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PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah discusses Kuwait-China agreements signed with China.

PM, ministerial committee review accords, MoUs signed with China

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday a ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace, to follow up on agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed with China.

The 20th meeting discussed the progress of joint Kuwait-China initiatives, particularly the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, renewable energy development, housing, environmental infrastructure for sewage treatment plants, eco-friendly recycling, cooperation in combating desertification, and sustainable agriculture.

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

He pointed out that a high-level technical delegation from the Ministry of Public Works will leave for China next week, as part of the joint coordination in environmental infrastructure, as well as to discuss the implementation of wastewater treatment projects in the country.

Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Nora Al-Fassam, Minister of Public Works, Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, 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, and President of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed were present at the meeting.

Citizenship pullback continues unabated

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Supreme Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship held a meeting on Thursday, chaired by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.



Sheikh Fahad

In a statement, the Ministry of Interior announced that Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked from an individual in accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of the Citizenship Law, due to holding dual nationality.

Another individual was stripped of citizenship for obtaining it through forgery and fraud, while one person was stripped of citizenship, citing the state's "higher interest" as a reason, it added.

'Kuwait worthy of 2025 Arab media capital title'

CAIRO, July 24, (KUNA): A number of Egyptian officials affirmed Thursday that Kuwait was fully deserving of its selection as the Arab Capital of Media and Culture for 2025, citing the Gulf country's long-standing and influential contributions to media and cultural fields.

Choosing Kuwait as the Arab capital of media and culture this year just reflected its strong presence and contributions within this field, affirmed Dr. Tarek Saada, Head of the Egyptian Media Syndicate, during an interview KUNA.

Whether in theater, journalism, radio, television, or any other media field, Kuwait is there and has a strong presence, he asserted.

He noted that the Kuwait leadership's unlimited support played a crucial role in highlighting the Gulf State's media and cultural contributions, adding that his country and Kuwait also had a strong cooperation in such fields.

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Save power, water, get 90 pc deduction on bill

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Chair of the Technical Committee for Incentive Grants and Director of the Automated Center Department in the Customer Service Sector at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Saud Al-Hayyan revealed that the "Hafez" (catalyst) Conservation Program targets 180,000 citizen customers living in private and commercial housing.

He said if the ministry succeeds in reducing subsidies by just half, it will achieve huge savings that can be redirected to development projects.

During an introductory lecture on the Hafez Conservation Program held recently at the ministry's headquarters, Al-Hayyan explained that customers who reduce their consumption by 20 percent or less will receive a 40 percent discount on their bill.

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KUNA photo
The Kuwait National Guard (KNG) and the French National Gendarmerie representatives signing the security agreement.

KNG, France ink security MoU

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Kuwait National Guard (KNG) and the French National Gendarmerie signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) today to enhance coordination, cooperation, and the exchange of expertise in military and security training.

The agreement was signed by KNG Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hashim Al-Rifai and

French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin.

Lt. Gen. Al-Rifai reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment – under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah – to strengthening ties with France,

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'Laws are not sacred'... judiciary shuffling axed

Serious violations noted: Al-Sumait

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait affirmed that, "Laws are not the Holy Quran. They are not sacred texts, but rather are meant to serve the public good, support employment, and organize the relationship between the people and the state", reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Sumait said, "We have amended the laws and are closely monitoring their impact and effectiveness among the public", stressing that any amendments must be approached with discretion.

He clarified that the state is entering a new era in which leadership is closely linked to the quality of legislation, adding that as long as laws are implemented properly, the process of amendment will continue.

Confirming what the daily published recently, Minister Al-Sumait issued a decision to cancel all actions taken by the selection committee re-



Nasser Al-Sumait

sponsible for the appointment of junior legal researchers eligible for the position of public prosecutor, as well as the supporting team. All related procedures and results were deemed null and void.

He decided that the written exams and personal interviews for applicants would be reorganized according to a new mechanism, to be announced at a later date.

The minister revealed that serious violations had marred the work of the committee and its team, reaching such an extent that no subsequent correction or review could remedy the damage.

Speaking to KUNA, Minister Al-Sumait explained that the decision to cancel the committee and its supporting team, which was formed under Ministerial Resolutions No. 1602/2024 and 1603/2024, stems from the Ministry of Justice's commitment to upholding the principles of equal opportunity, fairness, and transparency in judicial appointments, as well as maintaining public trust in the integrity of the judiciary. The ministry will reorganize the written tests and personal interviews for applicants based on a new mechanism, which will be announced at a later date.

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KISR study identifies 1st time fish-kill causing 'microalgae'

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced the success of a scientific study in identifying, for the first time, toxic microalgae that cause the red tide phenomenon and fish kills in Kuwaiti waters.

The study, published in renowned scientific journal Botánica Marina, identified three species (Karenia papilionacea, Karenia selliformis, and Karlodinium ballantini), settling a scientific controversy that lasted for years, remarked study lead author Dr. Manal Al-Kandari to KUNA on Thursday.

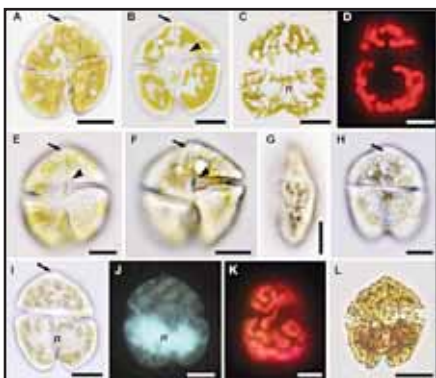
Al-Kandari added that the study conclusively established the existence of two controversial species: K. papilionacea, and K. selliformis, which was responsible for the largest fish kill in Kuwait in 1999.

She explained that the most notable achievement of the study is the recording of the species Karlodinium ballantini for the first time in Kuwaiti waters and the Arabian Gulf region, stressing that this constitutes a strategic scientific achievement for the country in the field of marine research.

She stated that the research team at the institute worked in cooperation with the University of Co-



Al-Kandari



KUNA photo
Fish-kill species identified.

penhagen in Denmark.

Al-Kandari emphasized that these results will enable the development of more effective early warning systems, as well as help protect the marine environment and fisheries and enhance food security. She pointed out that the study contributed to the establishment of a reference collection of living strains preserved, which is an important national and regional resource for future studies related to the effects of these algae.

She praised the continued support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences for marine research programs, stressing the importance of continuing such studies to protect the Kuwaiti marine environment.

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, **Hussein Taha** welcomed the joint international statement calling for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire.

The joint statement, signed by foreign ministers of 28 countries on Monday, also urges unhindered entry of humanitarian aid into the **Gaza Strip** and initiating a political process that could lead to a two-state solution.

Taha affirmed, in a statement, that this stance embodies the international community's rejection of the Israeli aggression and the forced displacement of the Gazans, which constitute a flagrant violation of humanitarian law. (KUNA)

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KUWAIT CITY: Minister of Commerce and Industry **Khalifa Al-Ajeel** and Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company (KFMB) CEO **Mutlaq Al-Zayed** discussed on Thursday ways to enhance food security and support national products.

In a press statement after the meeting, Minister Al-Ajeel affirmed the government's keenness on supporting national products and industries, particularly in the food sector. (KUNA)

Day by Day

ONE of the best decisions taken by the Ministry of Interior was the launch of the "Kuwait Visa Platform", which now enables easier access for individuals wishing to enter Kuwait without unnecessary obstacles or complications.

For many years, entry into the country was heavily restricted. Those seeking to come to Kuwait often faced near-impossible requirements, as if they were attempting to enter the Garden of Eden.

Thanks to His Excellency the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef for this initiative, which marks a huge step toward promoting Kuwait's potential and revitalizing the national economy.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Sweltering heat day and night

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department has announced that the country will experience extremely hot daytime temperatures and hot conditions at night over the weekend.

In a press statement on Thursday, meteorologist Abdulaziz Al-Ali explained that the country is currently affected by an extension of the Indian monsoon depression, accompanied by a very hot

air mass, with northwesterly to variable winds that are light to moderate in speed, occasionally becoming active and stirring up dust -- particularly in open areas; in addition to scattered clouds.

Al-Ali stated that Friday's weather will continue to be extremely hot, with relative humidity increasing in coastal areas.

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2 From belly dancing in Egypt to normalization with Israel



8 Kuwait Airways: Between legacy of history & arrows of distortion

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:32	Asr	15:30
Sunrise ..	05:03	Maghrib ..	18:45
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:13

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Very hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate northwesterly wind to moderate northwesterly wind to northeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

By Night: Hot to rather hot and

Weather			
relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	49	38	
Kuwait Airport	49	38	
Abdaly	49	33	
Bubyan	49	30	
Jahra	49	36	
Salmiyah	44	37	
Ahmadi	45	34	
Nuwaisib	49	35	
Wafra	48	36	
Salmly	48	30	

‘Peace, stability at risk’

Kuwait condemns Knesset motion to annex West Bank

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday strongly condemned and denounced the Israeli Knesset’s approval of a draft resolution imposing Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank and the Jordan Valley in the occupied territories – a blatant chal-

lenge to international law and relevant international legitimacy resolutions.

In a statement, the ministry said that this step represents a continuation of a series of dangerous escalations that will deepen the cycle of violence and undermine

security, stability, and prospects for peace in the region. It reiterated its call on the international community and the Security Council to fulfill their legal and moral responsibilities in deterring these blatant violations.

The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait’s

principled and firm stance in support of the brotherly Palestinian people and their legitimate rights to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

MoHE advances accessibility and integration for disabled students

New steps to improve support and faculty training

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal has stressed the importance of directly following up students with disabilities to fully understand the challenges they face during the semester and to figure out to what extent they benefit from reports referred to faculty members regarding their needs.

Al-Jalal made the statement during his meeting with President of the Kuwait Society for Following Up the Disabled Suad Al-Fares on Thursday; in the presence of students with disabilities and with the

participation of Kuwait University who was represented by Dean of Student Affairs Dr. Jassim Al-Hamdan, acting Director of the Social Welfare Department Aseel Al-Shaiji and acting Director of the Department for People with Disabilities Sheikhha Al-Qanaei.

During the meeting, Al-Jalal recommended conducting a periodic survey to measure the satisfaction of students with disabilities with the level of services provided, in addition to holding introductory meetings for new faculty members to familiarize them on the educational approaches for this group.

He issued a directive on the prepa-

ration of periodic reports covering the human and material challenges that the Deanship of Student Affairs usually face in supporting students with disabilities, and provide appropriate solutions to these challenges. He pointed out “this will ensure the continuous development of services provided to this valued group of our students.”

He emphasized the importance of fully integrating them with students of various backgrounds within the university environment; which promotes the principle of justice and equal opportunities, and establishes a culture of inclusion and community interaction among all students.

Meanwhile, Al-Hamdan talked about the efforts exerted by the Department for People with Disabilities in the Deanship of Student Affairs at Kuwait University, which currently serves 344 students with disabilities. He said the department provides individual accommodations tailored

to the nature of each student’s disability, and serves as an important link between students and university colleges to ensure their academic progress.

In addition, Al-Fares stressed that this meeting is an effective step towards addressing a number of important issues concerning students with disabilities; pointing out the importance of continuous coordination between the ministry, the association and higher education institutions.

Al-Fares also underscored the need to monitor the implementation of the agreed practical steps, in a way that translates the national trend towards comprehensive higher education for everyone; while appreciating the efforts of the minister in supporting students with disabilities and his commitment to create an inclusive educational environment that takes into account their needs and ensures their full participation in university life.



Dr. Al-Jalal



British Ambassador meets journalists in a symbolic farewell, highlighting a strengthened UK-Kuwait partnership. Inset: Her Excellency Belinda Lewis British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

Ambassador Lewis ends term, hails bilateral achievements

British envoy bids farewell, leaving a legacy of deepening ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Belinda Lewis, welcomed journalists to her Residence as she approaches the end of her posting.

Reflecting on the past four years, Lewis lauded Kuwait’s “special and long-standing” partnership with the UK - noting that 2025 marks 250 years of bilateral trading ties. She also thanked the Kuwaiti people for their warm hospitality, recalling Ramadan diwanias and the Al-Qaffal ceremony marking the end of the pearl diving season as especially memorable cultural experiences.

Lewis highlighted February 2024’s rollout of the UK’s Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme to Kuwaiti nationals as significant in strengthening people-to-people links between the two countries. Kuwaiti nationals

made 162,000 trips to Britain in 2024 - a 6% increase from 2023, with Kuwait Airways now offering 19 direct flights a week to London and Manchester. She also expressed delight that an ever-growing number of Kuwaitis are choosing to study at UK universities, with over 10,000 currently undertaking courses there.

Noting the UK and Kuwait’s rich shared history, Lewis reflected on the success of joint celebrations to mark 125 years of official UK-Kuwait diplomatic relations- rounded off by His Highness the Amir’s trip to Scotland to meet His Majesty King Charles III and discuss Kuwait’s partnership with the King’s Foundation; and His Highness’ August 2023 Guest of Government visit to London marking 70 years since the establishment of the Kuwait’s sovereign wealth fund, during which he oversaw the signing of a landmark investment

partnership.

Lewis noted that His Highness had travelled to the UK five times across her tenure, while Kuwait welcomed four UK Cabinet Ministers, including most recently the UK’s Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon David Lammy MP-plus numerous Ministers of State, senior officials and the Duke of Edinburgh.

She said Britain was now “close” to concluding a landmark Free Trade Agreement with the GCC, while praising the UK and Kuwait’s burgeoning international humanitarian partnership that has seen the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development announce lifesaving joint funding for communities in Gaza, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia.

Asked about the situation in Gaza, Lewis strongly condemned the killing of civilians attempting

to access humanitarian aid and called for an immediate end to the conflict, referring to the UK and 27 other countries’ 21 July joint statement. She also detailed the Embassy’s initiatives to fund specialist training for Kuwaiti medics deploying to Gaza, and its collaboration with the Palestinian Embassy and the British Consulate in Jerusalem to help small Palestinian businesses export their goods to Kuwait- with Lulu Hypermarket making a large order of foodstuffs earlier this year.

Lewis expressed confidence that her successor, Qudsi Rasheed (who will arrive in September), would thoroughly enjoy his time in Kuwait, and that UK-Kuwait collaboration - be it on trade & investment; defence & security; education & culture; or climate & environment - would continue to go from strength-to-strength under his guidance.

Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister, UK’s envoy discuss bilateral ties



KUNA photo

Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and UK Ambassador to the country Belinda Lewis.

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and UK Ambassador to the country Belinda

Lewis discussed on Wednesday enhancing bilateral ties, in addition to regional and international developments, according to a ministry statement.

Other Voices

From belly dancing in Egypt to normalization with Israel

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

IN 1948, Tahiya Carioca, an Egyptian belly dancer turned actress, used her public voice to rally support for the Palestinian cause. She called on fellow artists to take a stand and speak out for justice.

Carioca was not an exception in her time.

In the mid-twentieth century, Arab artists were deeply connected to the struggles around them. Voices from Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, and beyond stood openly with Palestine.

Singers voiced their support. Poets recited in public squares.

Theatre served as a tool for awareness, not a means of escape. There was little room for confusion, and occupation was named for what it was.

Today, the landscape has shifted.

Some artists have become envoys for normalization, collaborating with Israeli counterparts under slogans like “building bridges” or “breaking barriers” — as if decades of displacement and repression were simply a misunderstanding.

Of course, not everyone engaging across divides does so cynically.

Some may truly believe that dialogue, even under conditions of injustice, can plant the seeds of something better.

But we must be honest about the power dynamics at play — and about the risk of confusing normalization with justice.

Carioca stood truly and firmly with the oppressed.

She understood that recasting injustice as dialogue is a form of betrayal.

Many today sugarcoat silence as realism.

Worse than silence is the deliberate twisting of truth to fit the aggressor’s narrative.

Supporting Palestine today can lead to censorship, exclusion, or quiet blacklisting.

Aligning with Israel, by contrast, often unlocks access to funding, favorable media coverage, polite applause — and the occasional crumbs of financial reward.

I have experienced this dynamic myself.

Not everyone responds this way. Some have engaged me with



Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

real curiosity, even when we disagreed.

But increasingly, what should be honest disagreement gets recast as hostility — or worse, antisemitism — simply for questioning the narrative.

In one exchange, after calmly presenting documented facts, human rights findings, and a call for accountability on all sides, I received this reply:

“You are spreading fake information, wrong numbers and hatred.

I will not enter the debate as it’s a social media antisemitic tsunami... a narrative battle Israel lost long ago.”

When this is the response to reasonable questions, the problem is no longer disagreement — it is the unwillingness to engage at all.

There was a time when Arab artists, writers, and public voices stood openly for Palestine.

Today, many turn away from the atrocities Palestinians endure.

But if even the image of slight harm befalls an Israeli, the outrage among many Arabs is immediate, the sympathy unconditional, and the moral framing absolute.

The world does not lack the ability to feel.

It chooses where to look.

This is not a call to sever dialogue.

On the contrary, we need more of it, but rooted in truth, not selective empathy.

Real peace isn’t born from politeness.

It begins with the courage to name injustice, to confront what each side holds as truth, and to seek not an illusion of balance, but a shared solution that ends suffering, not prolongs it with ambiguity.



KUNA photo

Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Army, Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Commander of the United States Central Command, General Michael Kurilla.

Kuwait Army Deputy Chief of Staff meets US CENTCOM Commander

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met, at his office on Thursday, the Commander of the United States Central Command Michael Kurilla, and his accompanying delegation.

A statement by the Kuwaiti Armed Forces said the meeting addressed latest regional and international developments,

as well as ways to enhance joint military cooperation to ensure regional stability and security.

The two sides praised deep and long-standing Kuwaiti-US relations, which have been marked by decades of cooperation and continuous coordination.

Rear Admiral of the Kuwaiti Naval Force, Saif Al-Hamdan, and several senior brass attended the meeting.

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Will the situation in Syria’s Sweida stabilize or head for further turmoil?

“ON SUNDAY, July 13, armed members of a Bedouin tribe attacked and robbed a Druze vegetable merchant on the main road in Sweida, igniting clashes between the Bedouin and Druze communities. As tensions escalated, the Syrian government deployed military forces on Monday in an attempt to restore order. However, due to deep mistrust towards the government, many Druze militia members believed the forces had arrived to support the Bedouins and suppress the Druze. In response, they confronted and engaged in clashes with the military units,” Kuwaiti writer **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Reports surfaced of some army personnel insulting Druze civilians. Videos circulated widely on social media showing soldiers forcibly shaving the mustaches of Druze men, an act that is considered deeply disrespectful in their culture. One video showed 80-year-old Sheikh Marhej Shahin standing outside his home while a soldier shaved his mustache. The humiliation reportedly affected him so deeply that he later passed away.

“The footage triggered widespread outrage on social media throughout Syria. Many online voices condemned the acts as fueling hatred and deepening sectarian divisions. One among the comments was, “The scales will tip one day, and you will taste what you are doing. The cook of injustice will eat it.”

“Israel responded by stating that it will not allow harm to be inflicted on the Druze in Syria and will not stand idly by. This reaction was based on the close ties between Israel and its Druze community, with the Druze population in Israel reaching around 150,000. Many Druze serve in the Israeli army and police, some having participated in the Gaza War, and several have risen to high-ranking positions. As a result, their voices carry significant weight within Israeli political circles.

“While the majority of Druze in Israel identify as Israeli citizens, over 20,000 Druze residents of the occupied Golan Heights still consider themselves Syrians and maintain strong familial connections across the border. In response to mounting pressure from the Israeli Druze community to support their Syrian counterparts, Israeli officials have cited the protection of Druze populations as a justification for repeated military actions in Syria this year.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

“The fighting resulted in hundreds of deaths over four days, forcing the government to withdraw its forces and delegate security responsibilities to the Druze community. However, following the government’s withdrawal, clashes between the Druze and Bedouins resumed, forcing Bedouin families to flee Sweida for Daraa with their children. Thousands of residents also fled toward the Jordanian border to escape the violence.

“President Ahmad al-Sharaa explained the decision to withdraw government forces, citing the gravity of the situation for national unity and the need to prevent the country from sliding into a new large-scale war. He stated, “We were faced with two options - either an open war with the Israeli entity, which would destabilize Syria and the entire region, or allow the Druze notables and sheikhs to come to their senses and prioritize the national interest of the Druze.”

“Al-Sharaa praised the “effective intervention of the American-Arab-Turkish mediation, which saved the region from an uncertain fate.”

“Meanwhile, Israel also intervened in Syrian affairs by launching an airstrike that damaged the entrance to the Syrian Ministry of Defense headquarters in Damascus on Wednesday, July 16. The American magazine “The Atlantic” published an article stating, “Israelis believe they are safer when their Arab neighbors are too weak to pose a threat”, implying that Arab weakness benefits Israel.

