains committed to collaborating with the UN to create a safer world for children, the Kuwaiti diplomat added.



KUNA photo
Faisal Al-Enezi, Kuwait's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN

Health centers begin screenings

MoH facilitates medical exams for students bound for study abroad

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Ministry of Health said the school health centers throughout the country has started receiving Kuwaiti scholarship students for the required medical examinations as part of their academic scholarship procedures for the upcoming academic year, reports Al-Anba daily.

This move is a manifestation of the commitment of the ministry to facilitate health procedures for these students and ensure they meet all medical requirements before commencing their studies abroad.

The ministry designated the following health centers that started the medical procedures for the students on Monday:

- Capital Governorate: Hamad Al-Sagr Health Center in Adailiya
- Hawally Governorate: School Health Center in Bayan
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate: School Health Center in Adan
- Jahra Governorate: Jahra Health Complex, Al-Mutlala Health Center (N8)
- Ahmadi Governorate: Fahheel Health Center, Sabah Al-Ahmad Health Center (Sector D)
- Farwaniya Governorate: Al-Raqqai

Health Center

These health centers operate in the morning from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm from Sunday to Thursday; and in the evening on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 2:00 pm to 8:30 pm.

The ministry added that Al-Mutlala Health Center (N8) receives students in the morning on Sundays and Tuesdays; while Sabah Al-Ahmad Health Center (Sector D) serves students only during the morning shift.

It stressed the importance of personal attendance and bringing both the originals and photocopies of the following documents:

- Acceptance letter from the Ministry of Higher Education or proof of university admission (for self-funded students)
- Recent passport-sized photograph
- Civil identification card
- Passport
- Vaccination certificate

It then wished all the students success in their academic pursuit, and affirmed that the health center teams are fully equipped and prepared to provide high-quality health services to ensure student safety and a smooth medical examination process.

News in Brief

Power outage hits Rawda: According to the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Fatima Hayat, the Rawda M substation went completely out of service at 3:13 pm on Friday due to a technical fault in one of the 11-kilovolt (kV) copper rods at the station, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

She explained that this fault caused a spark, leading to the disconnection of 11/33 kV transformers Nos. 1, 2, and 3, protecting the rest of the station's components. As a result, an estimated 29-megawatt electrical load was lost, causing a power outage in parts of Rawda.

Immediately after the incident, teams from the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the Ministry of Interior, and the ministry's emergency crews responded to the site. There were no human injuries, and the damage was limited to minor material losses. Power restoration efforts began at 6:30 pm on Friday, and continued until electricity was fully restored to the affected customers as quickly as possible.

■ ■ ■

Passports Roundabout partially closed: The General Traffic Department announced the closure of half of the Passports Roundabout (Jawazat Roundabout) towards Salmiya on Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Road (Fifth Ring Road) for traffic coming from Al-Bidda Roundabout towards Jahra, due to necessary road maintenance, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The closure will remain in effect until dawn next Monday.

■ ■ ■

CSC opens registration: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced that registration for job seekers for the 91st period began on Friday, June 27, and will continue until July 11, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Applicants are urged to register through the official website: csc.gov.kw.

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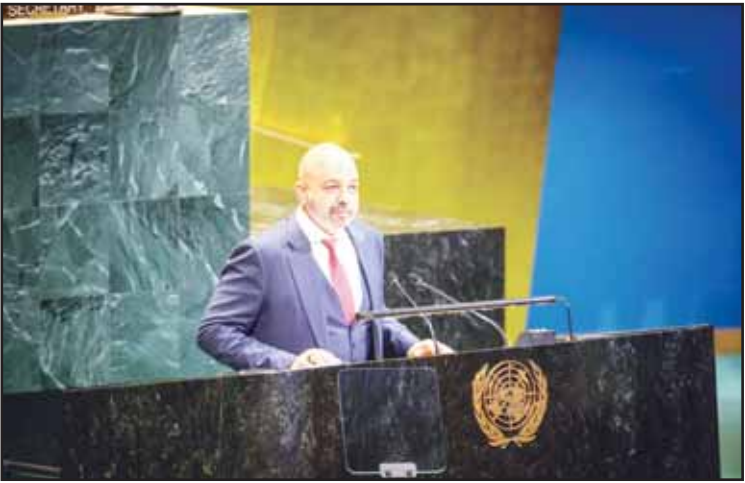
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KUNA photo
Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai, Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations.

Kuwait's UN envoy champions UN Charter for global stability

NEW YORK, June 28, (KUNA): The Gulf group at the United Nations on Thursday stressed adhering to the UN Charter as a "must" to ensure a more stable world.

Kuwaiti permanent envoy to the UN, Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai, gave a speech at a UN General Assembly commemorative plenary meeting on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, saying that instilling the values of sovereignty and equality among nations was a "cornerstone" for any just international system.

On June 26, 1945, the UN Charter was signed by 50 nations, establishing an organization dedicated to fostering peace, security, and human rights. Em-

phasizing the dignity of all individuals, the Charter aimed to prevent war, promote social progress, and uphold international law.

On this day, 80 years ago, the world came out of two devastating wars, looking forward for a more just and stable global system, in spite of growing threats stemming from armed conflicts, as well as the downward development process, and the stagnant state of the "United" body, he pointed out.

GCC countries believe in investing in the UN's capabilities as a platform for dialogue and understanding, along with empowering to play its role in preserving peace, sustaining development and bridging gaps amongst nations, the Ambassador noted.

Kuwait reaffirms sustainability goals at SCO meeting in China

Envoy stresses energy security, climate cooperation

BEIJING, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait renewed its commitment to sustainable development during its participation at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Energy Ministers meeting, held in Ningbo, Zhejiang, on June 26, 27.

Counselor of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Beijing, Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel,

delivered a speech at the meeting in which he affirmed Kuwait's full support for the organization's goals regarding sustainable development.

Al-Dakheel pointed out that the initiative reflected collective commitment to climate change, energy security, and the transition to a green economy, stressing Kuwait's keenness to strengthen its regional and international cooperation in these areas.

He reviewed his country's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 and its vision to diversify the national

economy and build a prosperous future for future generations.

He also pointed to the importance of the Kuwaiti-Chinese partnership in the energy sector, particularly following the signing of a memorandum of understanding in July 2024.

The memorandum was between the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, the Chinese State-owned Power Investment Corporation (SPIC), and the National Energy Administration.

The memorandum covered renewable energy, technical cooperation to

meet peak demand, and clean energy infrastructure planning.

Counselor Al-Dakheel said that the visit of a high-level Chinese delegation to Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Station last May reflected the seriousness of the partnership and the desire of both parties for future expansion.

This year's SCO meeting, under the theme of "Integrate Innovation for Energy Future," gathered energy regulators of SCO member states, observer states and dialogue partners, as well as major international organizations and energy enterprises.

Council to review land, power and drainage plans

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Municipal Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Muhri, will hold its second regular session in the fourth legislative term on Monday to discuss several items on its agenda.

The council will deliberate on the following:

- Request of the Ministry of Electricity Water and Renewable Energy to allocate overhead lines to connect the 'Shagaya Z' and 'Wafra Z' main transformer stations;

- Request for the addition of an area to Plot No. 39 in Block 24 in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh;
- Request of a company to amend the subdivision project in the plot located in Dasman to Plot No. 55, which it owns;
- Letter of the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs regarding ratification of the minutes of the 19th regular Municipal Council meeting held on May 26, which included the approval of several items; particularly request of the Public Authority for Sports to allocate an alternative site to the previous site designated temporarily and seasonally for youth training

- and skills development,
- Kuwait's freefall jump;
- Request of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) to allocate Basin No. 3 for the collection and drainage of rainwater in Sabah Al-Ahmad and South Sabah Al-Ahmad;
- Requests of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate a path for water services to supply East Sabah Al-Ahmad residential city with fresh water, and allocate two paths for underground cables in Arifjan and Ali Sabah Al-Salem suburb to supply the main transformer station in Umm Al-Hayman.



Business Council and dignitaries pose for a group photo during the Chargé d'Affaires Ahmed Arafat send-off for his distinguished service.

Arafa hailed as symbol of diplomacy in Kuwait farewell

Lebanese Business Council honors outgoing Chargé d'Affaires

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: In a gesture of loyalty and appreciation for his distinguished diplomatic career, the Lebanese Business Council in Kuwait organized a farewell ceremony in honor of Chargé d'Affaires at the Lebanese Embassy Ahmed Arafat, on the occasion of the end of his diplomatic mission in Kuwait and his appointment as Permanent Representative of the Lebanese Republic to the United Nations in New York.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait Ambassador Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda.

Representative of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Protocol Department Muhanna Al-Muhanna, members of the diplomatic

corps, economic and social figures, and representatives of the Lebanese community attended the event to express their sincere appreciation for Arafat's contributions throughout his tenure in Kuwait.

President of the Lebanese Business Council in Kuwait Ali Hassan Khalil delivered a heartfelt speech on behalf of the council and the Lebanese community. He said "since assuming your duties, you have been a symbol of modern diplomacy. You combined political, economic and social representation. You are Lebanon's honorable voice abroad and a shining example of its values and morals. We will never forget your oversight of the rehabilitation of the Lebanese mission headquarters to become a unifying home for all Lebanese. Kuwait will not forget the 'Kuwait Needs Your Safety' campaign, which embodied your humanity and demonstrated the highest value of solidarity between the two brotherly



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq
Chargé d'Affaires at the Lebanese Embassy Ahmed Arafat during a cake-cutting ceremony.

peoples. Today we bid farewell to the Chargé d'Affaires ... to welcome the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, the bearer of the

nation's message in international forums, with strong confidence in your ability to represent Lebanon with the highest levels of responsibility and competence."

Meanwhile, Arafat expressed his deep gratitude. He stated "I stand today overwhelmed with the love of my friends and colleagues, and with the warmth of a country that embraced me as it embraces its own people. Kuwait has truly been my second home, with the generosity, authenticity and sincere love I have witnessed."

He extended his deep gratitude to the Lebanese community that he described as "the beating heart," emphasizing that it has been the best support and an honorable symbol for Lebanon. He added: "I carry with me these memories, these relationships, and these values, to represent Lebanon at the United Nations, carrying its voice and true image based on dignity, justice, diversity and humanity."

Zubaydov, praised Arafat's professional and humanitarian qualities, emphasizing that he "was an example of a professional and pro-

active diplomat who worked tirelessly to develop Lebanese-Kuwaiti relations and consolidate them. His fingerprints will remain firmly in the memory of the missions and the records of bilateral relations, especially after the success of the recent visit of His Excellency the Lebanese President to Kuwait, which he contributed to organizing and making a success in an effective manner."

The ceremony witnessed a remarkable interaction among the attendees who praised Arafat's professional and friendly behavior, and his continuous presence at various events of interest to the Lebanese community.

At the end of the ceremony, an honorary shield was presented on behalf of the Lebanese Business Council, in appreciation of his efforts and as a token of love from his fellow citizens in Kuwait, with best wishes for his success in his new position in New York.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait denounces

The Kingdom calls on the international community to assume its responsibilities and put an end to Israeli violations of international laws, according to the statement.

In other news, at least 60 people were killed across Gaza by Israeli strikes, health workers said Saturday, as Palestinians face a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and ceasefire prospects inch closer.

The strikes began late Friday and continued into Saturday morning, among others killing 12 people near the Palestine Stadium in Gaza City, which was sheltering displaced people, and eight more living in apartments, according to staff at Shifa Hospital, where the bodies were brought. More than 20 bodies were taken to Nasser Hospital, according to health officials. A strike midday Saturday killed 11 people on a street in eastern Gaza City, and their bodies were taken to Al-Ahli Hospital.

The strikes come as U.S. President Donald Trump says there could be a ceasefire agreement within the next week. Taking questions from reporters in the Oval Office Friday, the president said, "we're working on Gaza and trying to get it taken care of."

An official with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press

that Israel's Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer will arrive in Washington next week for talks on Gaza's ceasefire, Iran and other subjects. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Talks have been on again off again since Israel broke the latest ceasefire in March, continuing its military campaign in Gaza and furthering the Strip's dire humanitarian crisis. Some 50 hostages remain in Gaza, fewer than half of them believed to still be alive. They were part of some 250 hostages taken when Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, sparking the 21-month-long war.

The war has killed over 56,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. It says more than half of the dead were women and children.

There is hope among hostage families that Trump's involvement in securing the recent ceasefire between Israel and Iran might exert more pressure for a deal in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is riding a wave of public support for the Iran war and its achievements, and he could feel he has more space to move toward ending the war in Gaza, something his far-right governing partners oppose.

Hamas has repeatedly said it is prepared to free all the hostages in ex-

change for an end to the war in Gaza. Netanyahu says he will only end the war once Hamas is disarmed and exiled, something the group has rejected.

Meanwhile, hungry Palestinians are enduring a catastrophic situation in Gaza. After blocking all food for 2 1/2 months, Israel has allowed only a trickle of supplies into the territory since mid-May.

Efforts by the United Nations to distribute the food have been plagued by armed gangs looting trucks and by crowds of desperate people offloading supplies from convoys.

Palestinians have also been shot and wounded while on their way to get food at newly formed aid sites, run by the American and Israeli backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, according to Gaza's health officials and witnesses.

Palestinian witnesses say Israeli troops have opened fire at crowds on the roads heading toward the sites. Israel's military said it was investigating incidents in which civilians had been harmed while approaching the sites.

Kuwait retains

applications in customs procedures.

The meeting also discussed issues related to goods affected by transfer pricing, the importance of reforming

financial systems, and exchanging expertise among member states in combating customs smuggling.

Head of the Kuwaiti delegation and Director General of the General Administration of Customs, Fatima Al-Qallaf, said Kuwait's membership reflected the international community's confidence in the effective role played by the General Administration of Customs.

She added that the administration has achieved advanced positions in the digital transformation process through electronic connectivity with government agencies to facilitate customs clearance procedures.

The administration also provided integrated electronic services for individuals, such as travel agency and electronic authorization services, which are completed entirely through modern digital systems, Al-Qallaf explained.

The meeting also included the election of Nigerian Ambassador Chief as Chairperson of the WCO Council, in addition to holding elections for the positions of Vice President and members of the Political and Financial Committees and the Audit Committee.

Silver steals

who sells silver jewelry loses 30 to 50 percent, unlike gold, which is bought and sold based on the price ceiling set

by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry," he explained.

Silver merchant Hussein Ali agreed, saying, "Indeed, there has been a noticeable increase in silver sales during this period; particularly after the rise in gold prices as a result of the Iran-Israel war, because gold is considered a safe haven for investors amid political fluctuations."

He disclosed that Kuwait imports silver from Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Italy. He said Swiss silver is the best type and most preferred by customers; hence, the price is around 15 fils higher than other types of silver.

In a related development, Ahmed Abdul Redha, a gold trader, pointed out that silver -- like other commodities -- is vulnerable to political tensions sweeping the world. However, he believes that investing in silver is profitable in the long term, as those who buy a kilogram of silver will not receive a profitable return for at least five years. He cited the fact that a kilogram of silver 20 years ago was worth a little more than KD50, while the current price per kilogram is KD417.

Gold trader Hamad Al-Saeedi stated that silver jewelry sales have been active since the outbreak of the war, with sales increasing by approximately 15 percent; but there has been no significant price increase, as the price of a gram of silver increased by around 15 fils. He revealed that the price of silver three months ago

was less than 290 fils per gram and rose to 360 fils during Eid Al-Adha. Despite this, some traders sell one gram of silver at 410 fils, he added.

He mentioned the multiple uses of silver in technology industries, tablets, solar panels, nuclear reactors and nuclear medicine. He thinks the price of silver will rise dramatically over the next five years with the proliferation of silver-related industries, considering the world is on the cusp of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which relies heavily on silver.

He said a group of investors prefers to store silver with gold to benefit from a profit margin, even if small, or as a guarantee in the event of a decline in paper currencies; especially since the value of the dollar is affected by international political events.

Gold trader Bou Yaacoub noticed the revival of the silver market, as some consider silver an alternative to gold, whose price rises based on global political and financial events. He explained that the price of a gram of a crafted silver could reach KD1,500; while the price of a silver bar depends on its weight, as it is sold without the 'workmanship' fee and this is different from silver jewelry, whose price includes the 'workmanship' fee, so the price of a gram could range from KD1,500 to KD2 depending on the work method. He indicated that the best types of silver in the local market are 925 karat and 999 karat.

For many S.Asian and Muslim New Yorkers, Zohran Mamdani political upset gives hope

NEW YORK, June 28, (AP): The success of Zohran Mamdani in New York City's Democratic primary for mayor is euphoric for Hari Kondabolu, a stand-up comedian who's been friends with the candidate for 15 years.

Mamdani stunned the political establishment when he declared victory in the primary on Tuesday, a ranked choice election in which his strongest competition, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, conceded defeat.

When he launched his campaign, the unabashed democratic socialist ranked near the bottom of the pack. Now, the 33-year-old state assemblyman has a chance to be New York City's first Asian American and Muslim mayor. Mamdani's family came to the United States when he was 7, and he became a citizen in 2018. He was born to Indian parents in Kampala, Uganda.

For Kondabolu, this moment is not just exciting, but emotional.

"I think so many of us have had those experiences in New York of being brown and in a city that has always been really diverse and feels like ours. But after 9/11, like you start to question it like, is this our city too," Kondabolu said. "And 25 years later ... it's surreal, like this is the same city but it's not because we've elected this person."

Mamdani's campaign has piqued the interest of many Indian, Pakistani and other South Asian Americans, as well as Muslims - even those who may not agree with Mamdani on every issue. Despite that opposition, some still see his rise as a sign of hope in a city where racism and xenophobia erupted following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Many of New York City's over 300,000 South Asian residents have been inspired by Mamdani's extraordinary trajectory.

"My mom was texting her friends to vote for him. I've never seen my mother do that before," Kondabolu said. "So the idea that it's gotten our whole family activated in this way - this is, like, personal."



Democratic mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani, (left), speaks on stage with fellow candidate Comptroller Brad Lander at his primary election party on June 25, in New York. (AP)

US Senate working to put Trump's big bill back on track but hurdles remain

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): US Senate Republicans appeared Friday to push President Donald Trump's big bill back on track after a flurry of last-minute revisions, including deep cuts to food stamps, but there's still a long way to go ahead of expected weekend votes.

Trump himself at first gave Congress some breathing room as senators race to meet his Fourth of July deadline, declaring, "It's not the end all," during a press conference at the White House. But he reversed course a short while later, insisting Republicans in the House ensure it's done by the Independence Day holiday.

"We can get it done," Trump said in a post. "It will be a wonderful Celebration for our Country."

