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Eco plans in focus

PM leads review of key agreements with China

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday a ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace, to review the implementation of bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) signed with China.

The meeting marked the 19th session of the committee tasked with tracking progress on joint Kuwait-China initiatives, the session focused on key projects ranging from the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and electrical grid upgrades to renewable energy expansion, housing development, and environmental infrastructure such as wastewater treatment and green recycling systems.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and Rapporteur of the Committee Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat provided a detailed briefing on Kuwait-China

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Left: HH the PM chairs the ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace to review Kuwait-China agreements and joint initiatives. Right: HH the PM receives Fang Jinshu and a Chinese technical delegation to discuss environmental cooperation and desert rehabilitation projects.



PM Diwan photos

61 perish in Iraq mall blaze

Kuwait condoles as Iraq observes 3 days of mourning



Mourners react over the coffin of one of the victims who died in a fire at a shopping center in Kut, during a funeral at the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf, Iraq, Thursday, July 17, 2025. (AP)

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed sympathy and solidarity of the State of Kuwait with Iraq following the fire that broke out in a mall Thursday, which left dozens of deaths and injuries.

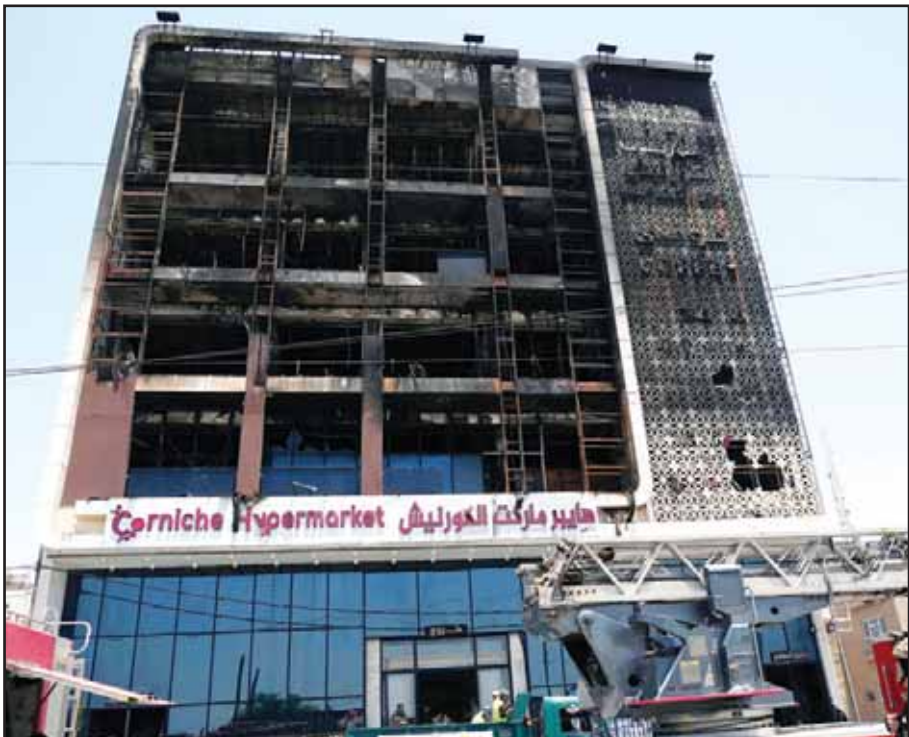
In a statement, the Ministry affirmed that the Government and people of Kuwait extend their condolences and sincere sympathies to Iraq and to the families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Cabinet declared three days of official mourning in solidarity with the families of the victims of the tragic fire incident in a mall in Iraqi Al-Kut area.

A statement by the Media Office of the Iraqi Prime Minister said that the Cabinet decision came during an extraordinary session held on Thursday, chaired by Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani.

Iraqi Ministry of Interior reported earlier that the number of the victims has reached 61, most of which have passed away inside restrooms due to suffocation, while 14 completely charred bodies were found and yet to be identified.

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Iraqi security forces gather in front of the blackened ruins of a hypermarket in Kut, Iraq, following a devastating fire on Thursday, July 17, 2025. (AP)

Dusty skies, high waves may hamper outdoor activities

48°C heat to scorch Kuwait this weekend

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department has forecast extremely hot daytime weather and hot to warm nights throughout the country this weekend.

Acting Director of the Meteorological Department Dhirar Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that Kuwait continues to be affected by the extension of the Indian seasonal low-pressure system, accompanied by a very hot and dry air mass. Winds are expected to be northwesterly to variable, light to moderate, and occasionally active, raising dust, particularly in open areas, and causing high sea waves at times. Scattered clouds may also appear.

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An air-conditioned pedestrian bridge is seen in Hawalli Governorate, July 16, 2025. Kuwait has developed a range of climate-adaptive public facilities to cope with extreme heat. (Xinhua)

Syria ceasefire brings tense calm

Kuwait blasts Israeli raids amid Sweida bloodshed

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait strongly condemns the attacks continuing since Tuesday by the Israeli occupation forces on the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Wednesday.

The despicable attacks, which targeted several government institutions in the Syrian capital city of Damas-

cus and the southern governorate of Sweida, left scores of civilian casualties, including women and children, according to the statement.

In addition, they caused extensive material damage to the civilian infrastructure and public utilities, which risks pushing the entire region into more chaos and more bloodshed, it noted.

The Ministry urged the international

community, particularly the UN Security Council to shoulder their responsibility for halting the Israeli aggression and bringing the culprits to book.

It renewed the State of Kuwait's support to the Syrian Arab Republic in whatever measures to might take to protect its security, stability and sovereignty.

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Defense Minister hails launch as game-changer

Kuwait Army adds Bayraktar TB2 drone to arsenal

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah said Thursday that the launching of Bayraktar TB2 drone is a manifestation of the commitment of the wise political leadership to support plans for the continuous development and modernization of defense systems, with the aim of raising combat readiness and achieving the highest level of security and stability in the country.

The General Staff of Kuwaiti Army made the statement during the Bayraktar TB2 drone launching ceremony at Salem Al-Sabah Air Base, under his sponsorship and in his presence.

Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Air Force Commander Brigadier General Pilot Mo-

hammad Al-Hamdan, Salem Al-Sabah Air Base Commander Brigadier General Pilot Mohammad Al-Rasheed and a number of Air Force officers warmly welcomed the minister.

The Defense Minister also pointed out that the launching of drones into service is a qualitative leap in developing the capabilities of the Army; particularly in the areas of surveillance, reconnaissance and information gathering. He stressed the importance of investing in training national technical and operational personnel to ensure maximum benefit from the modern systems. He affirmed that the Army is the nation's impregnable shield and safety valve in facing various challenges.

He asserted this step is in line with the commitment of the ministry to use

the latest global innovations and technologies to improve the defense systems, and provide modern capabilities that contribute to protecting national borders and airspace.

He expressed his pride in the national competencies that worked on the project and contributed to bringing the drone into service, praising the cooperation and sense of responsibility demonstrated by the Army and the Air Force.

The inauguration ceremony began with a technical briefing on the operational and technical capabilities of Bayraktar TB2 drone; including its accurate surveillance and reconnaissance capacities, and its ability to carry out air support missions and tactical operations.

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Ministry of Defense photo
Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah leads the inauguration ceremony for the Bayraktar TB2 drone, a milestone in Kuwait's defense modernization.

News watch

Kuwait unveils e-tax platform

KUWAIT CITY: The Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Citizenship held a meeting on Thursday, chaired by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

A statement by the Ministry of Interior revealed that the committee decided to strip off Kuwaiti citizenship from a number of cases, with the matter referred to the cabinet.

Those citizenships were stripped off due to dual citizenships, forgery, fraud, and conflict with the state's supreme interest. (KUNA)

PARIS: France announced Wednesday that it will co-chair alongside Saudi Arabia an international conference aiming to advance the efforts to implement a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue.

Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot will represent France at the conference, which will be held on July 28-29 at the UN headquarters in New York City under the auspices of the UN, will gather representatives of several UN member states and civil society members, the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement. (KUNA)



2 Who protects the small countries?



9 Weyay Bank wraps up AI-powered summer program for youth



10 Kuwaiti media delegation explores China's tech future

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:27	Asr	15:29
Sunrise ..	04:59	Maghrib ..	18:49
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:18

Local

Other Voices

Who protects the small countries?

By Abdulaziz Mohammad Al-Anjeri

WHEN Tom Barrack, the US envoy to Syria, said that Lebanon might “go back to Bilad al Sham”, many people were alarmed. He later said he didn’t mean it that way. But in international politics, saying something like that is rarely a mistake. Once a message is out, it serves a purpose. Taking it back doesn’t undo the signal it sent.

Barrack’s comment is part of a bigger pattern. Around the world, we’re seeing more signs that the idea of national borders and sovereignty is being questioned. Things that used to be off-limits are now openly discussed. Big changes in politics often start with words, not weapons. Once people feel comfortable talking about annexing land, the idea of safety behind borders starts to fade.

So what stops strong countries from claiming their neighbors’ problems are part of their own security? What stops them from stepping in under the excuse of keeping the peace or protecting minorities?

These are not just theoretical questions. We’re already seeing examples in many regions. The conflict in Western Sahara is still going. Kashmir remains tense. China talks more openly about Taiwan. Iran and Pakistan both have deep influence inside Af-



Al-Anjeri

ghanistan. And Syria is quietly being divided without official agreements.

What makes the situation even more dangerous is the presence of a player that cannot be fully trusted. Israel has mastered the art of exploiting regional shifts and moves beyond traditional calculations. It remains one of the most impactful and unpredictable actors in the Middle East equation.

In the Middle East, Israel shows how this works. Just days ago, it bombed military targets deep inside the Syrian capital, Damascus. The stated reason was to protect certain communities in southern Syria. But the result was something else: a shift in control. No troops were sent in, no land taken, but power moved. This is a new kind of influence.

Israel acted as a “protector,” but in doing so, it gained long-term leverage. The world didn’t protest. The borders didn’t move on maps, but they changed in reality.

So what should small countries do?

First, stop assuming that stability means safety. Without preparation, peace can fall apart quickly. Second, build strong internal trust. Foreign powers usually succeed when a country is divided from within. This isn’t fear. It’s being realistic.

Every small or mid-sized country today should ask itself: What makes us strong enough not to be pulled into someone else’s plans? And how do we make sure our future isn’t being decided behind closed doors where we have no voice?

‘Workers’ rights priority at all cost’

PAM shuts companies delaying staff salaries

Permit renewal, transfers unaffected

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Under the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah to monitor the enforcement of the Cabinet’s decision on the timely payment of workers’ salaries and wages, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) recently suspended a number of files of private businesses and companies that have been late in paying their workers’ salaries or in depositing them regularly in local banks, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting informed sources from PAM.

They affirmed that this measure aims to protect workers’ legal rights, which is a top priority for PAM.

The sources explained that the suspension does not prevent the renewal of workers’ files nor does it block their transfer to another employer whose file is not suspended. This step is taken in accordance with Article 57 of Law No. 6/2010 concerning labor in the private sector, which states that “an employer who hires no fewer than five workers, as per the law’s provisions, is obligated to deposit their salaries into accounts at local financial institutions and submit copies of the bank statements to PAM.”

The first phase of suspension targeted non-compliant business owners and companies in the private sector, based on the employer’s commitment through PAM’s automated systems to adhere to the requirements of the aforementioned



Sheikh Fahad

article. This serves as a precautionary warning.

While emphasizing that the suspension is primarily a warning to employers to ensure timely salary transfers to local financial institutions, the sources stressed that, under direct orders from Minister Sheikh Fahad, PAM will not tolerate any harm to Kuwait’s reputation in human rights, especially regarding the rights of expatriate workers.

They explained that PAM warned companies that fail to pay their workers’ salaries regularly that immediate legal action will be taken against them. It affirmed its continued monitoring of employers to ensure full compliance with salary payment and deposit requirements in accordance with the Labor Law. Once the conditions are met, the suspension will be automatically lifted from the company or employer without the need for further review.

Regarding the suspension of files and renewals, the sources clarified that suspending a company’s file does not prevent the renewal of its workers’ permits nor their transfer to a non-suspended employer’s file. This ensures that workers are not harmed or end up being in violation of residency laws.

However, suspending an employer’s file also halts the addition of new workers and the processing of need assessment requests until the employer’s legal status with the Authority is rectified. The employer must fully commit to transferring workers’ salaries to their personal accounts and provide reasons for any delays or failures through PAM’s automated system via the “Ashal” service.

Suspending a file also means suspending the addition of new workers and the processing of need assessment procedures.

It is worth highlighting that in October 2024, Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stressed that he would take firm action against all companies violating the Cabinet’s decision on the timely payment of salaries and wages to their workers.

Other Voices

King witness ... the deeper significance

By Ahmad alsarraf

ON February 14, 2005, former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated along with 21 others when an equivalent of 1,000 tons of high explosives detonated in his motorcade near the St. George Hotel in Beirut.

Given the political climate in Lebanon at the time and Hariri’s stature, the Lebanese government and the United Nations agreed to establish an international tribunal to identify those responsible. This was unprecedented, as it marked the first international tribunal to investigate a crime committed against an individual who was not holding an official position at the time.

The term “king witness” was frequently used during subsequent investigations and trials to describe the status of certain witnesses. At first, I thought it simply meant a key witness, but I later realized it carries a deeper significance.

The origin of the term dates back to the 1600s and the British judicial tradition, where judgments were issued in the name of the king. In some legal contexts, a ‘King’s Witness’ refers to a person who testifies on behalf of the Crown in criminal proceedings, especially when the British monarch is the reigning sovereign.

Witnesses play a crucial role in legal evidence, even in civil cases that often depend on written agreements between parties. While provable facts may be established through witness testimony, criminal cases particularly rely heavily on such evidence, which frequently forms the basis for conviction or acquittal.

A witness is a person who claims to have, or be-



alsarraf

lieves they have, relevant knowledge about an event or matter of interest. They may provide testimony voluntarily or under duress, either orally or in writing.

Chance often plays a role in their selection. A witness can become a defendant in the case they are testifying in if the judge determines they are lying or contradicting themselves, which can lead to charges of perjury.

A ‘king witness’ refers to someone who reveals a crime in which they were involved, whether in planning or execution. Such a witness may be granted immunity or pardoned for their participation in the crime in exchange for their testimony, confession, and cooperation in identifying the remaining perpetrators.

In most legal systems around the world, a witness may be exempt from punishment for a crime they reveal, even if they were involved, provided their testimony is accurate, useful, and given as part of a plea bargain. This is particularly common in serious crime cases such as murder, armed robbery, or political crimes like attempted regime change by force. A king witness is often granted leniency if they are not the primary perpetrator or a major accomplice.

A king witness is sometimes the weakest link, and authorities may strike a deal with them to secure critical information that pushes the case forward. However, not all countries grant immunity to king witnesses. In some jurisdictions, a person who confesses to a crime is not automatically exempt from criminal liability, except in specific cases, such as bribery or other exceptions clearly defined by law.

Therefore, self-reporting or cooperating with authorities does not necessarily absolve someone of legal responsibility.

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Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-50 km/h causing rising dust.
By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate freshening

Weather		
at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-40 km/h.		
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	49	38
Kuwait Airport	50	37
Abdaly	50	33

Jahra	51	38
Salmiyah	45	34
Ahmadi	44	32
Nuwaisib	51	33
Wafra	49	32
Salmy	50	34
Managish	51	35



Delegation of Kuwaiti students taking part in the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) 2025.

KUNA photo

Kuwaitis take part as IPhO '25 opens in Paris

PARIS, July 17, (KUNA): The 55th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) 2025 opened on Thursday in Paris under the sponsorship of French President Emmanuel Macron and runs through July 24.

Kuwait is represented by four students--Rakan Fayez Al-Dhafiri, Hashim Abdullah Al-Qallaf, Sayed Mohammad Hussein Al-Husseini, and Dana Nizar Al-Rais--supported by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC),

part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). Delegations from more than 80 countries are participating.

The team’s entry stems from co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Kuwait University and follows a year of intensive, specialist-led physics training to prepare students for international competition, SACGC said.

Participation, it added, reflects its mission to encourage scientific tal-

ent, strengthen Kuwait’s presence in global scientific forums, support excellence and innovation, and develop national scientific capabilities. SACGC wished the students success.

Founded in 1967, the IPhO is a premier physics competition for pre-university students under 20 who intend to pursue science, testing knowledge, analytical and critical thinking, problem-solving, and theoretical and experimental skills at the highest level.



Participants of the discussion.

Al-Seyassah photo

Challenges faced by Gulf societies discussed

AI outperforms many websites, makes research easier: experts

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: A number of faculty members at the College of Social Sciences and other institutions have underscored the need to address the challenges that the Gulf society is currently facing, the struggles of researchers in the field of social studies, and the dominance of quantitative methods in Arab research.

The faculty members made the statement in a symposium organized by the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University entitled, “Quantitative and Qualitative Social Studies in the Gulf and Arab Academic Community: Reality, Problems and Experience.”

Dr. Ghanem Al-Najjar, Professor of International Relations and Political Science at the College of Social Sciences, emphasized the need to differentiate between scientific research and studies related to public policy, as well as to apply concepts and theories realistically and away from randomness.

He pointed out that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been able to bring about a technological revolution in the

field of information, especially since forecasts indicate that AI will obscure many research applications based on links, as many people search for answers more quickly.

He said the simplest applications of AI have outperformed many other websites, such as Google, in terms of speed of response. He added that everyone is going through a new era in the issue of social research, and in how to address the challenges that the Gulf society is facing; such as quantitative research tools and the suffering of researchers in the field of social studies.

Dr. Baqer Al-Najjar, a faculty member in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the College of Social Sciences, addressed the most important problems encountered by the academic staff in countries in the region, which hinder the quality and productivity of scientific research.

He revealed that “through qualitative scientific research, I tried to present a clear picture of the condition of social science colleges in Gulf universities. It became clear that there are about 65 social science departments in public and private Gulf universities; and more than 700 professors and faculty members in

such colleges, who play a role in formulating policies in some countries, with limited capabilities.”

In a related development, Dr. Othman Al-Khader explained that the process of social studies is not limited to the quantitative or qualitative approach; and that interest in the Arab world in general, and Kuwait University in particular, is directed towards quantitative studies, specifically descriptive studies, with utter negligence of experimental and longitudinal studies, which negatively affect the quality of scientific research.

Dr. Ali Watfa, a faculty member in the Department of Educational Foundations at the College of Education, said that an in-depth analysis of quantitative and qualitative issues in the humanities and social sciences must occupy a wide space for discussion in social and educational research; and that the criticisms directed at quantitative approaches are ideological. He also cited the factors that dominate quantitative approaches in Arab research, affirming the authenticity of the qualitative approach in social studies and the ideological dimension in sociological approaches.

We have to enforce laws: MoCI

‘No abuse of co-ops boards of directors’

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Assistant Undersecretary for Financial, Administrative and Cooperative Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Sayed Issa stressed that the ministry does not abuse the boards of directors of cooperative societies.

In a press statement on the sidelines of an inspection tour in a number of cooperative societies in Ahmadi Governorate on Thursday, Issa pointed out there are laws, ministerial decisions, regulations and work bylaws; and that the ministry’s role in the event of non-compliance is to enforce the law, as the law governs the relationship in this regard.

He disclosed that the goals of the visit include following up the needs of cooperatives, addressing any obstacle they might be facing, and listening

directly to members of the boards of directors to identify shortcomings and needs. He affirmed the ongoing visits of the ministry to cooperative societies, as well as monitoring developments related to them and the removal of obstacles to ease procedures for citizens.



Dr. Sayed Issa

He said the field visits also aim to communicate with and get to know the members of the cooperatives’ boards of directors, closely examine their needs, and listen to their suggestions. He emphasized the need to encourage cooperative societies to expedite administrative and financial integration with the ministry through electronic

services in order to achieve full integration with the ministry’s systems. He believes this will lead to administrative and financial transparency and enhance the country’s strategic reserves.

He pointed out that the ministry calls on members of the cooperatives’ boards of directors to demonstrate understanding and work as one team to better serve the public. He expressed his hope that they remain united in serving the people, ensuring that cooperative services are of a high standard and quality.

He added that the ministry affirms its constant efforts to protect public interest and reach an understanding regarding any dispute, decision or current regulation for amendment. He asserted that the ministry is open to any comments from the cooperatives regarding the amendment of regulations and systems if they are aimed at providing better services to citizens.

Disguised unemployment hinders gov’t performance

“WE are facing a case of disguised unemployment, which has negatively affected the performance of the public sector. Despite the large number of employees, some government agencies have been slow in completing their tasks due to bureaucratic procedures and inflated administrative structures,” columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Marri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“In many countries, real unemployment is a pressing issue, with high numbers of young people unable to find work. In Kuwait, the government, to its credit, has worked to combat unemployment by creating jobs for Kuwaiti youth in the public sector. However, this approach has led to disguised unemployment, which not only places a strain on the state budget but has also slowed down the overall pace of work, rather than improving productivity.



Hamad Al-Marri

“Examples of disguised unemployment include appointing university graduates to jobs unrelated to their fields of study, assigning large numbers of employees to tasks that could easily be handled by just two or three people, and cramming these individuals into a small room with only enough space for two desks.

“To eliminate unemployment in all its forms, it is important to create meaningful job opportunities through the launch of new development projects, attract international companies to set up factories in the country, and properly activate the role of the private sector to ensure long-term job security for Kuwaiti youth.

“The government also needs to develop residential cities, which require essential public facilities and amenities such as schools, health centers, service centers that represent various ministries and government agencies, and other necessary infrastructure. The establishment of these facilities creates new job opportunities. Attracting international companies to set up factories in the country not only provides employment for Kuwaiti youth but also gives them valuable experience in these industries and helps strengthen the national economy.

“In addition, properly activating the role of the private sector is necessary for ensuring job security for Kuwaiti youth and encouraging their active participation in the workforce. The current situation discourages Kuwaiti youth from engaging in the private sector, largely due to misunderstandings about privatization. Unfortunately, privatization is often seen as merely diverting public funds to serve the private sector.

“While the government’s efforts to provide jobs for Kuwaiti youth in the public sector are commendable so that they can support themselves, start families, and avoid unemployment, true progress requires the creation of new job opportunities through the development of new projects.”

Also:

“Kuwait’s rise from 69th to 36th place globally in the Global Competitiveness Index is a clear sign that effective reforms are starting to deliver results. This huge leap is no coincidence or accident but it is the result of the deliberate, well-planned steps that have set Kuwait on a new path toward institutional maturity,” columnist Eng. **Yasmine Al-Rifai** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Several important factors have contributed to this progress, including increased government efficiency and the faster, more accessible digital services for the citizens. Integrity has become a key performance standard. The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) and robust oversight practices have transformed transparency from a mere slogan into a firmly adopted principle.

“The business environment is now clearer and more attractive, with updated laws and procedures that have boosted investor confidence and opened the door to new partnerships. Technology has become central to government operations. Collaborations in artificial intelligence and cloud computing have sparked a wave of modernization in decision-making and service delivery. Infrastructure is steadily advancing, with ongoing investments in transportation, energy, and communications laying the foundation for a modern and sustainable economy.

“This leap is more than just an improvement in global rankings, but it marks a shift in how the international community views Kuwait. The country is now seen as one that delivers on its promises and fulfills its commitments. Global institutions increasingly regard Kuwait as a serious reformer, which strengthens its regional standing and gives the New Kuwait 2035 vision renewed momentum for successful implementation.

“In the next phase, Kuwait needs smart governance powered by artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze risks and make precise decisions. A unified national data system is essential to connect government agencies and enable faster, more coordinated responses. Building national human capacity in the digital field is essential to lead this phase with efficiency and independence. Kuwait must continuously benchmark its achievements against the latest global best practices.