“At this point , we are not sure whether the situation in Sweida will stabilize or further deteriorate.”

Also:

“We suffer from traffic congestion on most highways and main roads in the country’s governorates, primarily due to the growing number of driver’s license holders, which has led to a significant increase in the number of vehicles on the roads,” columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Marri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“In the 1970s, 1980s, and even into the mid-1990s, driver’s licenses were issued only to Kuwaiti and Gulf citizens, as well as to certain categories of expatriates such as judges, teachers, doctors, accountants, and contractors.

“At the time, the available modes of transportation were limited to private cars, taxis, and public buses. Traffic congestion was virtually nonexistent, especially since most Kuwaiti families typically owned just one car, usually used by the father, as women generally did not drive as commonly as they do today.

“Driving licenses were not granted to anyone outside these categories, except by special permission from the Minister of Interior, who only made exceptions under the most difficult circumstances. Residents without driver’s licenses relied on public transportation, and the roads and streets were well-equipped to support this system. In fact, Kuwait was the first Arab country in the region to establish highways in the mid-1980s.

“In the mid-1990s, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior was authorized to issue driving licenses to some individuals not covered by the law. Years later, this authority was extended to the directors of traffic departments in the governorates, which unfortunately led to interference and favoritism in the issuance of driving licenses.

“To add insult to injury, driving licenses were also issued to delivery companies, including for motorcycles. As a result, the number of citizens holding driver’s licenses, and consequently, the number of vehicles on the roads, increased significantly. Some Kuwaiti families now own multiple cars - one for the husband, another for the wife, a third for the son, a fourth for the daughter, and even a fifth for the driver. The larger the family, the more vehicles they tend to own.

“Meanwhile, the roads have largely remained unchanged since they were built in the 1980s. Public transportation has also stayed the same, relying mainly on overcrowded buses.

“I would suggest constructing new expressways, such as the Eighth Ring Road, stretching from Nuwaiseeb to Jahra and passing through areas like Wafra and Sabah Al-Ahmad City, as well as serving new residential developments near the Seventh Ring Road.

“I also propose constructing expressways connecting Sabah Al-Ahmad City to the interior regions and other major highways, along with establishing a metro network that would run across Kuwait from south to north and east to west.

“In addition, I suggest minimizing the categories of residents eligible to obtain driving licenses and developing a railway network linking Kuwait to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, as well as another rail line connecting Kuwait to the Gulf states, passing through the coastal cities of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman.

“This would have a positive impact on the movement of goods and people.”

— Compiled by Mahmoud Attiye/Simi K.Kutty

Jail upheld for eve-teaser

Citizen acquitted, evidence insufficient

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Second Circuit Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Nasr Salem Al-Haid along with judges Saud Al-Sanea and Tariq Metwally, upheld a five-year prison sentence with hard labor issued against a citizen who was accused of behaving inappropriately with female high school students.

The Public Prosecution charged the individual with indecently assaulting one of the victims and inciting her to debauchery and immoral acts. The case came to light by chance.

The accused reportedly behaved indecently toward a female student and touched her inappropriately when she went to the local cooperative society branch after school. The student initially thought it was accidental, but the behavior was repeated, along with pressure to add him to her Snapchat account.

The student informed her father, who then filed a complaint with the police.

While reviewing the branch’s surveillance footage, it was revealed that the defendant waited outside the branch for girls wearing school uniforms, specifically high school students, to follow them inside and repeat his misconduct.

After detectives set up an ambush, the accused was arrested. During interrogation and when confronted with the footage, he confessed, stating he has an obsession with female students in school uniforms, particularly high schoolers.

The Criminal Court sentenced him to five



Al-Haid



Haider

years in prison with hard labor. The Court of Appeals rejected requests to suspend the sentence in the first session and upheld the sentence, confirming the validity of the original ruling.

Citizen acquitted: The Criminal Court acquitted a citizen of drug use charges due to the invalidity of the investigations conducted by the Investigations General Department and the lack of incriminating evidence to convict the accused.

The court affirmed that the investigations conducted by the Ministry of Interior investigator exceeded the scope of his jurisdiction, as he ordered a urine sample taken from the accused for examination, even though the alleged crime falls within the scope of felonies; which the misdemeanor investigator does not have the authority to do.

The court indicated that the forensics report -- which revealed the presence of methamphetamine in the sample -- is invalid and cannot be used as evidence, because it is the result of an illegal procedure.

The court stated in its reasoning that the Operations Unit at the ministry received informa-

tion about a person in an abnormal condition. When the security officer arrived at the scene, the accused admitted to using shabu. He was arrested and transferred to the police station, and from there, he was immediately referred to the Forensics Medicine Department as per the order of the ministry investigator who lacked the authority to do so. “This renders all subsequent procedures invalid and requires the exclusion of the obtained evidence,” the court explained.

Attorney Enaam Haider, lawyer for the accused, refuted the procedures and exposed their invalidity; in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Trials. She argued that the investigations and evidence based on the sample analysis were illegal -- a position that the court accepted and then it ruled to acquit her client.

Assault condemned: Attorney Elaf Al-Saleh, the legal representative of Kuwait Medical Association, strongly condemned the recent assault on two doctors while they were leaving their workplace, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Saleh asserted that the attack is a serious criminal offense under Kuwaiti law and is totally inconsistent with ethical and societal values. “This assault not only targeted the two doctors personally, but also a blatant violation of the dignity of the health sector and the professional and job security of its workers. Such offense undermines the human and ethical principles upon which any civilized society is built.”

She added “this assault is reprehensible as it occurred while the doctors were fulfilling their sacred duty to save lives and ease the suffering of others. Such an act is totally unacceptable.”

She confirmed that all the necessary legal steps -- criminal and civil -- have been taken against the perpetrator.



Wood is stored in Amghara scrapyard haphazardly.

Violating wood warehouses shut

KUWAIT CITY , July 24: The Kuwait Fire Force, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, the Public Authority for Manpower, and the Public Authority for Industry, launched an inspection campaign targeting the South Amghara (scrap wood) area in Jahra Governorate, reports Al-Anba daily.

The campaign aimed to identify buildings and facilities that fail to meet safety and fire prevention standards. Accord-

ing to an official statement from the Fire Force, several violations were recorded, and administrative closure orders were issued for a number of non-compliant establishments -- including warehouses storing wood and other flammable materials.

This action follows a massive fire incident in the same area just days ago, which required the efforts of approximately 200 firefighters and took nearly 12 hours to fully contain.

Kuwaitization continues as 10 promoted to ‘top court’

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: In a move aligned with the ongoing Kuwaitization of the judiciary, the Supreme Judicial Council -- headed by Counselor Dr. Adel Bouresli -- has approved the transfer of 10 Kuwaiti counselors from the Court of Appeals to the Court of Cassation, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting reliable sources.

Sources disclosed decision was taken during the recently concluded meeting of the council. They said the transfer comes at a time 10 expatriate counselors are set to depart at the beginning of the next judicial year. They pointed out this transition is a step toward replacing expatriate judicial personnel with qualified Kuwaiti professionals. They added the replacement process will continue over the next several years.

In another development, the daily obtained information that the Ministry of Justice has suspended the recruitment of law school graduates into the Public Prosecution. The ministry is currently reviewing the list of accepted candidates to verify that all admission criteria -- including required examinations -- have been properly met.

Officials are also assessing the possibility of addressing any procedural concerns or re-conducting certain aspects of the admission process to ensure fairness, transparency and compliance with established standards.

These measures reflect the government’s broader efforts to strengthen national capacity within the judiciary and uphold the integrity of its recruitment process.

MEW fines 54 employees for falsifying attendance

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Court of Cassation upheld the decision of a lower court to impose KD300 on 54 employees at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for embezzling more than KD164,000 of public funds by falsifying their attendance records while they were outside the country.

Investigations revealed that the accused left the country for varying periods, but their attendance continued to be recorded regularly; thereby, enabling them to unlawfully receive salaries.

Case documents indicated that the employees returned the amount they embezzled after an investigation. Nevertheless, the concerned court convicted them of embezzling public funds and falsifying official records, and fined them KD300 each.

Detention extended: The detention renewal judge on Thursday extended the detention of two members of the Cooperative Societies Union, two other employees and a number of expatriate company managers, on charges of bribery related to providing illegal facilities and violations in tenders and contracts.

The defendants were arrested in an entrapment carried out by the Criminal Investigation Department, under the direct orders of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousuf, who personally monitored the investigations and interrogations. He emphasized the need to deal with misappropriation of public funds or violation of laws in public institutions.

168 wanted criminals held in week

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Rescue Police General Department carried out extensive security and traffic campaigns over the past week, resulting in the arrest of numerous individuals and the handling of thousands of traffic-related incidents, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, the campaigns led to the arrest of 168 wanted individuals who evaded arrest, committed criminal offenses, were reported absconding and hold expired residency percent; 92 expatriates with expired residency permits; 24 in-

dividuals without official identification and 56 individuals wanted by law for absconding and other violations, while 55 vehicles wanted by judicial authorities were impounded.

In addition, the rescue police responded to 2,465 traffic reports; including 158 accidents that led to injuries and 976 collisions.

The source confirmed that the Traffic Affairs Sector remains committed to carrying out security and traffic campaigns round the clock, emphasizing that the pursuit of violators and the enforcement of laws will continue without leniency.

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Crown Prince offers prayers for victims, PM extends sympathy

Kuwait Amir condoles Bangladesh over plane crash

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Thursday to the President of Bangladesh, Mohammad Shahabuddin, expressing sincere sympathies for the victims of a military aircraft crash in the capital, Dhaka.

His Highness the Amir expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of life and wished a speedy recovery for the injured.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Bangladeshi President Mohammad Shahabuddin regarding the victims of a military plane crash in Dhaka's Uttara area, which left many dead and injured.

The Crown Prince prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow His mercy and forgiveness upon the victims, grant them a place in Paradise, and bless the injured with a speedy recovery.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to President Mohammad Shahabuddin of the People's Republic of Bangladesh over the victims of the military plane crash in Dhaka's Uttara District.

Education Ministry and GCC's IPTC explore IP awareness collaboration

Partnership promotes respect for creators' rights

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei met with a delegation from the Intellectual Property Training Center (IPTC), affiliated with the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), to discuss prospects for joint cooperation between the Ministry and the Center.

In a press statement issued Thursday, the Ministry said that the meeting focused on ways to implement specialized awareness programs targeting students in public schools. The aim is to instill concepts of intellectual property and encourage young people to respect the rights of creators and inventors, thereby fostering a culture of innovation and helping build generations that are more aware of their own rights and the rights of others.

The Ministry indicated that the meeting aligns with efforts to expand cooperation with relevant Gulf institutions, which contributes to the development of the educational process and equips students with knowledge and skills that enhance their legal and intellectual awareness in areas considered the cornerstone of future societies.

Notably, the meeting was attended by Minister Plenipotentiary and Head of the Center Musaed Al-Kulaib, Advisor Rana Al-Qurtas, Advisor Faisal Nawaf, Legal Researcher Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Supervisor of the Head of the Center Saud Al-Khalidi, Specialist Salem Al-Marri, and Specialist Abdullah Al-Adwani.



KUNA photo

Minister of Education and a delegation from the Gulf Cooperation Council Intellectual Property Center.



KUNA photo
Foreign Minister Abdullah Al Yahya receives a written message from UAE Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr. Sultan Al Neyadi.

Kuwaiti FM receives letter from UAE on developing youth diplomatic leadership

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Thursday a written letter from the UAE on developing youth diplomatic leadership in various fields.

The letter, sent by UAE Minister of Youth Affairs and Head of the Arab Youth Centers Dr. Sultan Al-Neyadi, was delivered to Minister Al-Yahya from the UAE Ambassador to Kuwait, Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi.

Other Voices

The Epic of Kuwait Airways

By Ahmad alsarraf

KUWAIT AIRWAYS is the region's premier airline, but it has faced a number of challenges since its establishment.

With the discovery of oil and its introduction to world markets following the end of World War II, a group of visionary Kuwaiti businessmen recognized the importance of connecting their country to the outside world by air. In 1953, they founded Kuwait National Airways, which began operations with a modest fleet of two Douglas aircraft.

Its first flight was to Basra, followed by flights to Damascus, Jerusalem, Abadan, and Beirut. I was fortunate to be on board one of these flights in 1956.

Due to special circumstances, the government acquired half of the company in 1955 before completing the full purchase in 1962. This marked the beginning of a new era, characterized by increased funding and extensive government support, especially as the airline expanded its network to cover Europe and Asia.

Then came the ordeal of the 1990 Saddam invasion, which marked the darkest chapter in Kuwait Airways' history. The Iraqi regime seized 15 of its aircraft and destroyed many of its facilities without any logical justification. After Kuwait's liberation, Kuwait Airways rebuilt and renewed its fleet, but faced strong competition from emerging airlines in the Gulf region.

The continuous changes in the company's board of directors, and the bad intentions of some members have contributed to increasing its problems and accumulating losses amounting to several billion dinars over a period of 60 years. I do not believe any government agency knows exactly how much has been spent to date.

Given the fragile stability of Kuwait Airways' current board of directors, any increase in revenues cannot cover expenses under the current circumstances.



alsarraf

stances, especially with a workforce of approximately 7,000 employees.

The Dead Horse Theory, based on wisdom attributed to Native Americans, states - When you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount and walk.

However, in the world of business and government, a wide range of alternative strategies are often employed before giving up. These include buying a stronger whip, changing the jockey, threatening the horse with dismissal, appointing a committee to study the horse's condition, sending "experts" abroad to observe how others ride dead horses, lowering standards so dead horses can be managed, reclassifying the dead horse as "living disabled," hiring foreign contractors to ride the dead horse, harnessing multiple dead horses together to increase speed, providing additional funding and training to improve the dead horse's performance, and conducting productivity studies to see if lighter jockeys might help.

It can also be stated that the dead horse requires no feeding, making it less expensive to maintain, incurs no operational costs, and therefore contributes significantly to increased profitability compared to some other horses. Eventually, the dead horse might even be promoted to a supervisory role, and a new one would be hired to take its place.

To be clear, I do not advocate for Kuwait Airways to give up or be left to its fate. On the contrary, I believe the current board of directors should be given the reassurance and stability it needs to remain in office for a sufficient period, long enough to deliver better results. This must be coupled with drawing on global aviation expertise to manage and operate the airline effectively.

I have called for this approach on several occasions, especially given that, over the course of 70 years, the company has failed to produce a CEO capable of leading it competently and efficiently without interference. That said, I must acknowledge the few capable CEOs who were given the opportunity to lead Kuwait Airways, albeit for only brief periods.

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Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with CEO of Asia Management Consulting Dr. Ahmad Rashid Al-Saber and Dr. Hamad Al-Aslawi.

Farwaniya Governor meets private sector leaders to enhance services

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met with CEO of Asia Management Consulting Dr. Ahmad Rashid Al-Saber and Dr. Hamad Al-Aslawi at his office in Farwaniya Governorate on Wednesday.

They discussed the most important work and activities of the company, the studies it has conducted, specializations that could contribute to the improvement of public services in the governorate, and ways to open horizons for cooperation between the two sides.

Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser underscored the importance of the private sector and its contribution to the development of many vital sectors. He praised the studies, consultations and efforts undertaken by the sector.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the guests expressed their thanks to the Governor for the warm welcome and for allowing them to present their proposals, open horizons for cooperation with the private sector, and brief him on the efforts exerted by Kuwaiti youths to serve the people of Farwaniya Governorate.

Army extends Officer Cadet registration

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The General Staff of Kuwait Army has announced the extension of the registration period until July 29 for military service as officer cadets at Ali Al-Sabah Military College, for the "51st batch of Officer Cadets" for diploma and high school certificate holders, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the announcement posted on its X account, the age requirements for applicants has been amended exceptionally for this year alone as follows:

- Diploma holders must be no older than 23, instead of 22.
- High school graduates must be no older than 22, instead of 21.



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Ambassador to Germany Reem Mohammed Al-Khaled presents her credentials to the President of the Republic of Lithuania as a non-resident ambassador.

Ambassador Al-Khaled submits credentials as Kuwait's non-resident envoy to Lithuania

BERLIN, July 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Reem Mohammad Al-Khaled submitted her credentials to President of Lithuania Gitanas Nauseda as the country's non-resident envoy, during a ceremony held at the presidential palace in the Capital of Lithuania, Vilnius.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Al-Khaled said that she conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings to President Nauseda, wishing Lithuania everlasting progress and prosperity.

During the meeting, she affirmed

Kuwait is keen on boosting its relations with Lithuania, and exploring collaboration chances in areas of common interest, she added.

She noted that the meeting discussed some regional and international topics, referring that there were identical views regarding the need of dialogue and cooperation in the face of common challenges.

Kuwait is looking forward to developing a constructive partnership with Lithuania based on enhancing cultural, economic and political cooperation to serve reciprocal interests and cement ties between the two friendly countries, Al-Khaled elaborated.

Key protein decoded for treatment

DDI harnesses AI to identify new drug targets for type 2 diabetes

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: A research team from the Dasman Diabetes Institute, led by Dr. **Anwar Mohammed**, has made significant progress in understanding the mechanisms of type 2 diabetes, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, their study was recently published in the international Journal of Cellular and Molecular Medicine.

The research relied on the advanced AlphaFold 3.0 platform to predict the three-dimensional structure of the interaction between the transcription factor KLF15 and DNA



Dr. Mohammed

at the atomic level, paving the way for the design of precise drugs targeting this critical interaction.

Dr. Anwar Mohammed highlighted that this study marks an important step in understanding how KLF15 regulates glucose levels in the body.

He expressed hope that the findings will lead to more precise and effective drug treatments.

Dr. Mohammed said the team employed an integrated computational approach combining molecular modeling, dynamic simulation, and energy analysis, resulting in identifying four key sites on the protein as potential starting points for drug development.

The study was supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), reflecting Kuwait's commitment to advancing scientific research in biomedicine and precision medicine, especially concerning chronic diseases.

By Nusaiba bin Shaiba

LONDON, July 24, (KUNA): A number of Kuwaiti researchers took part in the 15th Gulf Research Center Meeting on Wednesday, hosted by Cambridge University from July 22-24.

Along the participation of researchers of more than 180 countries, Kuwait is partaking in the event, which discusses a number of political, economic, energy, security, scientific and social topics in the Gulf area.

Speaking to KUNA, Dr. Fai bin Salama, a cybersecurity researcher, said she was in charge of the 12th workshop of the forum, adding that she offered a study aimed at drawing up a unified framework to show how GCC member states are ready to boost regional coordination to confront growing cyber threats.

Talal Mulla Ali, a PhD researcher at Brunel University of London, said he submitted recommendations of his study on the impact of AI on humans' reaction to machine on social media.

Awrad Mulla Ali, a PhD researcher at Birmingham University, told KUNA that she offered a presentation on her study on the AI.



KUNA photo

Being held annually, the meeting is organizing 12 workshops on varied themes for constructive dialogue and academic collaboration on Gulf-related issues.

Al-Tabtabaei OK's MoE overhaul

Ministry integrates tech, evaluation and support systems

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei on Thursday issued a ministerial decision amending Ministerial Resolution No. 242/2025 on the organizational structure of the ministry.

In a press statement, the ministry confirmed that the decision is in response to the comments and suggestions that the minister received; and it is in line with a comprehensive study on the work requirements in various departments and sectors.

The ministry disclosed that Article One of the decision stipulates the amendment of Ministerial Resolution No. 242/2025 issued on July 3. It added that the current supervisory position holders will continue to perform their duties until the new structure is fully staffed.

Following are the amendments to the organizational structure:

- First: Educational Affairs Sector
- A number of departments were merged under the General Administration for Educational Support Services,

which includes the Libraries Department, Activities Department, Psychological and Social Services Department, and Educational Technology Department.

- Addition of two new departments for Technology Supervision and Library Supervision, bringing the total number of guidance departments in the General Directorate of Guidance, Research and Curricula to 16.
- The organizational structure of educational affairs departments in the districts was amended to include monitoring units for all four educational levels (elementary, intermediate, high school and religious education).
- Extend the organizational structure of public schools to religious institutes.
- Include a new organizational structure for schools under the Private Education General Directorate.
- Reorganizing the General Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation to include three departments -- Student Assessment Department, Teacher Assessment Department and Curriculum Assessment Department.



Al-Tabtabaei

The General Directorate of Assessment oversees six monitoring units, instead of eight -- Examination Monitoring, Educational Performance and Quality Measurement Monitoring, Teacher Professional Performance Quality Monitoring, Curriculum Quality and Effectiveness Analysis Monitoring, Curriculum Development and Evaluation Monitoring, and Research Coordination.