As the party in majority power, Republicans are grinding through a punch-list of still-unsettled issues as they try to push the package to passage over unified Democratic opposition. Republicans are relying on steep cuts to health care, food stamps and green energy investments to help pay for \$3.8 trillion in tax breaks, their top priority. Any one of the roadblocks could doom the sprawling package.

The proposed Medicaid cuts, in particular, have raised stark concerns among some GOP senators worried that millions in their states will lose access to the health care program. At the same time, a tentative deal between the White House and House GOP lawmakers from New York and other high-tax dis-



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., arrives for a closed-door Republican meeting to advance President Donald Trump's sweeping domestic policy bill, at the Capitol in Washington on June 27. (AP)

High court ruling on injunctions could imperil many court orders blocking WH

Trump calls presidency 'a very dangerous profession' after US Supreme Court win

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Agencies): US President Donald Trump on Friday called being president a "very dangerous profession," suggesting that he might not have run if he had known.

He made the comments during a White House press conference held to celebrate the US Supreme Court's decision to curb the power of federal judges to impose nationwide rulings that block his policies, handing him a major victory.

When asked by a reporter about threats to his life, Trump said that he is occasionally reminded of the time he was grazed by a bullet at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on July 13, 2024.

"You have race car drivers as an example, one-tenth of 1 percent die. Bull riders, one-tenth of 1 percent. That's not a lot, but it's -- people die. When you're president, it's about 5 percent. If somebody would have told me that, maybe I wouldn't have run. Okay? This is, this is a very dangerous profession," he said.

In a 6-3 vote along ideological lines, the US Supreme Court ruled on Friday that district judges lack the authority to grant nationwide injunctions against the Trump administration's executive order to effectively end birthright citizenship.

The US Supreme Court's decision Friday limiting federal judges from issuing nationwide injunctions threatens to upend numerous lawsuits that have led to orders blocking Trump administration policies.

Between the start of the new administration and mid-May, judges issued roughly 40 nationwide injunctions against the White House on topics including federal funding, elections rules and diversity and equity considerations. Attorneys involved in some of those cases are vowing to keep fighting, noting the high court left open other legal paths that could have broad nationwide effect.

Multiple federal judges have issued nationwide injunctions blocking Trump's order denying citizenship to US-born children of people who are in the country illegally or temporarily. The high court's decision Friday came in a lawsuit over that order, but the justices left unclear whether the restrictions on birthright citizenship could soon take effect in parts of the country.

Opponents went back to court within hours of the opinion, using a legal path the court left open to file class-action lawsuits that could have nationwide effect.



US President Donald Trump speaks to the media as Attorney General Pam Bondi, (right), and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blance, (left), listen on June 27 in the briefing room of the White House in Washington. (AP)

received by Election Day and condition federal election grant funding on states adhering to the new ballot deadline.

California was one of the plaintiffs in that suit. The office of the state's attorney general, Rob Bonta, said in an email it was assessing the effect of Friday's Supreme Court decision on all of the state's litigation.

A federal judge in California in April blocked the administration from cutting off funding for legal representation for unaccompanied migrant children. The administration has appealed.

US District Judge Araceli Martinez-Olguin in San Francisco said there was "no practical way" to limit the scope of the injunction by party or by geography.

"Indeed, as discussed with the Government's declarants at the preliminary injunction hearing, there exists only one contract for the provision of the subject funding, and it applies to direct legal services nationwide," Martinez-Olguin wrote.

Plaintiffs' attorney Adina Appelbaum, program director for the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, said she didn't think the Supreme Court's decision would significantly affect her case.

But she blasted it, saying the high court had "turned its back on its role to protect the people," including immigrants.

A federal judge in February largely blocked sweeping executive orders that sought to end government support for programs promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.

Russian drone strike on Odesa kills 2 and injures 17 other people: Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, June 28, (AP): Two people died and at least 17 more were injured as Russian drones overnight struck the southern Ukrainian port city of Odesa, Ukrainian authorities said on Saturday.

A drone slammed into a residential tower block in the city, causing damage to three floors and trapping residents, emergency services said. The two killed in the attack were a married couple, according to regional Gov Oleh Kiper, who added that three children were among the injured.

There was no immediate comment from Moscow. According to Russia's Defense Ministry, over 40 Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight and on Saturday morning, over western Russia and Kremlin-occupied Crimea.

Long-range drone strikes have been a hallmark of the war, now in its fourth year. The race by both sides to develop increasingly sophisticated and deadlier drones has turned the war into a testing ground for new weaponry.

Russia and Ukraine exchanged more long-range drone attacks that have become a staple of the more than three-year war, officials said Friday, as Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow is ready for a fresh round of



Visitors watch damaged Russian drones during the International Conference on Expanding Sanctions Against Russia in Kyiv, Ukraine on June 27. (AP)

fectively rejected, are expected to be on the agenda.

The war shows no signs of abating as US-led international peace efforts have so far produced no breakthrough. Two recent rounds of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations in Istanbul were brief and yielded no progress on reaching a settlement.

Ukraine wants the next step in peace talks to be a meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Putin, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said.

Given Putin's recent comments, it's unclear how this will pan out. The Russian leader has said a summit meeting should take place only after the main provisions of a peace deal have been agreed, and that could take months or years.

Putin has also repeated his claim that Zelenskyy lost his legitimacy after his presidential term expired last year - an allegation rejected by Kyiv and its allies.

Meanwhile, Russian forces launched 363 Shahed and decoy drones as well as eight missiles at Ukraine overnight, the Ukrainian air force said Friday, claiming that air defenses stopped all but four of the drones and downed six cruise missiles.



A firefighting helicopter flies over Thymari, south of Athens on June 26, as authorities evacuate five locations during Greece's first summer heatwave with temperatures nearing 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). (AP)

Wildfire prompts evacuations near Athens

A large wildfire broke out south of Athens on Thursday, triggering authorities to issue evacuation orders and shut down parts of the coastal road linking the Greek capital to Sounion, location of the ancient Temple of Poseidon, a major tourist attraction.

The fire came as temperatures approached 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in Greece's first heatwave of the summer.

"Right now, strong land and air forces are fighting a huge battle against the flames, mainly among homes," fire department spokesman Col. Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said during a press briefing Thursday afternoon.

Twelve water-dropping planes and 12 helicopters were providing air support to 130 firefighters, backed up by volunteer firefighters in the Palaia Fokaia seaside area south of Athens, Vathrakogiannis said. A coast guard firefighting vessel doused the flames from the sea.

The fire, which reportedly broke out within a populated area, was fanned by strong winds that frequently changed direction, sending plumes of smoke fanning out across the sky. Television footage showed at least one home burning. (AP)

Spain sticks by decision to break with NATO spending goal despite Trump's tariff threats

MADRID, June 28, (AP): Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez walked away from this week's NATO summit with an opt-out from spending more on defense. He also left with fresh threats of tariffs from U.S. President Donald Trump.

On Thursday, the progressive Spanish leader stuck by his decision to break with NATO allies and responded to Trump's comments by pointing out that the European Commission - and not Spain - was who decided the bloc's trade policy.

"What is clear is that trade policy is a policy directed from here, from Brussels," Sánchez said. "Spain is an open country. It is a country that is friendly to its friends, and we consider the United States a friend of Spain."

At the military alliance's summit Wednesday, members agreed to raise their defense spending to 5% of GDP. But Sánchez secured a last-minute exemption, saying that Spain will only spend up to 2.1%, which he called "sufficient and realistic."

Trump criticized Spain after the summit, saying the country wanted "a little bit of a free ride," and that it would "have to pay it back to us on trade" through higher tariffs.

How Sánchez's gamble could play out was up for debate on Thursday.

"It is not always easy to interpret exactly what Mr. Trump means," Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever told reporters at an EU summit. "How he wants to impose import tariffs on Spain separately is a mystery to everyone. Could this



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez speaks during a press conference after the plenary session at the NATO summit in The Hague, Netherlands on June 25. (AP)

perhaps concern specific products from Spain? We will have to wait and see."

Spain's move on the international stage comes at a complex moment for Sánchez at home as corruption cases involving his inner circle have ensnared his Socialist party and resulted in louder calls - even from some leftwing allies - to announce early elections. So far, Sánchez has refused.

Europe

Norwegian crown princess' son charged: Oslo police on Friday announced charges against **Marius Borg Hoiby**, the eldest son of Norway's crown princess, on multiple counts including assault and bodily harm after a monthslong investigation of a case that involved a "double-digit" number of alleged victims.

Hoiby, the 28-year-old son of Crown Princess Mette-Marit and stepson of the heir to the throne, Crown Prince Haakon, has been under scrutiny since he was repeatedly arrested in 2024 and on preliminary charges of bodily harm and criminal damage.

Oslo Police Attorney Andreas Kruszewski said that Hoiby was cooperative during police questioning, which is now complete. Evidence in the case was drawn from sources including text messages, witness testimonies and police searches, the police attorney said.

"I cannot go into further detail about the number of victims in the case beyond confirming that it is a double-digit number," he said.

Defense attorney Petar Sekulic, in an email to The Asso-



Hoiby

ciated Press, said Hoiby was "absolutely taking the accusations very seriously, but doesn't acknowledge any wrongdoing in most of the cases - especially the cases regarding sexual abuse and violence."

The royal palace said "the case is proceeding through the legal system and is following normal procedures. We have nothing further to add."

The case was top news in Norway, where the royals are popular. (AP)

□ □ □

Samurai sword murderer gets life: A man armed with a samurai sword who murdered a London boy on his way to school during a rampage that seriously injured five other people was sentenced Friday to life in prison.

Marcus Arduini Monzo was condemned as "wicked" by Daniel Anjorin's father, who described the agony of finding his 14-year-old son crumpled in a pool of blood outside their home shortly after he'd left for school on April 30, 2024.

"It has been the worst nightmare experience of our lives," Dr. Ebenezer Anjorin said during the sentencing in the Central Criminal Court. "To have to go through the pain of losing a child in such a cruel and savage way. No family should have to go through this."

Monzo, 37, was convicted Wednesday of Anjorin's murder, along with three counts of attempted murder and one count each of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, aggravated burglary and possessing a bladed article. (AP)

Paetongtarn faces growing dissatisfaction over handling of border dispute

Protesters gather in Bangkok to demand Thai PM's resignation over Cambodia call

BANGKOK, June 28, (AP): Thousands of protesters gathered in Thailand's capital on Saturday to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, part of the brewing political turmoil set off by a leaked phone call with former Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Paetongtarn faces growing dissatisfaction over her handling of a recent border dispute with Cambodia involving an armed confrontation May 28. One Cambodian soldier was killed in a relatively small, contested area.

The recorded phone call with Hun Sen was at the heart of the demonstration Saturday and has set off a string of investigations in Thailand that could lead to Paetongtarn's removal.

Outrage over the call mostly revolved around Paetongtarn's comments toward an outspoken regional army commander and her perceived attempts to appease Hun Sen, the current Cambodian Senate president, to ease tensions at the border.

Protesters held national flags and signs as they occupied parts of the streets around the Victory Monument in central Bangkok. At a huge stage set up at the monument, speakers took turns expressing love for Thailand following the intensified border dispute. Protesters chanted, sang and danced to songs stoking nationalist sentiment.

Tatchakorn Srisuwan, 47, a guide from Surat Thani province, said he arrived in Bangkok by an overnight train to demand Paetongtarn's resignation over the leaked call.

"From a heart of a Thai person, we've never had a prime minister who's so weak," he said. "We don't want to invade anyone, but we want to say that we are Thai and we want to protect Thailand's sovereignty."

Many of the leading figures in the protest were familiar faces from a group popularly known as Yellow Shirts, whose clothing color indicates loyalty to the Thai monarchy. They are longtime foes of Paetongtarn's father, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who reportedly has a close relationship with Hun Sen.

Yellow Shirts rallies turned violent and led to military coups in 2006 and



Protesters gather at Victory Monument demanding Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra resign in Bangkok, Thailand on June 28. (AP)

2014, which respectively ousted the elected governments of Thaksin and Paetongtarn's aunt, former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

Hun Sen on Saturday vowed to protect his country's territory from foreign invaders and said the action by the Thai army was a serious

violation of Cambodia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, despite the country's good will in attempting to resolve the border issue.

"This poor Cambodia has suffered from foreign invasion, war and genocide, been surrounded and isolated and insulted in the past, but

now Cambodia has risen on an equal face with other countries," Hun Sen told an audience of thousands at the 74th anniversary celebration of the founding of his long-ruling Cambodian People's Party in the nation's capital, Phnom Penh.

There is a long history of territorial disputes between the countries. Thailand is still rattled by a 1962 International Court of Justice ruling that awarded Cambodia the disputed territory where the historic Preah Vihear temple stands. There were sporadic though serious clashes there in 2011. The ruling from the U.N. court was reaffirmed in 2013, when Yingluck was prime minister.

The scandal has broken Paetongtarn's fragile coalition government, costing her Pheu Thai Party the loss of its biggest partner, Bhumjaithai Party. Its departure left the 10-party coalition with 255 seats, just above the majority of the 500-seat house.

Paetongtarn also faces other investigations that could lead to her removal from office.

Sarote Phuangrampan, secretary-general of the Office of the National

Anti-Corruption Commission, said Wednesday that his agency is investigating Paetongtarn for a serious breach of ethics over the Hun Sen phone call. He did not give a possible timeline for a decision.

Reports said the Constitutional Court could decide as early as next week whether it will take a petition requesting Paetongtarn's removal due to the phone call, enabling the court to suspend her from duty pending an investigation. The prime minister said Tuesday she is not worried and is ready to give evidence to support her case.

"It was clear from the phone call that I had nothing to gain from it, and I also didn't cause any damage to the country," she said.

The court last year removed her predecessor from Pheu Thai over a breach of ethics. Thailand's courts, especially the Constitutional Court, are considered a bulwark of the country's royalist establishment, which has used them and nominally independent state agencies such as the Election Commission to cripple or sink political opponents.



Motorcyclists drive on a street during heavy rainfall, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on June 27. (AP)

Pakistan flash floods kill 8 after deluge sweeps away dozens

Flash floods triggered by pre-monsoon rains swept away dozens of tourists in northwest Pakistan on Friday, killing at least eight people.

The nationwide death toll from rain-related incidents rose to 18 over the past 24 hours, officials said.

Nearly 100 rescuers in various groups rescued a total of 58 people and were searching for the missing tourists who were swept away while picnicking along the Swat River in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said Shah Fahad, a spokesman for the provincial emergency service.

He said only 3 people belonging to an extended family of 16 could be rescued and others are still missing.

Fahad said divers had so far recovered eight bodies after hours-long efforts and the search continued for the remaining 10 victims.

Videos circulating on social media showed about a dozen people stranded

on a slightly elevated spot in the middle of the Swat River, crying for help amid rapidly rising floodwaters.

Also:

ISLAMABAD: At least 13 people were killed and over 20 others injured in a suicide bombing on Saturday in North Waziristan district of Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, security sources told Xinhua. (Agencies)

Asia

Japan executes man convicted of murder: A man convicted of murder for killing and dismembering nine people in his apartment near Tokyo was executed Friday, Japan's Justice Ministry said.

Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer," was sentenced to death in 2020 for the killings in 2017 of the nine victims, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media. He was also convicted of abusing female victims.

Police arrested him later that year after finding the bodies of eight teenage girls and women as well as one man in cold-storage cases in his apartment.



Shiraishi

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes. He killed the three teenage girls and five women. He also killed the boyfriend of one of the women to silence him.

"The case caused extremely serious outcomes and dealt a major shockwave and unease to the society," Justice Minister Keisuke Suzuki told an emergency news conference. He said he signed the execution earlier this week, but did not witness Shiraishi's hanging.

The execution was carried out as calls grow to abolish capital punishment or increase transparency in Japan after the acquittal of the world's longest-serving death row inmate Iwao Hakamada last year.

Suzuki justified the need for the execution in Japan, noting a recent government survey shows an overwhelming majority of the public still supports capital punishment, though opposition has somewhat increased.

"I believe it is not appropriate to abolish execution," Suzuki said, adding there is growing concern about serious crime.

Shiraishi was hanged at the Tokyo Detention House in secrecy with nothing disclosed until the execution was done.

Japan now has 105 people on death row, including 49 seeking retrials, Suzuki said.

Executions are carried out in secrecy in Japan, where prisoners are not even informed of their fate until the morning of their hanging. (AP)

Offshore quake hits southern Philippines: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.1 hit waters off the southern Philippines on Saturday morning, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

The institute said the quake, which occurred at 7:07 a.m. local time (2307 GMT), hit at a depth of 79 km, about 85 km southeast of Sarangani town in Davao Occidental province.

The institute said the tectonic quake is expected to trigger aftershocks but does not pose a tsunami threat. There is no report of casualties or damage.

The archipelagic Philippines has frequent seismic activities due to its location along the Pacific "Ring of Fire." (Xinhua)

6 Americans detained in South Korea: Six Americans were detained Friday in South Korea for trying to send 1,600 plastic bottles filled with rice, \$1 bills and USB sticks toward North Korea by sea, police said.

The Americans were apprehended on front-line Gwanghwa Island before throwing the bottles into the sea so they could float toward North Korean shores on the tides, two Gwanghwa police officers said. They said the Americans are being investigated on allegations they violated the law on the management of safety and disasters.

The officers, who requested anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to media on the issue, refused to provide personal details of the Americans in line with privacy rules.

Gwanghwa police said they haven't found what is on the USB sticks.

The U.S. Embassy in South Korea had no immediate public comment.

For years, activists have sought to float plastic bottles or fly balloons across the border carrying anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets and USB thumb drives carrying South Korean dramas and K-pop songs, a practice that was banned from 2021-2023 over concerns it could inflame tensions with the North. (AP)

Togo rocked by protests over reforms that could extend Gnassingbé's rule

LOME, Togo, June 28, (AP): Protesters and security forces clashed for a second straight day on Friday in Togo's capital Lomé over recent constitutional reforms that could cement President Faure Gnassingbé's long hold on power. Videos emerged showing apparent abuses by security forces.

Police fired tear gas in several neighborhoods of Lomé and reportedly used batons to beat protesters, severely injuring some, according to footage that appears to be from the scene.

Some videos showed what seem to be security units entering homes and assaulting residents with whips and clubs, while groups of men in plain clothes, believed to be auxiliary forces or self-defense units, patrolled parts of the capital with weapons in hand.

"We strongly condemn the violence with which unarmed protesters have been met," Professor David Dosseh, spokesman for a coalition of a dozen civil society groups, told The Associated Press.

Internet access across the West African nation has been restricted, with social media platforms func-



Demonstrators set up a barricade during a protest calling for President Faure Gnassingbe's resignation in Lome, Togo on June 26. (AP)

tioning intermittently.

Civil society groups and social media influencers had called for protests on June 26, 27 and 28, after the government's clampdown on protests early this month.