“The focus must remain on the impact of these measures on citizens, as they are the true measure of any success.”

□ □ □

“Some may argue, particularly educa-

tors, that the topic of cumulative grade point averages (CGPAs) in final high school exams has been overanalyzed. However, for those who examine the issue more deeply, the details suggest otherwise,” Kuwaiti writer **Dr. Hamoud Al-Hattab** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The truth is, today’s CGPAs largely represent a numerical accumulation rather than a true reflection of educational or experiential growth. The result is comparable to a woodcutter working in the dark—directionless and random, lacking in meaningful insight or purpose.

“This disconnect stems from several negative factors. Chief among them are the quality of the curriculum chosen for instruction and the nature of the educational objectives set across the three main academic stages. Added to this are various other systemic issues that further weaken the experiential value of what is supposed to be an academic measure.

“It is important to recognize that today’s cumulative grade point average, which often boosts students’ grades, is largely just an accumulation of scores. The outcome, both educationally and experientially, resembles a woodcutter working in the dark guided more by chance than by clarity or purpose. This issue stems from several underlying problems, foremost among them being the quality of the curriculum chosen for education and the nature of the educational objectives set in the three academic stages.

“The curriculum adopted by the ministry throughout its history is one of the least effective in providing learners with meaningful experience. This is not a personal critique, but rather an observation grounded in curriculum science, where it is known as the “separate study units curriculum.” Over the years, numerous education ministries have been formed, and many ministers, some former educators themselves, have held their posts and then moved on. Yet, if you were to ask many of these educational leaders, “What is the name of the curriculum you are currently overseeing and receiving your salary for?” you would find that many are unaware of both the name and the nature of the curriculum in use.

“This is neither an insult nor an expression of harshness. Consider how many ministers of education have served without specialized educational qualifications. How many education ministries have been formed where leadership appointments were based on seniority rather than specialization or even relevant experience? This is a valid and reasonable basis for criticism of the ministry.

“Now, let us return to the name of this long-standing curriculum used in most education ministries in the Arab world, including that of our own country, Kuwait. Gentlemen, we have stated that the approach we are discussing is known in the field of curriculum studies, and taught in educational sciences programs at universities and teacher training institutes, as the “separate study unit curriculum.” Within curriculum theory, this model is regarded as one of the weakest and least effective. It is also considered the simplest and least costly to develop, as well as the easiest to teach.

“These are simply symptoms of its inherent weakness and inferiority. In curriculum studies, it is also regarded as the most unsuccessful model, one that is least effective at developing learners’ capacities and diverse abilities. The core reason for this failure lies in its reliance, at all educational levels, on rote memorization and regurgitation. It focuses exclusively on building the single skill of memorization, which is not only limited but also easily lost over time for various reasons. Lacking a variety of memorization techniques, it depends primarily on repetition as the sole method for retaining information.

“This approach neglects many mental faculties, including the critical ability to understand that is essential to effective education. The expertise and specialized competencies of curriculum developers is a separate issue, with shortcomings as vast as mountains.

“Perhaps I have shed light on some key points regarding the issue of cumulative, rather than merely numerical, experience, which is the essential educational element that is currently missing. There is more to discuss on this topic, God willing.”

□ □ □

“The primary goal of any economy and politics is to ensure the welfare of citizens, support their livelihoods, and guarantee their social security,” columnist Eng. **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Contrary to what some may claim about the end of the welfare state, the truth is that if economic and financial policies fail to improve their well-being and standard of living, and provide social protection, then those policies are undeniably flawed. The most accurate and realistic measure of economic efficiency and quality of development is sustained, productive economic growth that generates job opportunities, along with policies that manage inflation and strengthen citizens’ purchasing power.

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



KUNA photos

GCC Chiefs of Armed Forces at the conclusion of the 11th consultative meeting. Inset: Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

GCC to boost defense ties, raise combat readiness

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): The 11th consultative meeting of the GCC Chiefs of Armed Forces concluded on Wednesday.

Hosted by Kuwait, the meeting discussed ways to enhance defense cooperation and co-

ordinate training to strengthen security and raise combat readiness. Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired the meeting, which emphasized military integration among

member states, said the Kuwaiti Army in a statement.

The army chiefs discussed several topics on the agenda that reflect the aspirations and goals of GCC leaders.

Trio acquitted in terrorism blame

Tunisians accused of joining ISIS

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Second Circuit of the Court of Appeals, headed by Judge Nasr Salem Al-Haid with Judges Saud Al-Sanea and Tariq Metwally as members, upheld the acquittal of three Tunisians of belonging to the terrorist organization ISIS on Wednesday.

The Public Prosecution had earlier charged the three Tunisians with joining ISIS, pledging allegiance to the leaders of the organization, and planning to bomb Shiite mosques and Husainiyats in Kuwait and kill the worshippers therein.

Case files indicate that the accused were trained in making firecrackers before being arrested by the State Security officers at the Ministry of Interior.

The Criminal Court acquitted the defendants, based on the prevailing legal and jurisprudential principle that punishment is not imposed for the stage of contemplating and reflecting on a crime. This is because as long as the intention remains within the mind and has not been revealed to the outside world, it poses no harm or danger.

It stated that the investigations and documents were devoid of any evidence that would definitely prove the defendants’ participation in the organization, and that despite their knowledge of the purpose for which this organization works, that is not sufficient to establish the crime of joining a banned organization, which is the subject of the accusation.

It pointed out that this crime does not occur simply by the defendants meeting and repeating the pledge of allegiance to the leaders of the organization in their homes.

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Deadline extended: In coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education, Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences announced an additional three-week period to complete university degree equivalency documents for all applicants wishing to enroll in the 33rd Specialized Cadet Officer Course and the 15th Specialized Female Cadet Officer Course, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Not guilty in drugs case

Woman acquitted in abuse of 2 children

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Criminal Court (Domestic Violence) acquitted a Kuwaiti woman of abusing her two children.

The court based its decision on the pleadings of the defense lawyer, Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, who pointed out the lack of incriminating evidence.

Case files indicate that the ex-husband of the accused claimed she beat her two sons and caused them injuries.

After examining the medical and psychological reports and the testimonies of the alleged victims, the court established the absence of conclusive evidence to support the accusation.

Although the report of the Child Protection Office stated that the mother used ‘disciplinary beating’ as a parenting method, the same report confirmed the existence of positive feelings between the children and their mother.

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Kuwaiti not guilty: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of the First Instance Court that acquitted a citizen of possession and consumption of narcotic and psychotropic substances and driving under the influence.

The court made its decision after confirming the invalidity of the arrest and search procedures, based on legal arguments presented by Attorney Jassim Al-Muhaisen.

The Public Prosecution had earlier charged the defendant with possession of hashish, methamphetamine and amphetamine for consumption as well as driving under the influence of drugs.

Al-Muhaisen argued that the arrest and search procedures were invalid, as the defendant’s abnormal condition at the time of arrest did not entail flagrante delicto, which would have allowed a security officer to arrest and search the accused without obtaining a warrant from the prosecution.

He submitted a detailed memorandum in which he explained the lack of external signs indicating the occurrence of a crime. He pointed out the contradictions in the statements of the arresting officer, the latter’s sole testimony, and the absence of connection between the accused and the seized items.

Since the court is convinced that the procedures for arresting and searching the accused are invalid; it decided to exclude the testimony of the officer, the forensic evidence reports, and the result of the urine analysis of the accused, as they were based on an invalid procedure.

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Ex-MP trial date set: The Criminal Court set Aug 7, 2025 for the trial of former MP Mohammad Al-Mutair on accusations of offending HH the Amir.

On Thursday, the court decided to refer the case of Al-Mutair to the president of the Court of First Instance to take the appropriate action regarding the appointment of another circuit to hear the case, in response to the request of the defense lawyer to recuse the court for the second time.



Mol photo

Najda police verifies the validity of a resident’s documents.

‘Najda’ intensifies bid to maintain security

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The General Directorate of Rescue Police (Najda) has intensified its efforts to maintain security and apprehend individuals in violation of the law. Over the past week, security campaigns were carried out across all six governorates, resulting in 1,441 operations, reports Al-Anba daily.

During these operations, authorities arrested 145 wanted individuals for various charges, including criminal rulings, arrest warrants, absconding, and theft. Additionally, 60 individuals were detained for lacking official identification, and 73 expatriates were found to be residing in the country with expired permits.

Police also seized 59 vehicles that were subject to judicial rulings. Seven physical altercations were resolved, and humanitarian aid was provided to 426 individuals in need.

On the traffic front, Najda officers recorded 3,675 traffic violations, including six for illegal parking in spaces designated for people with disabilities. Seven vehicles were impounded, and police responded to 126 traffic accidents and one case involving a pedestrian being run over.

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Jahra Council greenlights KOTC LNG water pipeline

Bridge adjustment, poultry relocation cleared

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Jahra Governorate Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Enezi, on Wednesday approved the request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate a freshwater route to feed the liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant of Kuwait



Al-Enezi
bridge linking the two plots from six meters to 4.8

Oil Tankers Company (KOTC) in Umm Al-Aish.

During the meeting, the committee also approved the following:

- Request of one of the companies that own plots 42 and 48 in Jahra Administrative and Commercial Center (Block 93) to change the height of the pedestrian bridge linking the two plots from six meters to 4.8 meters above ground level;
- Request of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) to allocate an alternative site for Naif Poultry Company in Sulaibiya Agricultural Area.

In addition, the committee referred to the executive authority the request of the Ministry of Health to change the use of the site of the pest control center in Jahra to become a kidney dialysis center, with the amendment of its borders and the expansion of its area; as well as the letter of Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi regarding the allocation of land to establish a walkway, for further study and to present its technical opinion on these requests.



Al-Seyassah photo
Nada Al-Duwaisan, Head of the Government Service Development Department, speaking at the workshop.

Initiative improves performance assessments

CSC workshop empowers public sector with new evaluation tools

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) organized a training workshop entitled "Employee Achievement Record."

Nada Al-Duwaisan, Head of the Government Service Development Department, conducted the workshop; with the representatives of the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, and the Secretariat General of the Private Universities Council in attendance.

In a press statement, the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education revealed that its participation in the workshop stems from its commitment to develop institutional performance and promote a culture of quality and achievement among its employees by adopting the best modern administrative practices, which support the journey of excellence in government institutions.

It is worth noting that the employee achievement record is an effective tool for monitoring professional performance and continuous development, and it contributes to building an efficient government agency.

The bureau added "the workshop aims to enhance the principle of institutional quality and highlight the importance of self-monitoring as a tool for selecting talent; along with institutional performance governance to ensure the achievement of standards of integrity, fairness and transparency in the government work environment."

It pointed out that the workshop's themes included a set of objectives; specifically identifying strengths and weaknesses in employee performance to work on developing or overcoming them, raising employee efficiency, and achieving job satisfaction through a mechanism for tracking and documenting achievement, as well as ensuring fairness in evaluation and promotions through accurate periodic employee performance reports.

New science programs target key job markets

KU expands cybersecurity, finance studies

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Dean of the College of Science at Kuwait University Dr. Haider Behbehani announced the introduction and development of various academic programs; such as the Cybersecurity Program in the Department of Computer Science, Financial and Actuarial Mathematics Program in the Department of Mathematics, and Data Analysis Program -- support specialization in the Department of Statistics.

Meanwhile, acting Head of the Computer Science Department Dr. Zaid Dashti stated that the Cybersecurity Program includes the fundamentals of Computer Science; covering the theoretical foundations of Cryptography and applied topics such as data, network and software security. He added it also takes into account the basic requirements of the ABET accreditation, as well as the needs of the labor market in line with technological developments and the vision of Kuwait.

He affirmed that the Deanship of the College of Science supports the program, which was approved by the Deanship of Admissions and Registration more than a year ago. "The proposal was submitted after being reviewed by three experts in the field of cybersecurity for presentation to the Academic Affairs Committee," he explained.

He said the cybersecurity specialization is not limited to systems in the virtual world, as it is one of the main academic specializations within the field of Computer Science. He asserted this specialization is very important due to recent developments in the field of technology and computers.

He pointed out that the Computer Science and Cybersecurity programs aim to graduate specialists capable of protecting data, networks and digital systems in all government and private sectors.

On the other hand, Dr. Mishari Al-Furaih -- a faculty member in the Mathematics Department -- disclosed that the Financial and Actuarial Mathematics program keeps pace with

developments in the labor market, and was created based on the manpower needs of the public and private sectors. He stated that the graduates of this course can join various financial sectors in the country; including the Central Bank, Capital Markets Authority (CMA), Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), banks and insurance companies.

Al-Furaih pointed out that this program studies how to make appropriate financial decisions based on the projection of changes in various financial products -- whether investment portfolios, bonds, stocks, insurance or pension.

Furthermore, Dr. Fatima Al-Madhkur, acting Head of the Statistics Department, said the Data Analysis program is an ideal choice for students who wish to improve their academic and professional opportunities in various fields like business, economics, health, science and engineering.

Al-Madhkur indicated that the program offers diverse career opportunities; such as data analyst, data scientist, business analyst, business intelligence developer and quality analyst.

Water supply halted at Abdali Farms

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Ministry of Public Works announced that the supply of treated water to Abdali

Farms will be temporarily halted due to scheduled maintenance and development work.

The suspension will begin next Saturday and is expected to last for ten days.

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KGAC photo
Participants in the training course.

Enhancing market protection

KGAC boosts counterfeit detection

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) has concluded a training course aimed to enhance the technical knowledge of inspectors and specialists, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Administrative Development and Training Department at KGAC conducted the training course, with the participation of a number of global brands.

During the course, each participating brand presented a comprehensive introduction about its products; such as the distinct characteristics and marks that help distinguish between original and counterfeit products; in addition to the threats the brands

are facing as a result of counterfeiting and piracy practices.

The training covered several topics like the registered trademark products, ways to develop the ability to distinguish between original and counterfeit products, and the most serious threats that the brands are currently facing.

KGAC stated that this training is in line with its commitment to develop the skills of its personnel; thereby, ensuring the efficiency of inspection and control procedures, and enhancing the protection of the local market from counterfeiting and other violations.

Efforts to improve work conditions

Society of Nuclear Medicine launches board nominations for 2025-'27 term

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Society of Nuclear Medicine Specialists and Practitioners has announced the opening of nominations for membership in its Board of Directors for the second term, covering the years 2025 to 2027, reports Al-Jarida daily.

President of the Society Ohoud Shafaqa Al-Enezi invited qualified and specialized professionals in the field to apply and take part in this volunteer experience, describing it as an opportunity to advance the profession and strengthen its role in the healthcare system.

Al-Enezi explained that this step reflects of his commitment to continue the institutional work that began with its official establishment in July 2023, following the preparatory phase that started in 2021. She affirmed that the society serves as an effective platform to put the specialization under the spotlight and defend the rights of technical staff working in the field of nuclear medicine.

"Since its inception, the society has dedicated its efforts to protecting the rights of professionals in the field and improving the work environment. Its most notable achievements include participation in preparing the technical job description for nuclear medicine specialists, clarifying professional roles and preventing staff from being assigned duties outside their scope of expertise," she elaborated.

She revealed that the society submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Health,

calling for the adoption of the job description approved by the Civil Service Commission. She said the memorandum also pointed out the absence of clear standards for organizing tasks in nuclear medicine departments and urged the ministry to adopt unified regulations to achieve professional justice. She praised the ministry's understanding and constructive response to these demands.

She stressed that the society put emphasis on reducing the workload and excessive shift hours faced by nuclear medicine professionals. She confirmed that the society has cooperated with other professional bodies, including the Pharmacists Association and the Laboratories Association, to address the issue of shift hours, which can reach up to 48 hours per month, contributing to staff fatigue and professional pressure.

She added the society discussed allowances and benefits for technical staff with the ministry, calling for the update of the unified cadre -- unchanged since 2013 -- to reflect developments in medical practice and better support such specialized staff.

She then expressed her gratitude to the members of the society and all those who contributed to the aforementioned accomplishments. She reaffirmed the commitment of the society to develop the profession and enhance the skills of the technical staff to better serve the healthcare system and the wider community.



Farwaniya Governorate photo of Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with Ambassador Noshrevan Lomtadize.

Farwaniya Governor hosts Georgia’s envoy to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received Georgia’s Ambassador to Kuwait Noshrevan Lomtadize on Thursday at his office in the governorate’s headquarters.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Sheikh Athbi Nasser welcomed the ambassador, and affirmed that such visits help strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

The governor praised the strong and growing relations between Kuwait and Georgia. During the meeting, both sides discussed several topics of mutual interest.

At the end of the visit, Ambassador Lomtadize thanked the governor for his warm welcome and hospitality, expressing his pleasure with the visit and wishing the governor continued success, and Kuwait lasting stability and prosperity.

‘Don’t wait too long’

‘Flexibility’ crucial to career growth for job seekers: CSC

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Accepting jobs offered through the Civil Service Commission (CSC), particularly for registered citizens seeking employment in the public sector, has many advantages; reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources pointed out that accepting a nomination for an available government job provides not only financial stability; but also the chance to acquire valuable workplace skills such as communication, teamwork and discipline -- assets that enhance employability even if the job is outside the applicant’s field of study. “Do not refuse a livelihood that comes to you,” they advised, especially for those facing financial difficulties.

“While the CSC aims to nominate graduates according to their specializations -- specifically in fields like Medicine, Engineering and Programming; there are cases where graduates with general bachelor’s degrees are nominated based

on ministry staffing needs. In such instances, flexibility can lead to long-term benefits,” sources said.

Sources stated that some candidates prefer to wait for a position in their specific area of expertise, citing job satisfaction and a lower risk of professional burnout as key reasons. However, they clarified that even if a candidate is initially placed outside their specialization, the CSC facilitates transfers to relevant fields when vacancies arise within the same government agency, especially in certain sectors such as Media and Political Science.

They also cautioned against prolonged waiting without skill development. “A long wait can diminish job prospects, particularly if graduates fail to invest in themselves through training, freelance work or acquiring new qualifications. This could result in psychological stress, especially for those under financial strain,” they warned.

MEW secures SAB approval for KD169mn GCCIA power import

Khalidiya B transformer fault triggers Faiha blackout

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The total amount for which the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy obtained conditional approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to contract for the import of electricity from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) reached KD169.126 million over a nine-month period -- from April to December.

According to reliable sources, the ministry got approval for the import in April amounting to KD2.641 million, two approvals in May -- first for KD1.756 million and the second for KD3.348 million, in addition to an approval from June until December for KD161.381 million.

Sources indicated that the energy import is through the coordinated efforts of the ministry and GCCIA to support the grid, maintain the stability of the electrical system during summer, and avoid resorting to scheduled power outages as much as possible, given the increased loads resulting from high temperatures and increased consumption rates in summer.

Sources disclosed that the ministry utilized the GCCIA as one of the solutions to address the energy crisis until production rates increase and new projects are implemented in the near future. Sources said these projects include the installation of gas turbine units operating on a combined cycle system to increase power production at Al-Subiya power station by 900 megawatts; indicating the ministry is racing against time to complete the fourth phase that includes the tender, award, contracting and implementation procedures.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy announced that three sub-feeders from the main “Khalidiya B” transformer station went out of service, causing a power outage in parts of Faiha.

In a statement, the ministry confirmed that emergency teams rushed to the site to work on restoring power as quickly as possible.

Students must complete 30 units to qualify

Abdullah Al-Salem University announces internal transfer guidelines; applications open Aug 20–21

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Dean-ship of Admission and Registration at Abdullah Al-Salem University has announced the general conditions and requirements for transferring between colleges and academic programs within the university. It stated that transfer applications will be accepted on August 20 and 21.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the university emphasized that this initiative reflects its commitment to offering academic flexibility and supporting students in choosing majors that match their academic strengths, professional goals, and personal interests.

The university explained the general conditions for internal transfers, divided into the following sections:

1. Academic and vocational transfer restrictions:

- Students are only once allowed to transfer from one college to another, or from one academic program to another.
- To be eligible, students must have completed no fewer than 30 credit units and no more than 45.
- Students who have completed between 46 and 79 credit units may have their transfer requests considered, in accordance with the regulations approved by the Academic Affairs and

Registration Committee.

2. Graduation requirements and academic commitment:

- Once a student transfers, they will be subject to the curriculum of the new college or program.
- Transfer requests cannot be canceled once they have been processed.
- 3. Academic criteria for transfer:**

 - To be eligible for transfer, students must have earned a minimum grade of C in the required courses for ensuring they are prepared to succeed in the new major.

- 4. Mechanism for determining available seats:**

 - The number of seats available for transfer into any academic program is determined based on actual vacancies in the entire program.
 - An additional five percent of the program’s total allocated seats are added annually to these available seats.
 - Vacant seats are calculated by subtracting the number of students admitted to the program in the same cohort as the applicant from the total number of allocated seats.

- 5. Timeline for submitting transfer applications:**

 - A specific period is allocated after the end of each semester for submitting transfer applications. This allows students to plan in advance and ensures the

smooth flow of the academic process.

Transfer requirements for each college

1. College of Business Administration

Academic Criteria:

- There is no minimum GPA requirement for transferring into the programs of the College of Business Administration.

Admission requirements based on secondary school certificate type:

- Students with a high school diploma in either the Science or Arts track may transfer to the ‘Digital Marketing Program’ or the ‘Business Administration, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Program’.
- Only students with a Science-track high school diploma are eligible to transfer to the ‘Supply Chain and Logistics Management Program’.

2. College of Engineering and Petroleum

Academic Criteria:

- A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.33 is required for transfer into any of the College of Engineering and Petroleum programs.
- Only students with a ‘Science-track’ high school diploma are eligible to transfer.

3. The College of Computing Sciences and Engineering

Academic Criteria:

- A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.33 is required for transfer into the The College of Computing Sciences and Engineering programs.
- Only students with a Science-track high school diploma are eligible to transfer.

In this regard, Dean of Admission and Registration at Abdullah Al-Salem University Dr. Ahmed Al-Mutawa affirmed that this policy reflects the university’s commitment to providing a flexible and advanced educational environment that meets students’ needs and supports them in achieving their academic and professional goals.

Dr. Al-Mutawa highlighted the university’s belief that students are at the heart of the educational process. As such, the university is committed to providing opportunities that empower students to choose the academic path that best suits their goals and interests.

He stressed the importance of careful planning and consulting with academic advisors before making a transfer decision, noting that such a decision can have a direct impact on a student’s academic path and the duration of their studies.

Dr. Al-Mutawa also urged all students to thoroughly review the requirements of their intended major and ensure they meet all necessary conditions before applying for a transfer.

Continued from Page 1

61 perish

The ministry added that civil defense teams managed to rescue more than 45 persons stuck inside the building.

A fire engulfed a newly-opened shopping center in eastern Iraq, killing more than 60 people, including children, Iraqi officials said Thursday.

Civil defense teams rescued more than 45 people who became trapped when the fire broke out late Wednesday in the city of Kut in Wasit province, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. Others are still missing, according to the state-run Iraqi News Agency.

Photographs and videos on local media showed the Corniche Hypermarket Mall, a five-story shopping center that had opened only a week earlier, fully engulfed in flames.

While the cause of the fire is still under investigation, officials and residents alleged that lack of fire safety measures in the building contributed to the scale of the tragedy.

Iraq’s Ministry of Interior said in a statement that 61 people died in the shopping center fire, most of them from suffocation. Among the dead were 14 charred bodies that remain unidentified, it said.

Provincial Gov. Mohammed al-Miyahi declared three days of mourning. He said legal cases were filed against the building owner and shopping center owner, but did not specify what the charges were.

“We assure the families of the innocent victims that we will not be lenient with those who were directly or indirectly responsible for this incident,” al-Mayyeh said.