Second: Administrative, Financial and Technical Affairs Sector

- Reorganize the units affiliated with the General Department of Human Resources and Personnel Affairs to oversee six administrative affairs departments in the educational districts.
- Expand the scope of the General Directorate of Public Services to include public services control centers in the six educational districts in order to unify tasks and ensure balanced service delivery.
- Reorganize the structure of the General Directorate of Planning to include two main departments and four specialized control centers.
- Reorganize the structure of the General Directorate of Technology and Information Systems. The Cybersecurity Department was created, reporting directly to the director of the department, alongside the Technical Office and Secretariat Department.

The General Directorate of Technology and Information Systems in-

cludes two main departments:

- Department of Systems Development and Digital Services that oversees software and application development, quality and electronic archiving.
- Department of Infrastructure and Support that oversees infrastructure monitoring, operations, technical support, and beneficiary support.

■ Put the warehouse departments in the educational districts under the General Directorate of Supplies and Warehouses.

Meanwhile, the minister on Thursday met with a delegation from the Intellectual Property Training Center at the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) -- currently on official visit to Kuwait -- to discuss prospects for joint cooperation between the ministry and the center.

The meeting tackled ways to implement awareness programs for students in public schools in order to enhance their knowledge on the concepts of intellectual property, and motivate young people to respect the rights of creators and inventors.

The ministry indicated that the meeting is part of efforts to strengthen cooperation with relevant Gulf institutions, contributing to the development of the educational process and providing students with the knowledge and skills that raise their legal and intellectual awareness.

Continued from Page 1

'Laws are

Al-Sumait stressed that the position of junior legal researcher, which qualifies its holder for appointment as a public prosecutor, is a pivotal role, as it represents the first building block of the judicial system and plays a great role in shaping the judiciary body.

He emphasized that judicial positions are both a responsibility and a trust that require the highest levels of competence, integrity, and impartiality.

Al-Sumait revealed that the Ministry of Justice had received a number of complaints and grievances regarding the recent admissions process, raising serious concerns about its fairness and the validity of its outcomes. Upon reviewing the documents and evidence, it was confirmed that violations had occurred that compromised the integrity of the entire admissions process and rendered the results unrepresentative of the applicants' true performance.

'Kuwait worthy

The two countries, said Dr. Saada, had a unified media message concerning issues of Arab concerns, noting that bolstering Arab national security and supporting the Palestinian cause were just a few causes that Kuwait and Cairo were keen on boosting cooperation within.

For her part, Egyptian Culture Ministry spokesperson Radhwa Hashem said that choosing Kuwait as the capital of Arab media and culture for 2025 was in recognition of its decades of contributions.

Kuwait remains a platform for dialogue and illumination, she asserted, indicating that this year's designation had already inspired several initiatives and events, including the launch of a joint digital media platform aimed at promoting Arab culture, media content, and creative production.

Hashem touched on Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations, commending its long-standing and tight coordination, especially with the media and cultural fields.

The choice of Kuwait as the capital of Arab media and culture is a great opportunity to expand pan-Arab cooperation to boost creativity and cultivate talents, she concluded.

Sweltering heat

Winds will shift from northwesterly to northeasterly at speeds between 10 and 30 kilometers per hour, and some high clouds may appear. Maximum temperatures will range from 46 degrees Celsius to 48 degrees Celsius, with sea conditions remaining light to moderate and wave heights between one and four feet.

Friday night will remain hot to very hot and relatively humid along the coast. Winds will vary from calm to northwesterly at six to 26 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures are expected to be between 31 degrees Celsius and 33 degrees Celsius, with waves reaching one to three feet.

On Saturday, the weather will be very hot as well and relatively humid in coastal areas. Winds will be variable, turning easterly at eight to 32 kilometers per hour. High clouds may appear. The maximum temperature will range between 46 degrees Celsius and 48 degrees Celsius. The sea will remain light to moderate with waves between one and four feet.

Saturday night is expected to be hot to very hot and humid in coastal areas, with variable winds shifting to northwesterly at six to 28 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures will range between 33 degrees Celsius and 35 degrees Celsius, and the sea will be light to moderate with waves between one and three feet.

Drug pills

The security clampdown took place under supervision of First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah and in cooperation with the General Administration of Customs and Kuwait Fire Force.

Acting on tips, the security services arranged with the customs authorities to facilitate the entry of the consignment into Kuwait, kept watching the route it took, and then arrested one of culprits red-handed.

The main culprit is abroad and the Kuwaiti authorities are in contact with the authorities of the country he is residing in as a prelude to a legal action against him, the statement noted.

The consignment took a tricky route before arriving in Kuwait; it was smuggled to an Arab country and to a European one before its final destination, the statement said.

The Ministry of interior appreciated the cooperation with the anti-drug agencies of the concerned countries that led to the successful clampdown.

KNG, France

particularly in defense and security affairs.

The ceremony was attended by senior officials from both sides, including representatives from Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and French military and security attachés based in the region.

KOC targets

need to fill the cooking gas deficit in view of the growing population, in addition to use of this gas as raw material for the production of chemicals and fertilizers.

Sources stated that KOC uses several methods to treat the associated gas extracted with oil to prevent environmental pollution, especially since it aims to reduce daily gas flaring by implementing several related projects, particularly the development of additional sour gas processing facilities and constructing new gas pipelines, while constantly striving to improve infrastructure. Sources added the company is also working hard to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Sources indicated that KOC is following the long-term policy of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to transform Kuwait from a permanent importer of free gas to an exporter in the coming years, especially since the country's free gas consumption rates increase remarkably during the peak summer months each year.

Sources revealed that Kuwait's free gas imports in the third quarter of every year increase, reaching more than 2.7 million tons; while it did not exceed the one million-ton limit in the first, second and fourth quarters. Sources added Kuwait's continuous gas import drains billions of US dollars from the budget of KPC annually.

Sources also stated that the offshore discoveries in the Julai'a and Nokhatha fields between 2024 and 2025, in addition to the current offshore discoveries, will increase the country's capacity of associated and non-associated gas; hoping that these two fields will enter production to boost the oil and gas production of Kuwait.

Kuwait eyes

The ministry routinely invites some of the world's most renowned healthcare professionals, 140 of whom have already visited, in a bid to instill global expertise into local personnel, subsequently ratcheting up the quality of the ministry's services, Al-Sanad underlined.

One of the most innovative healthcare projects the ministry had recently launched was deploying some 20 Automated External Defibrillators at Kuwait's International Airport to provide immediate assistance to those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest, all of which are portable and user-friendly, he noted.

Providing intricate healthcare data, the spokesman said that emergency units across healthcare facilities nationwide have dealt with some 200,000 cases last January, while there are some 117 primary healthcare centers all over Kuwait, he said.

Save power,

Those who save more than 25 percent on water consumption will enjoy a 50 percent discount.

If customers save on both electricity and water combined, the incentive may reach up to a 90 percent discount on their bill.

In cases where a renewable energy system is installed, the incentive increases to three times the usual discount.

Al-Hayyan clarified that the incentive is a discount on bills, not a cash payment. This discount is applied in January or February each year after obtaining official approvals, and it will positively impact citizens' bills.

He further explained that the state bears a major portion of the cost of energy and water production. While customers pay 2 fils per kilowatt-hour, the ministry covers the cost of 46 fils.

The cost of producing 1,000 gallons of water is approximately KD 5, rising to KD 8 in 2024, while citizens pay only 800 fils.



Volunteers from the Kuwait Environment Protection Society participate in a beach clean-up campaign on Umm Al Maradem Island.

Volunteers clean Umm Al-Maradem's shores

KEPS leads initiative to preserve Umm Al-Maradem Island wildlife

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) stressed on Wednesday the importance of cleaning and protecting Umm Al-Maradem Island, describing it as a haven for many marine creatures and wildlife, including turtles.

KEPS Vice Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Muhanna said in a press statement that the society recently participated in a national environmental campaign to clean Umm Al-Maradem Island, in which 200 volunteers took part and removed waste from several beaches.

Al-Muhanna explained that participation in environmental campaigns to clean coastal areas reflects environmental responsibility and ensures sustainability for future generations.

He added that a large amount of waste--equivalent to four truckloads provided by Kuwait Municipality--was collected, noting that plastic and foam constituted the largest proportion of the waste removed from both the beach and underwater areas.

He emphasized the importance of raising awareness to preserve Kuwait's environment by keeping its beaches clean. He said the campaign



KUNA photos
Waste removal from Umm Al Maradem Island.

sends a strong message about the significance of Kuwait's islands and helps instill a love of volunteerism in society.

Al-Muhanna also called on visitors to Kuwait's islands to exercise the highest level of care in maintaining beach cleanliness and protecting the marine environment from various pollutants.

‘Order unconstitutional’

US appeals court blocks President Trump’s order curtailing birthright citizenship

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): A federal appeals court in San Francisco ruled Wednesday that President Donald Trump’s order seeking to end birthright citizenship is unconstitutional, affirming a lower-court decision that blocked its enforcement nationwide.

The ruling from a three-judge panel of the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals comes after Trump’s plan was also blocked by a federal judge in New Hampshire. It marks the first time an appeals court has weighed in and brings the issue one step closer to coming back quickly before the Supreme Court.

The 9th Circuit decision keeps a block on the Trump administration enforcing the order that would deny citizenship to children born to people who are in the United States illegally or temporarily.

“The district court correctly concluded that the Executive Order’s proposed interpretation, denying citizenship to many persons born in the United States, is unconstitutional. We fully agree,” the majority wrote.

The 2-1 ruling keeps in place a decision from US District Judge John C. Coughenour in Seattle, who blocked Trump’s effort to end birthright citizenship and decried what he described as the administration’s attempt to ignore the Constitution for political gain. Coughenour was the first to block the order.

The White House and Justice Department did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

The Supreme Court has since restricted the power of lower court judges to issue orders that affect the whole country, known as nationwide injunctions.

But the 9th Circuit majority found that the case fell under one of the exceptions left open by the justices. The case was filed by a group of states who argued that



US President Donald Trump speaks during an AI summit at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium on July 23, in Washington. (AP)

they need a nationwide order to prevent the problems that would be caused by birthright citizenship only being the law in half of the country.

“We conclude that the district court did not abuse its discretion in issuing a universal injunction in order to give the States complete relief,” Judge Michael Hawkins and Ronald Gould, both appointed by President Bill Clinton, wrote.

Judge Patrick Bumatay, who was appointed by Trump, dissented. He found that the states don’t have the legal right, or standing, to sue. “We should approach any request for universal relief with good faith skepticism, mindful that the invocation of ‘complete relief’ isn’t a backdoor to universal injunctions,” he wrote.

Bumatay did not weigh in on whether ending birthright citizenship would be constitutional.

The Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment says that all people born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to US jurisdiction, are citizens.

Justice Department attorneys argue that the phrase “subject to United States jurisdiction” in the amendment means that citizenship isn’t automatically conferred to children based on their birth location alone.

The states - Washington, Arizona, Illinois and Oregon - argue that ignores the plain language of the Citizenship Clause as well as a landmark birthright citizenship case in 1898 where the Supreme Court found a child born in San Francisco to Chinese parents was a citizen by virtue of his birth on American soil.

Trump’s order asserts that a child born in the US is not a citizen if the mother does not have legal immigration status or is in the country legally but temporarily, and the father is not a US citizen or lawful permanent resident. At least nine lawsuits challenging the order have been filed around the US.

US government builds 5,000-person immigrant detention camp in Texas

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): The US government is building an immense 5,000-person detention camp in west Texas, government contract announcements said, sharply increasing the Trump administration’s ability to hold detained immigrants amid its ever-growing mass deportation efforts.

A Defense Department contract announcement on Monday said Acquisition Logistics, a Virginia-based firm, had been awarded \$232 million in Army funds to build the facility, which would be used for single immigrant adults.

Procurement documents called it a “soft sided facility,” a phrase often used for tent camps.

The announcement came just weeks after Florida authorities rushed to construct a new immigration detention center dubbed “Alligator Alcatraz,” which was built on an isolated airstrip surrounded by swampland in the Florida Everglades.

The announcement said the new facility would be built in El Paso, which is home to Ft. Bliss, an Army base that stretches across parts of Texas and New Mexico.

President Donald Trump recently signed a law setting aside \$170 billion on border and immigration enforcement, including \$45 billion for detention, even as the number of illegal border crossings has plunged. ICE will see its funding grow by \$76.5 billion over five years, nearly 10 times its current annual budget.



Federal agents escort a man to a transport bus after he was detained following an appearance at immigration court on July 22, in San Antonio. (AP)

Trump has vowed to deport millions of immigrants living illegally in the US.

Also: **WASHINGTON:** A federal judge in Maryland has prohibited the Trump administration from taking Kilmar Abrego Garcia into immediate immigration custody if he’s released from jail in Tennessee while awaiting trial on human smuggling charges, according to an order issued Wednesday.

US District Judge Paula Xinis ordered the US government to provide notice of three business days if

Immigration and Customs Enforcement intends to initiate deportation proceedings against him.

The judge also ordered the government to restore the federal supervision that Abrego Garcia was under before he was wrongfully deported to his native El Salvador in March. That supervision had allowed Abrego Garcia to live and work in Maryland for years, while he periodically checked in with ICE.

“Defendants have done little to assure the Court that absent intervention, Abrego Garcia’s due process rights will be protected,” Xinis wrote in her order.

Gabbard uses WH appearance to attack Trump’s enemies on Russia probe

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): As the national intelligence director, Tulsi Gabbard is responsible for guarding America’s secrets and discovering threats from overseas. But when she made a surprise appearance in the White House briefing room Wednesday, her targets were President Donald Trump’s political enemies.

Escalating her attempts to undermine the long-settled conclusion that Russia tried to help Trump beat Hillary Clinton for the presidency nearly a decade ago, she unspooled what she called unshakable proof that then-President Barack Obama and his advisers plotted nothing short of a coup.

“They conspired to subvert the will of the American people,” she said, claiming they fabricated evidence to taint Trump’s victory.

Little of what she said was new, and much of it was baseless. Gabbard said her investigation into the former Democratic administration was designed to stop the weaponization of national security institutions, but it spurred more questions about her own independence atop a spying system intended to provide unvarnished intelligence.

Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii who ran for president herself before joining Trump’s idiosyncratic political ecosystem, seemed prepared to use her presentation to burnish her own standing. She was trailed by her cinematographer husband, who held a video camera to capture the moment.

And Trump, who had previously ex-



Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard walks to the podium to speak with reporters in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House on July 23 in Washington. (AP)

pressed public doubts about Gabbard’s analysis of Iran’s nuclear program, appeared satisfied. He posted a video of her remarks, pinning them at the top of his social media feed.

It was a display that cemented Gabbard’s role as one of Trump’s chief agents of retribution, delivering official recognition of Trump’s grievances about the Russia investigation that shadowed his first term. The focus on a years-old scandal also served Trump’s attempts to shift attention from the Jeffrey Epstein case and questions about the president’s own association with

an abuser of underage girls.

During her White House remarks, Gabbard said she has referred the documents to the Justice Department to consider for a possible criminal investigation. Hours later, the department announced the creation of a “strike force” to investigate the findings.

Obama’s postpresidential office declined to comment Wednesday but issued a rare response a day earlier. “These bizarre allegations are ridiculous and a weak attempt at distraction,” said Patrick Rodenbush, an Obama spokesman.

‘Debris scattered among dense forest’

Plane crash in Russia’s Far East kills 48

MOSCOW, July 24, (AP): All 48 passengers and crew onboard a passenger plane that crashed in Russia’s Far East have died, the head of the country’s Amur region said in a statement Thursday.

Russia’s Emergency Situations Ministry said earlier that it had found the burning fuselage of the Soviet-designed twin turbo prop plane on a hillside south of its planned destination in the town of Tynda, more than 7,000 kilometers (4,350 miles) east of Moscow.

The plane, which was operated by the Siberia-based Angara Airlines, had initially departed from Khabarovsk before making its way to Blagoveshchensk on the Russian-Chinese border and onwards to Tynda.

It wasn’t immediately clear what caused the crash. Russia’s Interfax news agency said there were adverse weather conditions at the time of the crash, citing unnamed sources in the emergency services. Several Russian news outlets also reported that the aircraft was almost 50 years old, citing data taken from the plane’s tail number.

Images of the reported crash site cir-



In this photo taken from video released by Russia Emergency Situations Ministry press service on July 24, smoke rises from the place of the crashed Russian An-24 passenger plane of the Siberia-based Angara Airlines while carrying multiple passengers, in 15 kilometers (9 miles) south of Tynda, Far Eastern Amur region of Russia. (AP)

culated by Russian state media show debris scattered among dense forest, surrounded by plumes of smoke.

Regional Gov Vasily Orlov said rescuers struggled to reach the site due to its remote location, 15 kilometers (9 miles) south of Tynda.

The transport prosecutor’s office in the Far East said in an online statement that the plane was attempting to land for a second time when it lost contact with air traffic control and disappeared from radars.

Orlov announced three days of mourning in the Amur region to mark the disaster, which he described as a “terrible tragedy.”

A previous statement from the governor said that 49 people had been onboard the flight. The reason for the discrepancy was not immediately clear.

The authorities have launched a probe on the charge of flight safety violations that resulted in multiple deaths, a standard procedure in aviation accidents.

Aviation incidents have been frequent in Russia, especially in recent years as international sanctions have squeezed the country’s aviation sector.



Thousands of people protest against a law targeting anti-corruption institutions near the President’s Office in Kyiv, Ukraine on July 23. (AP)

‘It is important that we maintain unity’

Ukraine leader announces new anti-graft bill

KYIV, Ukraine, July 24, (AP): Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that he’s sending a new anti-corruption bill to Ukraine’s Parliament on Thursday, in a further attempt to defuse tensions after he approved changes to graft laws that brought a public outcry and sharp criticism from the European Union.

Opponents of the contentious law passed by lawmakers and approved by Zelenskyy earlier this week said that it stripped Ukraine’s anti-corruption watchdogs of their independence by granting the government more oversight of their work.

Zelenskyy said that it was needed to speed up investigations, ensure more convictions and remove “Russian influence” from the fight against

corruption, though he didn’t provide examples of Russian meddling.

In an abrupt change of course on Thursday, Zelenskyy unexpectedly said that he had drawn up a new draft bill on corruption that “guarantees the real strengthening of the law and order system in Ukraine.”

“The most important thing is real tools, no Russian connections, and the independence of the (watchdogs),” he said in a Telegram post.

The declaration appeared to bow to recent pressure that threatened to undermine public trust in Ukraine’s leaders after more than three years of fighting Russia’s full-scale invasion. The protests haven’t called for Zelenskyy’s ouster, but they are the first major anti-government demonstrations since the

war began.

“It is important that we maintain unity,” Zelenskyy said in his post.

The announcement also left some questions unanswered. Zelenskyy had said Wednesday that he met with the heads of Ukraine’s key anti-corruption and security agencies and gave them two weeks to make recommendations on how the graft law could be improved before he presented another bill to Parliament. Despite that assurance, further street protests were scheduled for Thursday evening.

The new pronouncement also left unclear whether Zelenskyy intended to revoke the law that he approved earlier in the week after Parliament had passed it.

Europe

Massive wildfire destroys Cyprus homes: Police in Cyprus found two bodies inside a burned-out car Thursday after a massive wildfire scorched 100 square kilometers (38.6 square miles) of forested hillsides, destroyed numerous homes and forced the evacuation of a dozen villages on the southern side of the island nation’s Troodos mountain range.

Police initially reported late Wednesday that Civil Defense personnel found the charred body of a single individual inside the vehicle on a main road connecting fire-hit hillside villages. But a second body was discovered early Thursday morning and police said identification efforts are ongoing.

Photos posted on social media purported to show the victims’ gutted vehicle on the shoulder of the main Monagri-Alassa road.

Fire Service Spokesman Andreas Kettis told state-run

Cyprus News Agency there are currently no active fronts but fire crews were still battling numerous flare-ups, and winds are expected to pick up later in the day. Up to 14 aircraft are resuming water drops over hard-to-reach areas. (AP)



Wildfires sweep Finnish Lapland: Multiple wildfires have broken out across northern Finland’s Lapland region in recent days, local newspaper Koti-Lappi reported Wednesday.

The Lapland Rescue Department said it responded to dozens of incidents over the past 24 hours, including smoke sightings, building fires, and wildfires.

Fires have been reported in several municipalities, including Lapland’s capital, Rovaniemi – widely known as the “hometown of Santa Claus.” By Wednesday morning, five new wildfires had already been reported across the region. One of the largest, in the town of Kemijarvi, spanned approximately three hectares and had entered the monitoring phase by midday. (Xinhua)



A general view of Trump Turnberry golf course in Turnberry, Scotland on July 23; US President Donald Trump is expected to visit Scotland in the next few days. (AP)

She was raised in a large Scots Gaelic-speaking family and left for New York in 1930, one of thousands of people from the islands to emigrate in the hardscrabble years after World War I.