Faure Gnassingbé, who has ruled since 2005 after the death of his father, was sworn in in May as President of the Council of Ministers. The powerful role has no official term limits and he is eligible to be re-elected by Parliament indefinitely.

Gnassingbe's former job as national president, a position that is now mostly ceremonial, was given to politician Jean-Lucien Kwassi Savi de Tove after the announcement.

Bid to end decades of bloody conflict

Congo, Rwanda sign US-mediated peace deal

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): The Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda on Friday signed a peace deal facilitated by the U.S. to help end the decadeslong deadly fighting in eastern Congo while helping the US government and American companies gain access to critical minerals in the region.

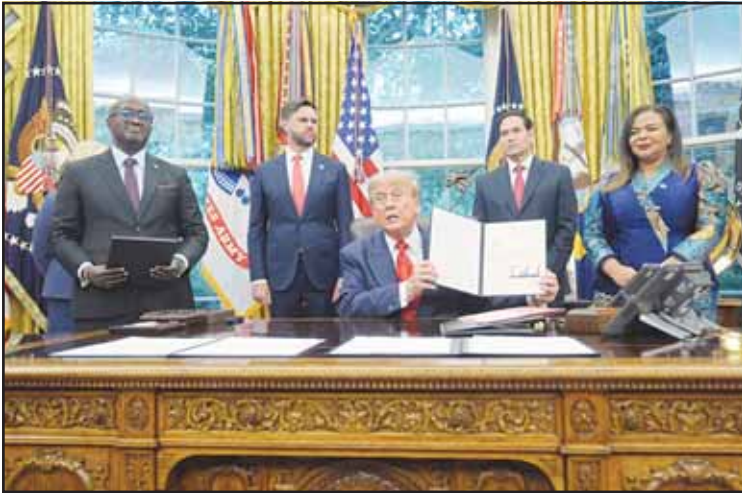
"Today, the violence and destruction comes to an end, and the entire region begins a new chapter of hope and opportunity, harmony, prosperity and peace," President Donald Trump told the foreign ministers of the two countries at a White House meeting.

The agreement was signed earlier at the State Department's Treaty Room beneath a portrait of Colin Powell, the first African American to hold the job of top U.S. diplomat. There, Secretary of State Marco Rubio called it "an important moment after 30 years of war."

The Central African nation of Congo has been wracked by conflict with more than 100 armed groups, the most potent backed by Rwanda, that have killed millions since the 1990s.

While the deal is seen as a turning point, analysts don't believe it will quickly end the fighting because the most prominent armed group says it does not apply to it. Many Congolese see it mainly as an opportunity for the U.S. to acquire critical minerals needed for much of the world's technology after their government reached out to Trump for support in fighting the rebels.

Trump has pushed to gain access to such minerals at a time when the



US President Donald Trump holds up a signed document to present to Congo's Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner, right, as Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhugirehe, from left, Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio watch on June 27, in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington. (AP)

United States and China are actively competing for influence in Africa.

Congo's Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner invoked the millions of victims of the conflict in signing the agreement with Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhugirehe. Both expressed optimism but stressed significant work still to do to end the fighting.

"Some wounds will heal, but they will never fully disappear," Wagner said. "Those who have suffered the

most are watching. They are expecting this agreement to be respected, and we cannot fail them."

Nduhugirehe noted the "great deal of uncertainty" because previous agreements were not put in place.

"There is no doubt that the road ahead will not be easy," he said. "But with the continued support of the United States and other partners, we believe that a turning point has been reached."

US signs agreements with Guatemala and Honduras to take asylum-seekers: Noem

GUATEMALA CITY, June 28, (AP): Guatemala and Honduras have signed agreements with the United States to potentially offer refuge to people from other countries who otherwise would seek asylum in the United States, US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said at the conclusion of her Central America trip.

The agreements expand the Trump administration's efforts to provide the US government flexibility in returning migrants not only to their own countries, but also to third countries as it attempts to ramp up deportations.

Noem described it as a way to offer asylum-seekers options other than coming to the United States. She said the agreements had been in the works for months, with the US government applying pressure on Honduras and Guatemala to get them done.

"Honduras and now Guatemala after today will be countries that will take those individuals and give them refugee status as well," Noem said. "We've never believed that the United



US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, second from left, meets with Guatemalan President Bernardo Arevalo, right, at the National Culture Palace in Guatemala City, on June 26. (AP)

States should be the only option, that the guarantee for a refugee is that they go somewhere to be safe and to be protected from whatever threat they face in their country. It doesn't necessarily

have to be the United States."

Both governments denied having signed safe third-country agreements when asked following Noem's comments.

Brazil first lady's outspokenness oversteps ceremonial role, say critics

SAO PAULO, June 28, (AP): Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government is grappling with unpopularity that has dented his credentials as the frontrunner for reelection next year. Critics and even some in his administration say his wife's outspokenness hasn't helped, accusing her of overstepping what has traditionally been a ceremonial role.

Rosângela da Silva, a 58-year-old sociologist also known as Janja, has also drawn criticism for insulting tech billionaire Elon Musk and advising the president on how to use the military during the Jan. 8, 2023 riots in the capital, Brasilia.

Still, the first lady says she will not change course. Meanwhile, Lula has staunchly defended her right to speak up and supporters says she is a strong, independent voice.



Brazil's First Lady Rosângela da Silva receives the Order of Cultural Merit from her husband, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, and Minister of Culture Margareth Menezes, during an awards ceremony at the Gustavo Capanema Palace in Rio de Janeiro on May 20. (AP)

Kuwait oil price up 70 cents to \$69.01 pb

KUWAIT CIY, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait oil price increased 70 cents to USD 69.01 per barrel yesterday Friday compared to Thursday's USD 68.31 pb, reported by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation on Satur-

day. In global markets, Brent Crude increased four cents to USD 67.77 pb while West Texas Intermediate rose by 28 cents to USD 65.52 pb.

Business

To offer customers seamless and smart banking experience

KFH launches Fahad, Kuwait's first AI-powered virtual employee

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched "Fahad", Kuwait's first AI-powered virtual employee. This innovative step reflects KFH's leading role in adopting AI, enhances its pioneering efforts in digital transformation, and aims to deliver exceptional customer experience.

Fahad is KFH's new, always-on digital employee, designed to provide instant and clear support to customers. He explains KFH's services, answers questions quickly and accurately, and even guides customers through ATM usage. This ensures KFH remains accessible and connected, embracing the latest global technological advancements.

KFH Deputy General Manager Digital and Alternative Channels, Meshal Alobaid, announced the inauguration of Fahad's first phase at the KFH branch in The Avenues (Phase Four). This first-of-its-kind innovation in Kuwait allows Fahad to swiftly and easily answer inquiries, offering comprehensive guidance on various services and products. This move underscores KFH's dedication to digital transformation and its commitment to providing top-notch, modern banking



Meshal Adnan Alobaid



KFH Web Banner

experiences.

Alobaid emphasized that this achievement further builds on KFH's leading journey in digital transformation and AI adoption. This journey has already deliv-

ered numerous high-quality digital financial solutions and services; all designed to meet customer needs and offer a seamless banking experience. Furthermore, KFH is continuously enhancing its technological in-

frastructure and the mechanisms for delivering technical services across all its platforms, smart branches, and self-service devices.

Banking Solutions

Demonstrating its leadership in digital innovation and its commitment to offering advanced financial solutions, KFH provides a wide array of exceptional e-banking services. These include the instant issuance of ATM and credit cards at KFHGo and all KFH branches, as well as virtual card issuance, which allows customers to easily create prepaid cards via KFHonline and add them to their digital wallets for instant online shopping. Customers can also open gold accounts, access financing using gold account collateral, and buy and sell gold. The bank's XTM device allows for instant chequebook printing, and customers can make instant transfers to KFH-Turkey using the RippleNet network. KFH recently updated its KFHonline app, introducing a modern design and smart banking services. This further solidifies its position as a digital innovation leader, with KFHonline now offering over 200 digital banking services.

World Bank flags deepening crisis

39 fragile states falling behind

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): The world's most desperate countries are falling further and further behind, their plight worsened by conflicts that are growing deadlier and more frequent.



Kose

That is the sobering conclusion of the World Bank's first comprehensive study of how 39 countries contending with "fragile and conflict-affected situations" have fared since the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020.

"Economic stagnation -rather than growth -has been the norm in economies hit by conflict and instability," said Ayhan Kose, the World Bank's deputy chief economist.

Since 2020, the 39 countries, which range from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific to Mozambique in sub-Saharan Africa, have seen their economic output per person fall by an average 1.8% a year. In other developing countries, by contrast, it grew by an average 2.9% a year over the same period.

More than 420 million people in the fragile economies are living on less than \$3 a day - the bank's definition of extreme poverty. That is more than everywhere else combined, even though the 39 countries account for less than 15% of the world's people.

Many of these countries have longstanding problems with crumbling infrastructure, weak governments and low levels of education. People in the 39 countries get an average of just six years of schooling, three years fewer

than those in other low- and middle-income countries. Life expectancy is five years shorter and infant mortality is twice as high.

Increasing conflicts have made things worse. In the 2000s, the world saw an annual average of just over 6,000 conflicts - in which organized groups used armed force against other groups or against civilians and cause at least one death. Now the annual average exceeds 20,000. The conflicts are more lethal, too: In the 2000s, they took an average of fewer than 42,000 lives a year. From 2000 through 2024, the number averaged almost 194,000.

Of the 39 countries, 21 are involved in active conflicts, including Ukraine, Sudan, Ethiopia and Gaza. The World Bank finds that countries involved in high-intensity conflict - which kill more than 150 out of every 1 million people - see a cumulative drop of 20% after five years in their gross domestic product, the output of goods and services.

More conflict also means more hunger: The World Bank estimated that 18% - around 200 million - of the people in the 39 countries are "experiencing acute food insecurity" compared with just 1% in other low and middle-income countries.

Some countries have managed to escape the cycle of conflict and economic fragility. Kose cites Nepal; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Rwanda; and Sri Lanka as relative success stories.

And the World Bank report notes that the 39 countries do enjoy strengths, including natural resources such as oil and natural gas and a lot of young, working-age people at a time when many economies are aging.

"Some of them are very rich when it comes to their tourism potential," Kose said. "But you need to have security established. You and I are not going to go and visit these places unless they are safe even though they might be the most beautiful places in the world."

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) launched an on-ground initiative to promote financial awareness through its dedicated booth at Assima Mall, as part of its ongoing efforts to support the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), in cooperation with local banks.



Al-Nasser

As a reflection of its commitment to promoting banking literacy across all segments of society, KIB's booth offered an interactive experience for mall visitors, allowing them to access valuable financial information and guidance in a simplified and comprehensive manner.

Commenting on the occasion, Mariam Al-Nasser, Head of Branches and Premier Banking at KIB, said: "Our presence at Assima Mall reflects our ongoing commitment to direct engagement with the community and to promoting financial empowerment, especially amid the growing use of digital banking services.

Through our participation in the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, we are keen to deliver meaningful awareness messages that help enhance individuals' financial literacy, introduce them to our banking products and solutions, and inform them of the best ways to protect their personal data."

She added: "Our booth saw strong engagement from visitors, as we focused on offering

Bank reaffirms continued support for 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KIB promotes financial awareness and banking literacy among visitors of Assima Mall through interactive booth



KIB Booth - Assima Mall

tips to help avoid financial fraud, encouraging smart saving habits, and promoting the safe use of digital services, especially given the growing reliance on digital platforms.

"We also made it a point to engage with diverse groups such as youth and families, helping them understand how banking services are intertwined with their daily lives and financial futures.

"The booth also provided an opportunity for visitors to learn about the principles of Islamic finance, the benefits of saving and investing, and how to build a secure financial future. Additionally, we showcased a range of KIB's innovative, Sharia-compliant solutions designed to help customers achieve their financial goals and meet their ongoing needs."

It is worth noting that KIB con-

tinues to strengthen its role as a trusted financial partner through its ongoing commitment to banking awareness and the launch of community initiatives aimed at building a secure financial environment. These efforts align with the Bank's comprehensive corporate social responsibility strategy and support the goals of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, reflecting its continued dedication to being a true 'Bank for Life.'

LuLu Retail wins 'Best IPO in the Middle East' award at EMEA Finance achievement awards

ABU DHABI/LONDON, June 28: LuLu Retail Holdings PLC, the region's leading full-line retailer, has been honored with the prestigious "Best IPO in the Middle East" award by EMEA Finance magazine. The recognition was presented at the annual EMEA Finance Achievement Awards 2024, held in London yesterday.

The accolade celebrates LuLu Retail's landmark Initial Public Offering, which successfully raised US\$1.7 billion in Q4 2024, and marked the company's official listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX).

"The IPO drew widespread investor interest and was one of the most anticipated public listings in the region, reinforcing strong market confidence in the Group's growth trajectory, financial resilience, and retail leadership.

The EMEA Finance Achievement Awards are regarded as a benchmark of excellence in capital markets across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Winners are selected by the editorial board from a pool of nominations submitted by investment banks, corporates, and market participants. The awards spotlight the most im-



The award was received by Saifee Rupawala, CEO; Prasad KK, CFO; and Nidhin Jose, Group Company Secretary, at the EMEA Finance Achievement Awards ceremony in London.

pectful and innovative financial transactions spanning IPOs, debt issuance, Islamic finance, structured deals, and mergers and acquisitions.

Saifee Rupawala, CEO of LuLu Retail Holdings, said:

"We are truly honored to receive this award, which re-

flects the strength of our business, the commitment of our team, and the trust placed in us by our investors. The IPO marked a transformative chapter for LuLu Retail, and we remain committed to delivering long-term value and sustainable growth."

Exclusive convenience for travelers

Gulf Bank offers safe deposit box service at Kuwait Airport

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: As part of its ongoing commitment to providing integrated banking solutions that enhance customer experience and align with their modern lifestyles, Gulf Bank has announced the launch of its Safe Deposit Box service at its branch located in the Arrivals Hall - Terminal 1 of Kuwait International Airport. This makes Gulf Bank the only bank offering such a service within the airport.

The new service provides travelers with a secure and convenient solution to store their personal or valuable belongings while abroad. It is particularly suited for individuals seeking reliable, short-term storage options during their time away from the country.

Tailored for flexibility and ease of access, the service allows customers to rent safe deposit boxes on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on the length and purpose of their travel. Available in both small and medium sizes, the boxes are secured with advanced safety features - including a dual-key system that requires both the customer and a bank representative to be present for access, ensuring enhanced privacy and maximum protection.

This initiative reflects Gulf Bank's vision of delivering a seamless and smart banking experience that meets customer needs even in busy locations such as airports. The Safe Deposit Box service allows travelers to embark on their journeys with peace of mind, without the burden of carrying jewelry, official documents, or other valuable items, all while ensuring their belongings remain secure until their return.



Gulf Bank flyer

The service is available seven days a week, with the added convenience of advance booking through WhatsApp - reflecting Gulf Bank's focus on delivering a smooth and advanced digital experience tailored to the expectations of today's generation of customers.

In addition to the Safe Deposit Box service, Gulf Bank's airport branch offers a full range of banking services including account openings, loan applications, cash deposits and withdrawals, currency exchange, and instant issuance of debit cards. This makes the branch a comprehensive banking destination for both arriving and departing travelers.

This service reflects Gulf Bank's strategic emphasis on innovation, customer-first solutions, and a strong presence in vital locations. It further solidifies the Bank's standing as a leading financial institution in Kuwait, committed to surpassing customer expectations and building long-term loyalty.

Reinforcing leadership in sustainable finance in Kuwait

Warba Bank receives GRI Index stamp for sustainability report

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Warba Bank's latest Sustainability Report has officially received confirmation from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Issued in English, the report was prepared in accordance with international standards outlined by MSCI, S&P Global and the IFRS S1 and IFRS S2 frameworks, reflecting the bank's strong commitment to global best practices in sustainability reporting and transparency.

Responsible Banking Leadership

The report highlighted several key achievements, including the issuance of Kuwait's first sustainability Sukuk valued at USD 500 million and listed on both the London Stock Exchange and Nasdaq Dubai. This historic issuance received strong interest from global investors, with a subscription rate over 3.5 times the offering, reaffirming the bank's dedication to financing projects that deliver environmental and social impact.

Warba Bank's Chief Executive

Officer, Mr. Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem, confirmed the bank's dedication to sustainability principles and its alignment with globally recognized goals that benefit all stakeholders, stating: "Warba Bank continues to affirm its position as a leading and trusted Islamic financial institution built on the principles of ethical banking, sustainability and digital transformation. Amid evolving trends in the financial sector, we strive to maintain a balance between strong financial performance and the adoption of responsible banking practices. This year, we enhanced our governance practices and further integrated ESG standards into our operations, while prioritizing innovation and staying true to our Sharia-compliant values."

He continued: "The year 2024 was marked by advancement, resilience and sustainable growth. The bank accelerated its digital transformation journey and focused on redefining the future of Islamic finance in Kuwait



Shaheen Al-Ghanem, Warba Bank's Chief Executive Officer

without compromising on delivering a seamless banking experience that meets the evolving needs of all customer segments."

Investing in Human Capital

The bank launched an integrated digital HR platform and adopted pa-

rental leave policies and special incentives for volunteering employees, promoting work-life balance and reinforcing community impact.

Al-Ghanem stated: "At Warba Bank, we believe that real investment lies in our people. That's why we are committed to empowering our employees through training and professional development programs that align with the latest advancements across all sectors of our industry. Our dedication to developing human capital is reflected in our policies and practices, which aim to foster a supportive and inclusive work environment where every employee can thrive and contribute to our sustainable growth."

A Comprehensive ESG Strategy

Last year, Warba Bank implemented several key environmental, social and governance (ESG) policies under an integrated framework that includes the bank-wide ESG policy, an environmental policy, a climate change and carbon reduction policy, a human

rights statement, a corporate diversity and inclusion policy and an employee engagement and well-being policy.

These policies reflect the bank's holistic approach to sustainability and its commitment to addressing environmental and social challenges. Warba Bank's recognition as the "Most Sustainable Bank in Kuwait for 2024" further solidifies its leadership in sustainable banking practices across the region.

Warba views sustainability reports as essential tools for enhancing transparency and building trust with investors and the wider community. By publishing comprehensive reports, the bank aims to identify areas for improvement, drive more sustainable and effective actions and respond to growing customer demand for responsible products and services.

The 2024 Sustainability Report is available on Warba Bank's official website, offering stakeholders detailed insights into the bank's ESG performance and future outlook.

Let's Own Tomorrow

Under its slogan "Let's Own Tomorrow," Warba Bank continues to set new benchmarks for the future of Islamic banking redefining customer experience while fostering a comprehensive and sustainable financial system. With one of the largest local shareholder bases and being among the fastest-growing Islamic banks in Kuwait, Warba remains committed to excellence, sustainability and innovation, positioning itself as a trusted partner for individuals and businesses alike.