In a phone interview with The Associated Press, al-Miyahi called the fire “a heartbreaking tragedy for the people of Wasit” and alleged that the building owner had not implemented the necessary fire safety measures when he converted it into a shopping center.

He said that no government official has resigned or been dismissed as a result of the fire, and that they are currently awaiting the results of the investigation. The results of the preliminary investigation will be released within 48 hours, he said.

The building owner could not immediately be reached for comment.

Poor building standards have often contributed to tragic fires in Iraq. In July 2021, a blaze at a hospital in the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah that killed between 60 to 92 people was determined to have been fueled by highly flammable, low-cost type of “sandwich panel” cladding that is illegal in Iraq.

In 2023, more than 100 people died in a fire at a wedding hall in the predominantly Christian area of Hamdaniya in Nineveh province after the ceiling panels above a pyrotechnic machine burst into flames.

PM leads

coordination and results of high-ranking Chinese governmental delegation visit to the country to discuss the implementation of projects to develop and rehabilitate systems.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Meshari; Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Noora Al-Fassam; Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem; Acting Head of the Prime Minister’s Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah; President of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed; and Ambassador Hayat.

Also on Thursday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Fang Jinshu, chairman of the Chinese state-owned company tasked with ecosystem rehabilitation, afforestation expansion, environmental protection, and sand-encroachment control projects in Kuwait, accompanied by a high-level technical delegation.

The Chinese team presented a visual report and detailed briefing after field visits to Kuwaiti areas needing land reclamation, outlining suitable solutions and modern technologies.

They also reviewed major projects undertaken by the company, which has more than 85 years of experience in combating desertification and implementing afforestation programs.

Attending were Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mashari, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Noora Al-Fassam, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, Acting Head of the Prime Minister’s Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, President of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed, and Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and ministerial committee member-rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat.

with northwesterly winds ranging between 12–40 km/h. Temperatures are expected to drop to between 31°C and 33°C. Sea conditions will be light to moderate, with occasional wave heights of two to six feet.

Saturday will continue to bring extremely hot daytime conditions, with northwesterly to variable winds blowing at 8–38 km/h. Scattered clouds may appear, and high temperatures are forecast to range between 46°C and 48°C. The sea will remain light to moderate, with wave heights of one to four feet.

Saturday night is expected to be hot to warm, with northwesterly winds ranging from 12 to 38 km/h. Temperatures will dip to between 32°C and 34°C, and sea conditions will be light to moderate, with wave heights between two and five feet.

Kuwait blasts

Meanwhile, Syrian forces largely withdrew from the southern province of Sweida on Thursday following days of clashes with militias linked to the Druze minority.

While the truce between Druze armed groups and government forces appeared to be largely holding, state media reported that Druze militants had launched revenge attacks on communities of Sunni Bedouins, leading to a wave of displacement.

Bedouin clans had fought alongside government forces against the Druze groups.

Druze leaders and Syrian government officials reached a ceasefire deal mediated by the United States, Turkey and Arab countries.

Under the ceasefire agreement reached Wednesday, Druze factions and clerics have been appointed to maintain internal security in Sweida, Syria’s interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa said in an address broadcast early Thursday.

The fighting had threatened to unravel Syria’s postwar political transition and brought further military intervention by neighboring Israel, which on Wednesday struck the Syrian Defense Ministry headquarters, in central Damascus. Israel said it was acting to protect the Druze religious minority.

Kuwait Army

At the conclusion of the ceremony, a live demonstration of the Bayraktar TB2 drone was presented, showcasing its technical and combat abilities; followed by the minister’s tour of the facilities, during which he assessed the level of readiness of the drone and operating amenities. He also met with a number of officers and technicians supervising the project.

Initiative highlights KFAS’s role in marine research

Scientific Center launches shark study

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Scientific Center, a subsidiary of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), has launched a pioneering scientific study titled, “Monitoring the Behavior of Sand Tiger Sharks in a Closed Environment.”

The study -- conducted in collaboration with marine biologist Dr. Dareen Al-Mojel, Nawah Foundation for Environmental Research and Education and Kuwait University -- was officially announced as part of the center’s Shark Week celebrations from July 17-26, 2025.

Utilizing high-precision cameras and cutting-edge scientific tools, researchers will monitor the daily behavior of sand tiger sharks housed in the aquarium of the center. The goal is to determine their behavioral patterns, assess biological conditions in a controlled environment, and develop more effective care strategies for this vulnerable species.

Director General of the center Eng. Musaed Al-Yassin has affirmed the importance of this initiative. He said “the launching of this specialized research project is a major step in supporting applied scientific and environmental research. It enhances Kuwait’s regional standing in Marine Science and raises environmental awareness in the community. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all team members whose dedication made this project possible. It truly reflects the spirit of collaboration and our mission as a leading educational and research institution.”

On the other hand, Al-Mojel highlighted the unique approach of



Eng. Musaed Al-Yassin, Director General of The Scientific Center.



KFAS photos of Dr. Dareen Al-Mojel, Nawah Foundation for Environmental Research and Education.

the study in terms of involving the public. He explained “this research focuses on understanding the sand

tiger shark’s reproductive behavior and identifying ideal conditions for mating within aquarium settings -- a vital issue given the endangered status of the species. Visitors can take part by scanning QR codes throughout the center to record their observations. These contributions will help build a collaborative scientific database and promote the value of community-based scientific research.”

The Shark Week activities will feature two sharks -- ‘Baby’, a female and ‘Bandar’, a male -- whose rare breeding behavior inside the aquarium is being closely monitored. This development is a scientific milestone comparable to global efforts in shark conservation and care.

The center will also host a series of interactive and educational events during Shark Week as follows:

- Fish dissection workshop, offering hands-on learning for participants;
- Continuous screenings of “Shark Kingdom” in the IMAX theater, a documentary exploring the natural beauty and ecological role of sharks;
- ‘Bahrna’ exhibition, from July 24 to 26, featuring national entities such as the Environment Public Authority (EPA), Coast Guard General Department, Kuwait Heritage Society, Kuwait Diving Team and Warba Bank.

The exhibition aims to raise public awareness about marine conservation and highlight national efforts to safeguard the ecosystems of the country.

MoCI cracks down on tyre fraud

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has confirmed the raid of a warehouse utilized in the illegal refurbishment and sale of used tyres as new -- a grave violation of safety and commercial regulations, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an official statement on the issue, the ministry disclosed that its emergency inspection teams raided the warehouse where more than 1,900 tyres were confiscated; following extensive investigations and field surveillance. It was discovered that the used tyres were remanufactured without adhering to approved technical or safety standards, posing a risk to the public and it is considered a case of commercial fraud.

Sources told the daily that the warehouse prepared the recycled tyres for distribution in the local market, misleading consumers and endangering lives.

The ministry affirmed that all the necessary legal measures have been taken against the violator, indicating the case was referred to the relevant authorities for further investigation and appropriate punitive action.

The ministry stressed that it will not tolerate any action deemed harmful to the public or violate market integrity, warning that such offenses are punishable under commercial fraud laws.

Officials also urged consumers to remain vigilant, purchase tyres only from trusted and licensed vendors, and report any suspicious activity through the official communication channels of the ministry.

They pointed out that this is a manifestation of the ongoing efforts of the ministry to safeguard consumers and maintain fair trade practices in the local market.

US, Bahrain to cooperate in civil nuclear energy

Trump hosts Arab Gulf leaders as new violence raises questions about peace efforts

WASHINGTON, July 17, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump hosted a pair of Arab Gulf leaders at the White House on Wednesday as violence between Israel and Syria renewed doubts about his pledge to impose peace on the Middle East.

Trump held a meeting in the Oval Office with Bahrain's crown prince and dined privately with Qatar's prime minister.

The Republican president has lavished attention on the Arab Gulf, a wealthy region where members of his family have extensive business relationships. He has already visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on the first foreign policy trip of his second term.

With little progress to share on the region's most intractable problems, including the war in Gaza, Trump was more focused Wednesday on promoting diplomatic ties as a vehicle for economic growth.

"Anything they needed, we helped them," Trump said in the Oval Office while meeting with Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. "And anything we needed, they helped us."

Bahrain is a longtime ally that hosts the US Fifth Fleet, which operates in the Middle East.

Like other Arab leaders, Al Khalifa was eager to highlight the lucrative potential of diplomatic ties with the U.S., including \$17 billion of investments.

"And this is real," he said. "It's real money. These aren't fake deals."

According to the White House, the agreements include purchasing American airplanes, jet engines and computer servers. More investments could be made in aluminum production and artificial intelligence.

Bahrain's king, the crown prince's father, is expected to visit Washington before the end of the year. An important part of the relationship will be an agreement, signed on Wednesday, to advance cooperation on civilian nuclear energy.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the prime minister of



US President Donald Trump and Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa speak in the Oval Office of the White House on July 16, in Washington. (AP)

Qatar and a member of the country's ruling family, was at the White House for a private dinner with Trump on

Wednesday evening.

Trump visited Qatar during his trip to the region, marveling at its palaces

and stopping at the Al Udeid Air Base, a key U.S. military facility.

The base was targeted by Iran after the U.S. bombed the country's nuclear facilities. One ballistic missile made impact, while others were intercepted.

Trump wants to use a luxurious Boeing 747 donated by Qatar as his Air Force One because he's tired of waiting for Boeing to finish new planes. However, the arrangement has stirred concerns about security and the ethics of accepting a gift from a foreign government.

Aaron David Miller, who served as an adviser on Middle East issues to Democratic and Republican administrations, said "the Gulf represents everything that Trump believes is right about the Middle East."

"It's rich, it's stable, it's populated by authoritarians with whom the president feels very comfortable," he said.

The fighting in Syria began with clashes between Sunni Bedouin tribes and Druze factions in the country's

south. Government forces intervened, raising alarms in Israel, where the Druze are a politically influential religious minority.

On Wednesday, Israel launched strikes in the Syrian capital of Damascus. A ceasefire was later announced, but it was unclear if it would hold.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** and Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. **Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani** signed on Wednesday a nuclear cooperation memorandum of understanding (NCMOU).

Speaking to reporters at the signing ceremony, Secretary Rubio said that signing this important document "serves as the first step towards a deeper civil nuclear cooperation - an example that the United States is prepared to be a partner with any nation on Earth that wants to pursue a civil nuclear program that clearly is not geared towards weaponization or threatening the security of their neighbors."

Nationwide protests planned against Trump's immigration crackdown

CHICAGO, July 17, (AP): Protests and events against President Donald Trump's controversial policies that include mass deportations and cuts to Medicaid and other safety nets for poor people are planned Thursday at more than 1,600 locations around the country.

The "Good Trouble Lives On" national day of action honors the late congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis. Protests are expected to be held along streets, at court houses and other public spaces. Organizers are calling for them to be peaceful.

"We are navigating one of the most terrifying moments in our nation's history," Public Citizen co-president Lisa Gilbert said during an online news conference Tuesday. "We are all grappling with a rise of authoritarianism and lawlessness within our administration ... as the rights, freedoms and expectations of our very democracy are being challenged."

Public Citizen is a nonprofit with a stated mission of taking on corporate power. It is a member of a coalition of groups behind Thursday's protests.

Major protests are planned in Atlanta and St. Louis, as well as Oakland, California, and Annapolis, Maryland.



Demonstrators standoff against law enforcement on horseback during a protest on June 14, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Lewis first was elected to Congress in 1986. He died in 2020 at the age of 80 following an advanced pancreatic cancer diagnosis.

He was the youngest and last survivor of the Big Six civil rights activists, a group led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1965, a 25-year-old Lewis led some 600 protesters in the Bloody Sunday march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Lewis was beaten by police, suffering a skull fracture.

Within days, King led more

marches in the state, and President Lyndon Johnson pressed Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act that later became law.

"Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and redeem the soul of America," Lewis said in 2020 while commemorating the 1965 voting rights marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

Chicago will be the flagship city for Thursday's protests as demonstrators are expected to rally downtown in the afternoon.

US Senate passes \$9 billion in spending cuts to public broadcasting, foreign aid

WASHINGTON, July 17, (AP): The Senate has passed about \$9 billion in federal spending cuts requested by President Donald Trump, including deep reductions to public broadcasting and foreign aid, moving forward on one of the president's top priorities despite concerns from several Republican senators.

The legislation, which now moves to the House, would have a tiny impact on the nation's rising debt but could have major ramifications for the targeted spending, from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to U.S. food aid programs abroad.

It also could complicate efforts to pass additional spending bills this year, as Democrats and even some Republicans have argued they are ceding congressional spending powers to Trump with little idea of how the White House Office of Management and Budget would apply the cuts.

The 51-48 vote came after 2 a.m. Thursday after Democrats sought to remove many of the proposed rescissions during 12 hours of amendment votes. None of the Democratic amendments were adopted.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Republicans were using the president's rescissions request to target wasteful spending. He said it is a "small but important step for fiscal sanity that we all should be able to agree is long overdue."

But Senate Appropriations Com-



US Sen John Hoeven (left), and Sen John Boozman, walk to the chamber as Senate Republicans vote on President Donald Trump's request to cancel about \$9 billion in foreign aid and public broadcasting spending, at the Capitol in Washington on July 16. (AP)

mittee Chairwoman Susan Collins, R-Maine, said the bill "has a big problem - nobody really knows what program reductions are in it."

Collins and Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, joined Democrats in voting against the legislation. Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, the former Republican leader, had voted against moving forward with the bill in a Tuesday procedural vote, saying he was concerned

the Trump White House wanted a "blank check," but he ultimately voted for final passage.

The effort to claw back a sliver of federal spending comes after Republicans also muscled Trump's big tax and spending cut bill to approval without any Democratic support. The Congressional Budget Office has projected that measure will increase future federal deficits by about \$3.3 trillion over the coming decade.

UK signs treaty on defense, trade and migration with Germany

LONDON, July 17, (AP): UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz signed a landmark treaty on Thursday that pledges to tighten defense ties and boost law-enforcement cooperation against criminal people-smuggling gangs using the English Channel.

"This is a historic day for German-British relations," said Merz, making his first official visit to Britain since taking office in May. "We want to work together more closely, particularly after the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. It is overdue for us to conclude such a treaty with each other."

Starmer said the agreement - signed at London's V&A Museum, which is named after Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert - was a "statement of intent, a statement of our ambition to work ever more closely together."

Starmer has made it a priority of his center-left Labour Party to curb the gangs behind cross-Channel people smuggling. About 37,000 people were detected crossing the English Channel from France in small boats in 2024, and more than 20,000 people made the crossing in the first six months of 2025. Dozens have died trying to make the crossing.

Berlin agreed last year to make facilitating the smuggling of migrants to the UK a criminal offence, a move that



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, (right), and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, (left), shake hands as they attend a signing ceremony of a wide-ranging bilateral cooperation treaty in London on July 17. (AP)

will give law enforcement more powers to investigate the supply and storage of small boats to be used for the crossings. Merz is expected to commit to adopting the law change by the end of the year.

"Chancellor Merz's commitment to make necessary changes to German law to disrupt the supply lines of the dangerous vessels which carry illegal migrants across the Channel is hugely

welcome," Starmer said.

The treaty builds on a defense pact the U.K. and Germany, two of the biggest European supporters of Ukraine, signed last year pledging closer cooperation against a growing threat from Russia. It includes a promise to come to one another's aid in the event of an attack - though as NATO members, they are already committed to that.



Ukraine's newly-elected Prime Minister Yuliia Svyrydenko speaks at the parliament session hall in Kyiv, Ukraine on July 17. (AP)

New PM appointed to reinvigorate war effort

Zelenskyy shakes up Ukrainian Cabinet

KYIV, Ukraine, July 17, (AP): Ukraine's economy minister and the key negotiator in the mineral deal with the US, Yuliia Svyrydenko, was appointed as its new prime minister Thursday, becoming the country's first new head of government since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Svyrydenko is one of a group of officials taking on new roles in Ukraine's government, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reshuffles the Cabinet in a bid to energize a war-weary nation and boost domestic weapons production in the face of Russia's grinding invasion.

At home, however, the Cabinet recalibration has not been seen as a major shift, as the Ukrainian leader continues to rely on officials who have proven their effectiveness and loyalty during the war, now in its fourth year.

Zelenskyy submitted nominations on Thursday to shuffle top government positions, including the replacement of Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, the longest-serving head of government in Ukraine's history.

Shmyhal now moves to become defense minister, according to the parliamentary website.

Other changes are expected in the Cabinet, but Svyrydenko's appointment as prime minister is taking center stage.

She played a key role in negotiating a US-Ukraine mineral agreement, ensuring the terms were acceptable to



Ukrainian 3rd Assault Brigade recruits train at the polygon in Kyiv region, Ukraine, on July 16. (AP)

Kyiv. Svyrydenko has frequently represented Ukraine in high-level talks with Western partners, focusing on defense cooperation, economic recovery and reconstruction.

Lawmakers and fellow officials describe her as a diligent executive with a reputation for loyalty to the presidential office.

Meanwhile, a new Ukrainian government approved Thursday will race to expand domestic arms production to meet half the country's weapons needs within six months as it tries to push back Russia's invasion, Zelenskyy

said.

Switzerland said Thursday that the US Defense Department had informed it that Washington is diverting a Swiss order for Patriot air defense systems to help Ukraine, which badly needs to improve its response to increasingly heavy Russian aerial attacks.

The Swiss Defense Ministry, which in 2022 ordered five Patriot systems, said Thursday it has been informed by the US Defense Department that it will "reprioritize the delivery of Patriot systems to support Ukraine."

It was not immediately clear whether the Swiss-ordered Patriots would go directly to Ukraine or would replace units in other European countries that may be donated to Kyiv.

Delivery to Switzerland of the systems, worth billions of dollars, was scheduled to begin in 2027 and be completed in 2028. But the Swiss government said Washington informed it of the delay on Wednesday, adding that it was unclear how many systems would be affected.

British Defense Secretary John Healey said Thursday he and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius will chair a meeting of Ukraine's allies on Monday to discuss US President Donald Trump's weapons plans. Healey said US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and NATO leader Mark Rutte will attend the meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group.

Europe

Britain to lower its voting age to 16: Britain will lower the voting age from 18 to 16 before the next national election as part of measures to increase democratic participation, the government announced Thursday.

The center-left Labour Party pledged before it was elected in July 2024 to lower the voting age for elections to Britain's Parliament. Scotland and Wales already let 16- and 17-year-olds vote in local and regional elections.

Britain will join the short list of countries where the voting age is 16, alongside the likes of Ecuador, Austria and Brazil.

The move comes alongside wider reforms that include tightening campaign financing rules to stop shell companies with murky ownership from donating to political parties. Democracy Minister Rushanara Ali said the change would strengthen safeguards against foreign interference in British politics. (AP)

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Teacher stabbed at Dutch show; 3 arrested: A teacher was stabbed and seriously injured at a musical performance by elementary school pupils on Wednesday night, Dutch police said in a statement Thursday. Three suspects were later arrested.

The 53-year-old teacher was stabbed as he tried to intervene in an argument between three men at a cultural center in Alblasterdam, police said, adding that many people witnessed the stabbing and were offered counseling in the immediate aftermath.

Children at elementary schools in the Netherlands traditionally put on shows for their parents in the last week before the summer holidays. (AP)

EU chief unveils new \$2.3 trillion budget

BRUSSELS, July 17, (AP): The European Union needs a new budget that would allow it to respond to crises like Russia's war on Ukraine or climate change, fund railways and energy grids, and protect farmers' livelihoods, the EU chief said Wednesday while unveiling her proposal totaling 2 trillion euros (\$2.3 trillion).

European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen**, who heads the EU's executive branch, said that under her budget plan, spending on defense and space would increase five-fold, while investment in migration and border management would triple.

The proposal kicks off two years of wrangling between the 27 member states which fund most of the budget and the European Parliament. The spending package - which runs from 2028 to 2034 - is seen as a statement about Europe's ambitions in the world.

Von der Leyen described her plan for the budget - known as the Multiannual Financial Framework - as "the most ambitious ever proposed."

"It is more strategic, more flexible, more transparent, and we are investing more in our capacity to respond and more in our independence," she told reporters in Brussels.

But in an early sign of the troubles ahead, von der Leyen conceded that even within her own team of policy commissioners - which worked through the night to finalize the proposal - "not everyone was satisfied with the amount."



Von der Leyen

Chinese VP meets South Africa’s deputy president

BEIJING, July 17, (Xinhua): Chinese Vice President **Han Zheng** on Thursday met with South African Deputy President Paul Mashatile in Beijing.

In September last year, China and South Africa upgraded the bilateral relationship to an all-round strategic cooperative partnership in the new era. Han said this opened a new chapter in building a high-level community with a shared future between the two countries.

He called on the two sides to further implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, constantly deepen political mutual trust, advance the high-quality development of bilateral cooperation, and serve the modernization endeavors of both countries.

Mashatile said that South Africa attaches great importance to the relationship with China and firmly adheres to the one-China policy.

Noting that the bilateral cooperation in trade, investment and other fields have made strong progress, Mashatile



Zheng

said they are ready to further implement the consensus reached to contribute to the development of relations between South Africa and China as well as those between Africa and China.

Also:

KINSHASA: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and China have pledged to enhance their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and deepen bilateral cooperation across multiple fields during high-level meetings between DRC leaders and a senior Chinese political advisor.

DRC President Felix Tshisekedi and Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka on Tuesday met separately in Kinshasa with Qin Boyong, vice chairperson of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

During these meetings, Qin conveyed warm greetings from Chinese President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders, reaffirming China’s commitment to working with the DRC to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state and the outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Beijing Summit.



A drone photo taken on July 16, 2025 shows a night view of the Linjiangmen Bridge on the Songhua River in Jilin City, northeast China’s Jilin Province. (Xinhua)

‘Great Wall of China symbolises extraordinary history’

Australian premier indulges in panda diplomacy as state visit in China nears end

BEIJING, July 17, (AP): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has toured a panda breeding facility in the final stages of an extended state visit that has cast China as a fellow champion of a global fair trade system under threat from the United States.

The panda diplomacy stop Thursday in the central Chinese city of Chengdu highlighted Australia’s special status as the only Southern Hemisphere country to host a pair of the rare Chinese native animals.

Albanese and his fiancée Jodie Haydon visited a pen where they saw Fu Ni, a giant panda who had been on loan to Australia’s Adelaide Zoo until last year.

“A great ambassador for China and a great friend of Australia,” Albanese said of Fu Ni as she chomped on bamboo.

Premier Li Qiang used a visit to the Adelaide Zoo last year to announce Fu Ni and her partner Wang Wang would be replaced by another Chinaborn pair that will hopefully breed.

The new couple, Xing Qiu and Yi Yan, made their public debut in January at the zoo in the South Australia state capital where they are a major tourist attraction.

Albanese’s China trip, which be-

gan Saturday and ends on Friday, is extraordinarily long compared with Australian state visits over the past decade and marks a normalization of bilateral relations that plumbed new depths under the previous Australian government’s nine-year reign.

Albanese said he had visited Chengdu and the Great Wall of China, as well as the usual diplomatic destinations of Beijing and Shanghai, as a show of respect to the Chinese people.

“The Great Wall of China symbolises the extraordinary history and culture here in China, and showing a bit of respect to people never cost anything. But you know what it does? It gives you a reward,” Albanese told reporters.

“One of the things that I find about giving countries respect is that you get it back,” he added.

In 2020, Beijing banned minister-to-minister contacts and imposed a series of official and unofficial trade barriers on commodities including wine, beef, coal, barley and lobsters that cost Australian exporters up to 20 billion Australian dollars (\$13 billion) a year. This was a response to Australia’s previous government demanding an independent inquiry into the cause of and responses to the



Australia Prime Minister Anthony Albanese reacts as he attends a zoo with retired Adelaide Zoo panda Fu Ni at a park in Chengdu, China on July 17. (AP)

COVID-19 pandemic.