MacLeod married the president’s father, Fred C. Trump, the son of German immigrants, in New York in 1936. She died in August 2000 at the

age of 88.

Trump still has relatives on Lewis, and visited in 2008, spending a few minutes in the plain gray house where his mother grew up.

Trump’s ties and troubles in Scotland are intertwined with golf.

He first proposed building a course on a wild and beautiful stretch of the North Sea coast north of Aberdeen in 2006.

Philippines hit by heavy rains and severe flooding amid series of storms

MANILA, July 24, (Xinhua): Heavy rain threatened to trigger more severe floods and landslides in the Philippines on Thursday as the country experiences a series of three tropical storms in days, worsening a disaster that has already left up to 12 people dead and over 2.7 million people displaced.

In a report, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said that a total of 765,869 families, or approximately 2,733,646 people, have been affected nationwide by flooding and landslides due to relentless rain dumped by Tropical Storm Wipha and the enhanced southwest monsoon since last week.

The agency reported that 12 have died and eight remain missing in the wake of Wipha and the monsoon rain. The death toll is expected to rise in the coming days as the agency continues validating fatalities from across the country.

The agency said Wipha and the monsoon caused significant damage to the country. The damage to agriculture amounts to 366.38 million pesos (roughly 6.5 million U.S. dollars), encompassing damage to rice, corn, high-value crops, fisheries, and livestock, which affects thousands of farmers and fisherfolk.

Additionally, the damage to infrastructure totals 3.77 billion pesos (approximately 66.5 million dollars).

Even with Wipha’s exit from the Philippines on Saturday, the southwest monsoon rain continued to fall due to two tropical storms, Francisco and Co-May, battering the country on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Philippine weather bureau, PAGASA, said Thursday that Tropical Storm Co-May is expected to move southeastward before turning north-northeastward, possibly passing close to Pangasinan province in the afternoon and making landfall over the Ilocos Region by Thursday night or early Friday.

Co-May may strengthen into a typhoon before landfall, the bureau added.

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Francisco continues to head west-northwestward and is expected to exit the Philippines on Thursday afternoon or evening.

The bureau further warned that the enhanced monsoon will likely cause floods, landslides, and other weather-related hazards in affected areas.

Flood warnings are in effect across Metro Manila and its adjoining provinces on Thursday.

Co-May is the fifth tropical cyclone to hit the Philippines this year.

An average of 20 typhoons lash the Philippines yearly. The archipelago is prone to tropical cyclones, which trigger heavy rains, flooding, and strong winds, resulting in casualties and destruction of crops and properties.



Residents negotiate floods after intense rainfall caused by the southwest monsoon in Cainta, Rizal province, Philippines on July 23. (AP)

Thailand seals all land border crossings

Thai and Cambodian forces clash as escalating border dispute leaves 11 dead

BANGKOK, July 24, (AP): Thai and Cambodian soldiers clashed in several areas along their border Thursday in a major escalation of their conflict that left at least 11 people dead, mostly civilians. The two sides fired small arms, artillery and rockets, and Thailand also called in airstrikes.

Thai villagers could be seen on video fleeing their homes to seek shelter as the clashes began in the morning.

Fighting was ongoing in at least six areas along the border, Thai Defense Ministry spokesperson Surasant Kongsiri said. The trigger for the clashes was a mine explosion along the border on Wednesday that wounded five Thai soldiers and led Bangkok to withdraw its ambassador to Cambodia and expelled Cambodia’s.

Thailand has also sealed all land border crossings while urging its citizens to leave Cambodia.

The Southeast Asian neighbors have longstanding border disputes that periodically flare along their 800-kilometer (500-mile) frontier and usually result in brief confrontations that sometimes involves exchanges of gunfire.

But relations have deteriorated sharply since a confrontation in May that killed a Cambodian soldier, and Thursday’s clashes were far bigger in scale and intensity than usual.

The first clash Thursday morning happened in an area near the ancient Ta Muen Thom temple along the border of Thailand’s Surin province and Cambodia’s Oddar Meanchey province.

A video from the Thai side showed people running from their homes and hiding in a concrete bunker as explosions sounded. The Thai army said its forces heard a drone before seeing six armed Cambodian soldiers moving closer to Thai military positions at the border. It said Thai soldiers tried to shout at them to defuse the situation, but the Cambodian side started to open fire.

Cambodia’s Defense Ministry, however, said Thailand deployed a drone first before opening fire, and that Cambodia “acted strictly within the bounds of self-defense, responding to an unprovoked incursion by Thai troops that violated our



Thai people who fled clashes between Thai and Cambodian soldiers take shelter in Surin province, northeastern Thailand on July 24. (AP)

territorial integrity.”

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet wrote to the current president of the U.N. Security Council asking for an urgent meeting “to stop Thailand’s aggression.”

The Thai army said it later launched airstrikes on military targets in Cambodia, while the Cambodian Defense Ministry said the Thai jets dropped bombs on a road near the ancient Preah Vihear temple, which has been the site of some of the most prominent and violent past conflicts between the countries.

Thailand’s Foreign Ministry accused Cambodia of attacking both military and non-military sites in Thailand, including a hospital.

“The Royal Thai Government is prepared to intensify our self-defense measures if Cambodia persists in its armed attack and violations upon Thailand’s sovereignty in accordance with international law and principles,” said Nikorndej Balankura, the ministry’s spokesperson.

Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said 11 people have died, including 10 civilians and one soldier. Meanwhile 28 have been injured, four of whom were soldiers and the rest civilians.

Cambodia released no details on deaths or injuries on its side.

On Wednesday, Thailand withdrew its ambassador to Cambodia and expelled the Cambodian ambassador to protest the mine blast that wounded its soldiers.

Thai authorities alleged the mines were newly laid along paths that both sides had agreed were supposed to be safe. They said the mines were Russian-made and not of a type employed by Thailand’s military.

Cambodia rejected Thailand’s account as “baseless accusations,” pointing out that many unexploded mines and other ordnance are a legacy of 20th century wars and unrest.

Cambodia also downgraded diplomatic relations, recalling all Cambodian staff on Thursday from its embassy in Bangkok.

The border dispute in May that resulted in the death of a Cambodian soldier has had political fallout in Thailand. Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra came under fire for for being too fawning in a phone call with her Cambodian counterpart when she tried to defuse the situation. She has since been suspended from office pending an investigation into possible ethics violations over the matter.

Remarks by Trump’s pick for envoy spark political storm in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, July 24, (AP): US President Donald Trump’s choice for ambassador to Buenos Aires sparked a storm Wednesday over his remarks that Argentina’s powerful ex-president should face justice in cases in which she was never convicted and his pledges to use his posting as a bulwark against China.

Opposition politicians in Argentina accused Peter Lamelas, Trump’s nominee for ambassador to the second-biggest South American country, of violating diplomatic conventions, interfering in Argentine domestic affairs and meddling in judicial matters.

Argentine media went into fifth gear with their coverage of Lamelas. Lawmakers introduced a bill in Congress rejecting his remarks as “an unacceptable interference in matters of national sovereignty.” Trade unions planned a mass protest for Thursday outside the US Embassy in Buenos Aires.

The Cuban-born Lamelas, a physician, founder of a chain of urgent care clinics in Florida and longtime Trump donor, would otherwise be stepping into the role at a time when the relationship between Argentina and the United States is at its strongest in recent memory. Lamelas spoke on Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on his nomination.

He said he would support Trump’s ally, right-wing Argentine President Javier Milei, in ensuring that the country’s former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner – now serving a six-year sentence on corruption charges under house arrest – gets the “the justice that she well deserves” in cases unrelated to her current sentence.

He also claimed her house arrest was a result of “political favoritism,” although it is common practice in Argentina for those convicted over the age of 70.

Fernández, the most prominent figure in Argentina’s left-leaning Peronist opposition movement, which holds a majority in Congress,



Mugs sit for sale at an event with President Javier Milei and supporters in Cordoba, Argentina on July 22. (AP)

did not mince words when she posted her reaction.

“The only thing he didn’t say was that he’d appoint the courts himself,” she said. Referencing scandals roiling the U.S., such including the investigation of convicted offender Jeffrey Epstein, she added: “They should clean their own house before commenting on ours.” There was no immediate comment on the hearing from libertarian Milei, elected in 2023 on a wave of public outrage over the failed economic policies of Fernández and other left-leaning populist predecessors.

Milei has repeatedly praised Trump and replicated his policies – including by following the U.S. in pulling Argentina from The World Health Organization – and recently dined and posed for friendly photos with Lamelas at Trump’s opulent Mar-a-Lago club.

“LAMELAS GO HOME,” wrote Axel Kicillof, the governor of Buenos Aires, Argentina’s most populous province, on X.

“Lamelas’ statements evoke the darkest times of United States interference in the democratic life of our region,” he added.

Lamelas waded into a controversy Tuesday when remarking on the alleged role of Fernández, Milei’s political enemy, in the cover-up to ob-

struct the investigation into the 1994 bombing of a community center in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 people and wounded more than 300.

While several people, including a former federal judge and a former head of the intelligence services, have been convicted for helping to stymie the investigation into the attack, Fernández has yet to stand trial on cover-up charges. She denies the allegations.

In his testimony, Lamelas contended that Fernández was “definitely involved in the cover-up,” without elaborating or saying why he believes this.

As ambassador, he would support “Milei and the Milei government on all their efforts to get to the bottom” of the bombing and “make sure that Cristina Fernández de Kirchner receives the justice that she well deserves,” Lamelas said.

Fueling the fire further, he suggested Fernández had something to do with the suspicious 2015 death of Alberto Nisman, the special prosecutor appointed to investigate the bombing. Fernández has not been formally accused or charged in connection with Nisman’s death.

An early investigation stated that Nisman committed suicide, but a later report showed that it was a homicide. The case has not been resolved.

Venezuela’s returning migrants allege abuses in El Salvador’s ‘hell’ prison

LOBATERA, Venezuela, July 24, (AP): Carlos Uzcátegui tightly hugged his sobbing wife and stepdaughter on Wednesday as the morning fog in western Venezuela lifted. The family’s first embrace in more than a year finally convinced him that his nightmare inside a prison in El Salvador was over.

Uzcátegui was among the migrants being reunited with loved ones after four months in prison in El Salvador, where the U.S. government transferred them -- accusing them of being members of a foreign gang in the U.S. illegally -- in one of its boldest moves to crack down on immigration.

“Every day, we asked God for the blessing of freeing us from there so that we could be here with family, with my loved ones,” Uzcátegui, 33, said. “Every day, I woke up looking at the bars, wishing I wasn’t there.”

“They beat us, they kicked us. I even have quite a few bruises on my stomach,” he added before later showing a mildly bruised left abdomen.

The migrants, some of whom characterized the prison as “hell,” were freed Friday in a prisoner swap between the U.S. and Venezuelan governments, but the latter sequestered them upon arrival to their country.

Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro and other officials have said many of the immigrants were physically and psychologically tortured during their detention in El Salvador, airing on state television videos of



Arturo Suárez, (left), a musician, one of the Venezuelan migrants deported months ago to El Salvador by the United States under the US President Donald Trump administration’s immigration crackdown, reacts as he returned home and was welcomed by his relatives in Caracas, Venezuela on July 22. (AP)

some of the men describing the alleged abuse, including rape, severe beatings and pellet-gun wounds. The narratives are reminiscent of the abuses that Maduro’s government has long been accused of committing against its real or perceived, jailed opponents.

As the men reached their homes, they and their relatives shared deeply emotional moments in which sad tears and happy tears rolled down their cheeks at the same time.

Uzcátegui’s wife, Gabriela Mora, 30, held onto their home’s fence and sobbed as she saw the military vehicle carrying him approach after a 30-plus-hour bus ride to their mining community nestled in Venezuela’s Andean mountains. She had set up gifts and decorations in their living room, including a star-shaped metallic blue balloon with a “Happy Father’s Day” greeting that his stepdaughter had saved since the June holiday.

12 rescued from mine collapse in Congo

DAKAR, Senegal, July 24, (AP): Twelve people have been rescued from an informal gold mine in eastern Congo that collapsed over the weekend, trapping an unknown number of the thousands of miners working there, the provincial governor said Wednesday.

The Lomera gold mine in the South Kivu province collapsed on Sunday following a landslide, burying numerous miners working in the underground tunnels, Gov. Patrick Busu bwa Ngwi Nshombothe said in a statement following his visit to the site.

Nshombothe, who was appointed by a rebel group that controls the area, said over 4,700 miners work on the site and the death toll and number of miners missing are unknown. Search and rescue efforts continue. The South Kivu region has recently been hit by heavy rains, triggering landslides in several villages and mining sites.

The Lomera site is an artisanal mine, operated not by a formal company but by individual workers using basic tools, often in hazardous conditions.



Nshombothe

Rwanda’s President Kagame appoints new prime minister

KIGALI, July 24, (Xinhua): Rwandan President Paul Kagame appointed Justin Nsengiyumva as the new prime minister on Wednesday, paving the way for the formation of a new cabinet.

Nsengiyumva, who served as deputy governor of the National Bank of Rwanda, replaced Edouard Ngirente, who had been prime minister since 2017 and was sacked Wednesday, according to a statement released by the office of the government’s spokesperson. In a post on X, Nsengiyumva thanked the president for the trust and confidence in him, pledging to serve the country with humility and dedication.

“I fully embrace the responsibility entrusted to me and remain committed to advancing our national priorities with integrity and purpose. I will give all I have in me to help you (president) achieve your great vision for this country,” he said.

According to Rwanda’s constitution, the appointment of a new prime minister paves the way for the formation of a new cabinet within 15 days.

Meanwhile, a meeting of chief instructors from African command and staff colleges from 18 African



Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame gestures as he gives a press conference after his final election campaign rally at Kigali Convention Centre in Kigali, Rwanda on July 13, 2024. (AP)

countries opened in the Rwandan capital of Kigali on Monday, aimed at strengthening collaboration among the colleges and enhancing the quality and relevance of training and education offered.

The meeting, which runs through Thursday, is geared toward fostering a common understanding of emerging threats and operational realities, according to a statement by the Rwanda Defense Force (RDF).

Subcontinent

7 dead as bus falls into gorge in India: At least seven people died and 24 were injured when a bus fell into a deep gorge in India’s northern hilly state of Himachal Pradesh on Thursday, local media reported.

The mishap occurred in the Maseran area of Sarkaghat sub-division, approximately 60 km from Mandi town.

All the injured people were admitted to a local hospital, according to police. (Xinhua)

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Mine collapse kills 9 in India: At least nine people were killed and a few others feared trapped after a portion of a coal mine collapsed in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, officials said Wednesday.

The collapse took place on Tuesday night. Experts say the coal mining industry is poorly regulated, and work-

ers with little protection often face life-threatening situations. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

200 pieces of firearms found in Afghanistan: Police have discovered some 200 pieces of light and heavy firearms in the eastern afghanistan Paktia province, reported the state-run Radio and Television of afghanistan (RTA) on Thursday.

The weaponry, according to the state-owned media outlet, includes 97 pieces of Kalashnikovs, seven pieces of the M16-type assault rifles, 86 stock pistols, seven rocket launchers, and many more types of arms and ammunition.

Without providing more details, the official media outlet citing police added that no one has the right to keep or carry arms illegally.

In similar operations, police reported discovery of arms and ammunition, including an anti-aircraft gun in the northern Samangan province on Tuesday. (Xinhua)

Kuwaiti oil price dips to \$70.86

KUWAIT CITY, July 24, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil dropped by 15 cents, reaching US 70.86 per barrel in Wednesday's trading, down from USD 71.01 per barrel on Tuesday, according to the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation on Thursday. Globally, price of Brent crude dropped by 8 cents to USD 68.51 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude fell by 6 cents to USD 65.25 pb.

Vice Chairman and Group CEO speaks on the sidelines of the 1H 2025 Analysts' Conference Call

Al-Sager: Our strong operational performance continued, with robust profits that underscore the strength, resilience, and diversified foundations of our unique business model

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), stated that the Bank reported a net profit of KD 315.3 million for the first half of 2025, marking a 7.8% increase from KD 292.4 million in the corresponding period of 2024.

Speaking on the sidelines of the analysts' conference call for the first-half 2025 results, Al-Sager highlighted that profit before tax surged by 17.0% year-on-year, reaching KD 401.5 million in the first six months of the year.

He explained that the new tax regime weighed on profitability, with the effective tax rate rising to 16.0% in the first half of 2025, up from 9.2% in the first half of 2024.

Al-Sager added that the Bank's pre-tax profit was further supported by the release of provisions for credit and impairment losses amounting to KD 10 million, compared to a charge of KD 43 million in the six-month period ended June 30, 2024.

"Our returns remained robust, with Return on Average Assets reaching (ROAA) 1.52% and Return on Average Equity (ROAE) standing at 15.1% for the period", Al-Sager said.

He explained that the Bank is confident in its ability to adapt and maintain its leadership in the local market, highlighting its readiness to navigate economic headwinds and emerge even stronger, supported by its resilience, continued investment in technology and innovation, and steadfast commitment to meeting the evolving needs of its customers.

Dividend Distribution Policy
Regarding the dividend distribution policy, Al-Sager stated that NBK's approach remains unchanged, maintaining a sustainable framework that strikes a balance between delivering attractive shareholder returns and prudently managing capital ratios.



Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer

He added that the Bank continues to prioritize effective capital planning to ensure capital levels align with its future growth ambitions, an approach it has consistently upheld and will continue to follow going forward.

Al-Sager stressed that the Bank remains committed to its approved dividend policy, noting that in light of the strong growth in its loan portfolio both locally and internationally, the Bank has opted to retain interim profits until year-end, with a focus on year-end final dividend distribution. This approach provides greater flexibility to capitalize on growth opportunities as they emerge throughout the year, in alignment with the Bank's strategic priorities.

He pointed out that NBK's regional and international presence plays a vital role in mitigating risks, sustaining stable returns, and enhancing operational efficiency.

Furthermore, he added that the Bank remains focused on leveraging

Al-Sager:

- Our loan portfolio recorded Strong growth, both in Kuwait and through our international operations
 - Our regional and global footprint continues to play a key role in mitigating risks and sustaining earnings stability
 - Confident in our ability to navigate challenges, we draw strength from our resilience and strategic investments in technology
 - The outlook for project activity in Kuwait remains promising, with positive momentum expected to continue
 - Effective capital planning remains a top priority to ensure we are aligned with our long-term growth objectives
 - Focusing on year-end dividend distribution gives us the flexibility to capitalize on growth opportunities as they arise
 - Our commitment to sustainability remains steadfast as we make meaningful progress on our sustainable finance roadmap
- Ronghe:**
- The Group maintains strong operating momentum, fueled by robust growth in business volumes
 - Sustained strength in our loan portfolio reflects high asset quality and prudent diversification strategy

cross-selling opportunities across its diverse geographical footprint. At the same time, its wealth management arm will continue to capitalize on deep expertise to deliver a comprehensive suite of portfolio management, advisory services, and investment solutions. Meanwhile, the Bank's Islamic banking services will further strengthen their local footprint while diversifying sources of profitability.

Projects Market Momentum
Al-Sager emphasized that following a strong year of project market activity in 2024, particularly in the

second half of the year, the pace of activity moderated slightly during the first half of 2025.

He noted that this moderation largely reflects a normalization from the elevated levels seen last year. Nonetheless, the outlook remains encouraging, supported by a pipeline of ongoing projects valued at KD 10 billion, signaling the government's continued commitment to advancing its development and reform agenda.

Al-Sager affirmed the Bank's ongoing commitment to sustainability and the advancement of its sustainable finance agenda, highlighting the



NBK Headquarters.

recent publication of its first Green Bond Allocation and Impact Report, as well as its inaugural TCFD Report. These disclosures underscore NBK's efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in its ESG and sustainable finance strategy. They also reflect the Bank's significant progress in integrating climate considerations across its operations, with a strong emphasis on portfolio diversification and climate risk management.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sujit Ronghe, Group Chief Financial Officer at NBK, stated that the Group continues to demonstrate strong operational momentum, driven by robust growth in business volumes, most notably across the loan and investment portfolios.

He added that the Group continues to benefit from the strength of its loan portfolio, which demonstrates high asset quality and a well-considered diversification of growth sources.

Ronghe explained that key business segments made strong contributions to net profit in the first half of 2025, highlighting their effective-

ness as core pillars of the Group's diversification strategy and their role in reinforcing profit resilience.

He stressed that NBK Group continues to leverage its unique competitive advantages among Kuwaiti banks, particularly its broad geographic footprint and its ability to operate across both conventional and Islamic banking.