Warba Bank has achieved remarkable success in a short period, securing a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking and becoming one of the local banks with the highest number of shareholders, reinforcing its closeness to all segments of society. This milestone reaffirms the bank's status as a trusted financial partner that blends innovation with social responsibility in delivering the best financial products and services.

Other Voices

Shell to take over BP? Is it about to happen?

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

FOR the past six months, financial newspapers in the UK and around the world have been focused on two major oil companies - Shell and BP. Today, however, the two companies are reportedly engaged in serious discussions. One company has declined to comment, while the other has remained silent.

The British press is generally supportive of a takeover by Shell, emphasizing that as a British company, Shell represents a "Jewel in the Crown" that should remain under British ownership rather than being acquired by a foreign entity. Meanwhile, BP is struggling to keep pace with its peers and has been divesting parts of its core business, such as Castrol lubricants.

BP may have made a critical error by moving too quickly away from oil and gas towards alternative energy sources like wind and solar, aiming to lead the energy transition. This shift left the company lagging behind and weakened, making it vulnerable to acquisition. Over the past 12 months, BP's share price has dropped by 22 percent.

At its peak, BP was so powerful it could influence governments and interfere in domestic politics in some parts of the world. Today, all of that is history, as BP is now searching for potential buyers.

Shell is a British multinational oil and gas company listed on the London Stock Exchange, making it a good fit to acquire BP due to their similar cultures. The main difference is that Shell started as an oil trading company, while BP, through the British Empire, acquired oil and gas fields in some of the richest hydrocarbon countries in the world, including the Arabian Gulf, starting in Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait. Interestingly, BP chose not to invest in Kuwait, claiming it already had too much oil under its control.



Kamel Al-Harami

Shell, however, has stated it has no intention of making a takeover offer for BP and has denied claims of being in active merger talks. It may be taking its time to decide, possibly waiting for other companies to submit bids before evaluating its own offer. Given the similarities and synergies in place, Shell is well-positioned to make an offer.

If the acquisition is completed, Shell would become the largest oil company, surpassing ExxonMobil and Chevron.

BP's current market value is estimated at around \$80-83 billion, while Shell is valued at approximately \$200 billion, nearly three times BP's worth.

How far, and for how long, the talks or speculation surrounding a potential BP takeover will continue remains uncertain. The ongoing rumors are creating volatility and may further weaken BP's position, potentially contributing to a decline in its market value.

Other oil giants, such as the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), are reportedly exploring the possibility of acquiring parts of BP. However, ADNOC appears more interested in acquiring specific segments of the company rather than taking over BP as a whole. BP, as a global energy giant, does not align entirely with ADNOC's structure. It is significantly larger, with a wide array of operations and an expansive international footprint, which would make full acquisition and management a difficult task.

In a few days, we may learn the outcome of these discussions and whether Shell intends to move forward with a takeover. BP appears poised for acquisition, but it needs the right partner, one capable of unlocking the full benefits of potential synergies.

Undoubtedly, Shell is the most prepared and best positioned to take over. For other international oil companies, acquiring and managing one of the historic "Seven Sisters" would be a significant challenge. Shell, on the other hand, seems to be taking its time to determine the right price before making a move to acquire its longtime peer and competitor.

□ □ □

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US economy shrinks for first time in 3 yrs



A shopper pushes a cart past a display of soups in a Costco warehouse Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025, in Sheridan, Colo. (AP)

Trump's trade policies stir turmoil

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): The U.S. economy shrank at a 0.5% annual pace from January through March as President Donald Trump's trade wars disrupted business, the Commerce Department reported Thursday in an unexpected deterioration of earlier estimates.

First-quarter growth was weighed down by a surge of imports as U.S. companies, and households, rushed to buy foreign goods before Trump could impose tariffs on them. The Commerce Department previously estimated that the economy fell 0.2% in the first quarter. Economists had forecast no change in the department's third and final estimate.

The January-March drop in gross domestic product - the nation's output of goods and services - reversed a 2.4% increase in the last three months of 2024 and marked the first time in three years that the economy contracted. Imports expanded 37.9%, fastest since 2020, and pushed GDP down by nearly 4.7 percentage points.

Consumer spending also slowed sharply, expanding just 0.5%, down from a robust 4% in the fourth-quarter of last year. It is a significant downgrade from the Commerce Department's previous estimate.

Consumers have turned jittery since Trump started plastering big taxes on imports, anticipating that the tariffs will impact their finances directly.



Trump

And the Conference Board reported this week that Americans' view of the U.S. economy worsened in June, resuming a downward slide that had dragged consumer confidence in April to its lowest level since the COVID-19 pandemic five years ago.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index slid to 93 in June, down 5.4 points from 98.4 last month. A measure of Americans' short-term expectations for their income, business conditions and the job market fell 4.6 points to 69. That's well below 80, the marker that can signal a recession ahead.

Former Federal Reserve economist Claudia Sahm said "the downward revision to consumer spending today is a potential red flag." Sahm, now chief economist at New Century Advisors, noted that Commerce downgraded spending on recreation services and foreign travel - which could have reflect "great consumer pessimism and uncertainty."

A category within the GDP data that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a 1.9% annual rate from January through March. It's a decent number, but down from 2.9% in the fourth quarter of 2024 and from the Commerce Department's previous estimate of 2.5% January-March growth.

This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

And federal government spending fell at a 4.6% annual pace, the biggest drop since 2022.

In another sign that Trump's policies are disrupting trade, Trade deficits reduce GDP. But that's just a matter of mathematics. GDP is supposed to count only what's produced domestically, not stuff that comes in from abroad. So imports - which show up in the GDP report as consumer spending or business investment - have to be subtracted out to keep them from artificially inflating domestic production.

Major banks pass Federal Reserve's 2025 stress test as standards ease

NEW YORK, June 28, (AP): All the major banks passed the Federal Reserve's annual "stress tests" of the financial system, the central bank said Friday, but the test conducted by the central bank was notably less vigorous than it had been in previous years.

All 22 banks tested this year would have remained solvent and above the minimum thresholds to continue to operate, the Fed said, despite absorbing roughly \$550 billion in theoretical losses. In the Fed's scenario, there would be less of a rise in unemployment, less of a severe economic contraction, less of a drop commercial real estate prices, less of a drop in housing prices, among other metrics compared

to what they tested in 2024.

All of these less harmful, but simulated, drops mean there would be less damage to these banks' balance sheets and less risk of these banks of potentially failing. Since the banks passed the 2024 tests, it was expected that the banks would pass the 2025 tests.

"Large banks remain well capitalized and resilient to a range of severe outcomes," said Michelle Bowman, the bank's vice chair for supervision, in a statement. An appointee of President Trump, Bowman became the Fed's vice chair of supervision earlier this month.

The Fed said it went with a less vigorous test because the global econo-

my has weakened since last year, and therefore the test tends to weaken. Further, the bank said previous tests had shown "unintended volatility" in the results and it plans to seek public and industry comment to adjust stress tests in future years. The Fed also chose to not test the banks as heavily on their exposure to private equity assets, arguing that private equity assets are typically held for the long term and are not typically sold at times of distress.

The Fed also didn't test for any bank exposure to private credit, a \$2 trillion asset class that even Fed researchers themselves have observed to be growing alarmingly quickly.

Trump pulls plug on Canada talks over tech firm tax

Deal with Beijing will speed China's export of minerals to US, treasury secretary says

BANGKOK, June 28, (AP): Washington and Beijing have signed a trade agreement that will make it easier for American firms to obtain magnets and rare earth minerals from China that are critical to manufacturing and microchip production, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Friday.

The agreement comes after China retaliated against steep import tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Chinese goods and moved to slow export of rare earth minerals and magnets much-needed by U.S. industrial interests.

Bessent said on Fox Business Network's "Mornings with Maria" that Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping "had a phone call" previously "and then our teams met in London, ironed this out, and I am confident now that we, as agreed, the magnets will flow."

"Part of the agreement was tariffs coming down and rare earth magnets starting to flow back to the U.S.," Bessent said. "They formed the core of a lot of our industrial base. They were not flowing as fast as previously agreed."

His comments follow President Donald Trump announcing two weeks



Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent talks to reporters about his lunch meeting with Republican senators and the schedule for getting the Republican megabill to President Donald Trump's desk by July 4, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, June 24, 2025. (AP)

earlier an agreement with China that he said would ease exportation of magnets and rare earth minerals

That pact cleared the way for the trade talks to continue. The U.S. has previously suspended some sales to China of critical U.S. technologies like components used for jet engines and

semiconductors. It has also agreed to stop trying to revoke visas of Chinese nationals on U.S. college campuses.

Bessent added of critical mineral exports: "What we're seeing here is a de-escalation."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told Bloomberg TV that the deal

was signed earlier this week.

China's Commerce Ministry said Friday that the two sides had "further confirmed the details of the framework," when responding to a question about if China was to speed up exports of rare earths to the U.S. and if the U.S. was to remove some restrictions on China.

"China will, in accordance with the law, review and approve eligible export applications for controlled items. In turn, the United States will lift a series of restrictive measures it had imposed on China," the ministry said.

Also:

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Friday that he's suspending trade talks with Canada over its plans to continue with its tax on technology firms, which he called "a direct and blatant attack on our country."

Trump, in a post on his social media network, said Canada had just informed the U.S. that it was sticking to its plan to impose the digital services tax, which applies to Canadian and foreign businesses that engage with online users in Canada. The tax is set to go into effect Monday.

Incomes drop sharply 0.4%

Americans' spending stalls as inflation edges higher in May

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): A key inflation gauge moved higher in May in the latest sign that prices remain stubbornly elevated while Americans also cut back on their spending last month.

Prices rose 2.3% in May compared with a year ago, up from just 2.1% in April, the Commerce Department said Friday. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 2.7% from a year earlier, an increase from 2.6% the previous month. Both figures are modestly above the Federal Reserve's 2% target. The Fed tracks core inflation because it typically provides a better guide to where inflation is headed.

At the same time, Americans cut back on spending for the first time since January, as overall spending fell 0.1%. Incomes dropped a sharp 0.4%. Both figures were distorted by one-time changes: Spending on cars plunged, pulling down overall spending, because Americans had moved more quickly to buy vehicles in the spring to get ahead of tariffs.

And incomes dropped after a one-time adjustment to Social Security benefits had boosted payments in March and April. Social Security payments were raised for some retirees who had worked for state and local governments.

Still, the data suggests that growth is cooling as Americans become more cau-

tious, in part because President Donald Trump's tariffs have raised the cost of some goods, such as appliances, tools, and audio equipment. Consumer sentiment has also fallen sharply this year in the wake of the sometimes-chaotic rollout of the duties. And while the unemployment rate remains low, hiring has been weak, leaving those without jobs struggling to find new work.

Consumer spending rose just 0.5% in the first three months of this year and has been sluggish in the first two months of the second quarter.

And spending on services ticked up just 0.1% in May, the smallest monthly increase in four and a half years.

"Because consumers are not in a strong enough shape to handle those (higher prices), they are spending less on recreation, travel, hotels, that type of thing," said Luke Tilley, chief economist at Wilmington Trust.

Spending on airfares, restaurant meals, and hotels all fell last month, Friday's report showed.

At the same time, the figures suggest that President Donald Trump's broad-based tariffs are still having only a modest effect on overall prices. The increasing costs of some goods have been partly offset by falling prices for new cars, airline fares, and apartment rentals, among other items.

From Gulf War to COVID-19: How crises reshape global energy demand and supply

Speculation sends oil on a wild ride



Trader Ryan Falvey works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Monday, June 23, 2025. (AP)

‘When crisis looms, countries and companies often start stockpiling oil and other raw materials rather than buying only what they need right now.’

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

By Skip York
Rice University

Global energy markets, such as those for oil, gas and coal, tend to be sensitive to a wide range of world events - especially when there is some sort of crisis. Having worked in the energy industry for over 30 years, I’ve seen how war, political instability, pandemics and economic sanctions can significantly disrupt energy markets and impede them from functioning efficiently.

First, consider the economic fundamentals of supply and demand. The risk most people imagine in the current crisis between Israel, the U.S. and Iran is that Iran, which is itself a major oil-producing country, might suddenly

expand the conflict by threatening the ability of neighboring countries to supply oil to the world.

Oil wells, refineries, pipelines and shipping lanes are the backbone of energy markets. They can be vulnerable during a crisis: Whether there is deliberate sabotage or collateral damage from military action, energy infrastructure often takes a hit.

For instance, after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Iraqi forces placed explosive charges on Kuwaiti oil wells and began detonating them in January 1991. It took months for all the resulting fires to be put out, and millions of barrels of oil and hundreds of millions of cubic meters of natural gas were released into the environment - rather than being sold and used productively somewhere around the world.

Logistics can mess markets up too. For instance, closing critical maritime routes like the Strait of Hormuz or the Suez Canal can cause transportation

delays.

Whether supply is lost from decreased production or blocked transportation routes, the effect is less oil available to the market, which not only causes prices to rise in general, but it also makes them more volatile - tending to change more frequently and by larger amounts.

On the flip side, demand can also shift radically. During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, demand rose: U.S. forces alone used more than 2 billion gallons of fuel, according to an Army analysis. By contrast, during the COVID-19 pandemic, industries shut down, travel came to a halt and energy demand plummeted.

When crisis looms, countries and companies often start stockpiling oil and other raw materials rather than buying only what they need right now. That creates even more imbalance, resulting in price volatility that leaves everyone, both consumers and producers, with a headache.

In addition to uncertainties around market fundamentals, it’s important to note that many of the world’s energy reserves are located in regions that have not been models of stability. In the Middle East, wars, revolutions and diplomatic disputes there can raise concerns about supply, demand or both.

Those worries send shock waves through the world’s energy markets. It’s like walking on a tightrope: One wrong move - or even the perception of a misstep - can make the market wobble.

Governments’ economic sanctions, such as those restricting trade with Iran, Russia or Venezuela, can distort production and investment decisions and disrupt trade flows. Sometimes markets react even before sanctions are officially in place: Just the rumor of a possible embargo can cause prices to spike as buyers scramble to secure resources.

In 2008, for example, India and

Vietnam imposed rice export bans, and rumors of additional restrictions fueled panic buying and nearly doubled prices in months.

In those scrambles, the role of investor speculation enters the picture. Energy commodities, such as oil and gas, aren’t just physical resources; they’re also traded as financial assets like stocks and bonds. During uncertain times, traders don’t wait around for actual changes in supply and demand. They react to news and forecasts, sometimes in large groups, which can shift the market just with the actions that result from their fears or hopes.

The events on June 22, 2025, are a good example of how this dynamic works. The Iranian parliament passed a resolution authorizing the country’s Supreme Council to close the Strait of Hormuz. Immediately, oil prices started rising, even though the strait was still open, with oil tankers steaming through unimpeded.

The next day, Iran launched a missile strike on Qatar, but coordinated in advance with Qatari officials to minimize damage and casualties. Traders and analysts perceived the action as a de-escalatory signal and anticipated that the Supreme Council was not going to close the strait. So prices started to fall.

It was a price roller coaster, fueled by speculation rather than reality. And computer algorithms and artificial intelligence, which assist in making automated trades, only add to the chaos of price changes.

International crises can also cause wider changes in countries’ economies - or the global economy as a whole - which in turn affect the energy market.

If a crisis sparks a recession, rising inflation or high unemployment, those tend to cause people and businesses to use less energy. When the underlying situation stabilizes, recovery efforts can mean energy consumption resumes. But it’s like a pendulum swinging back and forth, with energy markets caught in the middle.

Renewable energy is not immune to international crisis and chaos. The supply is less affected by market forces: The amount of available sunlight and wind isn’t tied to geopolitical relations. But overall economic conditions still affect demand, and a crisis can disrupt the supply chains for the equipment needed to harness renewable energy, like solar panels and wind turbines.

It’s no wonder energy markets are so jittery during international crises. A mix of imbalances between supply and demand, vulnerable infrastructure, political tensions, corporate worries and speculative trading all weave together into a complex web of volatility.

For policymakers, investors and consumers, understanding these dynamics is key to navigating the ups and downs of energy markets in a crisis-prone world. The solutions aren’t simple, but being informed is the first step toward stability. (AP)

Unemployment among young college graduates outpaces overall US joblessness rate

AI hype leaves US grads in the cold

‘The growth of artificial intelligence may be playing an additional role by eating away at positions for beginners in white-collar professions such as information technology, finance, and law.’

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): While completing a master’s degree in data analysis, Palwasha Zahid moved from Dallas to a town near Silicon Valley. The location made it easy to visit the campuses of tech stalwarts such as Google, Apple, and Nvidia.

Zahid, 25, completed her studies in December, but so far she hasn’t found a job in the industry that surrounds her.

“It stings a little bit,” she said. “I never imagined it would be this difficult just to get a foot in the door.”

Young people graduating from college this spring and summer are facing one of the toughest job markets in more than a decade. The unemployment rate for degree holders ages 22 to 27 has reached its highest level in a dozen years, excluding the coronavirus pandemic. Joblessness among that group is now higher than the overall unemployment rate, and the gap is larger than it has been in more than three decades.

The rise in unemployment has worried many economists as well as officials at the Federal Reserve because it could be an early sign of trouble for the economy. It suggests businesses are holding off on hiring new workers because of rampant uncertainty stemming from the Trump administration’s tariff increases, which could slow growth.

“Young people are bearing the brunt of a lot of economic uncertainty,” Brad Hershey, senior economist at the Upjohn Institute, a labor-focused think tank, said. “The people that you often are most hesitant in hiring when economic conditions are uncertain are

entry-level positions.”

The growth of artificial intelligence may be playing an additional role by eating away at positions for beginners in white-collar professions such as information technology, finance, and law.

Higher unemployment for younger graduates has also renewed concerns about the value of a college degree. More workers than ever have a four-year degree, which makes it less of a distinguishing factor in job applications. Murat Tasci, an economist at JPMorgan, calculates that 45% of workers have a four-year degree, up from 26% in 1992.

While the difficulty of finding work has demoralized young people like Zahid, most economists argue that holding a college degree still offers clear lifetime benefits. Graduates earn higher pay and experience much less unemployment over their lifetimes.

The overall U.S. unemployment rate is a still-low 4.2%, and the government’s monthly jobs reports show the economy is generating modest job gains. But the additional jobs are concentrated in health care, government, and restaurants and hotels. Job gains in professions with more college grads, such as information technology, legal services, and accounting have languished in the past 12 months.

The unemployment rate has stayed low mostly because layoffs are still relatively rare. The actual hiring rate - new hires as a percentage of all jobs - has fallen to 2014 levels, when the unemployment rate was much higher, at 6.2%. Economists call it a no-hire, no-

fire economy.