While the pandemic was the final straw, relations had been deteriorating for years over issues including laws banning covert foreign interference in Australian politics and Australia barring Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei on security grounds from involvement in the national 5G

network rollout.

The trade barriers have all been lifted since Albanese’s center-left Labor Party was first elected in 2022. But now, the United States threatens to become a major disruptor to global trade through President Donald Trump’s tariff regime.

Chinese President Xi Jinping told

Albanese at the outset of their bilateral meeting in Beijing Tuesday that the important thing their two countries had learned in repairing relations was that equal treatment, seeking common ground and pursuing cooperation served the interests of both.

“No matter how the international landscape may evolve, we should uphold this overall direction unswervingly,” Xi said through an interpreter. The comment was widely interpreted as a reference to U.S. tariffs.

Albanese replied that his government welcomed progressing cooperation under their decade-old bilateral free trade agreement.

“Australia will remain a strong supporter of free and fair trade,” Albanese said.

The United States has allocated Australia the minimum 10% tariff on U.S. imports. Australia argues that any tariff cannot be justified and that the U.S. has enjoyed a trade surplus with Australia for decades.

The greater economic damage for Australia would likely be from a Chinese economic downturn caused by its U.S. tariff treatment. Around a third of Australian exports go to China.

James Laurenceson, director of the University of Technology Sydney’s

Australia-China Relations Institute, described China’s presentation of itself as Australia’s ally in defending free trade as “self-serving.”

“It’s not so much Australia aligning with China. It’s really just about Australia and China agreeing they’ve got a shared interest in the existing system, and it’s the U.S. that’s walking away from that,” Laurenceson said.

“I don’t think the big shift this week is Australia getting closer to China. I think the distance with the United States is getting wider and wider,” he added.

Albanese’s political enemies have criticised him for now having four face-to-face meetings with Xi - including two in Beijing - while the prime minister has yet to meet Trump in person.

Albanese and Trump were to hold a one-on-one meeting on the sidelines of a Group of Seven summit in Canada last month, but the U.S. president left early.

Albanese said this week he expected to meet Trump this year.

“I look forward to a constructive engagement with President Trump. We have had three constructive phone conversations,” Albanese said.

Heavy monsoon rains in Pakistan kill at least 54 people in 24 hours: officials

ISLAMABAD, July 17. (Agencies): Heavy monsoon rains killed at least 54 people in eastern Pakistan in 24 hours, bringing the total rain-related deaths in the country to 178 over the past three weeks, officials said Thursday.

Rainfall has triggered flash floods and inundated several villages as the country experiences 82% more rainfall this month compared to the same period in July 2024, the Pakistan Meteorological Department said.

Since June 26, Pakistan has reported 178 deaths from Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the northwest, Sindh in the south and Balochistan in the southwest, officials said. The 54 deaths in the past day occurred in Punjab province, which received 124% more rainfall between July 1 and July 15 than the same period the previous year, forecasters said.

Heavy downpours continued Thursday, flooding streets in several urban areas including Rawalpindi and Lahore. Cloudburst in the Jhelum district in Punjab triggered flash flooding, prompting authorities to use boats to evacuate dozens of people.

The National Disaster Management



Local residents carry a big bag as they walk through a flooded road during monsoon rainfall, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on July 17. (AP)

Authority issued an updated flood alert Thursday and urged local officials to remain on high alert. Tourists were advised to avoid travel to affected areas where rains could trigger landslides and block highways.

Also:

ISLAMABAD: Three militants and an officer of the Pakistani army were

killed during a clash in Pakistan’s southwestern Balochistan province, the military said in a statement on Wednesday.

The incident happened in Awaran district, where the security forces launched an operation on the reported presence of terrorists, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistani military, said.



A village area is flooded due to heavy rain in Yesan, South Korea on July 17. (AP)

4 dead and 1,300 evacuated after heavy rain in S.Korea

Two days of heavy downpours in South Korea have killed at least four people and forced more than 1,300 others to evacuate, officials said Thursday.

One person was killed when their car was buried by soil and concrete after a retaining wall of an overpass collapsed in Osan, just south of Seoul, during heavy rain on Wednesday, the Interior and Safety Ministry said.

Three other people were separately found dead Thursday in a submerged car, a stream, and a flooded basement in southern regions. Ministry officials said they were still investigating whether those deaths were directly caused by heavy rain.

The heavy rain has forced the evacuation of 1,382 people from their homes, the ministry said in a statement, adding 46 flights have been cancelled.

Parts of southern South Chungcheong province have received up to 420 millimeters (16.5 inches) of

rain since Wednesday, according to the ministry.

Also:

BEIJING: Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Tuesday congratulated Kim Min-seok on assuming office as South Korean prime minister.

In his congratulatory message, Li said that China and South Korea are close neighbors across the sea, noting that the Chinese government places high importance on China-South Korea relations.

China stands ready to work with South Korea to enhance strategic communication, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges, strengthen multilateral coordination, so as to advance the China-South Korea strategic cooperative partnership along the right track, Li said. (Agencies)

Mexico City plans to tackle gentrification after fierce protests against mass tourism

MEXICO CITY, July 17, (AP): The Mexico City government on Wednesday announced a preliminary plan to deal with gentrification, a week after a fierce protest against rising housing prices some link to mass tourism and an increase in foreigners often called “digital nomads” who live temporarily in the capital city.

Mexico City Mayor Clara Brugada said the plan will include regulation so that landlords cannot increase rents above inflation. Authorities will also share a list of “reasonable rental” proposals.

Brugada said her government will open a discussion with residents of Mexico’s capital about her plan, but that the idea is to work on a bill that includes measures to promote affordable rent.

The protest in early July was fueled by government failures and active promotion to attract digital nomads who work remotely often for foreign companies from Mexico City, according to experts. Hundreds of people marched in neighborhoods popular with tourists, but the demonstration turned violent when a small number of people



A demonstrator kicks in a bank storefront window at the end of a peaceful protest that turned violent against gentrification, as the increase in remote workers has risen prices and increased housing demand in neighborhoods like Condesa and Roma, in Mexico City on July 4. (AP)

began smashing storefronts and harassing foreigners. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said that the protest was marked by xenophobia.

“The xenophobic displays seen at

that protest have to be condemned. No one should be able to say ‘any nationality get out of our country’ even over a legitimate problem like gentrification,” Sheinbaum said back then.

Subcontinent

Nepal disasters kill 93 in 3 months: A total of 93 people lost their lives in disasters across Nepal in the last three months, a government agency said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, 22 people went missing and 445 others were injured in these mishaps, which occurred between April 14 and July 16, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said in a report.

“The disasters affected 4,134 families,” the report noted, adding that lightning strikes caused 26 deaths, followed by fires and floods, which claimed 14 and 13 lives, respectively. (Xinhua)

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Quake shocks Afghanistan’s Baghlan: A 4.7-magnitude earthquake shocked northern Afghanistan’s Baghlan province and adjoining areas on Thursday, with no immediate report of casualties.

Neither officials nor residents reported any loss of life or damage to property. (Xinhua)

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Weapons found in Afghanistan: Afghanistan’s security forces have discovered a large amount of weapons and military equipment, including 885 hand grenades, in the past four months in eastern Ghazni province, a local official reported Wednesday night. (Xinhua)

Africa

Gunmen kill 27 in central Nigeria: At least 27 people were killed in an attack by suspected gunmen in Plateau State in central Nigeria, which has recently witnessed increased attacks, a senior official said Wednesday.

Caleb Mutfwang, governor of Plateau, told the media during an on-the-spot assessment of the havoc in the Bindi community of Riyom local government area that aside from the casualties, the gunmen also destroyed houses, crops on farmlands, and other valuable properties during the attack early Tuesday.

The gunmen rode motorbikes into the community, firing indiscriminately at residents while also setting homes and farmlands ablaze. (Xinhua)

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Ghana mining pit collapse kills 4: Four people were killed, and 20 others are still trapped in a mining pit collapse Wednesday in the Eastern Region of Ghana, local media reported.

Sources said four men have reportedly died underground when the mining pit collapsed at Akyem Wenchi, a community in the Denkyembour district, while 20 others who were said to be alive are trapped underground.

The cause of the collapse remains unclear. Rescue efforts are underway with the assistance of local residents. (Xinhua)

Kuwaiti oil price dips to \$70.38 pb

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil dropped by 25 cents, reaching USD 70.38 per barrel in Wednesday’s trading, down from USD 70.63 per barrel on Tuesday, according to the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation on Thursday.

Globally, price of Brent crude dropped by 19 cents to USD 68.52 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude fell by 14 cents to USD 66.38 pb.

Business

Reaffirming its commitment to the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ banking awareness campaign

NBK warns customers about the risks of fraudulent online shopping offers

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: In line with its unwavering commitment to fostering financial literacy and empowering all segments of society, NBK continues to bolster its support for the “Let’s Be Aware” banking awareness campaign. Spearheaded by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

As part of its commitment to customer protection, NBK is actively educating the public about fraudulent online shopping offers, often promoted through social media. These scams typically feature links to fake applications or websites that lure victims with enticing discounts and promotions.

Designed to mimic legitimate platforms, these fraudulent sites deceive users into providing sensitive personal and banking details—such as account and credit card numbers—ultimately compromising their financial

security. NBK urges customers to remain vigilant and avoid engaging with suspicious links, reinforcing its dedication to safeguarding the community from cyber threats.

NBK advises customers to exercise caution and avoid being misled by deceptive shopping deals that promise steep discounts. The bank emphasizes the importance of verifying website URLs and refraining from clicking on links from unknown sources—especially those received via email that advertise offers that appear too good to be true.

Furthermore, NBK cautions customers about the risks of saving credit card details on e-commerce websites or browsers for faster future transactions. The bank highlights that such platforms are susceptible to security breaches, potentially exposing stored banking data to theft.

The Bank also emphasizes that it will nev-



er request personal information via email, text messages, or phone calls. Additionally, NBK warns customers against responding to such messages, as they are often fraudulent attempts to steal banking credentials, sensitive data, or funds.

NBK remains vigilant in monitoring emerging fraud tactics, educating customers, and providing clear guidance on how to stay protected. Through comprehensive awareness materials shared across its digital

platforms, the bank continuously emphasizes the importance of engaging only with trusted links and avoiding interactions with unidentified sources.

Harnessing its vast communication capabilities, NBK utilizes all its digital channels—boasting the largest following among Kuwaiti banks—to ensure the widest dissemination of the campaign’s messages, effectively reaching the largest possible audience.

Led by the Central Bank of Kuwait in partnership with Kuwait Banking Association, “Let’s Be Aware” stands as the region’s most comprehensive financial literacy campaign. Aimed at empowering bank customers, the initiative delivers essential education on critical financial topics. Key focus areas include practical steps to prevent fraud, strategies for maximizing banking services, and fostering a strong culture of savings and

investment. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools to make informed financial decisions, the campaign strengthens financial security and resilience across Kuwait’s banking sector.

As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK remains a key supporter of the Central Bank of Kuwait’s initiatives aimed at enhancing financial literacy and promoting banking awareness across all segments of society. The bank actively organizes various educational events to keep the community informed about critical banking issues while also investing in specialized training programs for its employees. By strengthening expertise in fraud prevention and financial crime mitigation, NBK reinforces its commitment to safeguarding customers and upholding the integrity of the financial sector.

Boursa Kuwait posts solid gains amid heavy volume

General index up 0.83%

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait finished Thursday’s trading session in positive territory, with the general index climbing 70.42 points, or 0.83 percent, to settle at 8,598.42. Trading remained robust, as 819.3 million shares were exchanged across 40,798 cash transactions, generating a turnover of 136.7 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$447.1 million).

The Main Market Index advanced 52.87 points, or 0.71 percent, to close at 7,452.38, supported by a brisk

trading volume of 670.1 million shares via 31,178 transactions and a traded value of 80.2 million dinars (around \$262.3 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index saw an increase of 78.28 points, or 0.85 percent, closing at 9,309.26. The segment recorded a trading volume of 149.1 million shares through 9,620 transactions, with a turnover of 56.4 million dinars (about \$184.5 million).

In parallel, the Main 50 Index rose 27.92 points, or 0.38 percent, to stand at 7,452.03. A total of 377.7 million shares changed hands through 14,679 cash transactions totaling 44 million dinars (approximately \$143.9 million).

Airline unveils real-time feedback tool for flyers

Jazeera, LitmusWorld partner to enhance passenger experience

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait’s leading low-cost airline, has successfully launched the first phase of a cutting-edge Customer Experience (CX) and Feedback Intelligence Platform from LitmusWorld – within a week of its PSS upgrade. With customers at the core of the airline’s transformation efforts, this rapid integration scores a key milestone in the airline’s wider digital transformation journey and reinforces its commitment to delivering exceptional travel experiences.

Building on the recent upgrade of its Passenger Service Systems (PSS), the new CX platform represents the second major initiative in Jazeera’s strategy to enhance the end-to-end travel experience. In parallel, the airline has also partnered with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) to modernize its digital infrastructure and introduce a state-of-the-art, AI-driven chatbot – further personalizing and streamlining interactions with passengers across digital touchpoints.

At the core of the new platform is a dynamic, digital-first Net Promoter Score (NPS) system, designed to boost passenger engagement and elevate service quality. With the initial phase now live, Jazeera can capture real-time feedback at critical touch points including booking and online check-in. Passengers can give their feedback at different stages of their digital journey with an option to provide comments or feedback at a click versus calling or visiting customer service. Additional capabilities and expanded coverage are scheduled to launch later this year, further strengthening the airline’s ability to listen, learn, and lead in customer satisfaction.

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways highlighted, “Customer feedback is no longer just a metric – it’s the compass guiding our commitment to delivering exceptional travel experiences. We selected LitmusWorld for their globally trusted NPS platform, which reaches over a billion customers. The successful rollout has already yielded valuable insights, and with additional modules launching later this year, we are shaping a customer experience program that is both dynamic and deeply responsive to our passengers’ needs.”

Transforming Feedback into Action, in Real Time

Seamlessly integrated into Jazeera Airways’ ecosystem, the platform unlocks a smarter way to listen and respond, featuring:

- **Contextual Surveys:** Rolled out after key moments like bookings, check-ins, and flight completion, helping gather authentic and timely passenger feedback.
- **Multi-Channel Engagement:** Passengers can respond



via SMS, WhatsApp, email, social media, or even the call center making it convenient and accessible.

- **Live NPS Tracking:** Real-time customer sentiment data empowers teams to spot trends, address issues, and identify brand advocates.
- **Executive Dashboards:** Role-based insights allow everyone from crew managers to CXOs to stay aligned on customer priorities.

LitmusWorld is a leading customer experience and survey management platform and this collaboration also marks LitmusWorld’s debut in the Middle East aviation sector, further expanding its global footprint.

“We’re thrilled to kick off this exciting journey with Jazeera Airways,” said Sandip Sen, CEO of LitmusWorld. “The early success of Phase 1 is just the beginning. Our platform is built to scale, and together, we’ll continue unlocking richer insights and faster service recovery as we progress through the upcoming rollouts.”

As Jazeera Airways continues to innovate in the skies, this collaboration sets the tone for a new era of experience-driven aviation, one where every voice is heard, and every journey is better than the last.

About Jazeera Airways

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

Kuwait’s exports to Japan drop 45%

TOKYO, July 17, (KUNA): Kuwait’s trade surplus with Japan narrowed 66.7 percent from a year earlier to JPY 30.0 billion (USD 188 million) in June, down for the fifth consecutive month due to sluggish exports, government data showed on Thursday.

However, Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 17 years and five months, as exports still offset imports in value terms, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan plunged 45.2 percent year-on-year to JPY 63.4 billion (USD 404 million), down for the fifth straight month. Imports from Japan jumped 30.6 percent to JPY

33.3 billion (USD 209 million), up for the seventh month in a row.

Middle East’s trade surplus with Japan also narrowed 40.8 percent to JPY 382.4 billion (USD 2.5 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region falling 21.2 percent from a year earlier in value.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 92.7 percent of the region’s total exports to Japan, plummeted 23.2 percent.

The region’s overall imports from Japan soared 17.6 percent on demand for automobiles and machinery.

Japan’s global trade balance re-

turned to surplus for the first time in three months at JPY 153.1 billion yen (USD 1.0 billion) in June, although the value declined 30.8 percent on the year, chiefly due to weak exports to the US and lower energy bills.

Exports slid 0.5 percent from the year before chiefly due to weak shipments of automobiles to the US amid higher tariffs.

Imports edged up 0.2 percent on pharmaceutical products, mobile phones and electronic semiconductor parts. China remained Japan’s biggest trade partner, followed by the US.

The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

MENA leads in Global FDI ambition despite economic uncertainty, reports Bloomberg

DUBAI, July 17: The escalation of conflict in the Middle East, cybersecurity threats, and increased trade barriers are the top three concerns for MENA senior business decision-makers when allocating foreign direct investment (FDI), according to seventh wave of Bloomberg Media’s Global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Outlook, titled, “Rebalancing in Real Time: How Shocks Are Shaping the Global Investment Landscape”.

However, despite these concerns, the MENA region has the largest appetite for international expansion and biggest investment plans, with 90% of respondents expressing a desire to expand their operations internationally, well above the global average of 76%, and reported an average investment plan of \$239 million, compared to the global average of \$194 million.

The study draws on the views of 2,600 senior business decision-makers in 31 key markets across six regions who are personally involved in their organizations’ foreign investment strategies and consume international news. They were surveyed between 21 May and 11 June 2025 and included 227 individuals from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Morocco.

FDIs are increasingly focusing on stability and cost incentives, placing less emphasis on factors such as location and lifestyle. Compared to 2023, investor interest in FDI projects grew by 10 percentage points in manufacturing, 4 points in supply chains, and 3 points in new market ex-

pansion.

While FDI priorities remained broadly consistent, emerging regions tended to focus more on cost and productivity. Additionally, political instability and security risks are becoming increasingly influential in shaping FDI decision-making.

The report found that positive and negative outlooks are nearly evenly balanced for the first time in five years, signaling growing concerns about trade policy and its widespread global impacts. The easing of U.S.–China trade barriers is the leading driver of economic optimism in the MENA region, with 76% of respondents expressing strong positivity, the highest global rating for this scenario.

The conflict in the Middle East and U.S. President Donald Trump imposing tariffs on several major trading partners were among the key events that triggered global volatility and uncertainty so far in 2025.

These events have heightened geopolitical tensions, with Middle East conflicts ranking as the top concern for regional business leaders, followed by cybersecurity threats and increased trade barriers.

Looking ahead, advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence are presenting the biggest opportunities for FDI as they become central to how business leaders plan and prepare for the future. The MENA region stands out as a leader in investing in this sector, with more than half (53%) of respondents indicating they plan to invest in this sector within the next one to three years. This

signals a stronger focus on innovation and resilience, as investors look to tech that supports long-term growth.

In the field of ESG investing, the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement created a potential gap in global climate leadership. This occurred as ESG investing became more integrated into corporate values and standard practice, with fewer business leaders viewing it as a future business model or a unique driver of business growth.

However, the MENA region remains one of the leading regions in integrating ESG into FDI strategies, with 69% of senior business decision-makers currently doing so, compared to the global average of 56%, and 29% planning to do so in the future. While commitment to ESG varies by region, MENA businesses tend to take a pragmatic approach, with many already integrating sustainability into their investment strategies.

The Global Foreign Direct Investment Outlook is part of the Bloomberg Industry Accelerator series of industry-leading, proprietary studies and analyses on critical topics and groups, including Wealth, Travel, and Financial Advisors. Industry Accelerator is one offering within the Bloomberg Accelerator Suite, the company’s proprietary data platform for driving insights, activation, and targeting for advertising partners. Alongside the Industry Accelerator sits the Bloomberg Brand Accelerator, the proprietary brand diagnostic tool that assesses current brand perceptions and future potential of 700+ brands.

Expanding its elegant footprint in Kuwait

Morad Yousuf Behbehani Group opens APM’s second boutique at 360 Mall

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: APM Monaco, the internationally renowned contemporary jewelry brand celebrated for its chic, fashion-forward designs, opened its second boutique in Kuwait, located in the prestigious 360 Mall.

This new boutique marks an exciting step in APM Monaco’s expansion in the region and reflects the brand’s continued commitment to bringing its modern elegance and Mediterranean-inspired style to fashion lovers across Kuwait. Strategically located within 360 Mall—one of Kuwait’s premier luxury shopping destinations—



APM Monaco debuts new boutique in Kuwait’s 360 Mall.

the boutique offers a curated selection of APM’s latest collections, combining trendsetting design with timeless sophistication.

The boutique features APM’s signature aesthetic—minimalist elegance with a fashion-forward twist—and offers the full range of its latest seasonal collections.

With this opening, APM Monaco reaffirms its dedication to enhancing the luxury retail landscape in Kuwait and connecting with a growing community of jewelry enthusiasts in the Middle East.

Young minds dive into AI, VR, and cybersecurity at Weyay

Weyay Bank wraps up AI-powered summer program for youth

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Weyay Bank has successfully wrapped up its summer program designed for “Jeel” customers, aged 8 to 14. The closing ceremony highlighted the positive atmosphere and creative spirit that flourished during the multi-week workshops. This season’s program focused on programming and digital innovation through Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, underscoring Weyay’s commitment to empowering the next generation in increasingly essential digital fields.

The program offered engaging workshops that covered:

- AI-Powered Game Development: Participants delved into the world of game design and creation, exploring AI fundamentals and their practical applications.
- Virtual Reality Environment Development: These workshops provided participants with hands-on experience in designing virtual reality environments, opening new horizons in digital innovation.
- Cybersecurity Fundamentals: Participants gained vital knowledge on safe internet Browse and protecting personal data – an essential skill in our fast-paced digital world.

The enthusiasm and positive



Weyay Bank concludes successful digital innovation summer program for ‘Jeel’ customers.

interaction observed among participants, trainers, and the program content demonstrated their

passion for learning and readiness to explore new technological realms. The program also sig-

nificantly contributed to building their self-confidence and fostering creative thinking.

Investing in Kuwait’s Digital Future
Commenting on the program’s success, Fawaz AlNakib, Part-

nership Manager at Weyay Bank, stated: “At Weyay Bank, we believe that building Kuwait’s digital future starts with empowering the rising generation. As Kuwait’s first digital bank, we see our duty extending beyond providing innovative banking services to include investing in the minds of the next generations. The Weyay Summer Program was a living testament to this commitment.”

AlNakib added: “The ‘Jeel’ card and app are not just financial tools; they are a gateway to teaching young people the basics of financial responsibility and equipping them with the digital skills needed to keep pace with modern developments.”

The success of the summer program underscores Weyay Bank’s dedication to providing unique experiences for its customers, particularly “Jeel,” which forms the cornerstone of the Bank’s strategy to enhance financial inclusion and digital empowerment among youth in Kuwait. This commitment further validates Weyay’s recognition with the “Most Innovative Product” award at the MEED Banking Excellence Awards 2025 for the Middle East and North Africa region.

Producer prices flat in June

US wholesale inflation holds steady amid tariff concerns

WASHINGTON, July 17, (AP): U.S. wholesale inflation cooled last month, despite worries that President Donald Trump’s tariffs would push prices higher for goods before they reach consumers.

The Labor Department reported Wednesday that its producer price index was unchanged last month from May after rising 0.3% the previous month. June wholesale prices rose 2.3% from a year earlier, the smallest year-over-year gain since September. Both measures came in below what economists had expected.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so called core producer prices were also unchanged from May and up 2.6% from June 2024.

The report on wholesale inflation arrived a day after the Labor Department reported that consumer prices last month rose 2.7% from June 2024, the biggest year-over-year gain since February, as Trump’s sweeping tariffs pushed up the cost of everything from groceries to appliances.