Amid growing concerns over the impact of the ongoing tariff war and its implications for the global business landscape, Ronghe explained that NBK remains well-positioned to navigate this volatile environment, a testament to the strength and resilience of its diversified business model.

Regarding the catalysts for loan growth during the first half of 2025, Ronghe stated that corporate credit was the primary driver, emphasizing that demand was not concentrated in any single geographic area. Instead, it was well distributed across NBK's network, including the GCC region, international markets, and Boubayan Bank.

Other Voices

Kuwait Airways: Between legacy of history & arrows of distortion

By Dr. Yousef Al-Amiri

WHILE nations are striving to preserve their national institutions and build their legacies step by step, some in Kuwait engage in self-flagellation, launching reckless attacks on one of the country's most venerable institutions - Kuwait Airways, the national carrier and a symbol of Kuwait in the skies for over seven decades.

In recent years, Kuwait Airways has become a frequent target of harsh criticism on social media, often without proper scrutiny or investigation of the facts.

Of course, officials must be held accountable when mistakes are made, and reform should always be pursued. However, turning a national institution into a perpetual target, spreading accusations, fabricating stories, and fueling rumors goes beyond freedom of expression. It appears to be part of a deliberate campaign to undermine everything that is valuable and beautiful about this country.

Why do we try to stifle every attempt at reform?

Whenever a board of directors presents a development plan to rescue Kuwait Airways from its problems, the alarm bells ring. Social media turns into an inquisition, rejecting reform and treating it as a threat that must be stopped. Is the real goal to prevent the company from pursuing improvement, development, and recovery?

Why have we stopped giving it a chance? Why is it easier to judge intentions than to evaluate results? Why don't we wait to see the outcomes before passing judgment? Why is there so much skepticism around every move and decision, as if the aim is simply to find fault?

For those who don't know, or deliberately ignore, Kuwait Airways is more than just an airline. It is a part of the nation's memory and identity. It was born from the oil boom era, when the first shipment of oil departed in 1946.

Economic prosperity followed, and Kuwait saw the dream of civil aviation come to life in 1954 with the establishment of Kuwait National Airways Limited, starting with a modest capital of just KD 150,000 at the time.

Since its inception, Kuwait Airways has continuously soared toward the future despite challenges. Jet aircraft were introduced in the 1960s, expanding the network to London, then New York and Manila.

The fleet evolved from the DC-3 to the Comet and Boeing 707, and then to the iconic B747. It has been a journey marked by great achievements.

On August 2, 1990, Kuwait Airways faced one of the darkest moments in aviation history, which was the Iraqi invasion. Not only were our aircraft seized, but there was also an attempt to erase them from memory. Fifteen planes were destroyed, headquarters looted, and facilities demolished. Yet, Kuwait Airways bounced back and rose again.



Dr. Yousef Al-Amiri, Head of Kuwait House for National Works.

After liberation, despite deep wounds, Kuwait Airways rebuilt the national carrier and gradually restored its former glory. Today, it proudly represents Kuwait, carrying over one and a half million passengers annually and operating a network that spans continents worldwide.

It is true that we do not live in an isolated world, and global airlines face tremendous pressure, fierce competition, volatile fuel prices, and increasingly complex airports. Kuwait Airways is not immune to these challenges. However, instead of supporting its efforts to grow stronger, some persist in targeting the airline, ignoring its efforts to modernize the fleet, improve services, open new routes, and offer competitive promotions.

Criticism of performance is a legitimate right, but there is a big difference between those who seek reform and those who seek destruction. The former put their hand on the wound to heal it, while the latter press on it to deepen the wound.

Today, we need media and national awareness that distinguish between genuinely seeking solutions and pretending loyalty by spreading random accusations, between identifying shortcomings to address and seizing every chance to prove someone guilty.

To conclude, Kuwait Airways does not belong to individuals; it belongs to the nation. It is Kuwait's flag in the air and its image before the world. If Kuwait Airways needs development, let us stand with it, not against it. If it seeks reform, let us give it a chance.

It is unpatriotic to attack every achievement, discourage every hard worker, and pass judgment without examining the facts. Enough of self-destruction. Enough of dismantling our national institutions. History will not forgive those who weaken their country's foundations under the guise of "criticism."

Let us soar with Kuwait Airways, not bring it down.

And there's more to come in future articles.



email: kuwait-house@hotmail.com

In an interview with CNBC International

Al-Bahar: Kuwait's operating landscape shows promise, optimistic for 2H 2025

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer at National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), affirmed that the Bank delivered a strong quarterly performance, recording a 24% increase, while profitability for the first half of the year grew by 7.8% year-on-year.

In an interview with CNBC International, Al-Bahar noted that second-quarter profits were supported by provision recoveries and lower credit provisions, in addition to a healthy mix of interest income, which grew by 1.5% year-on-year, and a strong 8.9% increase in non-interest income.

Al-Bahar pointed out that net operating income grew by 3.1%, as the Bank delivered solid year-on-year growth in business volume, an outcome that underscores the success of its diversification strategy. She noted that this performance was fueled by continued momentum across various business segments and the Bank's branch network, adding that the loan portfolio grew by 12.1% as of June 2025.

Al-Bahar stated that the government has recently issued the executive regulations of the new corporate tax law, indicating its effective implementation in 2025. She explained that, as NBK Group is classified as a multinational entity under the new law, its effective tax rate rose from 9.2% in the first half of 2024 to 16%. This impact will be reflected in the Group's quarterly reports throughout the year, though its effect on full-year results is expected to fade beyond 2025.

Dividend Distribution
Commenting on the decision to retain interim dividends, Al-Bahar said: "NBK remains committed to rewarding its shareholders while maintaining a focus on long-term value creation. The decision to carry forward first-half profits to the end of the year and prioritize final dividend distribution was driven by the promising development opportunities across our markets, as well as the anticipated uptick in local activity. Kuwait is currently entering the execution phase of several mega projects, which will present significant opportunities for the banking sector, and for NBK in particular."

Al-Bahar added that the temporary capital ratio constraints resulting from an interim distribution would have limited the Bank's growth prospects over the course of the year.

Kuwait's Operating Environment
Responding to a question on the outlook for the operating environment in Kuwait, Al-Bahar stated that conditions remain highly favorable, with a very positive outlook for the period ahead. She added that the current economic climate presents promising opportunities for the Bank both in Kuwait and across other markets where it operates.

Commenting on the impact of the new tariffs and taxes imposed by the US administration, Al-Bahar emphasized that GCC economies are closely tied to fluctuations in the oil market. Fortunately, she noted, the tariffs do not extend to oil and gas, although some price volatility may persist due to ongoing adjustments in the global economic growth outlook.

Al-Bahar stressed that a prolonged decline in oil prices could pose challenges to the fiscal positions of GCC countries. However, she pointed out that most of these countries possess substantial sovereign reserves, which would significantly support the financing of major projects and business opportunities.

Kuwait's Economic Outlook
Regarding the prospects of the Kuwaiti



Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer in an interview with CNBC International.

- We recorded substantial growth in business volumes, fueled by sustained momentum across multiple sectors and our international branch network
- Our ongoing regional and international expansion continues to diversify revenue streams and reinforce the Group's operational strength
- The economic outlook remains positive, supported by emerging growth opportunities and steady progress on government-led reform initiatives
- We have a lucrative dividend policy—one that strikes a balance between delivering attractive returns to shareholders and managing capital ratios prudently
- Kuwait is entering a pivotal phase of implementing mega infrastructure projects, paving the way for substantial banking sector opportunities
- The approval of the Financing and Liquidity Law would support broader economic interests and enable the government to advance its expansion agenda
- The government's strong push for greater private sector involvement is expected to stimulate the economy and have a beneficial impact on the banking sector
- The impact of tariffs on GCC economies is expected to remain limited, given the region's substantial reserves that continue to fund large-scale development projects

economy, Al-Bahar reiterated her optimistic outlook, noting that the outlook remains highly positive, driven by emerging growth opportunities, steady progress in implementing strategic government plans, and strong momentum to empower the private sector. She added that the government continues to stimulate the economy, which will generate significant benefits for the banking sector.

Furthermore, she explained that a near-term challenge for banking sector profitability may stem from tightening margins. Despite some liquidity declines in other markets, margins remain compressed, and the anticipated shift by the US Federal Reserve toward lower interest rates will undoubtedly place additional pressure on spreads and, consequently, profitability. That said, this impact may be mitigated by stronger economic momentum and broad-based growth across multiple sectors.

She explained that NBK's regional and international growth plays a vital role in diversifying income streams and reinforcing the strength of its business operations.

2H2025 Forecast
Commenting on the outlook for the second

half of the year, Al-Bahar emphasized that the government's approval of the Financing and Liquidity Law marks a positive step for the economy, as it supports the government's ability to implement its expansionary plans. She noted that following the law's approval, the Central Bank began issuing local debt instruments on behalf of the government amounting to KD 700 million — a move that enables the deployment of previously non-interest-bearing deposits with the Central Bank and significantly boosts the Bank's profitability.

"We look forward to continued issuances through year-end as a means to effectively deploy excess liquidity," Al-Bahar said. "Our optimism is further reinforced by the government's stated intention to issue between KD 3 billion and KD 6 billion in debt instruments over 2025–2026. Similarly, Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) has issued RFPs to international parties, signaling the potential issuance of sovereign bonds worth up to \$6 billion. All of this points to a wealth of promising opportunities for banks operating in Kuwait."

US adds 147,000 jobs in June

Unemployment claims decline despite economic uncertainty

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): The number of Americans filing for jobless aid fell for the sixth straight week, hitting the lowest level since mid-April.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims for the week ending July 19 fell by 4,000 to 217,000. That's fewer than the 227,000 new applications analysts were expecting.

Applications for unemployment aid are viewed as representative of layoffs.

Earlier in July, the Labor Department reported that U.S. employers added a surprising 147,000 jobs in June, adding to evidence that the American labor market continues to show resilience despite uncertainty over President Donald Trump's economic policies. The job gains were much more than expected and the unemployment rate ticked down 4.1% from 4.2% in May.

Though the job market is broadly healthy by historical standards, some weakness has surfaced as employers contend with fallout from Trump's policies, especially his aggressive tariffs, which raise prices for businesses and consumers. Most economists believe the import duties make the economy less efficient by reducing competition. They also invite retaliatory tariffs from other countries, hurting U.S. exporters and potentially driving businesses to freeze hiring or cut staff.

The deadline on most of Trump's stiff proposed taxes on imports were extended again until Aug. 1. Unless Trump reaches deals with countries to lower the tariffs, economists fear they could act as a drag on the economy and trigger another bout of inflation.

Companies that have announced job cuts this year include Procter & Gamble, Workday, Dow, CNN, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Microsoft, Google and Facebook parent company Meta.

The Labor Department's report Thursday showed that the four-week average of claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, declined by 5,000 to 224,500.

The total number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits for the week of July 12 remained stable, rising by just 4,000 to 1.96 million.

meaningful market penetration in Japan," Blunt said.

Asked at Wednesday's briefing about whether Trump's sectoral tariffs such as those on autos were now subject to possible change, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that the issue had been going through the Commerce Department.

The framework with Japan was also an indication that some nations simply saw it as preferential to have a set tariff rate rather than be whipsawed by Trump's changes on import taxes since April. But for the moment, both Japan and the United Kingdom with its quotas on auto exports might enjoy a competitive edge in the U.S.

"With this agreement in place it provides Japan with a near-term operating cost advantage compared to other foreign automakers, and even some domestic U.S. product that uses a high degree of both foreign production and parts content," said Karl Brauer, executive analyst at iSeeCars. "It will be interesting to see if this is the first domino to fall in a series of foreign countries that decide long-term stability is more important than short term disputes over specific tariff rates."

Autos Drive America, an organization that represents major Japanese companies Toyota, Honda and Nissan and other international automakers, said in a statement that it is "encouraged" by the announced trade framework and noted its members have exceeded domestic automaker production for the past two years.

The statement urged "the Trump administration to swiftly reach similar agreements with other allies and partners, especially the European Union, South Korea, Canada and Mexico."

The Japanese framework could give automakers and other countries grounds for pushing for changes in the Trump administration's tariffs regime. The president has previously said that he values flexibility in negotiating import taxes. The USMCA is up for review next year.

Ford, GM and Stellantis do "have every right to be upset," said Sam Fiorani, vice president at consultancy AutoForecast Solutions. But "Honda, Toyota, and Nissan still import vehicles from Mexico and Canada, where the current levels of tariffs can be higher than those applied to Japanese imports. Most of the high-volume models from Japanese brands are already produced in North America."

Fiorani noted that among the few exceptions are the Toyota 4Runner, the Mazda CX-5 and the Subaru Forester, but most of the other imports fill niches that are too small to warrant production in the U.S.

"There will be negotiations between the U.S. and Canada and Mexico, and it will probably result in tariffs no higher than 15%," Fiorani added, "but nobody seems to be in a hurry to negotiate around the last Trump administration's free trade agreement."

US automakers worry over Japan's 15% auto tariff deal

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): U.S. automakers worry that President Donald Trump's agreement to tariff Japanese vehicles at 15% would put them at a competitive disadvantage, saying they will face steeper import taxes on steel, aluminum and parts than their competitors.

"We need to review all the details of the agreement, but this is a deal that will charge lower tariffs on Japanese autos with no U.S. content," said Matt Blunt, president of the American Automotive Policy Council, which represents the Big 3 American automakers, General Motors, Ford and Jeep-maker Stellantis.

Blunt said in an interview the U.S. companies and workers "definitely are at a disadvantage" because they face a 50% tariff on steel and aluminum and a 25% tariff on parts and finished vehicles, with some exceptions for products covered under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that went into effect in 2020.

The domestic automaker reaction reveals the challenge of enforcing policies across the world economy, showing that for all of Trump's promises there can be genuine tradeoffs from policy choices that risk serious blowback in politically important states such as Michigan and Wisconsin, where automaking is both a source of income and of identity.

The United Auto Workers said in a statement it was "deeply angered" by the deal. "A better deal would have held Japanese automakers to the same standards U.S. workers have fought for at GM, Ford, and Stellantis," the UAW said.

"If this becomes the blueprint for trade with Europe or South Korea, it will be a major missed opportunity," the union added. "We need trade deals that raise standards - not reward the race to the bottom. This deal does the opposite."

Trump portrayed the trade framework as a major win after announcing it on Tuesday, saying it would add hundreds of thousands of jobs to the U.S. economy and open the Japanese economy in ways that could close a persistent trade imbalance.

The agreement includes a 15% tariff that replaces the 25% import tax the Republican president had threatened to charge starting on Aug. 1. Japan would also put together \$550 billion to invest in U.S. projects at the "direction" of the president, the White House said.

The framework with Japan will remove regulations that prevent American vehicles from being sold in that country, the White House has said, adding that it would be possible for vehicles built in Detroit to be shipped directly to Japan and ready to be sold.

But Blunt said that foreign auto producers, including the U.S., Europe and South Korea, have just a 6% share in Japan, raising skepticism that simply having the open market that the Trump administration says will exist in that country will be sufficient.

"Tough nut to crack, and I'd be very surprised if we see any

Trump plans Federal Reserve visit amid renovation dispute

Fed upgrade fuels Trump's Powell push

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): President Donald Trump plans to step foot in the Federal Reserve on Thursday as his allies scrutinize its expensive building renovations, a highly personal and confrontational escalation of his campaign to pressure the central bank to slash interest rates.



Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during Federal Reserve Integrated Review of the Capital Framework for Large Banks Conference at the Federal Reserve in Washington, Tuesday, July 22, 2025. (AP)

Trump administration officials have used concerns about the building overhaul to cast doubt on Fed Chairman Jerome Powell's decision-making. They were scheduled to inspect the site on Thursday, and the White House announced late Wednesday that the president would also be visiting.

The visit reflects Trump's disregard for the traditional independence of the Fed, which plays a foundational role in the American economy by setting monetary policy that is supposed to be free of political influence.

While previous presidents have criticized the Fed's decisions, Trump's sustained campaign is unusual and, his critics say, dangerous departure from the norm. He has called on Powell to resign, insulted him repeatedly and suggested he could be fired.

More recently, Trump has said he has no plans to oust Powell, which could be illegal. Pushing

Powell out also would send shockwaves through global markets, potentially having the opposite effect that Trump wants as he pushes for lower borrowing costs.

Trump, a Republican, appointed Powell during his first term, and President Joe Biden, a Democrat, extended his tenure. Powell's term doesn't end until next May, and he's previously insisted that he will serve until then.

Not everyone in Trump's administration agrees with the president's contention that Powell needs to resign.

"There's nothing that tells me that he should step

down right now," said Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, whom Trump has floated as a potential replacement for Powell, in a recent interview with Fox Business. "He's been a good public servant."

Trump has criticized Powell for months because the chair has kept the short-term interest rate the Fed controls at 4.3% this year, after cutting it three times last year. Powell says the Fed wants to see how the economy responds to Trump's sweeping tariffs on imports, which Powell says could push up inflation.

Powell's caution has infuriated Trump, who has demanded the Fed cut borrowing costs to spur the economy and reduce the interest rates the federal government pays on its debt.

Trump will likely be disappointed again soon. A key Fed committee is expected to keep rates where they are when it meets next week.

The Fed has been renovating its Washington headquarters and a neighboring building. With some of the construction occurring underground and as building materials have soared in price after inflation spiked in 2021 and 2022, the estimated cost has ballooned from \$1.9 billion to about \$2.5 billion.

When asked last week if the costly rebuilding could be grounds to fire Powell, Trump said, "I think it sort of is."

"When you spend \$2.5 billion on, really, a renovation," Trump said, "I think it's really disgraceful."

Deposit rate at 2%

ECB pauses rate cuts, eyes US tariffs impact

FRANKFURT, July 24, (AP): The European Central Bank has left interest rates unchanged as it waits to see how big a blow U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs will inflict on the economy before deciding whether to cut rates again.

The bank's governing council announced Thursday at its skyscraper headquarters in Frankfurt that it would leave its benchmark deposit rate at 2%.

"The economy has so far proven resilient overall in a challenging global environment," said bank President Christine Lagarde at her post-decision news conference. "At the same time, the environment remains exceptionally uncertain, especially because of trade disputes."

The ECB has already cut rates eight times since June of last year. The monetary authority for the 20 countries that use the euro currency has been lowering rates to support growth after raising them in 2022-2023 to snuff out inflation caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the rebound after the pandemic.

With the bench mark rate now at 2%, down from a record high of 4%, analyst think there could be one more rate cut coming, but only in September.

The reason, say analysts: The ECB's policymakers simply don't know the outcome of talks between the EU's executive commission and the Trump



A person walks past a Euro logo, at the European Central Bank headquarters, in Frankfurt, Germany, Thursday, July 24, 2025. (AP)

administration. Trump first set a 20% tariff for EU goods, then threatened 50% after expressing displeasure at the pace of talks, then sent the EU a letter informing officials of a potential 30% tariff.

EU officials earlier held out hope of winning at least the 10% baseline that apply to almost all trade partners, and analysts think that the actual rate may be lower than Trump's tariff threats. The talks are up against an Aug. 1

deadline, but earlier deadlines have slipped as the sides kept talking.

With signs of economic activity holding up reasonably well, the ECB can afford to wait and see what the outcome of trade negotiations will be.

Higher tariffs, or import taxes, on European goods would mean sellers would have to either increase prices for U.S. consumers - risking loss of market share - or swallow the added cost in terms of lower profits. In either case, higher tariffs would hurt export earnings for European firms and slow the economy, which would strengthen the case for another rate cut in September.

The ECB's rate cuts have helped support economic activity by lowering the cost of credit for consumers and businesses to purchase goods. Higher rates have the opposite effect and are used to cool off inflation by reducing demand for goods.

Growth in the eurozone was relatively strong at 0.6% in the first quarter - though that was partly due to rushed shipments of goods trying to beat the tariffs. Inflation has fallen from double digits in late 2022 to 2% in June, in line with the ECB's target. A stronger euro, which lowers the price of imports, and softer global prices for oil have helped keep inflation moderate.

The stronger euro, up 13% this year at \$1.17, has attracted attention as a potential damper on growth and ECB Vice President Luis de Guindos said any rapid moves over \$1.20 could be "much more complicated." But the ECB typically does not target the exchange rate, and the euro's rise is considered to be less the result of Europe's strength and more the result of a weaker dollar weighed down by investor uncertainty about the future path of inflation, growth and government debt in the US.

Beef industry urges caution amid loosened US import rules

Australia loosens beef rules after Trump tariff threats

MELBOURNE, July 24, (AP): Australia announced it will reduce restrictions on U.S. beef imports in a move U.S. President Donald Trump's administration claimed as a major victory over "non-scientific trade barriers."