For college graduates 22 to 27 years old, the unemployment rate was 5.8% in March - the highest, excluding the pandemic, since 2012, and far above the nationwide rate.

Lexie Lindo, 23, saw how reluctant companies were to hire while applying for more than 100 jobs last summer and fall after graduating from Clark Atlanta University with a business degree and 3.8 GPA. She had several summer internships in fields such as logistics and real estate while getting her degree, but no offer came.

“Nobody was taking interviews or responding back to any applications that I filled out,” Lindo, who is from Auburn, Georgia, said. “My resume is full, there’s no gaps or anything. Every summer I’m doing something. It’s just, ‘OK, so what else are you looking for?’”

She has returned to Clark for a master’s program in supply chain studies and has an internship this summer at a Fortune 500 company in Austin, Texas. She’s hopeful it will lead to a job next year.

Artificial intelligence could be a culprit, particularly in IT. Matthew Martin, senior U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, has calculated that employment for college graduates 28 and above in computer science and mathematical occupations has increased a slight 0.8% since 2022. For those ages 22 to 27, it has fallen 8%, according to Martin.

Company announcements have further fueled concerns. Tobi Lutke, CEO of online commerce software company

Shopify, said in an April memo that before requesting new hires, “teams must demonstrate why they cannot get what they want done using AI.”

Last week, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said AI would likely reduce the company’s corporate workforce over the next few years.

“We will need fewer people doing some of the jobs that are being done today, and more people doing other types of jobs,” Jassy said in a message to employees. “We expect that this will reduce our total corporate workforce as we get efficiency gains from using AI extensively across the company.”

Zahid worries that AI is hurting her chances. She remembers seeing big billboard ads for AI at the San Francisco airport that asked, “Why hire a human when you could use AI?”

Still, many economists argue that blaming AI is premature. Most companies are in the early stages of adopting the technology.

Professional networking platform LinkedIn categorized occupations based on their exposure to AI and did not see big hiring differences between professions where AI was more prevalent and where it wasn’t, said Kory Kantenga, the firm’s head of economics for the Americas.

“We don’t see any broad-based evidence that AI is having a disproportionate impact in the labor market or even a disproportionate impact on younger workers versus older workers,” Kantenga said.

He added that the Federal Reserve’s

interest rate hikes have also slowed hiring in tech. Many IT firms expanded when the Fed pinned its short-term rate at nearly zero after the pandemic. In 2022, the Fed began cranking up rates to combat inflation, which made it harder to borrow and grow.

In fact, IT’s hiring spree when rates were low - fueled by millions of Americans ramping up their online shopping and video conferencing - left many firms with too many workers, economists say.

Cory Stahl, an economist at the job-listings website Indeed, says postings for software development jobs, for example, have fallen 40% compared with four years ago. It’s a sharp shift for students who began studying computer science when hiring was near its peak.

Zahid, who lives in Dublin, California, has experienced this whiplash firsthand. When she entered college in 2019, her father, who is a network engineer, encouraged her to study IT and said it would be easy for her to get a job in the field.

She initially studied psychology but decided she wanted something more hands-on and gravitated to data analysis. Her husband, 33, has a software development job, and friends of hers in IT received immediate job offers upon graduation a few years ago. Such rapid hiring seems to have disappeared now, she said.

She has her college diploma, but hasn’t hung it up yet.

“I will put it up when I actually get a job, confirming that it was worth it all,” she said.

editor’s choice



Chinese animation bridges cultures

Arabic-dubbed 'Ne Zha 2' premieres in Riyadh

RIYADH, June 28, (Xinhua): A soft ripple of guzheng music floated through the foyer of Reel Cinema in northern Riyadh on Wednesday night as dozens of movie-goers posed beneath a towering poster of Ne Zha 2, the first time the Chinese animation blockbuster has reached Saudi screens in Arabic.

Among the early arrivals was Bushra al-Dawood, a journalist for the Saudi outlet Gorgeous. To celebrate the premiere, she paired a black abaya embroidered with red crimson blossoms and matching red shoes. "A nod to the fiery spirit of Chinese culture and Ne Zha," she smiled. "The film's landscapes are so vivid that I can't wait to travel there and see those mountains and rivers for myself."

Inside the 200-seat auditorium, laughter, gasps and spontaneous applause punctuated the two-hour screening of the Arabic-dubbed edition, which blends standard Arabic with Saudi, Egyptian and other dialects. When the lights came up, clusters of children rushed back to the poster for selfies, while adults lingered in animated debate about the plot's twists and mythical creatures.

"The movie is visually stunning, the story is beautiful, and I had no trouble following it thanks to the Arabic dub," said Shahad, a fourth-year Chinese-language major at King Saud University. "I saw posters of Ne Zha 2 all over China during a summer camp but never caught a screening there. The moment I heard it would open in Riyadh, I signed up right away. I'll be back with my family."

Combination

The film's Saudi distributor, CineWaves Films, believes the combination of state-of-the-art animation and localised dialogue will broaden its appeal.

"Ne Zha 2" is a high-quality, truly original work that speaks to audiences everywhere," said Faisal Baltyuor, CineWaves chairman. "By dubbing it into Saudi dialect we remove the language barrier and make the story even more inviting for local viewers."

Directed by Chinese filmmaker Jiaozi, Ne Zha 2 continues the coming-of-age saga of the rebellious boy-god first

introduced in 2019's record-breaking Ne Zha. This time the stakes are higher, the universe larger and the visuals more ambitious, with richly textured dragons, fiery battles and sweeping panoramas rendered in full 3-D.

Saudi animation veteran Malik Nejer, who supervised the Arabic version, said selecting different dialects for rival clans helped newcomers navigate a world rooted in Chinese folklore.

"Many Arab viewers don't know Chinese mythology," Nejer explained. "So we matched each on-screen tribe with a distinct Arabic dialect. It guides the audience through the plot and mirrors the linguistic diversity of our own region."

He also mentioned when concepts had no exact equivalent, the team searched for cultural parallels, "letting viewers feel an instant connection."

Backed by CineWaves and Dubai-based PBA Entertainment, Ne Zha 2 opens nationwide in Saudi Arabia on Thursday and will roll out to the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar in early July.



Children pose for a photo with a promotional display for the premiere of Chinese animated blockbuster 'Ne Zha 2' in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on June 25. (Xinhua)

Obituary

Grammy and Oscar winner

Lalo Schifrin, composer of iconic 'M:I' tune, dies at 93

LOS ANGELES, June 28, (AP): Lalo Schifrin, the composer who wrote the endlessly catchy theme for "Mission: Impossible" and more than 100 other arrangements for film and television, died Thursday. He was 93.

Schifrin's sons William and Ryan confirmed his death to trade outlets. The Associated Press' messages to Schifrin's publicist and representatives for either brother were not immediately returned.

The Argentine won four Grammys and was nominated for six Oscars, including five for original score for "Cool Hand Luke," "The Fox," "Voyage of the Damned," "The Amityville Horror" and "The Sting II."

"Every movie has its own personality. There are no rules to write music for movies," Schifrin told The Associated Press in 2018. "The movie dictates what the music will be."

He also wrote the grand finale musical performance for the World Cup championship in Italy in 1990, in which the Three Tenors - Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti and José Carreras - sang together for the first time. The work became one of the biggest sellers in the history of classical music.

Schifrin, also a jazz pianist and classical conductor, had a remarkable career in music that included working with Dizzy Gillespie and recording with Count Basie and Sarah Vaughan. But perhaps his biggest contribution was the instantly recognizable score to television's "Mission: Impossible," which fueled the just-wrapped, decades-spanning feature film franchise led by Tom Cruise.

Written in the unusual 5/4 time signature, the theme - Dum-dum DUM DUM dum-dum DUM DUM - was married to an on-screen self-destruct clock that kicked off the TV show, which ran from 1966 to 1973. It was described as "only the most contagious tune ever heard by mortal ears" by New Yorker film critic Anthony Lane and even hit No. 41 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1968. Schifrin originally wrote a different piece of music for the theme song but series creator Bruce Geller liked another arrangement Schifrin had composed for an action sequence.

Exciting

"The producer called me and told me, 'You're going to have to write something exciting, almost like a logo, something that will be a signature, and it's going to start with a fuse,'" Schifrin told the AP in 2006. "So I did it and there was nothing on the screen. And maybe the fact that I was so free and I had no images to catch, maybe that's why this thing has become so successful - because I wrote something that came from inside me."

When director Brian De Palma was asked to take the series to the silver screen, he wanted to bring the theme along with him, leading to a creative conflict with composer John Williams, who wanted to work with a new theme of his own. Out went Williams and in came Danny Elfman, who agreed to retain Schifrin's music.

Hans Zimmer took over scoring for the second film, and Michael Giacchino scored the next two. Giacchino told NPR he was a hesitant to take it on, because Schifrin's music was one of his favorite themes of all time.

"I remember calling Lalo and asking if we could meet for lunch," Giacchino told NPR. "And I was very nervous - I felt like someone asking a father if I could marry their daughter or something. And he said, 'Just have fun with it.' And I did."

"Mission: Impossible" won Grammys for best instrumental theme and best original score from a motion picture or a TV show. In 2017, the theme was entered into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

U2 members Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen Jr. covered the theme while making the soundtrack to 1996's first installment, that version peaked at No. 16 on the Billboard 200 with a Grammy nomination.

A 2010 commercial for Lipton tea depicted a young Schifrin composing the theme at his piano while gaining inspiration through sips of the brand's Lipton Yellow Label. Musicians dropped from the sky as he added elements.

Born Boris Claudio Schifrin to a Jewish family in Buenos Aires - where his father was the concertmaster of the philharmonic orchestra - Schifrin was classically trained in music, in addition to studying law.



Grammy Award winning composer Lalo Schifrin appears at his studio in Beverly Hills, Calif., on May 10, 2006. (AP)

Momoa, Bautista among new Academy members

NEW YORK, June 28, (AP): The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences invited 534 new members to its organization on Thursday, adding recent Oscar nominees and many more to Hollywood's most exclusive club.

The newest class of Oscar voters includes a number of stars like Dave Bautista, Jason Momoa, Aubrey Plaza, Danielle Deadwyler and Andrew Scott. They, along with filmmakers, below-the-line professionals and executives will bring the film academy's membership total to 11,120, with voting members numbering 10,143.

That's the largest membership ever for the academy. Since the #OscarsSoWhite backlash, the film academy has added thousands of members to swell its ranks and diversify its voting body. This year's class is 41% female, 45% from underrepresented communities and 55% from outside the US.

Those new members will make the entire academy 35% women, 22% from underrepresented communities and 21% international.

"We are thrilled to invite this esteemed class of artists, technologists, and professionals to join the Academy," said academy chief executive Bill Kramer and president Janet Yang in a statement. "Through their commitment to filmmaking and to the greater movie industry, these exceptionally talented individuals have made indelible contributions to our global filmmaking community."

Film



This image released by Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment shows, (from left), Bechir Sylvain, Jonathan Bailey, and Scarlett Johansson in a scene from 'Jurassic World Rebirth.' (AP)

Hollywood's screenwriting powerhouse

Koepp brings fresh vision to 'Jurassic World'

NEW YORK, June 28, (AP): Ext Jungle Night -- An eyeball, big, yellowish, distinctly inhuman, stares rapidly between wooden slats, part of a large crate. The eye darts from side to side quickly, alert as hell.

So begins David Koepp's script to 1993's "Jurassic Park." Like much of Koepp's writing, it's crisply terse and intensely visual. It doesn't tell the director (in this case Steven Spielberg) where to put the camera, but it nearly does.

"I asked Steven before we started: What are the limitations about what I can write?" Koepp recalls. "CGI hadn't really been invented yet. He said: 'Only your imagination.'"

Yet in the 32 years since penning the adaptation of Michael Crichton's novel, Koepp has established himself as one of Hollywood's top screenwriters not through the boundlessness of his imagination but by his expertise in limiting it. Koepp is the master of the "bottle" movie - films hemmed in by a single location or condensed timed frame. From David Fincher's "Panic Room" (2002) to Steven Soderbergh's "Presence" (2025), he excels at corraling stories into uncluttered, headlong movie narratives. Koepp can write anything - as long as there are parameters.

"The great film scholar and historian David Bordwell and I were talking about that concept once and he said, 'Because the world is too big?' I said, 'That's it, exactly,'" Koepp says. "The world is too big. If I can put the camera anywhere I want, if anybody on the entire planet can appear in this film, if it can last 130 years, how do I even begin? It makes me want to take a nap."

"So I've always looked for bottles in which to put the delicious wine."

By some measure, the world of "Jurassic World" got too big. In the last entry, 2022's not particularly well received "Jurassic World: Dominion," the dinosaurs had spread across the planet. "I don't know where else to go with that," Koepp says.

Koepp, a 62-year-old native of Pewaukee, Wisconsin, hadn't written a "Jurassic" movie since the second one, 1997's "The Lost World." Back then, Brian De Palma, whom Koepp worked with on "Carlito's Way" and "Mission: Impossible," took to calling him "dinosaur boy." Koepp soon after moved onto other challenges. But when Spielberg called him up a few years ago and asked, "Do you have one more in you?" Koepp had one request: "Can we start over?"

"Jurassic World Rebirth," which opens in theaters July 2, is a fresh start for one of Hollywood's biggest multi-billion-dollar franchises. It's a new cast of characters (Scarlett Johansson, Mahershala Ali and Jonathan Bailey co-star), a new director (Gareth Edwards) and a new storyline. But just as they were 32 years ago, the dinosaurs are again Koepp's to play with.

"The first page reassured me," says Edwards. "It said: 'Written by David Koepp.'"

Variety

PARIS: Oscar winner Marion Cotillard and actor-director Guillaume Canet announced their separation Friday after 18 years and two children together, breaking up a power relationship of French cinema.

Cotillard won an Academy Award in 2008 for her performance as the legendary French singer Edith Piaf in "La Vie en Rose" and is one of France's best-known stars internationally. She

starred with Brad Pitt in the World War II romantic thriller "Allied" and Leonardo DiCaprio in "Inception."

Canet has acting, directing and screenplay credits and played in "The Beach" with DiCaprio.

The 49-year-old Cotillard and 52-year-old Canet starred together in the French-Belgian film "Love Me If



Cotillard

You Dare" in 2003, a breakthrough box-office hit in France for her. (AP)



PILTON, England: Irish-language rap group Kneecap is set to perform Saturday at the Glastonbury Festival despite criticism by British politicians and a terror charge for one of the trio.

Liam Óg Ó hAinle, who performs under the stage name Mo Chara, has been charged under the Terrorism Act with support a proscribed organization for allegedly waving a Hezbollah flag at a concert in London in November.

He is on unconditional bail ahead of a further court hearing in August.

The Belfast trio has been praised for invigorating the Irish-language cultural scene in Northern Ireland, but also criticized for lyrics laden with expletives and drug references and for political statements. The band draws, often satirically, on the language and imagery of the Irish republican movement and Northern Ireland's decades of violence. Videos have emerged allegedly showing the band shouting "up Hamas, up Hezbollah" and calling on people to kill lawmakers. (AP)

Bespoke bash for a billionaire

Bezos weds Sánchez in lavish Venice ceremony

VENICE, Italy, June 28, (AP): The sky itself is no limit for billionaire Jeff Bezos and fiancée Lauren Sánchez, who have traveled into space - and expectations were about as high ahead of their wedding in Venice on Friday.

One of the world’s most enchanting cities as backdrop? Check.

Star-studded guestlist and tabloid buzz? Of course.

Local flavor? You bet.

And then, time to tie the knot. The couple held their wedding ceremony Friday night, and Sánchez posted to Instagram a photo of herself beaming in a white gown as she stood alongside a tuxedo-clad Bezos, the world’s fourth-richest man.

It was the second day of events spread across the Italian lagoon city, which added complexity to what would have been a massive logistical undertaking even on dry land.

Dozens of private jets had flocked to Venice’s airport, and yachts pulled into the city’s famed waterways. Athletes, celebrities, influencers and business leaders converged to revel in extravagance that was as much a testament to the couple’s love as to their extraordinary wealth.

The heady hoopla recalled the 2014 wedding in Venice of actor George Clooney to human rights lawyer Amal Al-muddin, when adoring crowds lined the canals and hundreds of well-wishers gathered outside City Hall.

Not so for these nuptials, which became a lightning rod for small, colorful protests. But any desire to dampen the prevailing fever pitch hadn’t materialized as of Friday. Instead, the glitterati were partying, and the paparazzi jostling for glimpses of the gilded gala.

And the bride wore a classic mermaid-line gown, featuring Dolce & Gabbana’s signature Italian lace. A traditional

tulle-and-lace veil completed her look.

“Not just a gown, a piece of poetry,” she wrote on Instagram, where her name now appears as Lauren Sánchez Bezos.

Venice is famed for its network of canals, where gondoliers croon for lovestruck couples and even ambulances are aquatic. But water transport of everything from bouquets to guests makes Venice among the world’s most challenging cities for a party, according to Jack Ezon, CEO of Embark Beyond, a luxury travel advisory and destination event service.

“It’s a very tight-knit community; everyone there knows everyone, and you need to work with the right people,” said Ezon, whose company has put on a dozen high-end events in Venice. “There’s very tight control, especially on movement there with boats.”



Jeff Bezos waves as he arrives at San Giorgio island ahead of the anticipated wedding celebrations with Lauren Sanchez, in Venice, Italy, Friday, June 27. (AP)

Fashion

Watanabe unveils bold, offbeat looks in Paris

Kenzo brings colorful mischief to Maxim’s

PARIS, June 28, (AP): Few Paris addresses conjure myth quite like Maxim’s, the gilded Belle Époque haunt where artists and aristocrats once jostled for a seat at dinner, and a place immortalized in Cole Porter’s lyrics and classic Hollywood films as the very symbol of Parisian chic. On Friday night, at Paris Fashion Week the renowned restaurant-turned-nightclub became the improbable stage for Kenzo’s latest co-ed show - a riot of pop color, celebrity and cultural collision served tableside.

Guests perched around white tablecloths as Nigo, the first Japanese designer to helm Kenzo since the late, great Kenzo Takada, set out to prove the house can still surprise. What unfolded was a knowingly playful mash-up of preppy classics and off-kilter eveningwear: eye-popping pink dresses loosely gathered and knotted, each one tossed with a Left Bank silk scarf; a slinky tuxedo jacket paired with a blaring urban-printed tee in wild color, topped with a cartoon bunny in intentional clash. Think cocktail hour by way of Shibuya street style.

Tongue-in-cheek references ran rampant - a circus master’s striped waistcoat here, sheeny tiger-motif pants there, all nodding to Kenzo’s signature mix of high craft and sub-cultural wink. If the goal was to recapture the house’s historic sense of fun, Nigo went all in.