Consumer prices and producers prices do not always move in tandem, however.

Bradley Saunders, North America economist at Capital Economics, saw some signs of the impact of Trump’s tariffs in a 0.3% increase in core wholesale goods prices. Furniture prices rose 1% from May and home electronics 0.8%, he noted. Both of those types of goods are heavily imported.

But producer prices at steel mills fell 5.5% despite Trump’s hefty 50% tax on imported steel.

Some companies bought products before Trump rolled out his tariffs and have relied on those inventories to keep a lid on prices. But Saunders warned that those inventories are running low and that Trump plans to impose stiff tariffs (such as 25% levies on Japanese and South Korean

imports) starting Aug. 1.

“We are not out of the woods yet,” Saunders wrote in a commentary.

The producer price report showed that auto retailers’ profit margins dropped 5.4%, suggesting that car dealers were eating the cost of Trump’s 25% tariff on some imported cars and auto parts. That might explain why new vehicle prices fell last month in the consumer price report Tuesday.

“We doubt that auto retailers will continue to absorb the tariffs indefinitely,” wrote Samuel Tombs, chief U.S. economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, “but they have room to fall a good deal further after they surged during the spike in sales as people sought to get ahead of tariffs on imported vehicles.”

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Economists also monitor the report closely because some of its components, notably measures of health care and financial services, flow into the Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation gauge – the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, index.

Inflation began to flare up for the first time in decades in 2021, as the economy roared back with unexpected strength from COVID-19 lockdowns. That prompted the Fed to raise its benchmark interest rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023. The higher borrowing costs helped bring inflation down from the peaks it reached in 2022, and last year the Fed felt comfortable enough with the progress to cut rates three times.

But it has turned cautious this year while it waits to see the inflationary impact of Trump’s trade policies. Trump has aggressively stepped up pressure on the Fed to cut rates, which has been seen as a threat to the central bank’s independence.

Trump calls Fed renovation ‘disgraceful’

How Trump could use a building renovation to oust the Fed chair

WASHINGTON, July 17, (AP): President Donald Trump says he has finally found a way to achieve his goal of removing Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, accusing him of mismanaging the U.S. central bank’s \$2.5 billion renovation project.

The push comes after a monthslong campaign by Trump to try to rid himself of the politically independent central banker, who has resisted the president’s calls to slash interest rates out of concerns about the administration’s tariffs sparking higher levels of inflation.

The president indicated Tuesday that Powell’s handling of an extensive renovation project on two Fed buildings in Washington could be grounds to take the unprecedented and possibly legally dubious step of firing him. “I think it sort of is,” Trump said.

“When you spend \$2.5 billion on, really, a renovation, I think it’s really disgraceful,” Trump said, adding that he never saw the Fed chair as someone who needed a “palace.”

The project has been underway for years, going back to Trump’s first term. But it only recently caught the White House’s attention. Trump maintains that Fed rate cuts would lower the costs of government borrowing, while Powell has warned that a premature rate cut could worsen inflation and ultimately raise those borrowing costs.

The risk of the Fed losing its political independence could undermine America’s financial markets, possibly leading to a meltdown in stocks and investors charging a premium to lend to the U.S. economy.

Here’s what to know:

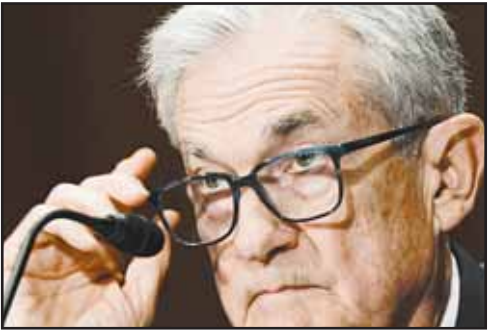
The Fed chair has been an obstacle in Trump’s efforts to gain total control over the executive branch.

Powell and his board have the dual mandate of maximizing employment and keeping prices stable, a task that can require them to make politically unpopular moves such as raising interest rates to hold inflation in check. The general theory is that keeping the Fed free from the influence of the White House – other than for nominations of Fed officials – allows it to fulfill its mission based on what the economy needs, instead of what a politician wants.

An attempt to remove Powell from his job before his term ends in May 2026 would undercut the Fed’s long-standing independence from day-to-day politics and could lead to higher inflation, higher interest rates and a weaker economy.

The Supreme Court recently signaled that the president can’t fire Powell simply because Trump disagrees with him on interest rates. But legally he could do so “for cause,” such as misconduct or dereliction of duty.

Trump’s workaround appears to be that Powell misrepresented the renovation project in congressional testimony and that the cost is excessive,



Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell listens during a Senate Committee on Banking hearing, June 25, 2025, on Capitol Hill in Washington. (AP)

thus meriting his dismissal.

The Fed says its main headquarters, known as the Marriner S. Eccles building, was in dire need of an upgrade because its electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems, among others, are nearly obsolete and some date back to the building’s construction in the 1930s.

The renovation will also remove asbestos, lead and other hazardous elements and update the building with modern electrical and communications systems. The H-shaped building, named after a former Fed chair in the 1930s and ‘40s, is located near some of Washington’s highest-profile monuments and has references to classical architecture and marble in the facades and stonework. The central bank is also renovating a building next door that it acquired in 2018.

The Fed says there has been periodic maintenance to the structures but adds that this is the first “comprehensive renovation.”

Trump administration officials have criticized the Fed over the project’s expense, which has reached \$2.5 billion, about \$600 million more than was originally budgeted.

Like a beleaguered homeowner facing spiraling costs for a remodeling project, the Fed cites many reasons for the greater expense. Construction costs, including for materials and labor, rose sharply during the inflation spike in 2021 and 2022. More asbestos needed to be removed than expected. Washington’s local restrictions on building heights forced it to build underground, which is pricier.

In 2024, the Fed’s board canceled its planned renovations of a third building because of rising costs.

The Fed says the renovations will reduce costs “over time” because it will be able to consolidate its roughly 3,000 Washington-based employees into fewer buildings and will no longer need to rent as much extra space as it does now.

Russ Vought, the administration’s top budget adviser, wrote Powell a letter last Thursday that

said Trump is “extremely troubled” about the Fed’s “ostentatious overhaul” of its facilities.

The Fed’s renovation plans call for “rooftop terrace gardens, VIP private dining rooms and elevators, water features, premium marble, and much more,” Vought said in his letter.

Powell has disputed the claims, which were given wide circulation in a paper issued by the Mercatus Center, a think tank at George Mason University, in March 2025. The paper was written by Andrew Levin, an economist at Dartmouth College and former Fed staffer.

“There’s no VIP dining room,” Powell said last month during a Senate Banking Committee hearing. “There’s no new marble. ... There are no special elevators. There are no new water features. ... And there’s no roof terrace gardens.”

Some of those elements were removed from initial building plans submitted in 2021, the Fed says.

The Fed’s changes to its building plans have opened it up to another line of attack: White House officials suggest the Fed violated the terms of the approval it received from a local planning commission by changing its plans.

In its September 2021 approval of the project, the National Capital Planning Commission said it “Commends” the Fed for “fully engaging partner federal agencies.” But because the Fed changed its plans, the administration is indicating it needed to go back to the commission for a separate approval.

Essentially, White House officials are saying Powell is being reckless with taxpayer money because of the cost of the renovation, but they are also accusing him of acting unethically by scaling back the project to save money.

James Blair, the White House deputy chief of staff whom Trump named to the commission, said last Thursday in a post on X that Powell’s June congressional testimony “leads me to conclude the project is not in alignment with plans submitted to & approved by the National Capital Planning Commission in 2021.”

Speaking last Thursday at the planning commission meeting, Blair said he intends to tour the construction site, review materials from the Fed on how the approved 2021 renovation plans have changed and circulate a letter among his colleagues on the commission that would go to Fed officials.

The central bank says, in a series of frequently asked questions on its website, that it is “not subject to the direction” of the commission and has only complied with its directives voluntarily.

Instead, the Fed said it is accountable to the Senate and House of Representatives, and is also overseen by an independent inspector general, not the White House. Powell has asked the inspector general to review the costs of the renovation project.

Key witnesses testify in Meta’s \$8 bln privacy suit

Zuckerberg, Meta leaders targeted in privacy-related shareholder case

WILMINGTON, July 17, (AP): An \$8 billion class action investors’ lawsuit against Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and company leaders – current and former – began Wednesday, with claims stemming from the 2018 privacy scandal involving the Cambridge Analytica political consulting firm.

Investors allege in their lawsuit that Meta did not fully disclose the risks that Facebook users’ personal information would be misused by Cambridge Analytica, a firm that supported Donald Trump’s successful Republican presidential campaign in 2016. Shareholders say Facebook officials repeatedly and continually violated a 2012 consent order with the Federal Trade Commission under which Facebook agreed to stop collecting and sharing personal data on platform users and friends without their consent.

Facebook later sold user data to commercial partners in direct violation of the consent order and removed disclosures from privacy settings that were required under consent order, the lawsuit alleges.

The fallout led to Facebook agreeing to pay a \$5.1 billion penalty to settle FTC charges. The social media giant also faced significant fines in Europe and reached a \$725 million privacy settlement with users. Now shareholders want Zuckerberg and others to reimburse Meta for the FTC fine and other legal costs, which the plaintiffs estimate total more than \$8 billion.

The first trial witness, privacy expert Neil Richards, testified Monday morning for the shareholders.

“Facebook’s privacy disclosures were misleading,” said Richards, a professor at Washington University Law School.

In later testimony, Jeffrey Zients, who served on Facebook’s board from 2018 to 2020, testified that consumer privacy and user data were priorities for both management and the board.

Nonetheless, he supported settling with the FTC as it investigated potential violations of the 2012 consent order, so the company could move forward.

“It was difficult because this was a lot of money, but I think it was better than the alternative,” Zients said.

Asked if the board considered making its founder a party to the settlement, he said Zuckerberg was “essential” to running the company.

And, Zients, who served in both the Obama and Biden administrations, said, “there was no indication that he had done anything wrong.”

The case is expected to run through late next week and include testimony from both Zuckerberg and former Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg. Other witnesses expected in Delaware Chancery Court, where Facebook parent Meta Platforms Inc. is incorporated, include board member Marc Andreessen and former board member Peter Thiel. The judge is not expected to rule for several months.

Meta had hoped the Supreme Court would dismiss the case. Justices heard arguments in November before deciding they should not have taken it up. The high court dismissed the company’s appeal, leaving in place an appellate ruling allowing the case to go forward.

From drone taxis to humanoid robots, visit showcases AI-powered transformation

Kuwaiti media delegation explores China’s tech future

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: A Kuwaiti media delegation went on an incredible journey to China, the land of the future and technology, at the invitation of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Kuwait.

The delegation visited three major cities - Shenzhen, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou, where they got a firsthand look at China’s rapid technological advancements, particularly in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The first stop was the vibrant city of Shenzhen, characterized by its iconic tall buildings and skyscrapers. The delegation was warmly received by Sun Huaizhong, Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Office in Shenzhen, who gave a presentation on the city’s “Smart City” project.

Huaizhong emphasized that high-speed internet and artificial intelligence are no longer luxuries but fundamental parts of everyday life.

He described Shenzhen as the “Silicon Valley” of hardware and AI, highlighting the presence of thousands of startups and a dynamic investment environment that offers huge opportunities for Kuwaiti companies.

Huaizhong expressed his admiration for Kuwait, indicating that he had read extensively about the country. “If we can build a bridge of understanding, it would be a great honor,” he said, emphasizing that Shenzhen welcomes all who wish to cooperate, including businessmen, tourists, and students.

The delegation’s second stop was Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province and one of China’s historic “Seven Ancient Capitals”. The Italian explorer Marco Polo once described it as the most beautiful and luxurious city in the world.

Hangzhou’s iconic West Lake area includes over 60 cultural heritage sites and countless tourist attractions, renowned for their breathtaking natural beauty. A cruise on the lake turned out to be one of the most captivating experiences.

Finally, the delegation visited Guangzhou, China’s largest industrial and commercial port, which handles a quarter of the country’s foreign trade. Guangzhou is a major hub for industrial and economic activity, known for its diverse sectors including sugar, textiles, iron and steel, paper, cement, agricultural fertilizers, automobiles, chemicals, and manufacturing machinery.

Hangzhou Robot City

The delegation also visited Hangzhou Shenhao Technology Co. Ltd., founded in 2002. The company specializes in equipment inspection and fault diagnosis using advanced technologies such as sensors, robotics, artificial intelligence, and big data analysis. Serving the industrial hygiene sector, Shenhao provides comprehensive solutions to ensure the safe operation and intelligent maintenance of industrial equipment.

A popular market in the heart of Guangzhou

The tour also included a visit to the Yongqingfang tourist area in western Guangzhou, located in the Liwan District of Guangdong Province. Located on an area of approximately 760,000 square meters, it is a fourth-class national tourist attraction. Yongqingfang combines tourism, culture, entertainment, and social life, showcasing ancient architecture and traditional arts alongside modern fashion and international entertainment.

Shenzhen Drone Taxi Company

The delegation visited EHang (Nasdaq: EH), a global pioneer in Urban Air Mobility (UAM) technology that provides safe, autonomous, environmentally friendly, and accessible air transportation for all. The company offers Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) systems and solutions in various sectors, including passenger and cargo air transport, smart city management, and aerial media services.

Notably, EHang’s EH216-S has received the world’s first Type Certificate (TC), Production Certificate (PC), and Standard Airworthiness Certificate (AC) for an electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) manned drone from the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

SRRSH Hospital

As part of the itinerary, the delegation also visited SRRSH Hospital, which was established during China’s reform and opening-up period. For its first five years, the hospital was managed in cooperation with Loma Linda University Health in the United States, serving as a pilot project for integrating Western and Chinese approaches to hospital administration, laying the foundation for the hospital’s high-standard international management.

The hospital was ranked among the “Tier 1” group of national public hospitals in record time. It continues to lead advancements in several areas, including medical system reform, healthcare services, modern hospital management, minimally invasive medicine, international cooperation, and smart healthcare.

It has received an A++ rating and has been ranked among the top one percent of hospitals in China. For five consecutive years, it has placed third nationwide in the Third Public Hospital Performance Assessment, and in 2022, it was ranked ninth.

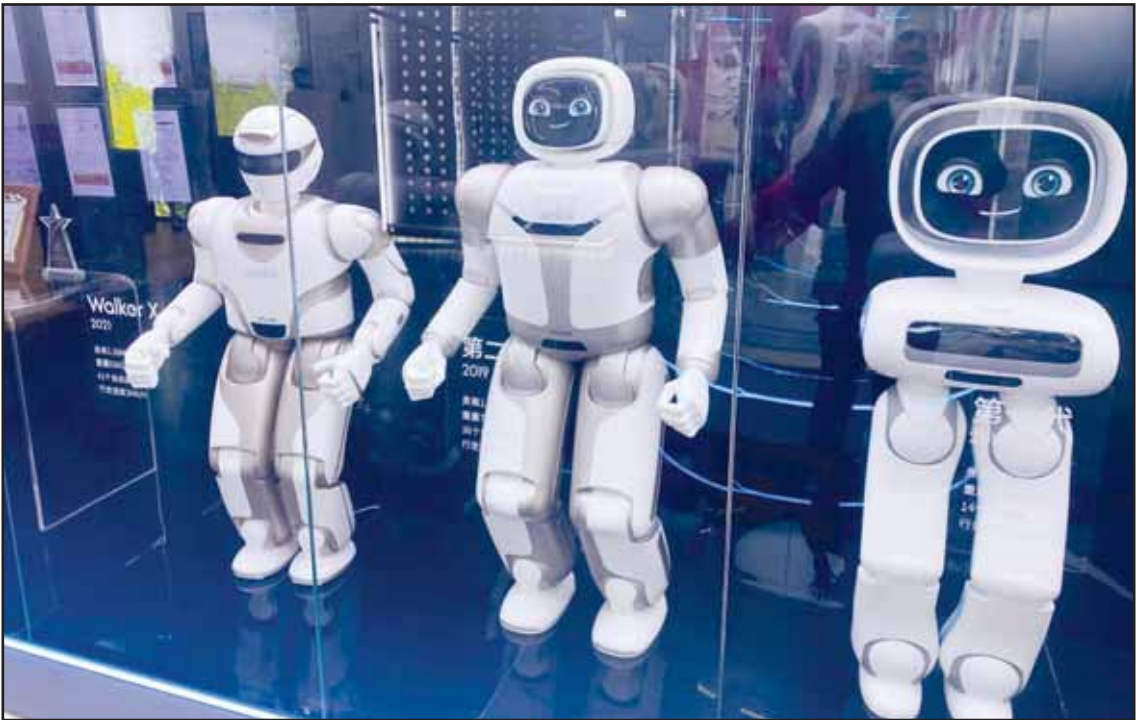
SRRSH Hospital holds several notable distinctions: it was the first hospital in China to receive JCI accreditation, the first to achieve Magnet status, and the first in the country to become a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network in China.

“Black Myth”... The Game of Millions

The delegation visited a museum dedicated to the action game “Black Myth: Wukong”, one of the most important technological games developed by a Chinese



Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Office Sun Huaizhong with the media delegation.



Advanced robots



Drone delivery



Flying taxi



The world’s largest building houses 20,000 residents.

startup in the gaming industry. The game is inspired by the classic Chinese novel “Journey to the West” and was officially released on August 20, 2024, for Windows and PlayStation 5.

The project first gained global attention on August 20, 2020, when the developer released a 13-minute alpha gameplay video. Within 24 hours, the video amassed nearly two million views on YouTube and 10 million views on Bilibili.

On February 8, 2021, the development team released a new 3-minute trailer, showcasing the game’s enemies, mythical creatures, and diverse environments. Later, on August 19, 2021, the team announced that the game had been ported to Unreal Engine 5.

The classic novel “Journey to the West” is considered one of the four most beloved literary works in China. It recounts the trials and tribulations of the renowned monk Tang Sanzang and his three disciples Sun Wukong, Zhu

Bajie, and Sha Wujing, as they journey to Tianzhu (present-day India) in search of the original Buddhist scriptures from the Buddha’s western homeland. After enduring numerous challenges, including battles with demons, monsters, and other dangers across 81 stages, the monk and his disciples ultimately succeed in retrieving the sacred texts.

As part of the visit, the delegation also toured UBTECH ROBOTICS CORP LTD, a leading company in the development of humanoid and intelligent service robots. Founded in March 2012, UBTECH has become a pioneer in the robotics industry. On December 29, 2023, the company was officially listed on the Main Market of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange under the stock code “9880.HK”.

Driven by its mission to bring intelligent robots into every household and enhance everyday life through smart technology, the company has independently developed a complete lineup of humanoid robots. Using its robust technological foundation, it is engaged in the research, development, design, intelligent manufacturing, and commercialization of intelligent service robots.

UBTECH has created an integrated robotic solution that combines hardware, software, services, and content. Its products serve a wide range of industries, including AI education, smart logistics, healthcare, elderly care, and commercial services. It is one of the few companies globally to have developed a full suite of humanoid robot technologies.

The company’s technological ecosystem includes a comprehensive range of industry-leading capabilities, such as robot motion planning and control, advanced AI technologies like computer vision and voice interaction, as well as integrated robotics and AI systems. These include SLAM and autonomous navigation, visual servo actuation, and human-robot interaction.

UBTECH also developed its own proprietary robotics application framework, the Robot Operating System Application Framework (ROSA).

The company is also among the few in the world to achieve mass production of self-developed servo motors across a wide torque range, from small to large. It has developed China’s first full-scale bipedal humanoid robot, scheduled for commercial launch in June 2024. To date, the company holds more than 2,450 patents related to robotics and artificial intelligence.

Through continuous development of core humanoid

robot technologies, the company is now at the forefront of global humanoid robot deployment. Its efforts are focused on three primary application scenarios - industrial manufacturing, commercial services, and home companionship.

To date, UBTECH is the only company in the world to announce multiple collaborations with major automotive manufacturers. Its Walker S series industrial humanoid robots have been integrated into the production lines of many automotive companies, where they perform a variety of tasks.

UBTECH firmly believes that the future lies in the harmonious coexistence of humans and robots. Guided by a strong commitment to innovation and technological advancement, the company aspires to bring UBTECH robots into every home and industry, shaping a world where humans and robots live and work side by side.



The home of iconic martial arts figure Bruce Lee.



Breathtaking scenery

Band's reunion tour ends in chaos

Jane's Addiction members sue each other after onstage fight

LOS ANGELES, July 17, (AP): The members of alternative rock band Jane's Addiction filed dueling lawsuits Wednesday over singer Perry Farrell's onstage scuffle with guitarist Dave Navarro at a Boston concert last year, prompting the cancellation of the rest of their reunion tour and a planned album.

Navarro, drummer Stephen Perkins and bassist Eric Avery sued Farrell in Los Angeles Superior Court seeking at least \$10 million, alleging that Farrell's behavior on the tour had ranged from erratic to out-of-control, culminating in the assault, where Farrell punched Navarro both on stage and backstage.

"With a series of swift blows, he single-handedly destroyed the name, reputation, trademark, and viability of the Band and those who built it," their lawsuit says.

Farrell and his wife, Etty Lau Farrell, sued the three bandmates in the same court Wednesday, blaming them for the conflict and the violence.

"Navarro, Avery and Perkins ap-

parently decided," the lawsuit says, "that Jane's Addiction's decades of success should be jettisoned in pursuit of a yearslong bullying campaign against Farrell involving harassing him onstage during performances, including, among other tactics, trying to undermine him by playing their instruments at a high volume so that he could not hear himself sing."

The Farrells said that Navarro and Avery actually assaulted them.

Perry Farrell said he was "blind-sided" when the other members canceled the remaining 15 shows of the tour and broke up the band without consulting him, costing all of them a great deal of money.

And he said his bandmates defamed him by publicly saying after the fight that he had mental health problems.

Jane's Addiction was an essential part of the Los Angeles music scene in the late 1980s with their combination of elements of punk, goth and psychedelic sounds and culture. They became a national phenom-



Dave Navarro, left, and Perry Farrell of Jane's Addiction perform during KAABOO 2017 at the Del Mar Racetrack and Fairgrounds on Sept. 16, 2017, in San Diego, Calif. (AP)

enon with hits including "Jane Says" and "Been Caught Stealing," and through their founding of the Lollapalooza tour, whose first incarnations they headlined in 1991.

The group broke up soon after but returned several times in various incarnations. The 2024 tour was the first time the original members had played together since 2010.

Farrell missed all seven of the group's rehearsals in the run-up to the tour, his bandmate's lawsuit alleges, and his behavior during the early shows ranged from erratic to out-of-control.

"He struggled night to night amid public concern for his well-being and apparent intoxication," their lawsuit says. "Perry forgot lyrics, lost his place in songs he had sung since the 1980s, and mumbled rants as he drank from a wine bottle onstage."

The lawsuit says Farrell was given many solutions to the volume problem, none of which he followed.

Then on Sept. 13 at Leader Bank Pavilion in Boston in front of about 4,000 fans, videos partially captured Farrell lunging at Navarro and bumping Navarro with his shoulder before taking a swing at the guitarist with his right arm. Navarro is seen holding his right arm out to keep Farrell away before Farrell is dragged away.

But Farrell's lawsuit says the "video evidence is clear that the first altercation onstage during the Boston show was hardly one-sided." It says Nav-

arro was deliberately playing loud to drown out the singer, and "what followed was an inappropriate violent escalation by Navarro and Avery that was disproportionate to Farrell's minor body check of Navarro."

Farrell alleges that when he was being restrained by a crew member, Avery punched him in the kidneys, and that both Avery and Navarro assaulted him and his wife backstage.

Shortly after the fight, Farrell in a statement apologized to his bandmates, especially Navarro, for "inexcusable behavior."