Agriculture Minister Julie Collins said Thursday that relaxing the restrictions designed to keep Australia free of mad cow disease, also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy or BSE, would not compromise biosecurity.

"Australia stands for open and free trade - our cattle industry has significantly benefited from this," Collins said in a statement.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins responded to Australia's announcement by congratulating Trump on a "major trade breakthrough that gives greater access to U.S. beef producers selling to Australia."

She issued a statement under the headline: Make Agriculture Great Again Trade Wins.

"American farmers and ranchers produce the safest, healthiest beef in the world. It's absurd that non-scientific trade barriers prevented our beef from being sold to consumers in Australia for the last 20 years," Rollins said.

"Gone are the days of putting American farmers on the sidelines. This is yet another example of the kind of market access the President negotiates to bring America into a new golden age of prosperity, with American agriculture leading the way," she added.

Australia has allowed imports of beef grown in the United States since 2019. But Australia has not allowed imports from the U.S. of beef sourced from Canada or Mexico because of the disease risk.

But the U.S. has recently introduced additional movement controls that identify and trace all cattle from



A price for beef is displayed on a shelf at a grocery store in Mount Prospect, Ill., Thursday, July 17, 2025. (AP)

Mexico and Canada to their farms of origin.

Australian authorities were "satisfied the strengthened control measures put in place by the U.S. effectively manage biosecurity risks," Collins said.

The timing of the new, reduced restrictions has not been finalized.

Trump attacked Australian import restrictions on U.S. beef when he announced in April that tariffs of at least 10% would be placed on Australian imports, with steel and aluminum facing a 50% tariff.

"Australia bans - and they're wonderful people, and wonderful everything - but they ban American beef," Trump told reporters then.

"Yet we imported \$3 billion of Australian beef from them just last year alone. They won't take any of our beef. They don't want it because they don't want it to affect their farmers and, you know, I don't blame them, but we're doing the same thing right now," Trump added.

Opposition lawmaker David Littleproud suspected the government was endangering Australia's cattle

taken a cautious approach toward U.S. imports.

"The department's undertaken a technical scientific assessment and we have to put faith in them. They've made this assessment themselves. They've said: 'We've looked at this, we've looked at the best science, this is a decision that we feel comfortable with,'" Evans said.

"When you have a \$75 billion (Australian \$50 billion) industry relying on them not making this mistake, I'm sure they've been very cautious in their decision-making," he added.

Beef prices have been rising in the U.S. due to factors that include drought and shrinking domestic herd numbers.

The average price of a pound of ground beef in the U.S. rose to \$6.12 in June, up nearly 12% from a year ago, according to U.S. government data. The average price of all uncooked beef steaks rose 8% to \$11.49 per pound.

Australian demand for U.S. beef is likely to remain low for reasons including a relatively weak Australian dollar.

Australia's opposition to any U.S. tariffs will be high on the agenda when Prime Minister Anthony Albanese secures his first face-to-face meeting with Trump.

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 expects the pair will meet this year, although no date has been announced. The two countries have had a bilateral free trade deal for 20 years and the U.S. has maintained a trade surplus with Australia for decades.



Indian Mango Fest opens at Lulu Hypermarket.

Six premium Indian mangoes featured at Lulu

Lulu Hypermarket rolls out Indian Mango Festival at AlRai outlet

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Lulu Hypermarket, the region’s leading retail chain, inaugurated its much-anticipated Indian Mango Festival on July 23, at its Al-Rai outlet, showcasing the richness and diversity of India’s favorite summer fruit. The event was held exclusively at Lulu Hypermarket AlRai, offering Kuwaiti customers a vibrant, flavor-filled celebration of Indian mangoes.

The grand opening ceremony was graced by H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, accompanied by Mr. Sanjay Muluka, Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Davinder Punj, Second Secretary (Commerce), and Mr. Sandeep Saha, Officer from APEDA (Agriculture & Processed Food Products

Export Development Authority). Lulu Kuwait’s senior management also participated in the event, reinforcing the brand’s commitment to bringing high-quality Indian produce to local consumers.

The festival features six premium varieties of mangoes imported directly from India, each renowned for its distinctive taste, aroma, and texture – Amrapali, Fazli, Mallika, Langra, Chausa and Dusheri. To celebrate the vibrant essence of the mango season, Lulu AlRai resembled mango-themed extravaganza with eye-catching displays.

Shoppers enjoyed free sampling counters, experienced the juicy flavors be-

fore purchase. In addition, a special culinary section was curated, offering an array of mango-based creations, including -- Mango cakes and pastries, Traditional Indian sweets, Fresh smoothies, juices, and shakes and Pickles, chutneys, and other gourmet delicacies.

The Indian Mango Festival at Lulu was part of an ongoing effort to promote Indian agricultural exports and strengthen Indo-Kuwaiti trade relations, especially in the food and fresh produce sectors. This unique promotion is available only at Lulu Hypermarket AlRai, and shoppers are encouraged to visit early to take full advantage of the wide selection of seasonal mango delights.

In support of Diraya campaign

KFH issues warning on unverified links

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) advises customers to stay cautious about a new phishing scam targeting their bank accounts and stealing their funds. KFH warning is part of its continuous support for Diraya campaign, which aims to promote banking awareness, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In its press release, KFH stated that the new form of online scam involves sending a message with a suspicious link tricking victims to click the link to visit a particular website or participate in a survey. Once they click the link, their devices will be hacked, enabling the hacker to access and exploit their personal data for harmful purposes.

KFH urged customers to stay vigilant and refrain from disclosing their personal information to requests received through e-mails, text messages, or phone calls, as they are attempts to obtain customers’ banking information to steal their funds or data.

KFH advised customers to be careful when receiving links as these links



KFH & Diraya logos

could lead to theft of sensitive banking information. The bank also recommended that customers protect their bank accounts by avoiding the storage of confidential information, such as card numbers or passwords, on their mobile phones. Additionally, customers were urged not to share their OTP with anyone and to log out of the bank’s application or website promptly after finishing a transaction.

OICC Kuwait supports first house in ‘Wayanad’ project

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Under the leadership of Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi, OICC Kuwait is providing assistance for the first house in the 100-home rehabilitation project being implemented in Wayanad, Kerala. This support will be officially handed over during the “Venu Poornima” event on August 22, in the presence of AICC General Secretary and organizational in-charge K.C. Venugopal MP. The assistance will be handed over to former minister and KPCC Working President A.P. Anil Kumar in the presence of the general public in Kuwait and OICC members.

KPCC General Secretary and Kuwait in-charge Adv. Abdul Muthalib and Mariam Oommen Chandy will also attend the function.

The “First Rajiv Gandhi Award” for outstanding public service, instituted by OICC Kuwait in the name of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, will be presented to K.C. Venugopal MP. The award will be conferred by the esteemed Panakkad Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal at the event on Friday, August 22, at Shuwaikh Convention Center and Royal Suites Hotel, Kuwait.

A musical evening featuring prominent artists from Kerala will also be part of the program.

The press meet was attended by OICC office bearers:

President Varghese Puthukulangara, Varghese Joseph Maraman, Joy John Thuruthikkara, Suresh Mathur, and Publicity Convener M.A. Nissam.



Press meet.

The Conversation

Study maps budget-friendly cooling fixes

Urban areas fight heat with green & reflective fixes

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

By Ian Smith, Boston University

When summer turns up the heat, cities can start to feel like an oven, as buildings and pavement trap the sun’s warmth and vehicles and air conditioners release more heat into the air.

The temperature in an urban neighborhood with few trees can be more than 10 degrees Fahrenheit (5.5 Celsius) higher than in nearby suburbs. That means air conditioning works harder, straining the electrical grid and leaving communities vulnerable to power outages.

There are some proven steps that cities can take to help cool the air — planting trees that provide shade and moisture, for example, or creating cool roofs that reflect solar energy away from the neighborhood rather than absorbing it.

But do these steps pay off everywhere?

We study heat risk in cities as urban ecologists and have been exploring the impact of tree-planting and reflective roofs in different cities and different neighborhoods across cities. What we’re learning can help cities and homeowners be more targeted in their efforts to beat the heat.

Urban trees offer a natural defense against rising temperatures. They cast shade and release water vapor through their leaves, a process akin to human sweating. That cools the surrounding air and reduces afternoon heat. Adding trees to city streets, parks and residential yards can make a meaningful difference in how hot a neighborhood feels, with blocks that have tree canopies nearly 3 F (1.7 C) cooler than blocks without trees.

But planting trees isn’t always simple.

In hot, dry cities, trees often require irrigation to survive, which can strain already limited water resources. Trees must survive for decades to grow large enough to provide shade and release enough water vapor to reduce air temperatures.

Annual maintenance costs — about US\$900 per tree per year in Boston — can surpass the initial planting investment.

Most challenging of all, dense urban neighborhoods where heat is most intense are often too packed with buildings and roads to grow more trees.

Another option is “cool roofs.” Coating rooftops with reflective paint or using light-colored materials allows buildings to reflect more sunlight back into the atmosphere rather than absorbing it as heat.

These roofs can lower the temperature inside an apartment building without air conditioning by about 2 to 6 F (1 to 3.3 C), and can cut peak cooling demand by as much as 27% in air-conditioned buildings, one study found. They can also provide immediate relief by reducing outdoor temperatures in densely populated areas. The maintenance costs are also lower than expanding urban forests.

However, like trees, cool roofs come with limits. Cool roofs work better on flat roofs than sloped roofs with shingles, as flat roofs



Workers plant a series of trees at the Coleman Young Community Center in Detroit. (AP)

are often covered by heat-trapping rubber and are exposed to more direct sunlight over the course of an afternoon.

Cities also have a finite number of rooftops that can be retrofitted. And in cities that already have many light-colored roofs, a few more might help lower cooling costs in those buildings, but they won’t do much more for the neighborhood.

By weighing the trade-offs of both strategies, cities can design location-specific plans to beat the heat.

Many cities around the world have taken steps to adapt to extreme heat, with tree planting and cool roof programs that implement reflectivity requirements or incentivize cool roof adoption.

In Detroit, nonprofit organizations have planted more than 166,000 trees since 1989. In Los Angeles, building codes now require new residential roofs to meet specific reflectivity standards.

In a recent study, we analyzed Boston’s potential to lower heat in vulnerable neighborhoods across the city. The results demonstrate how a balanced, budget-conscious strategy could deliver significant cooling benefits.

For example, we found that planting trees can cool the air 35% more than installing cool roofs in places where trees can actually be planted.

However, many of the best places for new trees in Boston aren’t in the neighborhoods that need help. In these neighborhoods, we found that reflective roofs were the better choice.

By investing less than 1% of the city’s annual operating budget, about US\$34 million, in 2,500 new trees and 3,000 cool roofs targeting the most at-risk areas, we found that Boston could reduce heat exposure for nearly 80,000 residents. The results would reduce summertime afternoon air temperatures by over 1 F (0.6 C) in those neighborhoods.

While that reduction might seem modest, reductions of this magnitude have been found

to dramatically reduce heat-related illness and death, increase labor productivity and reduce energy costs associated with building cooling.

Not every city will benefit from the same mix. Boston’s urban landscape includes many flat, black rooftops that reflect only about 12% of sunlight, making cool roofs that reflect over 65% of sunlight an especially effective intervention. Boston also has a relatively moist growing season that supports a thriving urban tree canopy, making both solutions viable.

In places with fewer flat, dark rooftops suitable for cool roof conversion, tree planting may offer more value. Conversely, in cities with little room left for new trees or where extreme heat and drought limit tree survival, cool roofs may be the better bet.

Phoenix, for example, already has many light-colored roofs. Trees might be an option there, but they will require irrigation.

Adding shade along sidewalks can do double-duty by giving pedestrians a place to get out of the sun and cooling buildings. In New York City, for example, street trees account for an estimated 25% of the entire urban forest.

Cool roofs can be more difficult for a government to implement because they require working with building owners. That often means cities need to provide incentives. Louisville, Kentucky, for example, offers rebates of up to \$2,000 for homeowners who install reflective roofing materials, and up to \$5,000 for commercial businesses with flat roofs that use reflective coatings.

Efforts like these can help spread cool roof benefits across densely populated neighborhoods that need cooling help most.

As climate change drives more frequent and intense urban heat, cities have powerful tools for lowering the temperature. With some attention to what already exists and what’s feasible, they can find the right budget-conscious strategy that will deliver cooling benefits for everyone. (AP)

Julia Roberts makes Venice Festival debut in ‘After the Hunt’

Venice unveils star-studded lineup with 21 films in competition

VENICE, July 24, (AP): Julia Roberts, George Clooney, Emma Stone, Dwayne Johnson, Adam Sandler and Idris Elba are just some of the celebrities headlining films at this year’s Venice International Film Festival. Organizers on Tuesday unveiled the starry lineup for its 82nd edition, which kicks off a busy fall film festival season in August.

Two years after launching “Poor Things” at Venice, Yorgos Lanthimos and Stone are returning with “Bugonia,” an English language remake of the South Korean sci-fi comedy “Save the Green Planet!” that is among the 21 films playing in the main competition. Clooney will also be back as star of Noah Baumbach’s “Jay Kelly,” in which he plays a famous actor on a trip through Europe with his longtime manager (Sandler).

Some of the other high-profile titles competing for the Golden Lion include: Guillermo del Toro’s “Frankenstein,” with Oscar Isaac as Victor Frankenstein and Jacob Elordi as the monster; Benny Safdie’s sports drama “The Smashing Machine,” starring Johnson as MMA fighter Mark Kerr and Emily Blunt as his wife; and Olivier Assayas’s “The Wizard of the Kremlin,” in which Jude Law plays Vladimir Putin and Paul Dano plays his spin doctor.

Also in competition are Kathryn Bigelow’s “A House of Dynamite,” a political thriller about an imminent missile strike on the US, starring Idris Elba and Rebecca Ferguson, and Jim Jarmusch’s anthology film “Father Mother Sister Brother,” with Cate Blanchett and Adam Driver. Many master filmmakers are also in the section: Park Chan-wook will debut “No Other Choice”; László Nemes has his most personal film yet in “Orphan”; and François Ozon takes on an Albert Camus adaptation with “L’Étranger.”



This photo combination shows, (from top left), Dwayne Johnson, Emma Stone, and Adam Sandler. (From bottom left), George Clooney, Julia Roberts, and Idris Elba. (AP)

One of the titles bound to make waves is Kaouther Ben Hania’s “The Voice of Hind Rajab,” about the young girl who was killed along with six other relatives when they were trapped in their car under Israeli fire in northern Gaza.

Luca Guadagnino’s “After the Hunt,” a psychological thriller for the #MeToo era about a complaint of sexual violence at an American university, is debuting out of competition - a joint decision between the filmmaker and Amazon MGM. It will mark Roberts’ first time at the festival. She co-stars in the film with Andrew Garfield and Ayo Edebiri.

Julian Schnabel’s “In the Hand of Dante,” based on the cult novel, with Isaac, Gal Gadot, Al Pacino and Martin Scorsese, is also showing out of competition, as is Gus Van Sant’s “Dead Man’s Wire,” with Bill Skarsgård, Colman Domingo and an appearance by Pacino.

The festival held on the Lido, a barrier island in the Venetian Lagoon, will open with Paolo Sorrentino’s “La Grazia,” starring Toni Servillo and Anna Ferzetti, on Aug. 27 and run through Sept. 6. Alexander Payne is presiding over the main competition jury, which also includes actor Fernanda Torres and directors Cristian Mungiu, Mohammad Rasoulof and Maura Delpero.

Venice has established itself as a solid launching pad for Oscar hopefuls, with a handful of best picture winners, including “The Shape of Water,” “Spotlight,” “Nomadland” and “Birdman,” and many more nominees to its name. Last year’s edition had several eventual Oscar winning films in the lineup, including Brady Corbet’s “The Brutalist,” which won three including best actor for Adrien Brody, Walter Salles’ best international feature winner “I’m Still Here,” and the animated short “In the Shadow of the Cypress.”

Variety

BUDAPEST, Hungary: Members of the Irish-language rap group Kneecap were banned from entering Hungary ahead of their scheduled performance at the popular Sziget Festival as authorities argued the musicians’ presence in the country would constitute a risk to national security.



Bóka

The Belfast trio, scheduled to play on Sziget’s closing day on Aug. 11, is known for anarchic energy, satirical lyrics and use of symbolism associated with the Irish republican movement, which seeks to unite Northern Ireland, currently part of the UK, with the Republic of Ireland.

The group has faced criticism for lyrics laden with expletives and drug references and for political statements seeming to glorify militant groups like Hamas and Hezbollah.

Kneecap has accused critics of trying to silence the band because of its support for the Palestinian cause throughout Israel’s war in Gaza and say they don’t support Hezbollah and Hamas nor condone violence.

Hungary’s immigration authority, the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, published decrees on Thursday declaring Kneecap members Naoise Ó Cairealláin, J.J. Ó Dochartaigh and Liam Óg ÓhAnnaidh would be banned from Hungary’s territory for three years since their “entry and stay constitute a serious threat to national security.”

Government spokesman Zoltán Kovács wrote on social platform X that the decision to ban Kneecap was due to “antisemitic hate speech and open praise for Hamas and Hezbollah.”

Hungarian authorities and other groups had earlier pushed Sziget Festival to cancel the band’s performance. Hungary’s minister for European affairs, János Bóka, noted the government’s “zero-tolerance” policy toward antisemitism in a July 11 letter to the festival’s organizers.

Hundreds of figures from Hungary’s music and cultural community also have signed a petition calling for Kneecap’s performance to be cancelled.

The group performed in April at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in California, where they accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians enabled by the US government. That sparked calls for the rappers’ US visas to be revoked and several Kneecap gigs have since been canceled as a result. (AP)

NEW YORK: Rapper Tekashi 6ix9ine admitted Wednesday that he violated the conditions of his supervised release from prison by possessing drugs, marking his latest run-in with the law since he completed a federal prison sentence on racketeering and conspiracy charges.

The 29-year-old performer, whose real name is Daniel Hernandez, told a Manhattan federal judge that his home in Miami was raided on March 12 and that “residual” cocaine and MDMA - the party drug known as Molly or ecstasy - were found in his bedroom cabinet.

In exchange for the admission, prosecutors agreed to drop two other counts he faced stemming from the incident.

The Brooklyn rapper, who shot to fame with the 2017 release of his song “Gummo,” will be sentenced Sept. 25.

He doesn’t face any state charges related to the raid, but U.S. District Judge Paul Engelmayer warned him that the “consequences will be severe” if he violates any of the conditions of his release before he is sentenced.

Federal sentencing guidelines call for between three and nine months in prison for each count, but Hernandez could face up to five years in prison and a lifetime of supervised release, the judge added.

The rapper, who was dressed in a black hoodie and who wasn’t sporting his trademark colorful hairstyle, declined to comment as he left the courthouse.

Hernandez pleaded guilty in 2018 to his involvement with a violent New York-based gang, the Nine Trey Gangsta Bloods. (AP)

Film



This image released by Disney shows Pedro Pascal in a scene from ‘The Fantastic Four: First Steps.’ (AP)

‘Fantastic Four’ get long-awaited big screen debut

Villains steal the show in ‘First Steps’

LOS ANGELES, July 24, (AP): More than six decades after Jack Kirby and Stan Lee created a superhero team to rival the Justice League, the Fantastic Four finally get a worthy big-screen adaptation in a spiffy ’60s-era romp, bathed in retrofuturism and bygone American optimism.

Though the Fantastic Four go to the very origins of Marvel Comics, their movie forays have been marked by missteps and disappointments. The first try was a Roger Corman-produced, low-budget 1994 film that was never even released.

But, after some failed reboots and a little rights maneuvering, Matt Shakman’s “The Fantastic Four: First Steps” is the first Fantastic Four movie released by Marvel Studios. And a sense of returning to Marvel roots permeates this one, an endearingly earnest superhero drama about family and heroism, filled with modernist “Jetsons” designs that hark back to a time when the future held only promise.

“First Steps,” with a title that nods to Neil Armstrong, quickly reminds that before the Fantastic Four were superheroes, they were astronauts. Reed Richards (Pedro Pascal), Sue Storm (Vanessa Kirby), Johnny Storm (Joseph Quinn) and Ben Grimm (a soulful Ebon Moss-Bachrach) flew into space but return altered by cosmic rays. “We came back with anomalies,” explains Reed, sounding like me after a family road trip.

They are now, respectively, the bendy Mister Fantastic, the fast-

disappearing Invisible Woman, the fiery Human Torch and the Thing, a craggy CGI boulder of a man. In the glimpses of them as astronauts, the images are styled after NASA footage of Apollo 11, like those seen in the great documentaries “For All Mankind” and “Apollo 11.”