While the creativity on display was undeniable, the sheer abundance of ideas sometimes made it hard for a single vision to shine through. With so many bold references and layers echoing recent seasons’ spirit of collaboration and eclecticism, the collection sometimes felt more like a lively collage than a focused statement. Still, there were moments where the craftsmanship and playful accessories truly stood out, offering glimpses of the distinct Kenzo spirit that Nigo has made his own.

It was a night that nodded to both past and future. After a string of worn years under the previous design duo, Kenzo seems determined to shake off old dust and reclaim its seat at Paris’ most storied table. The show at Maxim’s - equal parts fashion circus and cultural memory - was a reminder that Paris style is best served with a wink, a clash and more than a little mischief.

Junya Watanabe

A new kind of dandy took over Junya Watanabe’s runway on Friday - not the traditional gentleman, but a sharp-dressed rebel with a streak of punk at Paris Fashion Week.

Watanabe, the pioneering Japanese designer known for mixing classic tailoring with a wild, creative edge, unveiled a lineup of bold, offbeat looks at the Lycée Carnot. The show was sharp but rebellious, rich in history but full of energy. It wasn’t about looking back. It was an explosion of new ideas.

Watanabe has built his reputation by smashing the line between elegance and rebellion. This season, he didn’t just mix old and new, he turned history into a weapon. His spring men’s collection borrowed from the past - rich brocades, jacquards and a hint of Rococo flair - but reimagined them with a bold, punk attitude. Jackets worthy of Venetian nobility were paired with rugged workwear and raw denim, creating looks that felt both grand and streetwise.

The music followed the same energy, starting with a traditional piano piece breaking down into a thumping city beat. Classic style was pulled apart and rebuilt right on the run-



A model wears a creation as part of the men’s Kenzo Spring-Summer 2026 collection, that was presented in Paris, Friday, June 27. (AP)

way. Some outfits showed off sharp, careful tailoring, but the order quickly fell away - seams went crooked, sashes trailed loose, wild patterns took over. Even the ties broke free, knotted multiple times in ways that broke from tradition.

Despite the wild mix of styles, the show was more than just patchwork. Watanabe was making a statement about taste itself - a constant tug-of-war between old ideas and breaking the rules. Familiar touches - a monk’s robe, the rooftops of Florence - were turned into clever fashion puzzles.

Also:

NEW YORK: Anna Wintour is stepping down as Vogue editor-in-chief but will retain editorial control over the storied magazine.

The longtime Vogue powerhouse told staff Thursday she’s seeking a head of editorial content to handle more of the day-to-day operations. But she’s holding on to plenty of power to keep her a force at the magazine that built her



A model wears a creation as part of the men’s Kenzo SS 2026 collection in Paris, Friday, June 27. (AP)



A model wears a creation part of the men’s Junya Watanabe SS 2026 collection, in Paris Friday, June 27. (AP)

reputation in fashion.

“And it goes without saying,” she joked, “that I plan to remain Vogue’s tennis and theater editor in perpetuity.”

Wintour will remain chief content officer for Condé Nast and global editorial director of Vogue. The news shook the fashion world and Wintour-watchers on social media amid breathless headlines that she was “stepping down” from the magazine. The new lead will report directly to Wintour in her capacity as global editorial director, Vogue said in a statement posted to its website later Thursday.

“Anybody in a creative field knows how essential it is never to stop growing in one’s work. When I became the editor of Vogue, I was eager to prove to all who might listen that there was a new, exciting way to imagine an American fashion magazine,” Wintour told staff.

“Now, I find that my greatest pleasure is helping the next generation of impassioned editors storm the field with their own ideas, supported by a new, exciting view of what a major media company can be,” she added.

Lawsuit seeks \$787M in punitive damages

Calif Gov Newsom sues Fox News for defamation

SAN FRANCISCO, June 28, (AP): California Gov. Gavin Newsom sued Fox News on Friday over alleged defamation, saying the network knowingly aired false information about a phone call he had with President Donald Trump around the time the National Guard was sent Los Angeles.

The lawsuit alleges Fox News anchor Jesse Watters edited out key information from a clip of Trump talking about calling Newsom, then used the edited video to assert that Newsom had lied about the two talking.

Newsom is asking for \$787 million in punitive damages in the lawsuit filed in Delaware, where Fox is incorporated.

That’s the same amount Fox agreed to pay in 2023 to settle a defamation lawsuit by Dominion Voting Systems. The company said Fox repeatedly aired false allegations that its equipment had switched votes from Donald Trump to Joe Biden during the 2020 election, and the discovery process revealed the network’s efforts not to alienate conservatives in its audience in the wake of Biden’s victory.

“If Fox News wants to lie to the American people on Donald Trump’s behalf, it should face consequences - just like it did in the Dominion case,” Newsom said in a statement. “I believe the American people should be able to trust the information they receive from a major news outlet.”

He asked a judge to order Fox to stop broadcasting “the false, deceptive, and fraudulent video and accompanying statements” that Newsom said falsely say he lied about when he spoke to Trump regarding the situation in Los Angeles, where protests erupted on June 6 over Trump’s immigration crackdown.

Fox News said in a statement that it would fight the lawsuit “vigorously” and looks forward to it being dismissed.

“Gov. Newsom’s transparent publicity stunt is frivolous and designed to chill free speech critical of him,” it said.

Newsom’s suit centers on the details of the phone call with the president.

Both Newsom and the White House have said the two spoke late at night June 6 in California, which was already June 7 on the East Coast. Though the content of the call is not part of the lawsuit, Newsom has said they never discussed Trump’s plan to deploy the National Guard, which he announced the next day. Trump said the deployment was necessary to protect federal buildings from people protesting increased immigration arrests.

Trump later announced that he would also deploy Ma-



Newsom

Variety

NEW YORK: An autographed Michael Jordan rookie card sold for \$2.5 million in an auction that closed on Thursday.

The 1986-87 Fleer card sold through Joopiter - the auction platform founded by Grammy-winning artist and producer Pharrell Williams three years ago - shows Jordan soaring toward the rim with his right arm extended and tongue dangling. It was one of nine trading cards signed in a blue sharpie at his private golf course in Florida last year.

According to ESPN, the \$2.5 million is the most paid for a Jordan rookie card - signed or unsigned - and the third-highest price in a public sale for any Jordan card. That record is \$2.928 million.

Jordan In March, an autographed Bulls jersey that Jordan wore in a preseason game during his rookie year sold for \$4.215 million at an auction through Sotheby’s. (AP)



Jordan

NEW ORLEANS: A Super Bowl halftime show performer was charged Thursday with two misdemeanors, about 4 1/2 months after he ran across the field at the Superdome waving a flag that included the words “Sudan and Free Gaza,” Louisiana State Police said.

Zul-Qarnain Kwame Nantambu, 41, turned himself in to authorities to face of charges resisting a police officer and disturbing the peace by interrupting a lawful assembly, police said. He surrendered in coordination with his attorney and was booked into the Orleans Parish Justice Center.

Nantambu revealed the flag and ran on the field during rapper Kendrick Lamar’s halftime performance on Feb. 9. He was detained on the field after his demonstration but not charged. The NFL said at the time he would be banned for life from league stadiums and events. (AP)

Children sweat less and their body heats up faster

Rising summer heat increases risk of child deaths in hot cars

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., June 28, (AP): A record heat wave that spread across the East Coast of the United States during the first week of summer has child advocates warning parents and caretakers about the risks of heatstroke to children left inside hot vehicles.

So far this year, nine children have died after being left unattended in vehicles in California, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, New Mexico, New Jersey and North Carolina, according to Kids and Car Safety, which collects data on hot car deaths. Five died in June. And last year, 39 children in the US died after being left in hot cars.

Human-caused climate change keeps dialing up temperatures and extreme weather, scientists say. But the temperature outside doesn't have to be super hot for a child left

in a vehicle to be affected by the heat, said Kathy Wall, director of Safe Kids Palm Beach County.

"Inside, the vehicle can heat up 20 degrees in just 20 minutes," Wall said. "So if you imagine it's an 80 degree day, which in South Florida is a cool day, it could be over 100 degrees within 10 minutes inside the car."

Hot car deaths can happen any time of year, and since 1998, every state but Alaska has reported a hot car death, according to the National Safety Council. In both 2018 and 2019, a record 53 children died after being left in hot cars.

About 80% of the heat rise in vehicles happens in the first 30 minutes of a child being left inside, when maximum temperatures can exceed 150 degrees Fahrenheit (65 degrees Celsius), according to data compiled by Jan

Null, a certified consulting meteorologist at San Jose State University.

"Children sweat a lot less than adults do and their internal temperature can increase three to five times faster than an adult. So that's why it's just as important to make sure that your child isn't left in the vehicle, especially during these rising temperatures," said Capt. Karen Derogatis of Palm Beach County Fire Rescue. While it's easy to place blame for leaving a child in a vehicle, even people trained to know the dangers have made that tragic mistake, Wall said.

"It's not a socioeconomic group, it's not a cultural group," she said. "This sadly has happened to doctors, it's happened to dentists, it happened to school teachers, it's happened to child care workers. Nobody is exempt from this."

Distraction often leads to forgetting about a child in the backseat, which is why it is important to create routines and reminders, she said.

"It sounds crazy, but sometimes people get out of routines or are distracted, especially in today's world. There's lots going on in the news, lots going with families," she said.

A parent who normally doesn't drop a child off at a day care facility might become distracted and forget that the child is in the vehicle, she said.

She encourages parents and caregivers to establish routines.

"We have an acronym, ACT," Wall said.

A stands for avoiding leaving a child unattended in a vehicle.

C stands for creating a reminder that works best for you. Authorities suggest leaving a

personal item such as a purse or briefcase in the backseat so you'll have to open the back door before locking the vehicle.

T is to take action right away. "If you see a child in a car, don't try to figure out how long they've been in the car. Call 911 immediately," Wall said.

Some newer cars offer warnings for drivers to check the backseat for passengers.

Double checking the vehicle is key, said Derogatis, the fire captain.

"If you make it a common habit, just like you would look in their rear view mirror to see if somebody's behind you, or if you look at your side view mirror to see if you want to switch lanes, make it habit to look in your rearview mirror, whether you have a child or an animal or anything, just to ensure that they are as safe as possible," she said.

Misinformation

Denmark to ban deepfake images

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, June 28, (AP): Denmark is taking steps toward enacting a ban on the use of "deep-fake" imagery online, saying such digital manipulations can stir doubts about reality and foster misinformation.

The government said in a statement published Thursday that a "broad cross section" of parties in parliament support greater protections against deepfakes and a planned bill is expected to make it illegal to share them or other digital imitations of personal characteristics.

Culture Minister Jakob Engel-Schmidt, in a statement, said that it was "high time that we now create a safeguard against the spread of misinformation and at the same time send a clear signal to the tech giants."

Officials said Friday that the measures are believed to be among the most extensive steps yet taken by a government to combat misinformation through deepfakes, which refers to highly realistic but fabricated content created by artificial intelligence tools.

Deepfakes usually come in the form of pictures or video but can also be audio. They can make it appear that someone said or did something that they didn't actually say or do. Famous figures who have been depicted in deepfakes include Taylor Swift and Pope Francis.

Authorities in different countries have taken varying approaches to tackling deepfakes, but they've mostly focused on sexually explicit images.

Online protection: Norwegian ministers met on Thursday with representatives from major technology companies, urging them to take greater responsibility in protecting children and young people from harmful content on digital platforms.

The meeting, held during the 20th United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Lillestrom, brought together Norway's Minister of Digitalization and Public Governance Karianne Tung and Minister of Children and Families Lene Vagslid, alongside representatives from Google, Meta, TikTok, and Snapchat, the Norwegian government said in a press release.

The meeting followed up on similar discussions held in December last year, focusing on the specific steps technology companies have taken to safeguard children on their platforms.

Recent findings from the Norwegian Media Authority's report "Children and Media 2024" show that online risks remain widespread among young users. According to the report, 22 percent of children surveyed had received unwanted sexual comments in the past year, and 30 percent had received nude photos.

Nearly half of Sudan face severe food crisis

Driven to starvation, Sudanese eat weeds, plants to survive amid war

CAIRO, June 28, (AP): With Sudan in the grips of war and millions struggling to find enough to eat, many are turning to weeds and wild plants to quiet their pangs of hunger. They boil the plants in water with salt because, simply, there is nothing else.

Grateful for the lifeline it offered, a 60-year-old retired school teacher penned a love poem about a plant called Khadija Koro. It was "a balm for us that spread through the spaces of fear," he wrote, and kept him and many others from starving.

A.H, who spoke on the condition his full name not be used, because he feared retribution from the warring parties for speaking to the press, is one of 24.6 million people in Sudan facing acute food insecurity -nearly half the population, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Aid workers say the war spiked market prices, limited aid delivery, and shrunk agricultural lands in a country that was once a breadbasket of the world.

Sudan plunged into war in April 2023 when simmering tensions between the Sudanese army and its rival paramilitary the Rapid Support Forces escalated to fighting in the capital Khartoum and spread across the country, killing over 20,000 people, displacing nearly 13 million people, and pushing many to the brink of famine in what aid workers deemed the world's largest hunger crisis.

Food insecurity is especially bad in areas in the Kordofan region, the Nuba Mountains, and Darfur, where El Fasher and Zamzam camp are inaccessible to the Norwegian Refugee Council, said Mathilde Vu, an aid worker with the group based in Port Sudan. Some people survive on just one meal a day, which is mainly millet porridge. In North Darfur, some people even sucked on coal to ease their hunger.

On Friday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the Sudanese military leader Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan



This November 2024 photo provided by the World Food Program shows a young internally displaced person at the ZamZam camp in El Fasher, North Darfur state, Sudan. (AP)

and asked him for a week-long ceasefire in El Fasher to allow aid delivery. Burhan agreed to that request, according to an army statement, but it's unknown whether the RSF would agree to that truce. A.H. said aid distribution often provided slight relief. His wife in children live in Obeid and also struggle to secure enough food due to high prices in the market.

His poem continued: "You were a world that sends love into the barren time. You were a woman woven from threads of the sun. You were the sandalwood and the jasmine and a revelation of green, glowing and longing."

Sudanese agricultural minister Abu Bakr al-Bashari told Al-Hadath news channel in April that there are no indicators of famine in the country, but there is shortage of food supplies in areas controlled by the paramilitary forces, known as RSF.

However, Leni Kinzli, World Food Programme Sudan spokesperson, said 17 areas in Gezeira, most of the Darfur region, and Khartoum, including Jebel Aulia are at risk of famine. Each month, over 4 million people receive assistance from the group, including 1.7 million in

areas facing famine or at risk, Kinzli said.

The state is suffering from two conflicts: one between the Rapid Support Forces and the army, and another with the People's Liberation Movement-North, who are fighting against the army and have ties with the RSF, making it nearly impossible to access food, clean water, or medicine.

He can't travel to Obeid in North Kordofan to be with his family, as the Rapid Support Forces blocked roads. Violence and looting have made travel unsafe, forcing residents to stay in their neighborhoods, limiting their access to food, aid workers said.

A.H. is supposed to get a retirement pension from the government, but the process is slow, so he doesn't have a steady income. He can only transfer around \$35 weekly to his family out of temporary training jobs, which he says is not enough. Hassan, another South Kordofan resident in Kadugli said that the state has turned into a "large prison for innocent citizens" due to the lack of food, water, shelter, income, and primary health services caused by the RSF siege.

'Denormalization'

France to ban smoking in public places, near schools

PARIS, June 28, (AP): France has struggled to kick its smoking habit. A new public health decree published Saturday aims to change that.

In the coming days, smoking will be banned in all French parks and sports venues, at beaches and bus stops, in a perimeter around all schools, and anywhere children could gather in public.

In a country where smoking has for generations been glamorized in cinema and intertwined with the national image, government crackdowns on tobacco use have met resistance.

"In France, we still have this mindset of saying, 'this is a law that restricts freedom,'" Philippe Bergerot, president of the French League Against Cancer, told the Associated Press.

The ban aims "to promote what we call denormalization. In people's minds, smoking is normal," he said. "We aren't banning smoking; we are banning smoking in certain places where it could potentially affect people's health and ... young people."

It's been illegal to smoke in restaurants, bars and public buildings since a series of bans in 2007 and 2008. Ever-higher taxes mean a pack now costs upwards of 12 euros (\$14).

Yet more than 30% of French adults still smoke cigarettes, most of them daily, one of the higher rates in Europe and globally. The Health Ministry is particularly concerned that tobacco remains popular among young people, citing public health statistics showing that 15% of 17-year-olds smoke. Black market cigarette trading is common.

More than 200 people in France die each day of tobacco-related illness, Health Minister Catherine Vautrin said in a statement Saturday. That adds up to some 75,000 deaths per year.

In a Paris park as the ban loomed, views were mixed.

Parisian Natacha Uzan welcomed the end of smoking in restaurants. But she said: "Now outside, in parks, I find it becoming a bit repressive."

The broader ban is a "good thing" for Anabelle Cermell, mother of a 3-month-old boy. "I tell myself, oh, it's really not ideal for him, but there's not much I can do about it, or I would have to ... not take the bus, not go to parks."

The government said last month that the new ban would take effect July 1. The official decree introducing the ban was published Saturday, and a health minister's statement said that a government order specifying the perimeters set by the ban would be published in the coming days.

Electronic cigarettes are exempt from the new ban.

Other European countries have gone farther. Britain and Sweden have tightened smoking regulations in public spaces. Spain is extending its smoking ban to cafe and restaurant terraces, which are exempt from France's new ban.

Thailand starts banning sale of cannabis without prescription

BANGKOK, June 28, (AP): Thailand has started banning the sale of cannabis to those without a prescription, three years after becoming the first country in Asia to decriminalize the plant.

The new order, signed by Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin earlier this week, came into effect Thursday after it was published in the Royal Gazette. It bans shops from selling cannabis to customers without a prescription and reclassifies cannabis buds as a controlled herb.

Sellers that violate the new order could face a maximum one-year jail term and a 20,000-baht (\$614) fine.

The Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, in charge of enforcing regulations related to cannabis, held an online meeting Friday with officials across the country to prepare

them for the change.

Officials said during the meeting that shops that are currently licensed can continue to operate but they must get their products only from pharmaceutical-grade farms that are certified by the department, and must declare sources of their products to authorities every month.

Those farms must also acquire a license for selling cannabis. The order says shops can only sell a limited amount of cannabis to those with a prescription, enough for personal use in 30 days.

They also said the department is setting up clear guidelines for the prescription of cannabis and enforcement of the new regulations. They said they will give time for the shops to adjust, but did not say exactly how long that timeframe would be.