Both lawsuits allege assault and battery, intentional infliction of emotional distress and breach of contract, among other claims.

"Now," Navarro, Perkins and Avery's lawsuit says, "the Band will never have their revival Tour, to celebrate a new album and 40+ years of deep, complex, chart-topping recordings. Instead, history will remember the Band as suffering a swift and painful death at the hands of Farrell's unprovoked anger and complete lack of self-control."

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Pete Davidson is going to be a dad. His girlfriend, Elsie Hewitt, announced their baby news Wednesday on Instagram with an ultrasound preview.

The model and actor posted photos of herself and the "Saturday Night Live" alum with the caption: "welp now everyone knows we had sex." She included a video of herself getting an ultrasound and an up-close sonogram image.

A rep for Davidson, 31, confirmed the news via email. It's the first baby for both.

Davidson and Hewitt, 29, were first spotted out together in March, romping in the waves and making out in Palm Beach, Florida. Their relationship comes after Davidson's 10-month stretch with actor Madelyn Cline ended last July.

Hewitt, who's appeared in "Industry," "Dave" and a Benny Blanco music video, had previously been linked to celebrities like Jason Sudeikis and Blanco. Davidson, who has several comedy specials in addition to his acting credits, has been known for his dating life, including high-profile relationships with Ariana Grande and Kim Kardashian.

Davidson, who has spoken of a rough childhood and lost his own father in the Sept. 11 attacks, has long wanted to be a dad, telling Kevin Hart on Hart's talk show three years ago: "It's gonna be so fun to dress up a little dude. I'm so excited for, like, that chapter." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Comedian Shane Gillis' opening monologue as host of the ESPYS went over awkwardly in front of some of the biggest names in sports on Wednesday night.

Early on, he called out various famous faces in the Dolby Theatre crowd, including retired WNBA star Diana Taurasi, who was to receive the Icon Award later in the evening. Gillis said, "Give it up for her" after calling her "Deanna." The camera showed an unsmiling Taurasi shaking her head. Gillis quickly caught his mistake, saying, "My bad on that."

Gillis moved on to WNBA superstar Caitlin Clark, who wasn't on hand.

"When Caitlin Clark retires from the WNBA, she's going to work at a Waffle House so she can continue doing what she loves most: fist fighting Black women," he joked.

While some in the audience laughed, others appeared uncomfortable.

Gillis plowed on for 10 minutes, with jokes about President Donald Trump and Jeffrey Epstein, whose sex trafficking investigation has rolled the Justice Department and FBI.

Gillis' performance drew mixed reviews on social media, with some calling him "hilarious" and others "cringe." Gillis' initial joke about North Carolina coach Bill Belichick and his 24-year-old girlfriend Jordan Hudson drew a lot of laughs. (AP)

Film



This image released by Sony Pictures shows, (from left), Jonah Hauer-King, Sarah Pidgeon, Chase Sui Wonders, Madelyn Cline and Tariq Withers in a scene from 'I Know What You Did Last Summer.' (AP)

'Legacy sequel' mixes fear and flashbacks

Nostalgia, gore collide in new 'I Know'

LOS ANGELES, July 17, (AP): The new "I Know What You Did Last Summer" pretty much follows the plot of the 1997 film of the same name: A bunch of well-to-do young people get stalked and killed by a vengeful killer in a rain slicker with an ice hook. It even has some of the same stars.

"It's 1997 all over again. It's so nostalgic," says Freddie Prinze Jr., who stars in both, this time around. Responds another returning star, Jennifer Love Hewitt: "Nostalgia is overrated."

That line deserves a big laugh from a so-called "legacy sequel" that blends old and new to resurrect a franchise long dormant but isn't sure where it sits in 2025. A wink here, an eye-gouging there.

By aping the structure of the original - maddeningly calling itself by its predecessor's name - the new version of "I Know What You Did Last Summer" is both too tentative a step forward and yet too reliant on the past to fully break free of that gravitational pull.

The new installment follows a group of post-high school friends (Madelyn Cline, Chase Sui Wonders, Jonah Hauer-King, Sarah Pidgeon and Tyriq Withers) who cause a fatal car wreck on July Fourth and swear to keep their involvement a secret. But a year later, someone wants them dead, offering the anniversary warning: "I know what you did last summer."

This is a franchise that got a bit lost in the shad-

ow of the "Scream" dynasty, but still helped make household names of such Gen X heroes as Prinze, Hewitt, Sarah Michelle Gellar and Ryan Phillippe. A relaunch makes sense but it's pretty vapid stuff until the OGs arrive.

In fact, you may find yourself rooting for the killer. The five youngsters who have grown up in Southport, North Carolina - "the Hamptons of the South" - mostly live lives of nepo privilege, drinking from flasks, driving Volvos, munching on macarons and taking Adderall. One lives on a 156-foot (48-meter) yacht with three decks.

Survive

The movie mostly muddles along like a TV special, only coming to life when Prinze and Hewitt arrive, asked by the hunted youngsters for guidance. After all, the duo survived the 1997 attacks. "Get them before they get you," Hewitt's Julie advises.

Director Jennifer Kaytin Robinson, who co-wrote the screenplay with Sam Lansky, mixes gruesome stabbings, harpoon impalings and corpses displayed on hooks like fish at the dock with jokes that needle everything from Nicole Kidman's cheesy AMC commercials to our fling with true-crime podcasts.

The filmmakers make half-hearted attempts to explain the ripple effects from trauma but we're not here for generational pain; we're here for the slashy-

slashy. There is one dream sequence with a surprise returning OG that's worth the ticket price alone.

The tone is all over the place - whimpering victims one moment, horny the next. The police in Southport are nefarious - in a nod to "Jaws," they cover up the murders for fear of turning off tourism - but there's a "Scooby-Doo" vibe here (even a mention) that seems less playful than idea-deprived. There are elements of spoof, too, like a vain woman who has just lost someone close in a grisly bloodbath but worries about her skin care.

Look, we hate to break it to you, it's not going to end well for many of this privileged set, as they hunt whoever is hunting them. Coherence is also stabbed a lot because a clear motive for the mass murder is really hard to understand.

No matter: We get the scene when a scared victim with a massive knife sticking out of her back shoots a harpoon gun at the hook killer, and that's why we came in the first place. We also get Hewitt screaming her catchphrase, mocking her attacker: "What are you waiting for?" Well, what are you waiting for?

"I Know What You Did Last Summer," a Sony Pictures release in theaters Friday, is rated R for "bloody horror violence, language throughout, some sexual content and brief drug use." Running time: 111 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

People

Beach trespass

Backstreet Boy sues Fla. sheriff

ORLANDO, Fla., July 17, (AP): Backstreet Boys singer **Brian Littrell** says a local Florida sheriff's office isn't doing enough to protect his multimillion-dollar beachfront property from trespassers and is asking a judge for an order commanding deputies to do so.

The petition filed last month by Littrell's company in a Florida Panhandle county touches on a perennial tug-of-war between usually-wealthy oceanfront property owners and beach-loving members of the public, especially in Florida, which has 825 miles of sandy beaches.

Under Florida law, any sand on a beach below the high tide water mark is public. Many homeowners own the sand down to the average high-water line, though some counties over the decades have passed local ordinances that let the public use otherwise private beaches for sunbathing, fishing and walking if people have historically had access for those purposes.

Property records show that Littrell's company purchased the property in Santa Rosa Beach in Walton County in 2023 for \$3.8 million.

A spokeswoman for the Walton County Sheriff's Office said Wednesday that the office doesn't comment on pending litigation.

"The Walton County Sheriff's Office prides itself on handling every situation, call for service, or interaction with professionalism using a customer service approach," public information officer Lindsey Darby said in an email. "This has always been our philosophy and will remain so moving forward."

In the petition, Littrell's company said that chairs, umbrellas and small tables had been put out on the beach, as well as "No Trespassing" signs, to mark it as private property. But that effort had been in vain "as numerous trespassers have set out to antagonize, bully, and harass the Littrell family by regularly, every day, trespassing," according to the petition.

The sheriff's office has refused requests to remove trespassers or charge them, and the family has had to hire private security, the petition said.



Littrell

Duke of Sussex walks through a minefield for a cause

Prince Harry retraces Diana's footsteps in Angola for charity

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, July 17, (AP): Prince Harry followed in his late mother's footsteps on Wednesday by wearing a flak jacket and walking down a path in an active land mine field in Angola to raise awareness for a charity's work clearing explosives from old warzones.

The Duke of Sussex is in the southern African country with the Halo Trust organization, the same group Princess Diana worked with when she went to Angola in January 1997, seven months before she was killed in a car crash in Paris.

Diana's advocacy and the images of her walking through a minefield helped mobilize support for a land mine ban treaty that was ratified later that year.

Harry walked through a land mine field near a village in Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola, according to Halo Trust. It's not the first time he has

retraced his mother's steps after traveling to Angola for a similar awareness campaign in 2019.

Princess Diana visited Angola with the Halo Trust in January 1997, just seven months before she was killed in a Paris car crash. Diana was famously photographed on that trip wearing protective equipment and walking through an active minefield during a break in fighting in Angola's long civil war.

Her advocacy helped mobilize support for a treaty banning land mines later that year.

This is not the first time Harry has followed in his mother's footsteps by raising awareness for the Halo Trust's work. He also visited the southern African country in 2019 for a land mine clearing project. British media reported that Harry traveled to Angola this week without his wife Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex.

Halo Trust CEO James Cowan said in a statement Tuesday that he and Harry met with Lourenço to discuss continued demining efforts in Angola and thanked the president for his support for that work.

Angola was torn apart by a 27-year civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 2002, with some brief and fragile periods of peace in between.

The Halo Trust says there are estimates that around 80,000 Angolans have been killed or injured by land mines during and after the war, although there are no exact figures. The organization says just over 1,000 minefields covering an estimated 67 square kilometers (26 square miles) still needed to be cleared at the end of 2024.

Angola had set itself a goal to be land mine-free by 2025.



Britain's Prince Harry walks through a minefield during a visit to see the work of landmine clearance charity of the Halo Trust, in Cuito Cuanavale, Cuando province, southern Angola, Wednesday, July 16. (AP)

Young dinosaur steals the show

Largest piece of Mars on Earth fetches \$5.3m at auction

NEW YORK, July 17, (AP): The largest piece of Mars ever found on Earth was sold for just over \$5 million at an auction of rare geological and archaeological objects in New York on Wednesday. But a rare young dinosaur skeleton stole the show when it fetched more than \$30 million in a bidding frenzy.

The 54-pound (25-kilogram) rock named NWA 16788 was discovered in the Sahara Desert in Niger by a meteorite hunter in November 2023, after having been blown off the surface of Mars by a massive asteroid strike and traveling 140 million miles (225 million kilometers) to Earth, according to Sotheby's. The estimated sale price before the auction was \$2 million to \$4 million.

The identity of the buyer was not immediately disclosed. The final bid was \$4.3 million. Adding various fees and costs, the official sale price was about \$5.3 million, making it the most valuable meteorite ever sold at auction, Sotheby's said.

The live bidding was slow, with the auctioneer trying to coax more offers and decreasing the minimum bid increases. The dinosaur skeleton, on the other hand, sparked a war among six bidders over six minutes. With a pre-auction estimate of \$4 million to \$6 million, it is one of only four known



A Martian meteorite, weighing 54.388 lbs. (24.67 kg), said to be the largest piece of Mars on Earth, at Sotheby's, in New York, July 9, 2025, was sold for just over \$5-million at an auction of rare geological and archaeological objects, at Sotheby's, Wednesday, July 16. (AP)

Ceratosaurus nasicornis skeletons and the only juvenile skeleton of the species, which resembles the Tyrannosaurus rex

but is smaller.

Bidding for the skeleton started with a high advance offer of \$6 million, then escalated during the live round with bids \$500,000 higher than the last and later \$1 million higher than the last before ending at \$26 million.

People applauded after the auctioneer gaveled the bidding closed.

The official sale price was \$30.5 million with fees and costs. That buyer also was not immediately disclosed, but the auction house said the buyer plans to loan the skeleton to an institution. It was the third-highest amount paid for a dinosaur at auction. A Stegosaurus skeleton called "Apex" holds the record after it was sold for \$44.6 million last year at Sotheby's.

Parts of the skeleton were found in 1996 near Laramie, Wyoming, at Bone Cabin Quarry, a gold mine for dinosaur bones. Specialists assembled nearly 140 fossil bones with some sculpted materials to recreate the skeleton and mounted it so it's ready to exhibit, Sotheby's says. It was acquired last year by Fossillogic, a Utah-based fossil preparation and mounting company.

It's more than 6 feet (2 meters) tall and nearly 11 feet (3 meters) long, and is believed to be from the late Jurassic

period, about 150 million years ago. Ceratosaurus dinosaurs could grow up to 25 feet (7.6 meters) long, while the T. rex could be 40 feet (12 meters) long.

The bidding for the Mars meteorite began with two advance offers of \$1.9 million and \$2 million. The live bidding slowly proceeded with increases of \$200,000 and \$300,000 until \$4 million, then continued with \$100,000 increases until reaching \$4.3 million.

The red, brown and gray meteorite is about 70% larger than the next largest piece of Mars found on Earth and represents nearly 7% of all the Martian material currently on this planet, Sotheby's says. It measures nearly 15 inches by 11 inches by 6 inches (375 millimeters by 279 millimeters by 152 millimeters).

It was also a rare find. There are only 400 Martian meteorites out of the more than 77,000 officially recognized meteorites found on Earth, the auction house says.

"This Martian meteorite is the largest piece of Mars we have ever found by a long shot," Cassandra Hatton, vice chairman for science and natural history at Sotheby's, said in an interview before the auction. "So it's more than double the size of what we previously thought was the largest piece of Mars."



Suni Lee arrives at the ESPY Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, Wednesday, July 16. (AP)

Variety

NEW YORK: Oscar winner **El-len Burstyn** has a book coming out next year that reveals how she has been shaped by the power of words.

HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, announced Wednesday that Burstyn's "Poetry Says It Better" will be released April 28, 2026. Burstyn, 93, is known for such films as "The Last Picture Show" and "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore," for which she won an Academy Award; the TV shows "Political Animals" and "House of Cards" and the Broadway production "Same Time, Next Year."

Burstyn's favorite poets include Maya Angelou, Mary Oliver and William Butler Yeats. (AP)

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CHICAGO: With Chicago's WFMT Radio taking the lead, public radio stations across the United States started airing a new series of symphony orchestra programs from China's National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) on Monday.

Blending Eastern and Western musical traditions, the series promises an immersive listening experience for American audiences. It also serves as a prelude to the NCPA Orchestra's upcoming European tour in August.

"Symphony and opera are idealistic media for cultural exchanges between the East and the West," said Lv Jia, music artistic director of the center. "Chinese music not only has its beautiful melodies, but also contains the cultural heritage and the essence of thousands of years of Chinese civilization." (Xinhua)

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LOS ANGELES: The Walt Disney Co. on Wednesday sued a Hong Kong jewelry company it accuses of selling illegal Mickey Mouse jewelry.

The international media and entertainment conglomerate filed a lawsuit in federal court in Los Angeles against the Red Earth Group, which sells jewelry online under the name Sat ur.

Disney says the marketing and branding of the rings, necklaces and earrings in Sat ur's "Mickey 1928 Collection" violate its trademark rights and that the Hong Kong company is deliberately trying to fool customers into thinking the pieces are official Disney merchandise.

Sat ur, the suit alleges, "intends to present Mickey Mouse as its own brand identifier for its jewelry merchandise and "seeks to trade on the recognizability of the Mickey Mouse trademarks and consumers' affinity for Disney and its iconic ambassador Mickey Mouse."

A message seeking comment from representatives of the Red Earth Group was not immediately answered.

The lawsuit is indicative of Disney's dogged efforts to protect its intellectual property from unauthorized appropriation. Although the earliest version of Mickey Mouse entered the public domain last year after Disney's copyright expired, the company still holds trademark rights to the character. (AP)

Obituary



Singer Connie Francis performs during the dress rehearsal of the German TV show 'Summer Party of Folk Music' in Magdeburg, eastern Germany, June 5, 2004. (AP)

'Top performer of the pre-Beatles era'

Pop legend Connie Francis dies at 87

LOS ANGELES, July 17, (AP): Connie Francis, the wholesome pop star of the 1950s and '60s whose hits include "Pretty Little Baby" and "Who's Sorry Now?" - the latter that would later serve as an ironic title for a personal life filled with heartbreak and tragedy - has died at age 87.

Her death was announced Thursday by her friend and publicist, Ron Roberts, who did not immediately provide additional details.

Francis was a top performer of the pre-Beatles era, rarely off the charts from 1957-64. Able to appeal to both young people and adults, she had more than a dozen Top 20 hits, starting with "Who's Sorry Now?" and including the No. 1 songs "Don't Break the Heart That Loves You" and "The Heart Has a Mind of Its Own." Like other teen favorites of her time, she also starred in several films, including "Where the Boys Are" and "Follow the Boys."

The dark-haired singer was just 17 when she signed a contract with MGM Records following appearances on several TV variety shows. Her earliest recordings attracted little attention, but then she released her version of "Who's Sorry Now?" an old ballad by Ted Snyder, Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby.

It, too, had little success initially until Dick Clark played it on his "American Bandstand" show in 1958. Clark

featured her repeatedly on "American Bandstand," and she said in later years that without his support, she would have abandoned her music career.

Francis followed with such teen hits as "Stupid Cupid," "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" and "Lipstick on Your Collar." Her records became hits worldwide as she re-recorded versions of her original songs in Italian and Spanish, among other languages. Her concerts around the country quickly sold out.

Volunteered

Meanwhile, a romance bloomed with fellow teen idol Bobby Darin, who had volunteered to write songs for her. But when her father heard rumors that the pair was planning a wedding, he stormed into a rehearsal and pulled a gun on Darin, ending their relationship and seeming to set Francis on a pained and traumatic path.

She chronicled some of it in her autobiography, "Who's Sorry Now?" "My personal life is a regret from A to Z," she told The Associated Press in 1984, the year the book came out. "I realized I had allowed my father to exert too much influence over me."

Her father, George Franconero, was a roofing contractor from New Jersey who played the accordion. She was just 3 when her father presented her

with a child-size accordion, as soon as she began to show an aptitude for music. When she was 4, he began booking singing dates for her, going on to become her manager.

Although her acting career had faded by the mid-1960s, Francis was still popular on the concert circuit when she appeared at the Westbury Music Center in Westbury, New York, in 1974. She had returned to her hotel room and was asleep when a man broke in and raped her at knifepoint. He was never captured.

Francis sued the hotel, alleging its security was faulty, and a jury awarded her \$2.5 million in 1976. The two sides then settled out of court for \$1,475,000 as an appeal was pending. She said the attack destroyed her marriage and put her through years of emotional turmoil.

She suffered tragedy in 1981 when her brother George was shot to death as he was leaving his New Jersey home. Later that decade, her father had her committed to a psychiatric hospital, where she was diagnosed as manic-depressive. At one point she attempted suicide by swallowing dozens of sleeping tablets. After three days in a coma, she recovered.

She was married four times and would say that only her third husband, Joseph Garzilli, was worth the trouble. The other marriages each lasted less than a year.

Streaming growth slow

'Recession pop' surges in the US

NEW YORK, July 17, (AP): Half-way through 2025, a few music trends have become clear, according to Luminate's 2025 Mid-year Report, which was released Wednesday:

- In the US and globally, more music is being streamed than ever before...
- But growth has slowed.
- And in the US specifically, there's been a resurgence in Christian music and "recession pop."

In its midyear report, Luminate, an industry data and analytics company, provides insight into changing behaviors across music listenership.

Music streams continued to grow globally and stateside in the first half of 2025. Global on-demand audio streams reached 2.5 trillion in the first half of 2025 - up from 2.29 trillion in the same period last year.

And in the U.S., on-demand audio streams grew to 696.6 billion in 2025, compared to 665.8 billion in 2024.

But even though more music is being streamed than ever before, compared to past years, the rate of growth is slowing down. In 2024, US and global on-demand audio streams grew 8% and 15.1%, respectively. In 2025, those numbers have



Lady Gaga rehearses for her free concert on Copacabana beach, in Rio de Janeiro on May 2, 2025. (AP)

dropped to 4.6% and 10.3%.

In the US, streaming accounts for 92% of all music consumption. On-demand streams were up in 2025 as physical and digital album sales dropped.

R&B/hip-hop remains the most popular genre in terms of on-demand audio streaming volume, followed by rock, pop, country and Latin. The same was true in 2024. What's interesting are the highest-growth genres: Rock leads stateside, followed by Latin, country, and Christian/gospel

music.

Though streams of new music - music released in the last 18 months - are slightly down from the same time last year, new Christian/gospel music has defied that trend, said Jaime Marconette, Luminate's vice president of music insights and industry relations. It is led by acts like Forrest Frank, Brandon Lake and Elevation Worship.

He attributed the genre's growth to "younger, streaming-forward fan-base," which is 60% female and 30% millennial.

"Recession pop" - the term for upbeat hits like Kesh a's "Tik Tok," Miley Cyrus' "Party in the U.S.A." and other carefree pop music that emerged in 2007-2012 around the time of the Great Recession - has also seen a jump this year. Luminate found that US on-demand audio streams of pop music from that era have increased 6.4% in 2025. Songs from Cyrus, Bruno Mars, Lady Gaga and Rihanna lead the shift.

"We're actually seeing pop music from those years outpace the growth of the industry at-large," adds Marconette. "When looking at performance of all genres from that period, listeners are gravitating toward pop in particular, highlighting a sense of nostalgia and potentially bigger themes of escapism."

Romance genre revival

Romance novels gain respect, retail space

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., July 17, (AP): Romance novels have always spiced up quiet nights. Now, a genre that has sometimes been dismissed as a guilty pleasure is bringing readers and writers together through social media, book clubs and a growing number of romance-specific bookstores.

At a recent launch party for Nora Dahlia's enemies-to-friends romance Pick-Up at Lovestruck Books, a romance-dedicated store in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a crowd of women browsed the shelves and mingled in a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

After Dahlia's reading, patrons stuck around to mingle, swap contact info and trade author recommendations. It was a particularly social event for a book talk. But the communal atmosphere is typical of events for romance fans.

Dahlia likened romance readers to "Comic-Con folks," referring to the deep-rooted passion that defines comic-book fandom.

"They're educated on the genre in a real way," Dahlia said. "Many of them started reading romance - Danielle Steel, V.C. Andrews, Jude Deveraux - as teenagers."

At The Ripped Bodice bookstore in Brooklyn, New York, manager Katherine Zofri said romance fans who have connected online frequently come into the store to meet in person. Along with author events, the store hosts three different book clubs and a romance comedy night.

"We've had a couple proposals here, we've had a wedding here which was really fun," Zofri said.

Romance

She said customers range "from teenagers who are starting to really get into the romance genres to older folks who have been romance readers for their entire lives and remember way back when they were reading the Harlequins and romance wasn't as widely accepted."

"Now they're loving seeing how widely accepted romance has become."

Bookstores like Lovestruck and The Ripped Bodice (which has a flagship store in Los Angeles) have begun popping up all over the U.S., from Wichita, Kansas, to Wilmington, North Carolina, to Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

Of the 157 romance-dedicated bookstores in the American Booksellers Association, more than half opened within the last two years, said Allison Hill, CEO of the group.

"Romance books have been one of the fastest growing book sales categories in recent years, driven by a number of factors including the need for escape reading and BookTok," Hill said.

And the genre has evolved. "The romance genre is more diverse in every way including character identity and plot," she said.

Lovestruck's owner, Rachel Kanter, called the boom "incredible - and honestly, overdue. Romance has always been one of the most commercially successful genres, but for a long time it didn't get the respect or space it deserved in the literary world."