But part of the fun of the Fantastic Four has always been that while the foursome might have the right stuff, they also bicker and joke and argue like any other family. The chemistry here never feels intimate enough in “First Steps” to quite capture that interplay, but the cast is good, particularly Kirby.

In the first moments of “First Steps,” Sue sets down a positive pregnancy test before a surprised Reed. That night at dinner - Moss-Bachrach, now an uncle rather than a cousin, is again at work in the kitchen - Ben and Johnny immediately guess what’s up. The rest of the world is also eager to find out what, if any, powers the baby will have.

We aren’t quite in our world, but a very similar parallel one called Earth-828. New York looks about the same, and world leaders gather in a version of the United Nations named the Future Foundation. The Thing wears a Brooklyn Dodgers cap. Someone sounding a lot like Walter Cronkite reads the news.

And there’s a lot to read when the Silver Surfer (Julia Garner) suddenly hovers over the city, announcing: “I herald your end. I herald Galactus.” The TV blares, as it could on so many days:

“Earth in Peril. Developing Story.”

Yes, the Earth (or some Earth) might be in danger, but did you get a look at that Silver Surfer? That’s Johnny Storm’s response, and perhaps ours, too. She’s all chrome, like a smelted Chrysler Building, with slicked-back hair and melancholy eyes. He’s immediately taken by her, but she shoots off into space. In a rousing, NASA-like launch (the original Kirby and Lee comic came eight years before the moon landing), the Fantastic Four blast off into the unknown to meet this Galactus.

But if the Silver Surfer made an impression, Galactus (voiced by Ralph Ineson) does even more so. Fantastic Four movies have always before gone straight for Doctor Doom as a villain, but his entrance, this time, is being held up for “Avengers: Doomsday.” Still, Galactus, a planet-eating tyrant, is no slouch. A mechanical colossus and evident fan of Fritz Lang’s “Metropolis,” he sits on an enormous throne in space. Sensing enormous power in Sue’s unborn child, he offers to spare Earth for the baby.

What follows casts motherhood - its empowerments and sacrifices - onto a cosmic plane. There’s a nifty chase sequence in space that plays out during contractions. The two “Incredibles” movies covered some similar ground, in both retro design and stretchy parent and superhuman baby, with notably more zip and comic verve than “The Fantastic Four.”



Diana, (from left), Kal Smith, and Melissa Ann from San Diego, Calif. pose during preview night for Comic-Con International on Wednesday, July 23, in San Diego. (AP)



David DeMatteis, (left), dressed as Han Solo, and Jacquii DeMatteis, dressed as Leia Organa, from Temecula, Calif. (AP)



A general view of atmosphere during preview night for Comic-Con International on Wednesday, July 23, in San Diego. (AP)

Comic-Con 2025 kicks off without some major superheroes

Tens of thousands of fans - many in costumes - were to descend Thursday on Comic-Con International, the four day pop culture spectacle that will feature updates on the new “Predator” movie, “Alien” series and a special appearance by George Lucas.

Just don’t expect major news about the future of Marvel’s movie slate or what’s next for the hit relaunch of DC’s high-flying “Superman” franchise. Both studios are sitting out Comic-Con 2025, as far as their film slates go.

An estimated 135,000 people will attend the convention, which will greet Lucas on Sunday for his first Comic-Con appearance. The “Star Wars” creator will discuss his new Lucas Museum of Narrative Art that will open next year in Los Angeles.

Fans of the “Alien” and “Predator” franchises will have plenty to cheer. Elle Fanning, star of “Predator: Badlands,” will discuss the film at Comic-Con’s massive Hall H this week. FX will also bring the stars and creators of “Alien: Earth,” a series

that will unleash the Xenomorph species on Earth next month.

“Alien: Earth” will be one of the projects that brings a massive interactive experience to San Diego, with a replica of spacecraft from the series. The attraction will feature what’s described as a terrifying mission at night.

Marvel may not be presenting new movies, but it will have a “Fantastic Four: First Steps” attraction near the convention, a tie-in to Friday’s release of the latest attempt to successfully launch its “first family” in theaters. (AP)

‘The record everyone knows but few have heard’

‘Buckingham Nicks’ holy grail album finally getting reissued

NASHVILLE, Tenn., July 24, (AP): They were in love once. Four years before Fleetwood Mac’s “Rumours” became one of the best breakup records of the 1970s - and, many might say, all time - Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham were relative unknowns, a young couple putting out their own album, posing nude on the cover like a Laurel Canyon version of Adam and Eve.

Released as “Buckingham Nicks,” the 1973 album has for decades maintained somewhat of a holy grail status in the dusty bins of record stores, selling for \$20 to \$90 depending on its condition. Now, in addition to new vinyl, it will be available on streaming and CD for the first time when it’s reissued Sept. 19 on Rhino, Warner Music Group announced Wednesday.

“It’s one of those records that everybody has heard of but not that many people have actually heard,” said Brian Mansfield, a music historian, journalist and record collector in Nashville, Tennessee. “Especially before everything got put onto YouTube, very few people had heard it because it had never been on CD. But it had this iconic cover that everybody recognized.”

“Buckingham Nicks” featured the duo’s iconic harmonies and Buckingham’s distinct guitar sound, which later fueled Fleetwood Mac’s ability to sell tens of millions of records. But “Buckingham Nicks” bombed upon release and Polydor dropped them from the label, prompting Nicks’ return to waitress and Buckingham to briefly tour with Don Everly.

The rest of the story is enshrined in lore: Drummer Mick Fleetwood heard “Frozen Love” from the album when he visited the studio where it was recorded, Sound City. After guitarist Bob Welch left the band, Fleetwood invited Buckingham to Fleetwood Mac, with Buckingham insisting Nicks join too. The band also included the late Christine McVie on



Music historian and journalist Brian Mansfield holds an original pressing of the ‘Buckingham Nicks’ vinyl record at his home in Nashville, Tenn., Wednesday, July 23. (AP)

keyboards and John McVie on bass.

Generations of avid Fleetwood Mac fans have tattooed their lyrics or analyzed them at a forensic level, enshrining the tumultuous relationship between Buckingham and Nicks in pop culture. The upcoming reissue of “Buckingham Nicks” is a reminder of the couple’s musical beginnings and the special status their only joint album has held among fans and record collectors.

“As soon as we put it out, it goes that day,” said Michael Bell, owner of Hunky Dory Records, which has locations in Raleigh, Durham and Cary, North Carolina.

Nicks and Buckingham met during high school at a local church in Northern California where young musicians gath-

ered on a school night, according to Stephen Davis’ “Gold Dust Woman: The Biography of Stevie Nicks.”

Buckingham played the Mamas & the Papas’ “California Dreamin’” on piano, prompting Nicks to chime in, singing Michelle Phillips’ high harmony.

“They glanced at each other; she noticed his eyes, cold blue like lake ice,” Davis wrote. “They sang the whole song while the room went quiet, everyone mesmerized.”

After high school, Nicks joined the band Buckingham was in, Fritz, which would open for Creedence Clearwater Revival, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. They eventually split off as a duo, started dating and moved to Los Angeles.

Nicks said she loved Buckingham before he was a millionaire, according to Davis’ book, and “washed his jeans and embroidered stupid moons and stars on the bottom of them.”

The first track on “Buckingham Nicks,” “Crying in the Night,” has “a sense of Joni Mitchell fronting the Eagles,” Davis wrote. “Frozen Love” closed out side two, with “layers of strings and synthesizers and a major Lindsey Buckingham rock guitar symphony.”

“No one seemed to like the record,” Davis wrote. “Polydor executives hadn’t even wanted to release it.”

A review that ran in The Pittsburgh Press said Nicks and Buckingham produced “a pleasant, albeit a whiny vocal blend on some pretty fair songs.”

“And if you don’t like the record,” the review concluded, “you might like the costumes they’re wearing on the cover - a couple of those oh-so-chic birthday suits.”

Interest in the record only grew following the new Fleetwood Mac lineup. That incarnation’s first record in 1975, “Fleetwood Mac,” contained the songs “Landslide,” “Rhannon” and “Monday Morning.”

“Rumours” came two years later.

Bob Fuchs, retail manager of record store Electric Fetus in Minneapolis, said the shop gets in about two to four of the original vinyl a year. Those go on its collectible wall that showcases hard-to-find titles. Depending on its condition, the album sells for between \$40 to \$90, he said.

“You put it up on a Saturday morning and it’s gone by Saturday at noon. So it lasts about two hours,” he said.

Fuchs never bought the album himself because, “every time I came in, it was \$60 or \$80. ... So I’ll probably end up picking up a reissue.”

Across the river at the St. Paul, Minnesota, location of Cheapo Discs, though, worker Geoff Good said people rarely came in looking for the original. He does expect the reissue to juice sales. He has the original, which he bought in 1974 or 1975, in his own collection.

“The songwriting is really good, the harmonies are good, Lindsey Buckingham is an amazing guitar player,” he said.

Mansfield, the Nashville historian, randomly found a copy two weeks ago in a neighborhood garage sale, just days prior to hints that a reissue was coming.

He has no idea why “Buckingham Nicks” hasn’t been reissued more considering the steady demand. For him, it’s a good album but not one that reached the heights of what was to come.

“It’s definitely not there yet,” he said. “I don’t know that there’s anything on this album that would have made a Fleetwood album.” The romantic relationship between Buckingham and Nicks would end around the making of “Rumours.”

Nicks and Buckingham would shoot eye daggers at each other onstage in packed stadiums, while Buckingham would roll his eyes during Nicks’ MusiCares speech in 2018, according to the Los Angeles Times.

Television



This image released by Disney shows Sterling K. Brown in a scene from ‘Washington Black.’ (AP)

A journey from slavery to hope and freedom

Why ‘Washington Black’ felt like fate

LONDON, July 24, (AP): “Washington Black” just seemed destined for a screen adaptation.

The 2018 novel by Canadian writer Esi Edugyan caught actor Sterling K. Brown’s eye. As he put the wheels in motion, things just started to line up in a most un-Hollywood fashion - so much so that Brown started to believe strongly the project was meant to be.

“Sometimes you keep hitting barricades and obstacles and you’re like ‘Well maybe I should step away.’ No, things kept falling into line in such a lovely way that let me know that we were moving in the direction we were supposed to go,” he recalls.

It felt appropriate that the universe wanted a coming-of-age story about a Black boy with big dreams, who goes from the Barbados plantation where he was born to finding freedom, love and friendship across the seas. The eight-episode miniseries premiered Wednesday on Hulu.

Brown noted that, as a producer, he wants to put out tales that can benefit society.

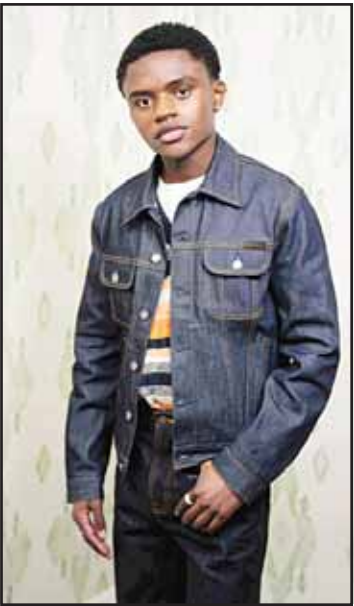
Opportunity

“I think for me it’s been the sort of fare that has been reserved for people that don’t look like us so much,” he says - so the opportunity to make it happen was “very exciting.”

The idea of doing a show where a young person overcomes tumultuous circumstances through hope and joy enchanted him: “They were telling him, ‘Maybe you should dream smaller.’ He just kept going up. It’s beautiful.”

The first stop was finding a writer and Selwyn Seyfu Hinds fit the bill perfectly. His lyrical style and family background inspired Brown - who also acts in the show - to get him on board as one of the two showrunners. Born and raised in Guyana, Hinds moved to the United States as a teen with his family, and felt the story spoke to him personally.

“It’s always been part of my desire as a writer to tell stories that connect



Eddie Karanja (left) and Edward Bluemel pose for portrait photographs to promote the television series ‘Washington Black’ on June 16, 2025, in London. (AP)

the Caribbean to the overall diaspora,” Hinds says.

The show follows 11-year-old George Washington “Wash” Black, born into slavery in Barbados on a plantation owned by the Wilde family in the 1830s. His quick mind, inquisitiveness and knack for science get the attention of Christopher “Titch” Wilde (Tom Ellis), an inventor, who enlists him as his assistant. A tragic turn of events forces them to run away together and takes them on adventures on the high seas, North America and ultimately the Arctic; the story stretches across almost a decade.

Adapting it into eight episodes required changes to the book, but they kept to the emotional core of the journey.

“It’s big and expansive, not for its own sake, but because I think that thematically reflects the character’s heart and the character’s own ambitions,”

says Hinds.

The series filmed across locations in Nova Scotia, Canada, Mexico and Iceland between 2022 and 2024.

Co-showrunner Kim Harrison is still incredulous at pulling off such a massive endeavor of juggling multiple locations, temperamental weather and stars’ schedules.

“When you look back at the finished product, you’re like, ‘Wow, we did that,’” she says of the feat.

Among the many elements that had to work, the most crucial one, perhaps, was finding its young leads - one actor to play young Wash and another to play him as a young adult.

After months and months of auditions and thousands of tapes, they both revealed themselves in an “undeniable” way to the producers.

“They both carry the truth of the character in their eyes ... like they’ve got the same emotional expression and

intelligence and empathy in their in their eyes,” Hinds says. He’s speaking of Ernest Kingsley Jr. and Eddie Karanja, who was just 14 at the time.

Kingsley got the older part three months out of acting school in London; he was bowled over when he had to do a chemistry read with Brown, who stars as Medwin Harris, a Black community leader and father figure in the Nova Scotia years. Brown found himself impressed by the newcomer immediately.

“This kid embodies the hopefulness, the sort of Black boy joy that is the engine that drives the show,” he recalls thinking during auditions.

Comfortable

Brown inadvertently became a mentor to the inexperienced actors on set because he wanted all of them to feel comfortable. He remembers how young actors feel unable to voice doubts or practical questions because everyone else seems to know what they’re supposed to do.

“You just want to give them the space to share all of that so we can move through it together,” he says.

He extended the same helping hand to Lola Evans, who plays older Wash’s love interest, and Edward Bluemel, her suitor. Brown always made time in his busy schedule to visit the set to watch, listen and generally be a hype man.

Charles Dance, the inscrutable paterfamilias James Wilde, surprised everyone who’d seen him in “Game of Thrones.”

Hinds recalls even Ellis, who plays Dance’s character’s son, gave a speech at the wrap party in Iceland saying how shockingly nice Dance was - he had been terrified before meeting him.

“So the fact that Charles is scary and intimidating just worked beautifully for us,” laughs Hinds as Ellis channeled it into his performance.

Karanja says he even got a boost from Dance: “Charles was the warmest guy and he continued to give me confidence in myself as an actor.”

Opera meets wrestling

Fleming makes directing debut at Aspen festival

ASPEN, Colo., July 24, (AP): **Renée Fleming’s** “Cosi fan tutte” was ready to rumble.

Long a star soprano, Fleming made her directing debut Monday night at the Aspen Music Festival and School by transporting Mozart’s masterpiece from 18th century Naples, Italy, to a gym in Yarmouth, Massachusetts, amid professional wrestling’s rise in 1980.

Posters on stage display Sylvester Stallone as Rocky, wrestler Randy Savage and Jane Fonda hawking her workout video. In Fleming’s concept, Fiordiligi and Dorabella are workout-obsessed high school sisters.

“It’s a coming of age for the protagonists and a loss of innocence,” Fleming said.

An outstanding student cast ages 25-32 mostly making role debuts, was accompanied by conductor Patrick Summers leading a 45-piece orchestra at the 375-capacity Wheeler Opera House, opened in 1889 during the Colorado Silver Boom. There are two additional performances through Saturday at a festival that includes about 200 public events from July 2 to Aug. 24.

Lauren Carroll, the 26-year-old soprano who sings Fiordiligi, did a split. Dorabella, 27-year-old mezzo-soprano Ashlyn Brown, struggled to lift a heavy barbell. Michelle Harvey’s scenic design in the tight space of a 28-foot-wide proscenium included punching bags, bo staffs and ThighMasters.

Fleming sang her first Countess in Mozart’s “Le Nozze di Figaro” as an Aspen student in 1984. Now 66, she has, since 2017, limited her singing to concerts, a few contemporary operas and Broadway.

Fleming had a circuitous route to her concept.

“I can’t do the opera relating to hockey, but I did think of another sport that reminds me so much of opera and that’s professional wrestling. There’s a suspension of disbelief that is huge,” she said. “Fans believe these characters are real and that the moves are real, and of course it’s all completely choreographed.”

Fleming at first spoke with Francesca Zambello, the Washington National Opera’s artistic director.



Fleming

Overture

“I said, ‘Convince me, sell me, tell me,’” Zambello related, “‘you really have to work it through from the overture to the final curtain.’”

WNO’s “Cosi” in 2021 was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In 2020, Fleming and Summers launched Aspen Opera Theater and VocalARTS, with 15 singers annually attending an eight-week program that covers their \$12,325 tuition, room and board plus pays a \$1,500 stipend.

Ashlyn Brown, the 27-year-old mezzo-soprano who performs Dorabella, is a granddaughter of Don Stansauk, the wrestler known as Hard Boiled Haggerty.

“I grew up with wrestling culture,” she said. “I used to go to the Cauliflower Alley Club meetings when I was a kid. He brought all of his buddies, like Andre the Giant.”

Carroll was a cheerleader and her mother is an aerobics instructor.

“She really invests in young artists and it’s authentic,” she said of Fleming. “She really means it and backs it up with action.”

In creating the look, Fleming thought back to her time at Churchillville-Chili Senior High School in New York.

“I have photographs of me with a really bad mullet and overalls,” she said. Just before intermission ended, a Fonda dress-alike led the audience in calisthenics. Despina (soprano Laura Miah), a gym manager here instead of a maid, uses a blender to make protein shakes and heads stretching exercises.

“Renée of course demanded a lot of herself as a singer in that way and that’s extended itself to her demands on them in this,” Summers said.

Mozart’s opera has the two girlfriends adopt hidden identities and romance each other’s girlfriend to test their virtue. Both women fall for the other’s boyfriend, and while the two couples get back together in the original, Fleming has both relationships come apart. Fiordiligi ends up wearing an “Era Yes” shirt.

Don Alfonso is a gym owner. Guglielmo and Ferrando, the boyfriends (baritone Finn Sagal and tenor Jonghyun Park), wear Amanda Seymour’s colorful clothes, including powder blue and light gray tuxedos with ruffled shirts.

Peter Barber, a 31-year-old bass-baritone who sings Don Alfonso, boxes to keep in shape.

“When I was I think 8 or 9 years old after watching ‘Rocky,’ I had a custom boxing robe made for me,” he said.

Fleming sang Fiordiligi for the first time at Geneva in March 1992. She greeted the cast at the first rehearsal on June 30 by telling them: “Toi toi toi. Let’s have some fun,” using a performers’ expression for good luck.



Kay Murray attends the ESPN Original Series premiere of ‘Running with the Wolves’ at The Robert A. Iger Building on Wednesday, July 23, in New York. (AP)



The medical team at Chest Diseases Hospital behind Kuwait's first minimally invasive coronary artery bypass surgery.

New technique shortens recovery time

Kuwait achieves breakthrough with first minimally invasive heart bypass surgery

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: In a groundbreaking medical achievement, the Chest Diseases Hospital has successfully performed coronary artery bypass surgery using a minimally invasive technique – the first of its kind in Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the medical team, the advanced procedure was carried out on several patients and all of them reported 100 percent successful outcomes.

The surgeries were led by Dr. Mohammad Mishal Al-Ayyar, a consultant cardiac surgeon and head of the surgical team.

Talking about the innovation, Al-Ayyar explained that unlike traditional bypass surgery, which requires opening the entire chest, the new method involves a small incision -- not larger than five centimeters -- on the left side of the chest. "This dramatically reduces surgical trauma and shortens the recovery period. This type of surgery marks a qualitative leap in cardiac treatment in Kuwait. Patients are able to return to their normal lives within just three to five days, compared to the lengthy recovery required by conventional open-heart procedures," he affirmed.

He pointed out that the successful implementation of this advanced technique highlights the competence and leadership of national medical teams, as well as their ability to adopt the latest surgical innovations in line with international standards.

"This achievement is a confirmation of the commitment of the hospital to provide cutting-edge healthcare and remain at the forefront of global medical advancements. It is also a major step forward in the ongoing development of the healthcare system in the country," he added.

Al-Ayyar expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Health for its continuous investment in advanced medical technologies; as well as the hospital's leadership, including Medical Director Dr. Jamal Al-Fadhli, for their unwavering support for the surgical staff.