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Storm hands Sun eighth consecutive loss



Golden State Valkyries guard Kaitlyn Chen (2) is defended by Chicago Sky guard Hailey Van Lith (2) during the third quarter of an WNBA basketball game at Chase Center in San Francisco. (AP)

Hegerberg is a talented pioneer

Norway’s female soccer leaders blaze a trail for equality, progress

GENEVA, June 28, (AP): In the male-dominated world of soccer leadership, many of the trailblazing women have come from Norway.

The Norway team at the Women’s European Championship is captained by the first Women’s Ballon d’Or winner, Ada Hegerberg, and led by a female federation president, Lise Klaveness, who is one of just three such leaders among the 55 UEFA member countries.

Klaveness, who played for Norway’s team that was runner-up at Euro 2005, sees a decades-long tradition of the federation being progressive, promoting women and speaking out at international meetings.

Before her, there was Karen Espelund, the first woman to join UEFA’s executive committee, and Ellen Wille, whose speech at a FIFA congress helped create the Women’s World Cup.

They all worked with Per Omdal, a long-time federation president who in 2022 was awarded one of Norway’s highest civic honors to recognize his support for women’s soccer.

“We are not perfect at all,” Klaveness told The Associated Press in a recent interview. “Of



In this file photo, Norwegian federation president Lise Klaveness speaks during the FIFA congress at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

course everything can be better, but I feel like I inherited something proud and value-based.”

The captain of Norway’s team at Euro 2025 in Switzerland - her squad will play in a group with the host, Finland and Iceland - fits perfectly into the national tradition.

Hegerberg is a talented pioneer, winner of the first Ballon d’Or for women in 2018, and unafraid to have principles.

The Lyon forward won the award in the second season of a five-year, self-imposed absence

from the national team to protest a lack of equality for women from the federation.

In 2022, within weeks of Klaveness being elected, Hegerberg ended her exile.

“Ada already now sees she’s part of something bigger ... the connection in history,” Klaveness told the AP, describing the captain as “a very beloved player.”

Hegerberg’s exile meant missing the 2019 World Cup in France, the eighth edition of a tournament FIFA’s all-male leadership finally launched in 1991.

Wille’s words at FIFA’s annual meeting in 1986 were key to that progress. A member of the Norwegian federation’s executive committee, her speech urging FIFA to do more for women’s tournaments was a rare female contribution to any debate at its congress.

Norway lost that first World Cup final to the United States but won the next title in 1995.

At age 15 in 1976, Espelund was in the first wave of players when the Norwegian federation formally recognized women’s soccer. She later played for the national team.

In 2002, at a volatile FIFA congress, Espelund was a rare women in a leadership role as the federation’s general secretary alongside

president Omdal.

Espelund took the platform to challenge FIFA’s embattled then-president Sepp Blatter about its fragile finances ahead of him winning re-election.

In 2011, with FIFA again in turmoil amid another controversial Blatter election and promises of governance reform, Espelund was appointed the first woman on the UEFA executive committee which she served for five years. Klaveness became the fourth in April.

Klaveness, a labor lawyer and judge, made an international impact in her first month as Norwegian federation president.

Klaveness describes Omdal, a former UEFA vice president, as “still my mentor” whom she sees each week. “He really fought for a women’s league in Norway and (to) have 50% (representation) on boards.”

Now Klaveness is herself a role model for women in European soccer, including Norway’s coach at Euro 2025, Gemma Grainger.

“I feel like Lise is a great example for me and for any female, to really stand by what she says,” Grainger told the AP. “For her to stand up and talk so openly and fight for more than football is a true inspiration.”

Mercury makes record

SEATTLE, June 28, (AP): Skylar Diggins scored 24 points, Gabby Williams had 16 points, eight rebounds and seven assists and the Seattle Storm beat Connecticut 97-81 on Friday night for the Sun’s eighth straight loss.

Diggins, Williams and Ezi Magbegor combined to score 35 points in the first half as the Storm led 52-38. Dominique Malonga ran past the defense for a long pass from Diggins and converted a fast-break layup with 1.2 seconds left to cap the first-half scoring.

Seattle opened the second half on a 18-5 run, capped by Nneka Ogwu-mike’s 3-pointer, to build a 27-point lead at 70-43. The Storm outscored the Sun 30-17 in the frame to make it 82-55.

Ogwumike finished with 16 points and Magbegor scored 12 for Seattle (10-6). Malonga scored a career-high 11 points off the bench. Diggins, who entered with 5,102 career points, passed Swin Cash (5,119) for 24th on the WNBA’s all-time list.

Rookie Aneesah Morrow had a career-high 20 points to go with 10 rebounds and Bria Hartley added 19 points for Connecticut (2-14). Jacy Sheldon scored 15 points and Olivia Nelson-Ododa had 12. Connecticut was without second-leading scorer Marina Mabrey (15.2 points per game) due to a left knee injury.

Fever 94, Wings 86

In Dallas, Kelsey Mitchell scored 32 points, and the Indiana Fever held on without the injured Caitlin Clark, taking a 22-point lead in the first quarter before finishing off a 94-86 victory over the Dallas Wings on Friday night.

Clark’s left groin injury spoiled what was supposed to be the first meeting of the past two No. 1 picks in the WNBA draft. The game was the first at the home of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks for the Wings, who took Paige Bueckers first overall this year.

The Wings, who are planning a move to downtown Dallas in the next couple of years, have played about 20 miles away on the campus of the University of Texas at Arlington since moving to the area nine years ago.

Mercury 106, Liberty 91

In Phoenix, Satou Sabally scored 25 points and the Phoenix Mercury set a team record for 3-pointers in the second straight game - and broke a WNBA record in the process - in a 106-91 victory over the New York Liberty.

Alyssa Thomas, who had 17 points, matched the Phoenix record of 15 assists for the second time and finished a rebound short of her 12th regular-season triple-double. The Mercury had a franchise record 30 assists on 41 baskets.

The Mercury (12-6) finished 18 of 39 behind the arc a game after hitting 17 3s in a win over Chicago. The 35 3s in consecutive games is a WNBA record. The league record for 3s in the regular season is 19, which the Liberty hit twice this season.

Sabally went 7 of 10 from dis-



Dallas Wings guard Paige Bueckers, right, makes a move to the basket as Indiana Fever forward Natasha Howard (6) defends during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)

tance and Sami Whitcomb was 5 of 7 for 15 points. Kitija Laksa added 13 points and Kahleah Copper 12 as Phoenix won its sixth straight.

Breanna Stewart scored 17 points, Nyara Sabally, in her first start against her sister, had a career-high 16 points and Natasha Cloud added 15 for the Liberty (11-4), who have lost four of five games, starting with an 89-81 home loss to the Mercury eight days ago.

Lynx 96, Dream 92, OT

In College Park, Napheesa Collier scored 26 points and the Minnesota Lynx successfully challenged two foul calls in the last minute of overtime to beat Atlanta in a game that saw the Dream rally after a weather-related delay in the second quarter.

The Lynx were up 92-90 when challenges reversed foul calls on Atlanta drives with 54.8 and 20.5 seconds to go. Kayla McBride then made four free throws in the last 17.5 seconds to secure the win.

McBride scored 18 points for the Lynx (13-2) to surpass 5,000 for her career. Courtney Williams added 16 points and Bridget Carleton 14. Minnesota made 13 3-pointers and 17 of 18 free throws.

Brianna Jones had 18 points, Allisha Gray scored 17 and Brittney Griner 16 for the balanced Dream (10-6). Rhyné Howard added 15 points, Jordan Canada had 14 and reserve Naz Hillmon 10. Atlanta had a season-high 52 points in the paint to 24 for Minnesota.

Valkyries 83, Sky 78

In San Francisco, Kayla Thornton scored a career-high 29 points to help the Golden State Valkyries beat the Chicago Sky.

Thornton made her fourth 3-pointer with two minutes remaining to give Golden State (7-8) a 78-70 lead. But Chicago (4-11) scored the next four points, the last when Angel Reese grabbed an offensive rebound and scored with 1:11 left.

Thornton was fouled with a second left on the shot clock and she made 1 of 2 free throws for a 79-74 lead. Reese scored again after another offensive rebound, but Tiffany Hayes sealed it with two free throws.

Hayes finished with 13 points, Kate Martin had 11 and Kaitlyn Chen 10 for Golden State.

No trash talk necessary

Alvarez, Crawford share compliments in final stop of media tour for Sept 13 bout

LAS VEGAS, June 28, (AP): No trash talk necessary.

That was Friday’s message from Terence Crawford and Canelo Alvarez, both complimentary of one another while downplaying a shoving incident in New York earlier this month during the media tour for their blockbuster match on Sept. 13 at Allegiant Stadium.

The fight for the unified super middleweight championship is part of Alvarez’s reported \$400 million, minimum four-fight deal with Riyadh Season.

“You can see how big is this fight,” Alvarez said inside of a crammed dressing room at T-Mobile Arena before the official press conference began in front of thousands of fans. “I’m glad to be involved in these big fights. And you know, Crawford is one of the best fighters in the last decade, and I’m glad to be here.

“These big fights don’t need to talk (expletive) about each other. That’s what I think.”

Crawford, meanwhile, addressed why he pushed Alvarez in New York, saying he “heard some things (he) didn’t like,” but took the high road in sharing his excitement for what will be the biggest fight of his career.

“I don’t even know the last time I’ve been this excited for a fight,” said Crawford, who held court with media members in the bowels of the arena on a loading dock. “September 13, it’s going to be a great night of boxing.”

Friday marked the final stop of a three-city tour to market the event, which saw cooler heads prevail during the faceoff at T-Mobile Arena.

Riyadh Season is working with UFC CEO Dana White to promote the fight, which supplanted UNLV football’s



Canelo Alvarez, center left, and Terence Crawford pose during a news conference for their upcoming boxing match in Las Vegas. (AP)

home opener against Idaho State.

Earlier in the day, UNLV announced the game would shift to August 23, with first-year coach Dan Mullen making his program debut in what is now the Rebels’ season-opener in Week 0.

“The World Championship Boxing Match is important to Las Vegas, and the impact it will have on tourism is unmatched,” UNLV’s director of athletics Erick Harper said in a statement.

The long-awaited showdown between two of the greatest boxers since the turn of the century will be the first combat event inside the home of the NFL’s Raiders.

“Listen, this is the one,” Crawford said. “God don’t make no mistakes. It’s the reason why he waited all this time to put me on this stage with another all-time great like Canelo.

“Two Hall of Famers going head to

head in one of the biggest events in the last 20 years. I’m looking forward to it.”

It’s White’s first venture into boxing, and quite a statement in becoming a major player in the sport.

Alvarez (63-2-2) unified the division with a unanimous decision victory over William Scull in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on May 3, with Crawford (41-0) in attendance.

Crawford said it’s been a longtime coming, and the jump to 168 pounds to meet Canelo has been on his mind since moving from 147 to 154 pounds.

“I don’t think any fighter has went from 147 to 168 to fight pound-for-pound a top five fighter like Canelo in the history of the sport of boxing,” Crawford said. “Everything impressed me about Canelo. I’m a big Canelo fan.

KAMPALA, June 28, (Agencies): Ugandans have welcomed the news of Arthur Kaluma signing with an NBA team with happiness.

The Los Angeles Lakers announced on Friday that they have signed Kaluma on an Exhibit 10 contract. The NBA’s Exhibit 10 contract is for one-year and with a minimum salary agreement.

“This is very big news for Uganda basketball to have our player drafted by a big team like the Lakers,” said Susan Ofungi, a basketball fan.

Another ardent fan David Tusime told Xinhua in an interview that Kaluma joining Lakers means a lot not only to him but also to Uganda. “Having Kaluma play for a big team like the Lakers will also bring attention to Uganda as a country,” added Tusime.

Patrick Ogwel, the Secretary of the National Council of Sports in Uganda also received the news with joy. “This is very good news for Kaluma and Uganda. We are sure this move will help put Uganda on the map because we shall get more attention now with a Ugandan playing for a big team,” added Ogwel.

“We are very happy for Kaluma because this is a very huge step in his professional basketball journey. We are also excited as Ugandans because this opens more doors for other players when a Ugandan is always mentioned,”

Jesica Nalubwama told Xinhua.

Kaluma will have the opportunity to prove a point when the 17-time NBA champions Lakers begin Summer League action against the Dallas Mavericks on July 10.

Yang Hansen is going to fit into American culture just fine.

The Trail Blazers’ 7-foot-1 Chinese center was introduced to Portland on Friday, and was asked about his interests. Turns out, he’s already a gamer.

“Sometimes I sleep. All the time, sleep. I like to play PS5. And I like to eat,” Yang said, laughing.

Yang was the 16th pick in the NBA draft on Wednesday. While some were surprised that he went as early as he did, the Blazers had been scouting him for two years.

Yang averaged 16.6 points and 10.5 rebounds last season for the Qingdao Eagles. He has played for the team in China’s top pro league for the past two seasons.

“You can just tell he’s been taught the right way. So a lot of things as a coach that I have to teach with young guys, I don’t have to teach this kid,” Blazers coach Chauncey Billups said. “He’s been taught the right way,



Kaluma

so I’m really excited about him, and it’s going to be a lot of fun.”

Portland had the 11th pick in the draft but traded the draft rights to guard Cedric Coward to the Memphis Grizzlies for Yang’s draft rights, a 2028 first-round pick, a 2027 second-round pick and a 2028 second-round pick.

Blazers general manager Joe Cronin saw value in the deal and didn’t want to risk dropping any lower for fear Yang would not be available.

“This is a very, very unique talent, in our opinion. He obviously has great size at 7-2, young, just turns 20 tomorrow. High, high-end skillset, his ability to pass, his basketball IQ, his functionality in the post. His ability to step out. We think he’ll be a good free-throw shooter, we think he’ll make perimeter jump shots as well,” Cronin said. “Defensively, he’s a really smart player that can be pretty versatile in the post with his size and IQ.” Yang, who was seated in the stands at the draft and had to make his way down to the stage when his name was called, said the comparisons he’s heard to Nikola Jokic and fellow countryman Yao Ming are flattering.

“I think the Baby Joker or being compared to Yao are a big honor,” Yang said through an interpreter. “I just try to learn from everyone, every good player, and try to improve myself every day.”

Yildiz and Vitinha lead best player standouts

Top performers and major shocks highlight Club World Cup group stage

NEW YORK, June 28, (Xinhua): The group stage of the FIFA Club World Cup brought drama, late goals, surprise results, and standout individual performances.

Some of the tournament favorites advanced with ease while others stumbled early and never recovered. A handful of emerging talents made their mark, and attendances fluctuated from sellouts to near-empty stands.

Here are eight key takeaways from the opening phase.

Best players

Arguably the player to have made the biggest impact so far is Juventus winger Kenan Yildiz. The 20-year-old Turkiye international is the competition's joint top scorer with three goals and has also registered two assists. He provided one of the few positives for Juventus in its 5-2 loss to Manchester City, coming off the bench to deliver a sublime assist for Dusan Vlahovic.

Paris Saint-Germain's Vitinha also stamped his class on the group stage and was the standout player in his team's 4-0 win over Atletico Madrid with a midfield masterclass that included a brilliant first-half strike.

Others to shine so far include Al Ahly's Palestinian striker Wessam Abou Ali, who netted a hat trick against Porto, and Colombian winger Jhon Arias, a driving force for Fluminense. Manchester City's resurgent midfielder Phil Foden and Benfica veteran Angel Di Maria have also been influential.

Best match

Few would disagree that the most entertaining match was the 4-4 draw between Al Ahly and Porto in New Jersey. Abou Ali's hat-trick and Mohamed Ali Ben Romdhane's second-half strike weren't enough as Porto matched the Egyptian champions goal for goal. Rodrigo Mora, William Gomes, Samu Aghehowa, and Pepe all scored for the Portuguese club.

The result proved irrelevant, with both teams bowing out by virtue of the 2-2 draw between Inter Miami and Palmeiras.

Other matches that stood out included the 2-2 draw between Boca Juniors and Benfica, as well as Borussia Dortmund's 4-3 win over Mamelodi Sundowns.

Brightest talents

At just 18, Palmeiras forward Estevão has shown he is ready to step up to the elite level with back-to-back Player of the Match awards against Porto and Al Ahly. The Brazil international will join Chelsea in July, and he looks ready to feature in Enzo Maresca's first-team plans from the outset.

Estevao's compatriot Igor Jesus, while six years his senior, has also emerged as one to watch for Botafogo. Jesus struck the winner in Botafogo's 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain and was also on target in the Rio de Janeiro club's opening 2-1 victory over Seattle Sounders.

Having made his international debut last year, Jesus appears certain to be part of Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti's 2026 World Cup plans.

Other young players to make an impact include Manchester City's Claudio Echeverri, Al-Hilal's Marcos Leonardo and Salzburg midfielder Oscar Gloukh.

Biggest surprise

Undoubtedly, the biggest shock of the tournament so far was Botafogo's 1-0 victory over Paris Saint-Germain. The reigning Brazilian and Copa Libertadores champions neutralized the 2025 Champions League winners with a disciplined defensive display, as Igor Jesus' 36th-minute goal proved enough to secure a memorable result.

After the match, PSG manager Luis Enrique said Botafogo's defense was the best his team had faced this season.

Other surprise results included Flamengo's 3-1 victory over Chelsea, Inter Miami's 2-1 win over Porto and Auckland City's 1-1 draw with Argentine giants Boca Juniors.

Biggest disappointment

Atletico Madrid's group-stage exit has been one of the tournament's biggest upsets. Despite finishing level on six points with PSG and Botafogo in Group B, Diego Simeone's men were eliminated on head-to-head goal difference after a 4-0 opening loss to the Parisians.

A 1-0 win over Botafogo in the final group match wasn't enough to overturn the deficit, leaving the Spanish club third in the group and out of the

knockout rounds.

It marked a disappointing end to a season in which Atletico also fell short in La Liga, the Copa del Rey, and the Champions League.

Brazilian success

All four Brazilian clubs - Palmeiras, Botafogo, Flamengo, and Fluminense - advanced to the round of 16, showcasing the depth and competitive intensity of the country's domestic football.

Palmeiras topped Group A unbeaten while Botafogo stunned Paris Saint-Germain in Group B. Flamengo's victory over Chelsea helped the Rio club top Group D and Fluminense progressed from Group F after taking five points from three matches.

Together, the four sides finished the group stage with six wins and just eight goals conceded.

Argentine doldrums

Despite drawing large crowds to their matches, Argentine giants River Plate and Boca Juniors fell short of expectations.

After beating Urawa Red Diamonds in its opener, River managed only a goalless draw with Monterrey before losing 2-0 to Inter Milan.

In addition to questions over discipline - the Buenos Aires side received three red cards in its last two games - River struggled to get the best out of Real Madrid-bound teenager Franco Mastantuono, who found little space to operate.