Romance-specific bookstores, she says, "are places where readers can feel joy, comfort, and connection - and where love is taken seriously as a literary theme."

As with many hobbies, romance fandom solidified and expanded after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cultural

"The pandemic had pushed so many people toward reading for escape and comfort, and romance became a lifeline for a lot of folks," said Kanter.

"At the same time, there was a wider cultural shift happening - people were rethinking what mattered, craving joy and softness, and looking to support indie businesses that reflected their values. Romance, with all its hope and heart, met that moment beautifully," she said.

Romance has countless subgenres - hockey romance, Western romance, LGBTQ romance, even romance set on prison planets. But a common theme is their "inherently hopeful storylines," says Elizabeth Michaelson Monaghan, a 52-year-old freelance writer and editor in New York who said she's read "hundreds" of romance novels.

"Romance must have a happily-ever-after - or at least a happily-for-now. Romance writers and readers are very clear on this," she said.

Romantic fiction that doesn't end that way? That's just a love story.

Traits of the romance genre also include strong character descriptions, attraction, conflict, and a satisfying resolution and emotional growth. Expect plenty of steam - some authors deploy it explicitly, others are more tame.

There's a long-standing culture of (mostly) women reading and sharing these books across generations.

"It is pleasurable to reimagine courtship or the romantic bond," said Jayashree Kamble, professor of English at LaGuardia Community College and president of the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance. "There is limited risk involved."

Kamble has been a voracious romance reader since her teenage years in India, where she devoured Harlequin romances.

Romance novels, she said, are "a lovely reminder that individualism and companionship can go together. These are basic bonds."

Podcasts, too, have become a source for discovering what's trending. Andrea Martucci, creator and host of the romance-focused "Shelf Love" podcast, said romance bookstores have become places of connection akin, in some ways, to churches - for the romantically devoted.

"I can go to a bookstore and not just find people who love books," she said, "but find people who love the very same books I love."

As Annabel Monaghan, author of several love stories including "Nora Goes Off Script," puts it, "People who read romance want to feel good. And when you gather a bunch of people who want to feel good, it's magic."



Lovestruck Books owner Rachel Kanter poses in her bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts on Dec. 15, 2024. (AP)



The medical team at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Kidney Center during the surgery.



Kuwait Health Minister (center) during his participation at the opening of the World Congress of Robotic Surgeons held in the city of Strasbourg.



Live broadcast of the surgery. KUNA photos

Kuwait showcases remote robotic surgery at global congress

Kuwait’s Health Ministry touts success of remote prostatectomy

KUWAIT CITY, July 17, (KUNA): A Kuwaiti team successfully carried out a remote prostatectomy on a patient residing in Al-Sabah medical district, said the Health Ministry on Wednesday.

According to a Health Ministry statement, the procedure – done on patient in his 50s – saw the partial removal of his prostate via MEDBOT technology with the team being abroad. The ministry added that the team was headed by Dr. Saad Al-Dossari, who beamed the remote procedure in details to some 2,500 surgeons partaking in the World Congress of Robotic Surgery in Strasbourg, France. Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi was also present, it affirmed.

This is the ninth surgery of its kind headed by Dr. Al-Dossari, who previously carried out eight procedures with the last being from Shanghai, China, to a patient in Kuwait, it said.

Mental health crisis

US pushes forward on psychedelic therapies

WASHINGTON, July 17, (AP): For decades, proponents of psychedelic drugs have come to Washington with a provocative message: Illegal, mind-altering substances like LSD and ecstasy should be approved for Americans grappling with depression, trauma and other hard-to-treat conditions.

A presidential administration finally seems to agree.

“This line of therapeutics has tremendous advantage if given in a clinical setting and we are working very hard to make sure that happens within 12 months,” Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. recently told members of Congress.

His suggested timeline for green-lighting psychedelic therapy surprised even the most bullish supporters of the drugs. And it comes as psychedelics are making inroads in deep red states like Texas, where former Trump cabinet secretary and ex-governor Rick Perry has thrown his full support behind the effort.

The administration’s embrace of psychedelics has sparked both excitement as well as concern from those in the field, who worry the drugs might be discredited if they appear to be rushed onto the market or are too closely linked with Kennedy, who is known for controversial views on vaccines, antidepressants and fluoride.

“I’m quite optimistic,” says Rick Doblin, whose organization has pursued the medical use of MDMA (or ecstasy) since the 1980s. “But I’m also worried that the message the public might get is ‘Well, RFK likes psychedelics and now it’s approved.’”

Under President Joe Biden, the FDA rejected MDMA as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, citing flawed data and questionable research. Regulators called for a new study, likely taking several years. It was a major setback for Doblin and other advocates hoping to see the first U.S. approval of a psychedelic for medical use.

New hope to rescue unused donor hearts

Researchers try ‘innovative’ ways to preserve more hearts for transplants

WASHINGTON, July 17, (AP): Two university hospitals are pioneering new ways to expand lifesaving heart transplants for adults and babies – advances that could help recover would-be heart donations that too often go unused.

The new research aims to overcome barriers for using organs from someone who dies when their heart stops. Called DCD, or donation after circulatory death, it involves a controversial recovery technique or the use of expensive machines.

Surgeons at Duke and Vanderbilt universities reported Wednesday that they’ve separately devised simpler approaches to retrieve those hearts. In the New England Journal of Medicine, they described successfully transplanting hearts to a 3-month-old infant at Duke and three men at Vanderbilt.

“These DCD hearts work just as well as hearts from brain-dead donors,” said Vanderbilt lead author Dr. Aaron M. Williams.

Most transplanted hearts come from donors who are brain dead. In those situations, the body is left on a ventilator that keeps the heart beating until the organs are removed.

Circulatory death occurs when someone has a nonsurvivable brain injury but because all brain function hasn’t ceased, the family decides to withdraw life support and the heart stops. That means organs can spend a while without oxygen before being recovered, a time lag usually doable for kidneys and other organs but that can raise questions about the quality of hearts.

To counter damage and determine whether DCD organs are usable, surgeons can pump blood and oxygen to the deceased donor’s abdominal and chest organs – after clamping off access to the brain. But it’s ethically controversial to artificially restore circulation even temporarily and some hospitals prohibit that technique, called normothermic regional perfusion, or NRP.

Another option is to “reanimate” DCD organs in a machine that pumps blood and nutrients on the way to the transplant hospital. The machines are expensive and complex, and Duke’s Dr. Joseph Turek said the devices can’t be used for young children’s small hearts – the age group with the most dire need.

Turek’s team found a middle ground: Remove the heart and attach some tubes of oxygen and blood to briefly assess its ability to function – not in a machine but on a sterile table in the operating room.



This photo provided by Duke Health shows surgeon Joseph Turek during pediatric heart surgery in Durham, N.C., in 2021. (AP)

Evacuation

Jordan aids 35 Gaza sick kids

AMMAN, July 17, (Xinhua): The Jordan Armed Forces on Wednesday evacuated the seventh group of sick children from the Gaza Strip under the Jordanian Medical Corridor initiative, according to a military statement.

The group included 35 children, accompanied by 72 family members. They were transported to Jordan for treatment in local hospitals via the King Hussein Bridge.

The evacuation was carried out in coordination with the Jordanian Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, and conducted under strict medical and security procedures.

According to the statement, this is the largest group evacuated since the initiative was launched in March.

To date, a total of 112 children and 241 family members have been brought to Jordan for medical care.

Jordan’s King Abdullah II announced in February the country’s readiness to receive up to 2,000 Palestinian children from Gaza for treatment.

□ □ □

HPV vaccine: Namibia’s Ministry of Health and Social Services on Wednesday addressed concerns over the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, as misinformation, cultural beliefs, and safety fears are hindering public acceptance.

The ministry said in a statement that vaccine hesitancy is being fueled by false claims, including concerns about infertility and moral objections, which are not supported by scientific evidence. It urged parents to seek reliable information from healthcare professionals.

“The vaccine is safe and effective,” the ministry said. “We encourage families and communities to trust verified health sources and support the national rollout.”

With a population of about 3 million, the southern African nation plans to roll out the HPV vaccine free of charge to girls aged nine to 14 across all 14 regions, with distribution taking place through schools, public health facilities, and targeted outreach initiatives.

According to the health ministry, the nationwide education campaign includes community outreach, media engagement, and collaboration with schools to promote awareness about cervical cancer prevention and the benefits of early vaccination.



This image shows jets of silicon monoxide blowing away from the baby star HOPS-315 on July 15. (AP)

Astronomers capture planets’ birth

Astronomers have discovered the earliest seeds of rocky planets forming in the gas around a baby sun-like star, providing a precious peek into the dawn of our own solar system.

It’s an unprecedented snapshot of “time zero,” scientists reported Wednesday, when new worlds begin to gel.

“We’ve captured a direct glimpse of the hot region where rocky planets like Earth are born around young protostars,” said Leiden Observatory’s Melissa McClure from the Netherlands, who led the international research team. “For the first time, we can conclusively say that the first steps of planet formation are happening right now.”

The observations offer a unique glimpse into the inner workings of an emerging planetary system, said the University of Chicago’s Fred Ciesla, who was not involved in the study appearing in the journal Nature. (AP)

Coca-Cola to use real sugar in coke: Trump

WASHINGTON, July 17, (AP): Make American Coke Great Again?

President Donald Trump said Wednesday that Coca-Cola has agreed to use real cane sugar in its flagship soft drink in the US at his suggestion – though the company didn’t confirm such a move.

Any switch from high-fructose corn syrup in Coke sold in the United States would put Coca-Cola more in line with its practice in other countries, including Mexico and Australia. But it wouldn’t affect Trump’s drink of choice, Diet Coke, which uses aspartame as a calorie-free beverage.

“I have been speaking to Coca-Cola about using REAL Cane Sugar in Coke in the United States, and they have agreed to do so,” Trump wrote on his social media site. “I’d like to thank all of those in authority at Coca-Cola. This will be a very good move by them – You’ll see. It’s just better!”

A spokesperson for Atlanta-based Coca-Cola Co. said in a statement that the company appreciated Trump’s enthusiasm and promised that more details on new offerings within its products would be shared soon.

Coca-Cola didn’t elaborate. But the company has long indulged U.S. fans of cane sugar by importing glass bottles of Mexican Coke to the U.S. since 2005.

Returning to sugar in U.S. production, meanwhile, might affect the nation’s corn farmers, whose yields are used in artificial sweeteners.

“Replacing high fructose corn syrup with cane sugar doesn’t make sense,” Corn Refiners Association President and CEO John Bode said in a statement. “President Trump stands for American manufacturing jobs, American farmers, and reducing the trade deficit. Replacing high fructose corn syrup with cane sugar would cost thousands of American food manufacturing jobs, depress farm income, and boost imports of foreign sugar, all with no nutritional benefit.”

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Messi multi-goal streak ends in Miami loss to Cincinnati



New York City FC midfielder Aiden O'Neill (21) tires to stop Orlando City midfielder Cesar Araujo (5) from advancing the ball during the second half of an MLS soccer match in Orlando, Fla. (AP)



CF Montreal's Joel Waterman, left, and Philadelphia Union's Bruno Damiani leap for the ball during the first half of an MLS soccer match, in Chester, Pa. (AP)

L AFC tops Minnesota United for third straight shutout victory

CINCINNATI, July 17, (AP): Lionel Messi's MLS-record streak of scoring multiple goals in five straight matches ended on Wednesday night in Inter Miami's 3-0 loss to FC Cincinnati.

Cincinnati got a first-half goal from Gerardo Valenzuela and two second-half strikes from Evander to remain one point behind the Philadelphia Union in the Eastern Conference standings. Philadelphia beat CF Montreal 2-1 on Wednesday night.

The loss ended a five-match winning streak for Inter Miami (11-4-5) which is fifth in the Eastern Conference standings.

Messi is the first player in MLS history to have a multi-goal streak of more than four matches. He is second in the league with 16 goals.

Messi has only played in three matches against Cincinnati since coming to MLS, but the team has made things difficult for the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner.

Cincinnati had four shots on target in the first 16 minutes to none for Inter Miami, and took a 1-0 lead when Valenzuela angled a shot from the left side of the box for his fifth goal of the season.

Messi's first shot came in the final minute of first-half stoppage time and landed comfortably in the arms of keeper Roman Celentano.

Evander's 14th goal of the season, and 50th in MLS, put Cincinnati ahead 2-0 less than five minutes into the second half.

Denis Bouanga scored on a first-half penalty kick and Hugo Lloris made it stand up for his third straight clean sheet as Los Angeles FC edged Minnesota United 1-0.

Bouanga scored his 11th goal when he sent a right-footed shot past Dayne St. Clair in the 42nd minute. The PK was awarded after Jeremy Ebobisse was fouled by defender Nicolás Romero, who received a yellow card.

Lloris finished with three saves for his league-high-tying ninth clean sheet of the season for LAFC (10-5-5).

St. Clair entered with nine shutouts and totaled five saves for Minnesota United (11-5-7), which falls to 6-3-3 at home.

Tai Baribo scored his 14th goal and rookie defender Oluwethu Makhanya scored the first of his career early in the second half to lead the Philadelphia Union to a 2-1 victory over CF Montreal.

Baribo scored unassisted with a right-footed shot from the center of the box in the 37th minute to put the Union up 1-0.

Prince Owusu took a pass from defender Joel Waterman two minutes into stoppage time and scored to tie it 1-1 at halftime. It was a career-high 10th goal this season for Owusu and his 44th in 60 career appearances. Waterman's assist was his first in 128 career appearances over six seasons with Montreal.

Alonso Martínez scored in stoppage time to help New York City FC rally and beat Orlando City 2-1.

Orlando (9-6-8) is winless four straight.

Julián Fernández, on the counter-attack, played a ball-ahead to a sprinting Martínez, who outraced the defense and then beat goalkeeper Pedro Gallese - who moved to the edge of the penalty area - with a rolling shot inside the right post in the first minute of stoppage time.

Pep Biel scored two goals, his first career multi-goal game in MLS, to help Charlotte FC beat D.C. United 2-1.

Charlotte (10-11-2) is 3-0-1 at home against United all time.

Sam Surridge had a goal and an assists, Hany Mukhtar also scored a goal and Nashville SC beat Columbus 3-0 to snap the Crew's five-game unbeaten streak, which included four wins.

Joe Willis had four saves and his eighth shutouts this season - tied for third most in MLS - for Nashville (13-5-5).

Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Emil Forsberg both had two of New York's five unanswered goals in the sec-

ond half and the Red Bulls rallied to beat the New England Revolution 5-3.

Emmanuel Sabbi scored a goal in the fourth minute, Sebastian Berhalter added a goal and the Vancouver Whitecaps beat the Houston Dynamo 3-0.

Yohei Takaoka had two saves and his MLS-high 10th shutout this season for Vancouver.

Theo Corbeanu scored in the 20th minute, Sean Johnson stopped the only shot he faced and Toronto FC beat San Diego FC 1-0 in the first-ever meeting between the clubs.

Diogo Gonçalves scored late in the second half and Rafael Cabral made it stand up in Real Salt Lake's 1-0 victory over the Portland Timbers.

Gonçalves scored for the third time this season when he used 20-year-old rookie Ariath Piol's second assist in the Myrto Uzuni scored a goal in the 40th minute and added an assists, Owen Wolff scored his first goal of the season and Austin FC beat LA 2-1 to snap the Galaxy's three-game home win streak.

Will Reilly scored his first career goal in the fourth minute of second-half stoppage time after subbing into the match in the second half to rally Atlanta United to a 2-2 draw with the Chicago.

Darren Yapi subbed in and scored the equalizer in the 75th minute and the Colorado Rapids rallied for a 3-3 draw with Seattle after the Sounders blew a three-goal lead.

Dream cruises past Sky

Minnesota stays undefeated at home, Liberty dominates Fever without Clark

NEW YORK, July 17, (AP): Breanna Stewart had 24 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists to help the New York Liberty to a 98-77 win Wednesday night over the Indiana Fever, who played without star guard Caitlin Clark.

Clark missed the game after injuring her right groin on Tuesday night in the final minute of the game against Connecticut in Boston. Clark has a busy weekend ahead as Indiana is hosting the WNBA All-Star Game and she's slated to compete in the 3-point contest and is captain of one of the two teams.

Sabrina Ionescu, who will also be in the 3-point contest, added 15 points and nine assists for the Liberty (15-6).

Stewart got the Liberty off to a strong start as they led 32-24 after one quarter and were up 15 at the half. The Liberty's All-Star forward had 13 points, nine rebounds and five assists by the break.

New York put the game away in the third quarter behind Stewart, whose three-point play with 3:57 left made it 71-48 much to the delight of the crowd of 17,371. The Fever could only get within 15 the rest of the way.

Kelsey Mitchell led Indiana (12-11) with 16 points. The Fever fell to 4-6 when Clark has missed a regular season game this season.



New York Liberty's Marine Johannes, left, protects the ball from Indiana Fever's Aari McDonald during the second half of a WNBA basketball game in New York. (AP)

10 points in the third and Alanna Smith finished with 11 points for Minnesota (20-4). Williams recorded five-plus assists in her seventh straight game.

Alyssa Thomas had 12 points and nine assists, and Kalani Brown had 11 points and 11 rebounds for Phoenix (15-7). DeWanna Bonner also scored 11 points on 5-of-12 shooting.

Lynx 79, Mercury 66

In Minneapolis, Kayla McBride scored 18 points, Courtney Williams had 12 points, seven rebounds and five assists, and Minnesota beat Phoenix to improve to 12-0 at home this season heading into the All-Star break.

Jessica Shepard's one-handed put-back just before the third-quarter buzzer made it 64-49. The Lynx made five 3-pointers in the frame to outscore the Mercury 27-16.

Napheesa Collier scored eight of her

Dream led by as many as 43 in the fourth. Rookie Te-Hina Paopao finished with 13 points and Naz Hillmon scored 10 for Atlanta (13-9). Jordin Canada had eight assists.

Storm 67, Valkyries 58

In Seattle, Nneka Ogumike scored 22 points to move into sixth place on the WNBA's all-time scoring list and Seattle beat Golden State.

Ogumike passed Candice Dupree (6,895 points) by one point and is now behind Tamika Catchings, who scored 7,380 in her career.

The Storm (14-9) went to Ogumike quite often down the stretch. She had 11 of her 22 points in the fourth quarter, including a pivotal layup with 2:09 remaining and a pair of free throws at the 1:18 mark to put Seattle up 61-54.

Erica Wheeler had a strong third quar-

ter, sinking back-to-back 3-pointers early and following with a running layup at the 7:41 mark to put the Storm up 39-33.

With 2:32 to go in the third, Wheeler converted a three-point play to give Seattle a 45-37 lead. The Valkyries (10-12) made it 56-54 with just 4:48 to go in regulation on a layup from Veronica Burton.

Ogumike's late efforts were enough to stymie the late Golden State push.

Wheeler had 15 points. Skylar Diggins scored 10 and Lexie Brown scored seven off the bench. Cecilia Zandalasini had 12 points and Janelle Salaun scored 10 for the Valkyries.

Aces 90, Wings 86

In Dallas, A'ja Wilson scored a season-high 37 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for her eighth double-double of the season and Las Vegas held off a late rally to beat Dallas.

Wilson, who had 34 points and 16 rebounds in a 104-102 win over Golden State on Saturday, finished 15 of 25 from the field to reach 30-plus points for the fourth time this season. Her 37 points tied for most points in a WNBA game this season.

Las Vegas created separation in the third quarter by going on an 18-2 run to build a 70-48 lead. The Aces scored 12 straight points during the run as Dallas went scoreless for three-plus minutes.

The Wings rallied in the fourth, opening on a 9-1 run to get within 73-61 on a 3-pointer by Paige Bueckers. Dallas added a 3-pointer on three straight possessions to cut its deficit to 86-82 with 1:04 left.

Bueckers made a baseline jumper with 26.5 seconds left to pull within 86-84, but Wilson was fouled while making a layup at the other end for a four-point lead. The Wings missed two 3-pointers and the Aces made their free throws.

Lynagh to start at flyhalf for Wallabies

No Welsh players in Lions test team for first time in 129 years

BRISBANE, Australia, July 17, (AP): Tom Lynagh will start at flyhalf for Australia against the Lions in the series-opening test on Saturday, 36 years after his famous father wore the Wallabies No. 10 jersey against the combined British and Irish rugby team.

Both squads were announced within a couple of hours on Thursday, with the Lions unveiling a squad that doesn't contain a Welsh player for the first time in tests against either Australia, New Zealand or South Africa since 1896.

Wallabies coach Joe Schmidt was forced into some significant changes by injuries to regular backrower Rob Valetini, lock Will Skelton and flyhalf Noah Lolesio.

Andy Farrell's Lions lineup is bigger, more experienced and close to full strength, similar to the squad that beat the Brumbies in Canberra last week.

England lock Maro Itoje is captain of the 23-man squad that contains eight Irish players in the starting lineup and three on the bench. Welsh backrower Jac Morgan missed out on a loose forward combination comprising No. 8 Jack Conan and flankers Tom Curry and Tadhg Beirne, meaning this Lions squad will have only players only from Ireland, England and Scotland.

Morgan got "as close as you could imagine," to selection, Farrell said. "You're actually gutted for players like that."

Flyhalf Finn Russell will spearhead a backline with his Scotland teammates Huw Jones and Sione Tuipulotu combining in the centers.

The Lions are 5-0 ahead of the three-test series since a 28-24 loss to Argentina in a warmup in Dublin. They had wins over all of Australia's Super Rugby franchises - the Western Force,



Australia's Nick Champion de Crespigny catches a ball during a training session ahead of the first rugby union test against the British and Irish Lions at Ballymore, in Brisbane. (AP)

Queensland Reds, Waratahs and Brumbies - before Saturday's 48-0 demolition of an AUNZ invitational XV in Adelaide.

Nick Champion de Crespigny will make his debut on the blindside flank to replace Valetini, bringing a different style of game and allowing Wallabies skipper to take up more of the ball-carrying responsibility. Hooker Matt Faessler also returns to the starting XV.

The 22-year-old Lynagh will start a test for the first time after coming off the bench three times previously. He'll form a new halves combination with Jake Gordon in the biggest moment of his fledgling international career.

"I'm really excited for Tom. He's got a quiet confidence about him, that gives us a quiet confidence as well," Schmidt said. "He's given us the confidence that he's going to run the game for us. He's incredibly brave - to a

fault."

The Lions won the series 2-1 on their last tour to Australia in 2013, avenging a 2-1 series loss to the Wallabies in 2001.

Michael Lynagh was part of the Australian team that lost the 1989 series 2-1 to the Lions, and he went on to help guide the Wallabies to a 1991 World Cup triumph.

His son was born in Italy, went to school in England and moved in 2021 to Australia, where he has flourished at the Queensland Reds and earned three test caps.

Tom Lynagh will be the first Wallaby to follow in his father's footsteps in playing against the Lions.

Squads:

Australia: Tom Wright, Max Jorgensen, Joseph-Aukuso Sua'ali'i, Len Ikitau, Harry Potter, Tom Lynagh, Jake Gordon; Harry Wilson (captain), Fraser McReight, Nick Champion de Crespigny, Jeremy Williams, Nick Frost, Allan Ala'alatoa, Matt Faessler, James Slipper. Reserves: Billy Pollard, Angus Bell, Tom Robertson, Tom Hooper, Carlo Tizzano, Tate McDermott, Ben Donaldson, Andrew Kellaway.