Boca fared even worse than its arch-rival, going winless and finishing its campaign with a 1-1 draw against the semi-professional Auckland City.

Crowd figures

The highest turnout of the group stage came at the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, where 80,619 spectators watched Paris Saint-Germain dismantle Atletico Madrid.

Elsewhere, matches featuring Al Ahly, Al-Hilal, Pachuca, Inter Miami, Palmeiras and Real Madrid each drew crowds exceeding 60,000.

The lowest attendance was for the Ulsan-Mamelodi Sundowns clash in Orlando on June 17, which drew just 3,412 spectators.

British and Irish Lions dominate Force in opening game of tour

Sheehan makes perfect start on debut

PERTH, Australia, June 28, (AP): Dan Sheehan made the perfect start on debut for the British and Irish Lions.

The Ireland hooker led the Lions for the first game of their Australian tour, scored in the second minute and steered the team to a commanding 54-7 win over the Perth-based Western Force on Saturday.

After an arm-wrestle of a first half where the Lions led 21-7 despite having only 40% of possession and spending most of the time in their own half, the bigger, more polished British and Irish lineup opened up and put five unanswered tries on a tiring defense in the second.

Scrumhalf Tomos Williams scored a pair of tries before limping off with a left hamstring issue, fullback Elliot Daly scored two tries and flyhalf Finn Russell created two tries with his spur-of-the-moment judgement. He also kicked five goals.

Henry Pollock, the 20-year-old England No. 8, played an integral hand in two tries and also spent 10 minutes in the sin-bin in his eventful debut start for the Lions.

The Lions made changes after a 28-24 loss to Argentina in a warmup last week in Dublin, putting more emphasis on short, sharp passing.

The Lions had the ball for 11 phases until Russell kicked high and wide to the right touchline where Sheehan took the ball high and tapped infield for winger James Low, who flicked an inside pass back to him to score.

The Force equalized quickly after 14 phases of attack with veteran Wallabies scrumhalf Nic White sniping over from the base of a



Alex Mitchell of the British & Irish Lions is tackled by Western Forces' Matt Proctor, left, during their rugby match against the Western Force in Perth, Australia. (AP)

ruck in the fifth minute.

The Force opted against taking penalty goals in order to keep up attacking intensity but the Lions held firm and relieved pressure with some crucial turnovers.

Flyhalf Russell set up the first try with his pinpoint kick wide and the third with a quick penalty tap and go in the 35th, scooting up to the five-yard line before popping up a ball off the ground for full-back Daly to score.

In between, Pollock was instrumental in the Lions' second try, bursting onto a sharp inside ball from opsense flanker Josh van der Flier, stepping inside and out and going to ground before popping a ball up to scrumhalf Williams to score.

The tourists went into halftime with a man down after Pollock was yellow carded for a ruck infringement deep inside his own quarter. The Force crossed the line from the resulting penalty but were held up.

Williams finished off an 80-meter counter-attacking try seven minutes into the second half. Both wingers were involved, with Lowe making an initial break and then exchanging passes with Williams at the end.

Williams limped off after scoring, and was replaced by Alex Mitchell.

The Lions' attacking intent led directly to Garry Ringrose's try soon after that gave the Lions a 33-7 lead.

Pollock, the youngest member

of the Lions squad, was back in the attack quickly, chipping over the defense, regathering and almost scoring himself before the Lions shifted it quickly through the hands for lock Joe McCarthy to score out wide in the 55th.

Daly scored in the 71st minute after sustained attack to help the Lions take a 40-point buffer.

It was extended to 47 when Mitchell scored after the siren, taking the last pass from Australian-born Ireland winger Mack Hansen to put the final touches on the victory.

The Lions are playing nine games in their first tour to Australia since 2013, including tests in Brisbane on July 19, in Melbourne on July 26 and in Sydney on Aug. 2.

Al-Nasr appoints Al-Daihani as Volleyball Director for season

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Board of Directors at Al-Nasr Club has named former player Mohammed Al-Daihani as Director of Volleyball for the upcoming 2025-2026 season. The appointment is part of the club's broader strategy to rejuvenate the volleyball program and entrust leadership roles to experienced professionals.

Last season, the Al-Nasr Club delivered a standout performance, runner-up in the First Division League under the guidance of coach Niaz Salam.

Al-Daihani brings extensive experience to his new role, having played for several clubs and represented the national team during his career.

In related news, the team has secured the signing of Sultan Ahmed from Al-Arabi Club to bolster the squad for the upcoming season.



Mohammed Al-Daihani

Separately, former Al-Qadsiya volleyball player Saad Saleh has undergone successful knee surgery.

Best of the Rest

Le Sommer joins Toluca: France all-time leading scorer Eugénie Le Sommer has signed a contract to play for Mexican club Toluca, where she will reunite with former Lyon coach Patrice Lair.

The 36-year-old forward parted ways with Lyon in May after 15 seasons and wasn't chosen for the national team for the Women's European Championship.

Toluca, located near Mexico City, said late Friday that Le Sommer has joined for the upcoming Liga MX Apertura season.

Le Sommer's former France and Lyon teammate Amandine Henry also plays for Toluca. The defensive midfielder joined last year.

Le Sommer has scored 94 international goals in 200 appearances for France. She posted a broken heart emoji on her Instagram page when she wasn't selected for the Euro 2025 squad. (AP)

□ □ □

Bonmatí hospitalized: Spain midfielder Aitana Bonmatí, the two-time Ballon d'Or holder, has been hospitalized with viral meningitis less than a week before the Women's European Championship begins.

Spain coach Montse Tomé said late on Friday that her star player had felt ill and was taken to a hospital in Madrid where she tested positive for meningitis.

Spain's team is set to travel to Switzerland on Sunday for the tournament. Its first game is against Portugal on Thursday in Bern.

"Aitana is a very important player for us and we will wait for her," Tomé said after Bonmatí missed Friday's friendly against Japan in the Spanish capital when Spain beat the visitors 3-1. The 27-year-old Bonmatí has won the top individual award for women's soccer for the past two years. The Barcelona player was key in Spain winning the 2023 Women's World Cup. (AP)

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Giroud to leave LAFC: French striker Olivier Giroud said Friday that he had reached an agreement to leave Los Angeles FC after just one year with the Major League Soccer club.

The 38-year-old, whose contract had been due to expire in December, will make his last appearance for LAFC in a home match against Vancouver on Sunday.

"I am happy to have played a part in the success of LAFC. From winning a trophy last season to participating in the Club World Cup, this has been a great experience in LA for me and my family." Giroud scored five goals in 37 appearances for the Californian side after joining from AC Milan in May 2024. »{(

England one of favorites despite upheaval in squad

Lionesses face new challenges and 'noise' in Euro title defense

LONDON, June 28, (AP): England will look to eliminate the "noise" when it kicks off its campaign to retain the Women's European Championship crown.

The defending champions travel to Switzerland as one of the favorites at the 16-team tournament, despite recent upheaval in the squad, after winning last time and finishing runner-up to Spain in the 2023 World Cup.

Euro 2022 saw England triumph on home soil and secure the country's first senior title since the men's team won the World Cup in 1966. And, in a soccer-mad country, that success has ratcheted up the hype around the Lionesses.

"My experience is before a major tournament there's always noise," England coach Sarina Wiegman said. "So we expect noise until we go into the tournament, and it probably stays."

"The difference is that ... now, just the attention and the visibility of the women's game has increased so much. So it sounds like that's more noise, but there's just more talk, more journalists here ... we just have to deal with it and move on and focus on football."

The 55-year-old Wiegman, who



England's Leah Williamson takes part in a training session, at St. George's Park, Burton upon Trent, England. (AP)

took charge of the Lionesses in September 2021, is bidding to make it a hat trick of European Championship titles, as she steered the Netherlands to the trophy in 2017.

However, a chaotic week leading up to her Euro 2025 squad announcement saw several key, experienced players pull out of selection for the tournament.

Star defender Millie Bright declared herself unavailable, saying

she was not ready "100% mentally or physically," while goalkeeper Mary Earps and midfielder Fran Kirby retired from international soccer. All three were in England's title-winning team at Euro 2022.

"We can only control ourselves and how good we can be," England captain Leah Williamson said. "That noise it's there, it is a factual thing, and of course there will be times when it will weigh heavier than

others, but ultimately I think we're very much focused on this new task which has changed dramatically.

"The two tournaments of the Euros are incomparable really in terms of what's out there and what's to come," she added, "so I think it will be very exciting for us and we're excited for that new challenge as this new team."

Bright had knee surgery but Earps' surprise move came after she fell behind Chelsea's Hannah Hampton in the goalkeeping pecking order. It leaves Hampton as the only capped shot-stopper in a relatively inexperienced squad.

The group includes 13 players who lifted the trophy three years ago, but there are also seven players heading into their first major tournament.

And Wiegman is hoping to have found a winning blend of experience and youth.

"When I came in, the team was very experienced. But I do think we have enough experience in the team," Wiegman said. "There's about 16 players who have played a major tournament. Also with playing at such a high-level club, you are experienced with having media around, playing for big crowds. So I don't think that's a problem."

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NEWS



Australia's Josh Hazlewood raises the ball after taking the wicket of West Indies' Jomel Warican, his fifth of the innings, on day three of the first cricket Test match at Kensington Stadium in Bridgetown, Barbados. Hazlewood 5-for leads Australia to three-day win over West Indies in Barbados test. (AP)

Sports

Kuwaiti figure skating team concludes ‘successful’ training camp in Bergamo



The figure skating delegation.

BERGAMO, Italy, June 28: The Kuwaiti Figure Skating Team has wrapped up its participation in the third Regional Development Camp held in Bergamo, Italy. Organized by the Egyptian Figure Skating Federation under the supervision of the International Skating Union (ISU), the camp was supported in full by the Kuwait Winter Games Club.

The event brought together 36 athletes from the national teams of Egypt, Greece, South Africa, and the UAE. Representing Kuwait were four skaters: Lara Al-Barrak, Sama Jarrah, Najat Al-Turki, and

Ghala Al-Matar.

Speaking about the experience, Lara Al-Barrak described the camp as a valuable opportunity to enhance their skills in figure skating. She noted that the team trained for five hours daily and also attended technical lectures focusing on the fundamentals needed to excel in the sport.

Al-Barrak highlighted the high quality of training at the ISU's Ice Lab Center of Excellence, attributing the strong performance levels to the presence of experienced Olympic coaches. She praised both the

practical and theoretical depth of the camp.

She also emphasized the importance of such international events in developing the technical capabilities of Kuwaiti athletes and preparing them to represent the national "Blue Figure" team in future global competitions.

Al-Barrak concluded by thanking the Kuwait Winter Games Club, led by Fahid Al-Ajmi, for its continued support in promoting figure skating among girls in Kuwait. She also commended the efforts of both the Egyptian and International Federations for organizing a successful international training event.

Al-Salmiya move imminent

Al-Arabi parts ways with Al-Shatti after 2 seasons

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Aeyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Al-Arabi has officially announced the departure of national coach Nasser Al-Shatti and his entire coaching staff, including Maitham Al-Shatti, Saleh Mahdi, and Ali Boland. The decision comes after two seasons of collaboration, with recent negotiations over a contract extension reaching a deadlock.

Despite holding several meetings over the past 10 days, the two sides failed to agree on key terms for a renewed deal. Under Al-Shatti's leadership—alongside his brother and assistant Maitham—Al-Arabi had a strong season, finishing second in both the Zain Premier League and the Crown Prince Cup. The team also reached the final of the Emir's Cup, which has been postponed due to the current situation. However, no titles were secured during his tenure.

Al-Shatti is now a leading candidate to take over at Al-Salmiya for the 2025–2026 season. Sources indicate that the two parties have already agreed on most terms of the proposed contract, with an official announcement expected soon.

This potential move comes as Al-Salmiya looks to end its contract with Croatian coach Ante Miša, who remains under contract until the end of next season. The club is reportedly seeking a mutual termination.

Meanwhile, at Al-Qadsiya, efforts to reinforce the squad ahead of the 2025–2026 season are in full swing. Head coach Nabil Maaloul is currently reviewing several foreign players being offered by agents, with a strong focus on midfield and attacking reinforcements.

Algerian midfielder Ghilas Guenaoui, born in 1998, has emerged as a top target. He previously played for ES Sétif in Algeria and Port Said in Egypt and is known for his versatility and playmaking ability.

Guenaoui is the second Algerian



Ghilas Guenaoui

player under consideration, alongside defender Ayoub Abdellaoui (32), who has experience with MC Alger, USM Alger, and Saudi Arabia's Al-Ettifaq. Additionally, former Tunisian international striker Haythem Jouini has been offered to the club.

Al-Qadsiya is in rebuilding mode after parting ways with three foreign players: Moroccan Ismail Khafi, Nigerian Daniel Jibola, and Algerian Hussein Dahiri. The futures of Libyan winger Mohamed Soula and Moroccan midfielder Mehdi Berrahma—both still under contract—will be decided by Maaloul in the coming weeks.

Preparations for the new season have already begun, with the squad set to begin training on the 16th of the month, followed by an overseas training camp. The Zain Premier League campaign kicks off on September 12.

In a bid to strengthen its squad for the upcoming First Division season, Yarmouk Club has signed former Al-Salmiya player Othman Al-Dosari. The move comes as the club looks to bounce back after finishing last in the Zain Premier League.

Sri Lanka dominates Bangladesh to win Series

Jayasuriya takes 5 wickets

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, June 28, (AP): Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya took his 12th five-wicket haul in test cricket to lead Sri Lanka to a dominating win over Bangladesh by an innings and 78 runs in the second cricket test and a 1-0 victory in the two-match series.

The fourth day started with Bangladesh struggling on 115 for six needing 97 more runs to make Sri Lanka bat again. But the rest of the match lasted less than 30 minutes as Jayasuriya polished off the tail by taking three of the last four wickets at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

Bangladesh was all out for 133 in its second innings having made 247 in the first. Sri Lanka scored 458 in its first innings dominated by a brilliant century from opener Pathum Nissanka and backed up by half-centuries from Dinesh Chandimal (93) and Kusal Mendis (84).

Litton Das (14) edged Jayasuriya to wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis with one run added to the overnight score Saturday. Jayasuriya lured Nayeem Hasan (5) for a drive and he was stumped by Kusal Mendis. Jayasuriya caught Taijul Islam (6) off his own bowling while off spin

bowler Tharindu Rathnayake ended the game trapping Ebadot Hossain (6) lbw.

Jayasuriya finished the innings with 5-56. Captain Dhananjaya de Silva and Rathnayake took two wickets each.

The first test in Galle ended in a draw. "Bowlers and batters did well in the first innings here," said de Silva. "Bowlers had their plans and executed well. That's a good morale booster for us, losing the toss and putting the opposition under pressure."

De Silva had high praise for Nissanka, who was named player of the match and series.

"He's been performing in all three formats for a long time and I think he will continue to do that," de Silva said of Nissanka.

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said after the match that he would step down as test captain to allow consistency in leadership in different formats of the game. Recently he had been replaced as one-day international captain.

Shanto said his side's batting "wasn't up to the mark." "We had opportunities but we couldn't make those things happen," he said. "The wicket is a little slower but the way we got out was not good enough. We always took easy options and made mistakes while batting."



Sri Lankan team members pose for photographers during the fourth day of the second cricket test match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Swiatek's title drought continues

Pegula wins Bad Homburg Open ahead of Wimbledon

BAD HOMBURG, Germany, June 28, (AP): Top-seeded Jessica Pegula beat five-time major champion Iga Swiatek 6-4, 7-5 on Saturday to win the grass-court Bad Homburg Open, extending Swiatek's year-long title drought.

Pegula clinched her third title of 2025 - with the others in Austin, Texas, and Charleston, South Carolina - and it was the ninth title of the 31-year-old American's career.

Swiatek was seeded fourth at the WTA 500 tournament in Germany, where the 24-year-old Pole sought her first trophy since the 2024 French Open and a 23rd overall.

In their 11th career meeting, but first on grass, Pegula won for the fifth time overall. Pegula beat Swiatek in the quarterfinals at last year's U.S. Open, where she finished the runner-up.

Although Swiatek hit nine aces in Saturday's final, she also dropped her serve twice. Pegula saved the only break point she faced and won a higher percentage of points on first and second serve.

The former No.1-ranked Swiatek has won four French Open titles and one U.S. Open, but has never been beyond the quarterfinals at Wimbledon.

Pegula has also never been past the last eight at Wimbledon, where plays starts on Monday in London.

To be clear, Coco Gauff didn't bring up the word "star" during a recent interview with The Associated Press; the reporter did. So as Gauff began to answer a question about balancing her life as a professional athlete with her off-court interests, she caught herself repeating that term.

"I definitely didn't know how it would look like," she began with a smile. "before I got to be, I guess, a star - feels weird to call myself that - but I definitely did want to expand outside of tennis. Always. Since I was young."

She still is young, by just about any measure, and she is a really good tennis



US Jessica Pegula poses with the trophy as she won the final match at the WTA tennis tournament against Poland's Iga Swiatek in Bad Homburg, Germany. (AP)

player - Gauff owns the Grand Slam titles and No. 2 ranking to prove it as she heads into Wimbledon, which begins Monday - but the 21-year-old American is

also more than that.

Someone unafraid to express her opinions about societal issues. Someone who connects with fans via social media. Someone who is the highest-paid female athlete in any sport, topping \$30 million last year, according to Sportico.com, with less than a third of that from prize money and most via deals with companies such as UPS, New Balance, Rolex and Barilla. Someone who recently launched her own management firm.

And someone who wants to succeed in the business world long after she no longer swings a racket on tour.

"It's definitely something that I want to start to step up for post-career. Kind of start building that process, which is why I wanted to do it early. Because I didn't want to feel like I was playing catch-up at the end of my career," said Gauff, who will face Dayana Yastremska in the first round at the All England Club on Tuesday.

"On the business side of things, it doesn't come as natural as tennis feels. I'm still learning, and I have a lot to learn about," Gauff said. "I've debated different things and what paths I wanted to take when it came to just stimulating my brain outside of the court, because I always knew that once I finished high school that I needed to put my brain into something else."

In a campaign announced this week by UPS, which first partnered with Gauff in 2023 before she won that year's U.S. Open, she connects with business coach Emma Grede - known for working with Kim Kardashian on Skims, and with Khloe Kardashian on Good American - to offer mentoring to three small-business owners.

"Coco plays a key role in helping us connect with those younger Gen-Z business owners - emerging or younger entrepreneurs," Betsy Wilson, VP of digital marketing and brand activation at UPS, said in a phone interview. "Obviously, she's very relevant in social media and in culture, and working with Coco helps us really connect with that younger group."