British and Irish Lions: Hugo Keenan (Ireland), Tommy Freeman (England), Huw Jones (Scotland), Sione Tuipulotu (Scotland), James Lowe (England), Finn Russell (Scotland), Jamison Gibson-Park (Ireland); Jack Conan (Ireland), Tom Curry (England), Tadhg Beirne (Ireland), Joe McCarthy (Ireland), Maro Itoje (England, captain), Tadhg Furlong (Ireland), Dan Sheehan (Ireland), Ellis Genge (England). Reserves: Ronan Kelleher (Ireland), Andrew Porter (Ireland), Will Stuart (England), Ollie Chessum (England), Ben Earl (England), Alex Mitchell (England), Marcus Smith (England), Bundee Aki (Ireland).

Neymar scores late as Santos beats Flamengo

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 17, (Xinhua): Neymar struck late as Santos edged to a 1-0 home win over leader Flamengo in Brazil's Serie A championship.

The former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain forward broke the deadlock in the 84th minute, turning sublimely after receiving Guilherme's pass and firing into the far corner.

It was the 33-year-old's first goal of a Serie A campaign disrupted by injury, with only three starts so far.

"I want to play 90 minutes of every game," Neymar said after the match. "I want to be better physically but that takes time, both in terms of playing and training." Neymar admitted he remains some way off recapturing his best form, having suffered a series of leg muscle injuries since returning from a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee last October.

"My body is still adapting, getting used to everything again," said Neymar, who spent more than a year on the sidelines after sustaining the injury while playing for Brazil in a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay.

"It's not easy to deal with the injury I had. I'm very happy to be able to contribute in every way, both attacking and defending. I'm not 100%, but I'm getting better all the time," he added.

Wednesday's result leaves Santos 13th in the 20-team standings with 14 points, 13 points behind Flamengo, which is ahead of second-placed Cruzeiro on goal difference.

"Flamengo, in my opinion, is the best team in the league," Neymar said. "Tactically they are very good, they defend and attack very well. They have very high-quality players."

"Today we showed that we can be better than our current league position suggests. It's a fresh start for us. We had time to work. We showed that we can compete with any team in the competition." In other Brazilian Serie A fixtures on Wednesday, Palmeiras drew 1-1 at home to Mirassol, Corinthians won 1-0 at Ceara, Botafogo was held to a goalless home draw by Vitoria and Sao Paulo drew 2-2 at Bragantino.

Al-Jahra signs Albania’s Memolla

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Al-Jahra officially signed Albanian international defender Hysen Memolla as part of the club’s preparations for the upcoming 2024–2025 season, set to kick off on September 12 with the Zain Premier League.

The club returns to the top division after a successful campaign in the First Division last season, where they clinched the title and earned promotion back to the Premier League.

Memolla, 32, is a left-footed center-back and most recently played for Kosovo’s FC Suhareka, helping the team capture the domestic league title. In addition to his Albanian nationality, Memolla also holds Italian citizenship.

Over the course of his career, he has played for several European clubs, including Hajduk Split (Croatia), Koper (Slovenia), Egnatia (Albania), and Salernitana (Italy). He has also made six appearances for the Albanian national team.

Memolla becomes the third foreign player on Al-Jahra’s roster this



Albanian international defender Hysen Memolla.

season, joining Tunisian midfielder Amro Zakri – who recently renewed his contract – and Angolan forward Antonio Silva, signed last month.

Al-Jahra is set to begin preseason training next week, followed by an overseas training camp that will include a series of friendly matches to prepare for the league campaign.

Kuwait begins ‘historic’ West Asia Volleyball Championship title quest

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, July 17: Kuwait’s national volleyball team will begin its campaign in the inaugural West Asia Championship tomorrow, Saturday, with a Group B match against Oman at 3:00 pm. The tournament is being held at Isa bin Rashid Hall in the Bahraini capital, Manama.

Also in Group B, Saudi Arabia will face Qatar at 5:00 pm. The championship opens earlier at 1:00 pm with a Group A clash between the UAE and Jordan, followed by host Bahrain taking on Lebanon at 7:00 pm.

Kuwait recently concluded its overseas training camp in Tunisia, where it played four friendly matches – twice against Libya, once against Tunisia’s youth team, and once against Algeria – winning two and losing two.

Led by Argentine head coach Julián Álvarez and assistant coach Zaid Al-Kazemi, the Kuwaiti team is aiming to deliver strong performances throughout the tournament. However, its opener against Oman will be a tough test, as the Omani



Players gear up for their opener against Oman.

side is currently in a rebuilding phase, blending youthful talent with seasoned veterans.

Kuwait’s 14-man roster includes: Abdulaziz Najm, Yousef Mandeel, Fahad Saad, Abdunasser Al-Enezi, Abdullah Al-Enezi, Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa, Saud Al-Duwaisan, Ahmed Al-Munais, Rashid Anbar, Athbi Malik, Fares Sulciman, Talal Abdulrazzaq, Ibrahim Mandeel, and Abdulrahman Mohammed.

This tournament carries significant weight, as it is held under the authority of the International Vol-

leyball Federation (FIVB), and its results will count toward the global rankings. Moreover, as the first-ever edition of the West Asia Championship, all participating teams are eager to capture the historic title and become the first name engraved in the competition’s records.

Qadsia Club aims for handball revival under a new leadership

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Qadsia Sports Club has restructured its handball administration, appointing Sami Buyabas as Head of the Handball Department. He will be supported by Assistant General Manager Baqer Khuraibet, First Team Manager Hadi Nasser, and administrators Haidar Bahman and Osama Masameh.

The club’s board is aiming to establish administrative stability in the handball division, hoping this will reflect positively on the technical and competitive aspects of the team and contribute to Qadsia’s return to title contention in the upcoming season.

Last season, Qadsia experienced inconsistent performances, missing out on Premier League qualification and instead competing in the First Division. However, the team clinched the First Division title to secure promotion back to the top flight.



Sami Buyabas

Kazma to kick off training on Saturday ahead of new season

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Kazma Sports Club will begin first-team training on Saturday, under the direction of Croatian head coach Dragan Tadić as it prepares for the upcoming 2024–2025 season, which officially starts with the Zain Premier League on September 12.

Training sessions will be held on the club’s secondary pitch No. 2 before the team departs for an overseas training camp in August, which will feature several friendly matches.

After several lean years without major trophies, Kazma has been active in the transfer market, aiming to return to title contention. The club has renewed the contracts of captain Nasser Al-Faraj and goalkeeper Faisal Al-Subaie for another season.

Kazma also secured the signing of midfielder Sultan Al-Enezi, who previously played for Qadsia and Al-Arabi before spending last season with Oman’s Dhofar



Dragan Tadić, Kazma head coach.

club. Additionally, they brought in Olympic national team midfielder Bandar Al-Barazi from Al-Nasr. Defender Bader Dhukrallah and forward Mishaal Al-Shammari have both extended their contracts as well.

To bolster its squad further, the team signed Jordanian professionals Ali Al-Azaiza and Youssef Boujazar, while also renewing contracts for fellow Jordanians Anas Al-Awdat and Nigerian forward Samuel Enikola.

SINGAPORE, July 17, (Xinhua): China missed the women’s water polo quarter-finals at the World Aquatics Championships after falling 13-11 to Italy in a tight duel here.

Facing world No. 7 Italy, a traditional European powerhouse and bronze medalist at the Fukuoka World Aquatics Championships, China entered the match with confidence following a third-place finish in Group B.

The match began with intense physical battles as both teams focused on defense. Italy, the runners-up of Group A, took a 2-0 lead after the first quarter. China gradually found its rhythm in the second quarter, with Wang Shiyun netting the team’s first goal. Zhang Yumin, Zhou Shang and Zhang Qishuo also contributed, helping China stay close. The first half ended 6-5 in favor of Italy.

In the second half, Italy never led by more than three goals, as China



Italy’s Sofia Giustini, left, tries to block China’s Wang Huan during a women water polo quarter-finals match at the World Aquatics Championships in Singapore. (AP)

continued to press. In the fourth quarter, Yan Siya’s goal narrowed the gap to one goal at 11-10 while goalkeeper Shen Yinen made several crucial saves. However, China was unable to convert on key pos-

sessions, and Italy held on to garner the 13-11 win and a spot in the quarterfinals.

“Physical confrontation is part of the charm of water polo. Our goal is to fight for every game,” said Yan Jing of China after the loss. “We’ll work to improve and aim to beat them next time.” China head coach Miki Oca expressed satisfaction with his team’s performance.

“It’s been a very close game, all the time, but they’ve been leading in the end. But anyway, I think the girls performed well, and we are growing.

“We have to learn. We have to improve, we have to keep on growing, and then we have to get used to play crucial games and then get experience and keep on going,” Oca added.

Looking ahead, Oca reaffirmed the team’s long-term goal: “We’ll now focus on the preparation for the Los Angeles 2028 and continue working hard.” China will next compete in classification.

Smith signed by Arsenal for world record women’s soccer fee

LONDON, July 17, (AP): Canada forward Olivia Smith became the most expensive player in women’s soccer history at a reported one million pounds (\$1.34 million) when Arsenal signed her from Liverpool.

The new benchmark in women’s soccer would surpass the 900,000 pounds (\$1.1 million) Chelsea paid when signing Naomi Girma from the San Diego Wave in January.

Smith’s four-year deal highlights the increase in spending in women’s soccer with transfer records regularly broken.

Zambia striker Rachael Kundananji joined Bay FC from Madrid CFF for a record \$788,000 last year, and that figure was quickly exceeded by Girma’s move to Chelsea.

As recently as 2020, the most expensive women’s player was Denmark’s Pernille Harder, who joined Chelsea from Wolfsburg for \$355,000.

England’s Keira Walsh left Manchester City for Barcelona in 2022 for a deal worth \$513,000, and Chelsea broke the record again in 2024 when signing Mayra Ramirez from Levante for \$542,000.

The 20-year-old Smith has rapidly risen since developing in the United States college system. She joined Sporting Clube in Portugal in 2023 and scored 16 goals in 28 appearances in her debut season.

She moved to Liverpool last year and scored nine times in 25 games.

Smith is also Canada’s youngest international after making her debut at 15 in 2019.

“Olivia is an exciting young player and we believe she can make a big contribution here at Arsenal,” head coach Renee Slegers said. “We’ve been impressed by her mentality and character, excelling in two European leagues at such a young age.”

Arsenal is a 15-time English champion and won the Champions League for the second time in its history last season.

Despite Chelsea being the dominant force in women’s soccer in England, Arsenal is the only English team to win the Champions League.

“It’s my dream to compete for the biggest titles here in England and in Europe and I’m excited to get started and contribute to doing that here with Arsenal,” Smith said.

‘Rossoneri cannot be satisfied with average’

Modric demands excellence as Milan plots comeback

MILAN, July 17, (AP): Luka Modric grew up supporting AC Milan because his idol and fellow Croat, Zvonimir Boban, played for the club.

And because Milan in the 1990s was one of the strongest teams in Europe.

So now that the 39-year-old former Ballon d’Or winner has joined the Rossoneri after 13 seasons at Real Madrid, he won’t stand for the mediocrity that Milan displayed last season for an eighth-placed finish in Serie A that excluded the squad from Europe this coming season.

“Milan cannot be satisfied with average,” Modric told Milan TV. “It needs to have (the) biggest goals possible, to win titles, to compete with the best teams in the world. And that’s why I’m here.”

Modric was shown a photo of himself wearing a Milan warmup suit as a child.

“When I grew up, I used to watch a lot of the Italian league and Milan was my favorite team,” he said. “At the time in Croatia we followed Milan a lot because it was one of the most popular clubs in the world. And also because there was Zvonimir Boban who was my idol.”

On Monday, Modric signed a one-year contract with Milan that includes an option for another season.

“I wanted to stay in Europe, continue playing competitive football,” he said. “I had some other offers but



Luka Modric, AC Milan’s new signing, arrives at the Madonnina clinic for medical examinations in Milan. (AP)

when Milan showed up for me it was clear from the first moment. ... What also impressed me (was) how (sporting) director Igli Tare came to Croatia to present me the project.”

Milan rehired Massimiliano Allegri as the coach after last season, replacing the fired Sergio Conceicao. Allegri won the Italian league for the first time with Milan in 2011, then guided Juventus to five straight titles from 2015-19. Tare was also hired recently.

“What I want to bring there is to win, to help my teammates in every aspect, to work hard, to earn my place in the team,” Modric said.

“Nothing can come easy in your life. You have to work. You have to fight.”

With Milan winger Rafael Leão holding onto the No. 10 shirt, Modric will return to the No. 14 he once wore for Croatia and at Tottenham.

Leão was the Serie A MVP when Milan won the league in 2022 but has since performed inconsistently and clashed with the team managers.

“Leão,” Modric said, “is the present and future of Milan.”

□ □ □

Lamine Yamal will switch to the

No. 10 jersey at Barcelona, the same number Diego Maradona, Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi wore for the Catalan club.

“I’ll try to build my own path, but all kids would like to be like them,” Yamal said Wednesday at the club’s announcement. “All three have been incredible players, they’re legends, and I’ll try to follow in their footsteps.”

Having turned 18, Yamal was able to sign the contract extension that he had agreed with Barcelona in May, keeping him in place until 2031.

“My goal is to keep winning and growing,” Yamal said. “It’s the club of my life. It’s my home, I’ve been here since I was 7 years old.”

Yamal wore the No. 19 jersey last season. The No. 10 most recently was with Ansu Fati, who will play on loan with Monaco.

Yamal, accompanied by his family, received the No. 10 jersey from club president Joan Laporta.

The announcement comes after Yamal was criticized for reportedly hiring people with dwarfism as entertainers during his lavish 18th birthday party last weekend.

“In the end I work for Barça, but when I’m away from the club’s training center, I enjoy my life and that’s it,” Yamal said. “I’m indifferent to both criticism and praise if they don’t come from my family or people close to me.”

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NEWS



Bangladesh's team members pose for photographers with the winner's trophy after the third Twenty20 cricket match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Sports

31 players attend first training session

Maaloul: 10 years without league title is unacceptable for Qadsia

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: Al-Qadsia began its preseason training at Farouq Ibrahim Stadium, led by Tunisian head coach Nabil Maaloul, as the team prepares for the upcoming Zain Premier League season starting on September 12.

The first session saw 31 players in attendance, with training set to continue until the team departs for an overseas camp in early August, which will include several friendly matches.

Before training commenced, Maaloul held a meeting with the players, urging them to give their utmost effort this season and emphasizing the importance of full commitment to achieve the club's goals.

Speaking to the press after the session, Maaloul said, "A club with Qadsia's history and prestige should never go ten years without winning the league title." He vowed to intensify

preparations to ensure the team is fully ready for all competitions.

He added, "Qadsia will compete in four domestic tournaments plus the Gulf Champions League, and we intend to fight for every trophy." Maaloul noted that while Kuwaiti players are talented, they often lack motivation, pointing to the difference in the team's performances domestically versus in regional competitions.

The coach stressed, "Kuwaiti players have great potential but need to improve their work ethic, discipline, and focus." He called for a change in mentality on the field and comprehensive readiness for every match, whether local or international.

Media coordinator Abdullah Al-Ansari confirmed that new signings will be announced soon to strengthen the squad, alongside recent contract renewals. He said the coaching staff is keen to bring in quality players who will add strength and discipline.

Al-Ansari described a positive atmosphere within the team, stating, "The players showed great enthusiasm in the locker room."

He also dismissed rumors about goalkeeper Hameed Al-Qallaf retiring, explaining that although he was absent for two seasons, he has now officially returned. "All goalkeepers have full support from the technical staff," he added.

Captain Bader Al-Mutawa missed the session but is expected to join training on Sunday. Moroccan Mehdi Berrahma is set to return on Saturday.

The session included Libyan Mohamed Soula, Moroccan Ismail Khafi, goalkeeper Hameed Al-Qallaf, and several players from the under-20 youth squad.

Assistant coach Saleh Al-Sheikh recently earned his PRO coaching license. He has served with Qadsia's first team for several seasons and will continue as part of Maaloul's staff this season.



Al-Rashidi, Al-Fenini, and Sola lead Qadsia's training sessions.

Qatar, UAE and Oman in same group

Saudi Arabia and Iraq renew rivalry in 2026 World Cup qualifier playoffs

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, July 17, (Agencies): Saudi Arabia and Qatar drew home advantage in the fourth round of Asia qualifying for the 2026 World Cup on Thursday. In October, Qatar will host Group A that also contains the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Saudi Arabia welcomes Iraq and Indonesia into Group B.

The winner of each round-robin group will take Asia's last two remaining automatic spots at next summer's tournament, to be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The teams that finish second will then meet, with the winner progressing to inter-confederation playoffs, which are scheduled for March 2026.

Six teams from Asia secured qualification last month: Japan, Iran, South Korea and Australia have all participated numerous times, while Jordan and Uzbekistan will make their first appearance.

Historically, Iraq and Saudi Arabia



A file photo of players fighting for the ball.

have met 37 times across different competitions. Iraq leads the head-to-head with 17 victories, while Saudi Arabia has won 11 matches, and nine encounters ended in draws.

Throughout these meetings, Saudi Arabia has scored 34 goals against Iraq but conceded 56, underscoring Iraq's offensive dominance in this longstanding rivalry.

China remains perfect after comeback win over Philippines

XI'AN, China, July 17, (Xinhua): Captain Xi Kailin delivered a walk-off single to cap China's hard-fought 2-1 comeback victory over the Philippines in the women's softball Asia Cup preliminaries here on Thursday.

The win, which followed a 2-0 shutout of South Korea earlier in the day, marked the host's seventh consecutive triumph and kept its perfect record intact heading into a high-stakes clash with world No. 1 Japan on Friday.

"The win is a huge boost to our morale and will make us even more determined going into the next games," said third baseman Yan Siyu after the match.

Through six innings, both teams registered five hits apiece but failed to break the deadlock. The Philippines finally took the lead in the top of the seventh with back-to-back hits by Roma Jane Cruz and Alaiza Talisik. China responded by replacing starting pitcher Chai Yinan with Wei Yuchen, who closed the inning without allowing further damage, preserving the tension heading into the bottom frame.

China's rally began with Li Xintian reaching first base on a single and advancing to second on a sacrifice bunt by He Xiaoyan. With two outs and a 3-1 count, Yan stepped up and delivered a clutch hit to bring Li home, leveling the score at 1-1.

Pinch runner Zeng Zhilin replaced Yan at first and

advanced on a single by Xie Yue, setting the stage for Xi. The team captain came through, lining a single to second base as Zeng raced home to seal the dramatic win in front of an electrified home crowd.

"It shows that every player on our team is important," Yan said of the thrilling finish. "We have to strike when the opponent least expects it." While acknowledging that the team felt "a little anxious" during the scoreless early innings, Yan emphasized their "unwavering belief" as the foundation of the comeback. "Whether in a tight game or behind, we always stayed confident that we could win," added the 30-year-old veteran, who also hit a solo home run in China's win over South Korea earlier in the day.

Elsewhere on Thursday, Japan, the tournament's only other unbeaten team, cruised to dominant wins over Thailand 16-0 and South Korea 12-2. Chinese Taipei also impressed, shutting out India 10-0 and overpowering Malaysia 15-0.

India endured its second loss of the day with a 7-0 defeat to Hong Kong, China, while the Philippines routed Singapore 13-0 before falling to China.

Ten teams are competing in a single round-robin preliminaries with the top two teams advancing to the final. With two days of competition remaining, China and Japan sit atop the standings with perfect 7-0 records, followed by Chinese Taipei and the Philippines.

Girelli powers Italy into Women's Euro semifinals



Italy players celebrate after the Women's Euro 2025 quarterfinals soccer match between Norway and Italy at Stade de Geneve in Geneva, Switzerland. (AP)

'Heartbreaking to concede so late'

GENEVA, July 17, (AP): On a night of goals and drama for two veteran star strikers, Cristiana Girelli got the better of Ada Hegerberg to send Italy into the semifinals of the Women's European Championship on Wednesday.

Girelli's 90th-minute header, her second goal of the game, sealed a 2-1 win over Norway, whose captain Hegerberg had tied the game after missing a penalty.

She had seized the lead for Italy in the 50th by deftly guiding in a shot fired across the Norway goal by Sofia Cantore.

With extra time looming, Girelli met Cantore's perfectly weighted cross with a graceful leap at the far post to direct her header just under the crossbar.

Hegerberg leveled the score in the 66th with her first scoring chance just six minutes after missing a penalty kick for the second time at Euro 2025.

Hegerberg ran clear to a long pass and poked a shot past onrushing goalkeeper Laura Giuliani. The slow-rolling ball just beat the Italian defenders in a race to the goal line.

"She gets the goal after the (penalty) miss, that tells a lot about her," Norway coach Gemma Grainger said. "It's heartbreaking to concede so late, it taints the feeling of the game."

Girelli now has 61 goals for Italy and the last three all went into the same net at the mountains end of the Stade de Genève stadium.

She also scored one of the goals of the tournament, curling in a 22-meter yard shot against Portugal that shaped to be decisive in the group stage until Italy conceded an 89th-minute equalizer.

The Norway star has taken two penalty kicks at Euro 2025 and missed both, placing her two shots wide of each post. She also scored in each of those games and has 51



Norway's Ada Hegerber, left, vies for the ball with Italy's Barbara Bonansea during the Women's Euro 2025 quarterfinals soccer match between Norway and Italy at Stade de Geneve in Geneva, Switzerland. (AP)

career goals for Norway.

Hegerberg won this spot-kick by falling under a grappling challenge from Italy captain Elena Linari trying to meet a high cross. Replays suggested Hegerberg might have been offside.

Taking a short and slow run to the ball, Hegerberg sent her shot wide of the left hand post of Giuliani, who guessed correctly which way to dive.

The former Ballon d'Or winner also missed when Norway led 2-1 over Switzerland, shooting to the right of Livia Peng's dive, in an opening day win by that score.

Italy got its tactics right in the first half, with Arianna Caruso and Emma Severini breaking in space through the Norway midfield. Both tested Norway goalkeeper Cecilie Fiskerstrand with shots.

Maybe it was Italian confidence that left it vulnerable to fast breaks.

Hegerberg missed a chance alone in front of goal in the 36th. She sent the ball wide after it arrived at an awkward height because of Linari's deflection trying to block the cross.

Norway was stronger after half-time, with four attackers on the field chasing an equalizing goal and then a decisive second.

Gilgeous-Alexander and Biles win top honors at ESPYS

LOS ANGELES, July 17, (AP): NBA Finals MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Olympic champion gymnast Simone Biles won as best male and female athletes at the ESPYS.

Gilgeous-Alexander led the Oklahoma City Thunder to the NBA championship last month while piling up hardware as league MVP and scoring champion.

"It's a dream come true and for dreams to come true it takes a village," he said, thanking his wife, parents, brother and others. "Those names probably don't mean much but to me they mean everything."

Biles, an 11-time Olympic medalist, claimed the night's first award, best championship performance for her efforts at the Paris Games. She won three golds and a silver while helping the U.S. win its first team title since 2016.



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander speaks after winning the Best Athlete Men's Sports award at the ESPY Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

She beat out Stephen Curry, Freddie Freeman and Rory McIlroy.

Biles' Olympic teammate, Suni Lee, won the best comeback award for overcoming two rare kidney diseases. She brought one of her doctors to the

show.

Basketball Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson accepted the Arthur Ashe Award for Courage from point guard Russell Westbrook.

Robertson was president of the

NBA Players' Association at the time of a landmark antitrust lawsuit against the NBA in 1970. It led to an extensive reform of the league's strict free agency and draft rules and eventually to higher salaries for all players.

The 86-year-old Robertson, a 12-time All Star known as The Big O during his career, was the first Black president of any sports labor union.

"I knew there was work to do. There was a desperate need for players to have more career security, improved working conditions and other accommodations," he said. "In life, it's important to be persistent or as I have been called stubborn. Stubborn about what you believe in."

Comedian Shane Gillis' opening monologue as host of the show that honors the past year's top athletes and sports moments went over awkwardly.