Less than 1.6 children per woman

US fertility rate hits record low in 2024

NEW YORK, July 24, (AP): The fertility rate in the US dropped to an all-time low in 2024 with less than 1.6 kids per woman, new federal data released Thursday shows.

The US was once among only a few developed countries with a rate that ensured each generation had enough children to replace itself - about 2.1 kids per woman. But it has been sliding in America for close to two decades as more women are waiting longer to have children or never taking that step at all.

The new statistic is on par with fertility rates in western European countries, according to World Bank data.

Alarmed by recent drops, the Trump administration has taken steps to increase falling birth rates, like issuing an executive order meant to expand access to and reduce costs of in vitro fertilization and backing the idea of "baby bonuses" that might encourage more couples to have kids. But there's no reason to be alarmed, according to Leslie Root, a University of Colorado Boulder researcher focused on fertility and population policy.

"We're seeing this as part of an ongoing process of fertility delay. We know that the US population is still growing, and we still have a natural increase - more births than deaths," she said.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the statistic for the total fertility rate with updated birth data for 2024.

In the early 1960s, the US total fertility rate was around 3.5, but plummeted to 1.7 by 1976 after the Baby Boom ended. It gradually rose to 2.1 in 2007 before falling again, aside from a 2014 uptick. The rate in 2023 was 1.621, and inched down in 2024 to 1.599, according to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

Birth rates are generally declining for women in most age groups - and that doesn't seem likely to change in the near future, said Karen Guzzo, director of the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina.

People are marrying later and also worried about their ability to have the money, health insurance and other resources needed to raise children in a stable environment.

"Worry is not a good moment to have kids," and that's why birth rates in most age groups are not improving, she said.

Asked about birth-promoting measures outlined by the Trump administration, Guzzo said they don't tackle larger needs like parental leave and affordable child care.

"The things that they are doing are really symbolic and not likely to budge things for real Americans," she said.

The CDC's new report, which is based on a more complete review of birth certificates than provisional data released earlier this year, also showed a 1% increase in births - about 33,000 more - last year compared to the prior year.

That brought the yearly national total to just over 3.6 million babies born.

But this is different: The provisional data indicated birth rate increases last year for women in their late 20s and 30s. However, the new report found birth rate declines for women in their 20s and early 30s, and no change for women in their late 30s.

What happened? CDC officials said it was due to recalculations stemming from a change in the US Census population estimates used to compute the birth rate.

That's plausible, Root said. As the total population of women of childbearing age grew due to immigration, it offset small increases in births to women in those age groups, she said.

Kuwait strengthens role in cancer research

2 Kuwaiti doctors join Gulf Oncology Society

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Gulf Federation for Cancer Control has confirmed the nomination of two Kuwaiti doctors – Dr. Abdulaziz Hamada and Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Jassem – as members of the Gulf Oncology Society, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The announcement was made during the recent meeting of the federation. Secretary General of the federation Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh affirmed the approval of new members from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. He said the Gulf Oncology Society serves as the scientific arm of the federation, playing a central role in shaping cancer care and research throughout the region.

The new appointees include Dr. Maha Al-Sindi of Bahrain who will serve as the society's Rapporteur; Dr. Taha Al-Lawati of Oman as Advisor; Dr. Noura Al-Hammadi of Qatar; and Dr. Ahlam Al-Dahl and Dr. Kholoud Al-Wusaiby of Saudi Arabia. Other members include Dr. Aida Al-Awadhi and Dr. Hamid Al-Shamsi from the United Arab Emirates, and Dr. Ahmed Badib and Dr. Labib Abdullah from Yemen.

Al-Saleh explained that the Gulf Oncology Society is responsible for managing the annual oncology conferences of the federation, which rotate among GCC countries. The society also oversees collaborative scientific research among oncologists in the region, and it is in charge of updating standardized cancer treatment protocols.

In addition, the society supervises the publication of the Gulf Oncology Journal, a peer-reviewed scientific journal that has held a place in the US National Library of Medicine's registry for the past 15 years. The journal is regarded as a vital reference for cancer research in the Gulf region.

The inclusion of Dr. Hamada and Dr. Al-Jassem in this elite body underscores the growing leadership of Kuwait in the field of oncology, and its ongoing commitment to advance medical research and collaboration in the Gulf region.



Dr. Al-Jassem



Dr. Al-Saleh

'Environmental protection a legal duty'

Failing to protect planet from climate change could violate global law: ICJ

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, July 24, (AP): The United Nations' top court in a landmark advisory opinion Wednesday said countries could be in violation of international law if they fail to take measures to protect the planet from climate change, and nations harmed by its effects could be entitled to reparations.

Advocates immediately cheered the International Court of Justice opinion on nations' obligations to tackle climate change and the consequences they may face if they don't.

"Failure of a state to take appropriate action to protect the climate system ... may constitute an internationally wrongful act," court President Yuji Iwasawa said during the hearing. He called the climate crisis "an existential problem of planetary proportions that imperils all forms of life and the very health of our planet."

Activists demonstrated outside the Peace Palace, housing the International Court of Justice, ahead of an advisory opinion on what legal obligations nations have to address climate change and what consequences they may face if they don't, Wednesday, July 23, in The Hague, Netherlands. (AP)



Actions

The non-binding opinion, backed unanimously by the court's 15 judges, was hailed as a turning point in international climate law.

Notably, the court said a "clean, healthy and sustainable environment" is a human right. That paves the way for other legal actions, including states returning to the ICJ to hold each other to account as well as domestic lawsuits, along with legal instruments like investment agreements.

The case was led by the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu and backed by more than 130 countries.

All UN member states including major greenhouse gas emitters like the United States and China are parties to the court.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the "historic" advisory opinion.

"This is a victory for our planet, for climate justice, and for the power of young people to make a difference," he said in a statement. "Young Pacific islanders initiated this call for humanity to the world. And the world must respond."

Climate activists had gathered outside the crowded court with a banner that read: "Courts have spoken. The law is clear. States must ACT NOW." They watched the ruling on a giant screen, clapping and cheering at times during the two-hour hearing.

"Today, the tables have turned. The world's highest court provided us with a powerful new tool to protect people from the devastating impacts of the climate crisis - and to deliver justice for the harm their emissions have already caused," former UN human rights chief Mary Robinson said in a statement.

"The ICJ's decision brings us closer to a world where governments can no longer turn a blind eye to their legal responsibilities. It affirms a simple truth of climate justice: Those who did the least to fuel this crisis deserve protection, reparations, and a future," said Vishal Prasad, director of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change. After years of lobbying by vulnerable island nations who fear they could disappear under rising sea waters, the U.N. General Assembly asked the ICJ in 2023 for an advisory opinion, an important basis for international obligations.

Environment

Its panel was tasked with answering two questions: What are countries obliged to do under international law to protect the climate and environment from human-caused greenhouse gas emissions?

Second, what are the legal consequences for governments when their acts, or lack of action, have significantly harmed the climate and environment?

"The stakes could not be higher. The survival of my people and so many others is on the line," Arnold Kiel Loughman, attorney general of the island nation of Vanuatu, told the court during a week of hearings in December.

In the decade up to 2023, sea levels rose by a global average of around 4.3 centimeters (1.7 inches), with parts of the Pacific rising higher still. The world has also warmed 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times because of the burning of fossil fuels.

Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu's minister for climate change, called the ruling a "very important course correction in this critically important time. For the first time in history, the ICJ has spoken directly about the biggest threat facing humanity."

He said the ruling exceeded his expectations. "I didn't expect it to be good. It's good. And it did go above and beyond," he told reporters in The Hague.

Activists could bring lawsuits against their own countries for failing to comply with the decision, which ran to over 130 pages.

The senior attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law, Erika Lennon, said the ruling also can be used as leverage at the next U.N. climate conference later this year in the Brazilian city of Belém.

"States must take this ICJ ruling and use it to advance ambitious outcomes at COP30 and beyond. People and the planet deserve it," she said.

The United States and Russia, both of whom are major petroleum-producing states, are staunchly opposed to the court mandating emissions reductions.

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Hancko signs for Atletico as summer recruitment drive continues

Barcelona cancels Japan tour over contract dispute, Korea leg in doubt

MADRID, July 24, (Xinhua): FC Barcelona’s pre-season plans are in ruins after the club was forced to cancel its visit to Japan at short notice due to a contractual problem with the tour organizers.

The Barca squad was due to fly to Japan on Thursday morning ahead of a game against Vissel Kobe on Sunday, before travelling to South Korea to face Seoul FC and Daegu FC. However, the Japanese leg of the tour has now been cancelled and the South Korean part is in the balance.

“FC Barcelona announces that it has been forced to suspend its participation in the match scheduled for next Sunday in Japan due to a serious breach of contract by the promoter. However, the Club will consider readjusting the South Korean portion of the summer tour...provided certain conditions are

met by the promoter,” explained the club in a statement.

The cancellation of at least part of the tour is a blow to Barcelona’s economy, with the cash-strapped club due to receive an important injection of around 15 million euros for playing the games, but it is also a sporting blow as Hansi Flick’s side will have to look for new rivals at short notice as Flick looks to prepare for the new La Liga season.

Barca’s only other pre-season game that is currently scheduled is against Como on August 10, before the new La Liga campaign starts in Mallorca on August 16.

Atletico Madrid continues its summer recruitment with the signing of Slovakian central defender David Hancko from Dutch side Feyenoord.

Hancko is Atletico’s sixth signing this summer after the arrivals of Alex Baena, Johnny Cardoso, Marc Pubill, Thiago Almada and Matteo Ruggeri, while the club has also made loan deals for Clement Lenglet and Juan Musso permanent.

Atletico have closed the deal after Hancko’s proposed move to Saudi Arabian side Al Nassr collapsed at the last minute.

His arrival will help Atletico coach Diego Simeone compensate for the departures of veteran defenders Axel Witsel, Cesar Azpilicueta and Reinildo, who has moved to Premier League outfit Sunderland.

Speaking on Wednesday, Atletico president, Enrique Cerezo told the press that in principle the club had concluded its transfer business for the summer “unless an opportunity” arises.

Powerful artistic experience promised

Rice to oversee Olympics & Para opening and closing ceremonies

LOS ANGELES, July 24, (AP): The former chairman of Walt Disney Television and head of 21st Century Fox has been hired to oversee the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and Paralympics.

LA28 organizers said Wednesday that Peter Rice will serve as head of ceremonies and content and be responsible for the creative vision and physical production of the LA28 Games, which run July 14-30, and the Paralympics, which run Aug. 15-27.

“Peter is one of the rare individuals whose expertise seamlessly combines creativity, operational insight and production excellence to deliver Ceremonies that will captivate audiences around the world,” said LA28 president and chairperson Casey Wasserman, who will supervise Rice. “He’s been a leading figure in shaping the modern television and film landscape and is the perfect asset to reimagining the delivery of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies for the digital age, leaving a legacy well beyond the Games.”

The opening ceremony be held July 14 at 8 p.m. ET, with events at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and SoFi Stadium in Inglewood. The closing ceremony will be July 30 at 9 p.m. ET at the Coliseum.

“I look forward to delivering Ceremonies that honor the legacy of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and celebrate the cutting-edge future of



In this file photo, Chairman of Disney General Entertainment Content for The Walt Disney Company Peter Rice, attends the premiere of Hulu’s Original Series ‘Life & Beth’ at the SVA Theatre in New York. (AP)

the 2028 Stadium,” Rice said. “These venues have hosted some of the most legendary moments in sports history, and I’m thrilled to deliver a powerful artistic experience that adds a new chapter to LA’s Olympic and Paralympic story.”

Rice, a British-American, began his career at 20th Century Fox in 1989, rising through the ranks before being promoted to president of 21st Century Fox in 2017. Following Disney’s acquisition of the company, Rice became chairman of Walt Disney Television and chairman of General Entertainment for The Walt Disney Co.

Anti-doping efforts

CHINADA issues guidelines to protect underage athletes rights

BEIJING, July 24, (Xinhua): The Chinese Anti-Doping Agency (CHINADA) has released its first comprehensive guidelines aimed at safeguarding the rights of underage athletes throughout the anti-doping process, marking a significant step toward a more athlete-centered approach.

The “Guidelines on Protecting the Rights of Underage Athletes in Anti-Doping Work (Trial),” issued on Thursday, outline a full-chain protection framework covering testing, result management, and privacy protection.

“This is not just a rule adjustment but a conceptual shift,” said Jiang Tao, associate professor at the China University of Political Science and Law. “The principle of prioritizing athletes’ best interests has now been implemented in detail.” The guidelines are based on the World Anti-Doping Code and Chinese regulations, focusing on creating a supportive environment for young athletes during investigations and testing. Measures include “customized conversations” tailored to the athlete’s personality, psychological state, and background, as well as careful attention to the testing environment to prevent psychological stress.

In line with the International

Standard for Education, the guidelines emphasize that a young athlete’s first anti-doping experience should start with education. Testing officers are required to explain rights, obligations, and procedures if the athlete has not received prior anti-doping education, allowing for a “buffer period” during testing.

To address the heightened stress faced by minors during doping violation cases, the guidelines introduce a “triple protection” system: easing evidentiary requirements, waiving financial penalties for athletes without income, and providing legal aid for hearings. Privacy protection measures also limit mandatory disclosure of personal information in violation cases.

CHINADA has established a coordinated mechanism involving national and provincial anti-doping bodies as well as frontline personnel. Specialized educators and a team of legal and psychological experts will provide professional support to both athletes and guardians, raising awareness of rights protection.

“These measures aim to ensure that young athletes can train and compete in a fair, safe, and clean environment,” CHINADA stated, adding that the initiative reflects China’s determination to contribute to the global fight against doping.

Best of the Rest

Cameroon coach resigns: Cameroon head coach of the national men’s football team, Marc Brys resigned citing “contract violations” as the reason for his departure.

In his resignation letter addressed to the country’s Minister of Sports and Physical Education, Narcisse Mouelle Kombi, the Belgian said he was quitting his job “due to the non-payment of my salary and that of my staff for more than 60 days”.

“I urge you to take necessary measures for prompt settlement of this matter, to avoid litigation,” Brys said. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Maeve Kyle dies at 96: Maeve Kyle, who became Ireland’s first female track-and-field Olympian when she competed at the 1956 Melbourne Games, has died. She was 96.

The Olympic Federation of Ireland said that Kyle was a “trailblazer for women’s sport.” The cause of death was not announced.

“She competed at three consecutive Olympic Games - Melbourne 1956, Rome 1960, and Tokyo 1964 - at a time when women had to overcome huge prejudice and when opportunities in international athletics were extremely limited,” the federation said in its announcement.

The federation also praised the breadth of Kyle’s career.

“A sprinter and middle-distance runner, she represented Ireland in the 100m and 200m sprints in 1956 and 1960, and went on to reach the semifinals of the 400m at the age of 36 in Tokyo 1964, cementing her status as one of Ireland’s all-time greats on the track,” the statement added.

Kyle also represented Ireland more than 50 times in field hockey. (AP)

□ □ □

Wolverhampton signs Arias: Premier League side Wolverhampton has completed the signing of Colombia forward Jhon Arias from Brazilian club Fluminense on a four-year deal, with the option of a further 12 months.

The 27-year-old Arias impressed at the Club World Cup this summer, helping Fluminense reach the semifinals.

Financial terms were not disclosed. According to the BBC, Wolves signed him for an initial 15 million pounds (\$20 million) plus a further 4 million pounds in add-ons, which includes European qualification. (AP)

MLS edges Liga MX in All-Star Game; Messi faces suspension for no-show



Liga MX All-Stars’ Luan Garcia, right, heads the ball past MLS All-Stars’ Michael Boxall (15) during the MLS All-Star soccer match in Austin, Texas. (AP)

Surridge continues scoring run

AUSTIN, Texas, July 24, (AP): **Sam Surridge, Tai Baribo, and Brian White scored goals and Major League Soccer defeated Liga MX of Mexico 3-1 in the MLS All-Star Game.**

Lionel Messi and his Inter Miami teammate, Jordi Alba, both face possible league suspensions for their team’s next match against Cincinnati on Saturday for missing the All-Star game.

Liga MX’s James Rodríguez also chose not to play in the game played in front of more than 20,000 fans at Q2 Stadium.

MLS has defeated Liga MX three times in four tries. Last year, Liga MX won 4-1 in Columbus, Ohio. The MLS All-Stars won in 2022, beating Liga MX on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw the pre-

vious year.

Messi has yet to appear in an MLS All-Star Game. He missed the game last year with an injury. Messi is tied with Nashville’s Surridge for the MLS lead in goals with 18.

Surridge scored another goal on Wednesday, from the middle of the box, heading in to the lower right corner a ball directed by LAFC’s Denis Bouanga in the 28th minute.

The opportunity developed after Bouanga had a point-blank attempt stopped by Liga MX goalkeeper Luis Malagon (Club America). Bouanga hustled to retrieve the long rebound and sent it to Surridge.

Before the goal, both teams had attempts rejected with diving stops by Luis Malagon and Austin FC’s Brad Stuver in the 13th and 18th minutes.

MLS went ahead 2-0 in the 51st minute when Diego Rossi (Columbus) passed ahead to Baribo

(Philadelphia), whose right-footed shot from the center of the box made it to the lower left corner of the goal.

Liga MX closed the gap to 2-1 just 13 minutes later when Gilberto Mora (Club Tijuana) converted a pass from Elias Montiel (Pachuca) from the middle of the box.

Liga MX’s bid to tie the match was snubbed when a shot by Diber Cambindo (Necaxa) was stopped by Yohei Takaoka (Vancouver) in the 75th minute.

White (Vancouver) finished the scoring in the 80th minute.

MLS and Liga MX continue their rivalry with the Leagues Cup, which begins on July 29 and concludes on August 31. The competition features a new format, with all 18 clubs from Liga MX and the top 18 from MLS competing. Last year, all 47 clubs from the two leagues were included.

‘When it comes to his opinion on women ... he still has a lot to learn’

Chicharito faces backlash in Mexico for remarks

MEXICO CITY, July 24 (AP): Soccer star Javier “Chicharito” Hernandez is facing a backlash from Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum and others for remarks posted on his social media accounts about gender roles.

“Chicharito is a very good soccer player,” Sheinbaum said at a news conference Wednesday. “But when it comes to his opinion on women ... he still has a lot to learn.”

The former Manchester United and Real Madrid striker, who plays for Chivas, is injured and missed the first two matches of Mexico’s Apertura tournament.

Over the weekend, he posted several reels and videos, mainly on Instagram.

“Don’t be afraid to be women, to allow yourself to be led by a man,” the 37-year-old Hernandez said.

Hernandez, the all-time leading scorer for the Mexican national team with 52 goals, returned to Mexico last year on a two-year deal with Chivas, the team where he began his professional career in 2006.

“You women need to learn to accept and honor masculinity,” he said in another one of his posts.

Sheinbaum, a 63-year-old scientist, was elected last year as the first female president in the country’s 200-year history.

“I’m a mother, I’m a grandmother, I’m also a housewife,” the president added Wednesday. “But I’m also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Women can be whatever we want.”



In this file photo, LA Galaxy forward Javier ‘Chicharito’ Hernandez in action at MLS soccer match against the Charlotte FC in Charlotte, N.C. (AP)

Hernandez is a divorced father of two who has a habit of kneeling in the middle of the pitch to pray before the start of matches. He began creating content for a YouTube channel where he portrayed his life as a player with West Ham and his marriage.

Hernandez had a low profile on social media before hiring life coach Diego Dreyfus, to whom many attribute much of “Chicharito’s” new persona.

Criticism followed his recent statements, with some urging him to limit himself to soccer, given that his performance since returning to the Mexican league last year has not been as expected.

Hernandez, who also played for Bayer Lev-

erkusen, West Ham and Sevilla, has scored just two goals in 25 matches in his first two tournaments back in Mexico.

A few hours after the president’s remarks, Hernandez was fined by the by the Gender and Diversity Commission of the Mexican Soccer Federation and by Chivas.

“A few days ago, on the social platform Javier Chicharito Hernández made statements that promote sexist stereotypes that are considered media violence and go against gender equality in the sport,” a statement from the federation said.

The federation did not disclose the amount of the fine but said that a more severe penalty awaits if he does it again.

Chivas didn’t mention Hernandez by name in announcing its fine, only saying that the team is against “behavior that reinforces stereotypes that limit the freedom, respect, and full development of all people, both inside and outside of sports.”

This is the first time that the federation has sanctioned a player for misogynistic comments. Earlier this year businessman Ricardo Salinas Pliego, the owner of the Mazatlán and Puebla clubs, made harsh statements about female journalists and was left unpunished.

Chicharito has been banned from the national team since 2019 after he, alongside other players, organized a non-authorized party in New York after a game against the United States.

Atlanta beats Mercury as Griner returns to Phoenix

PHOENIX, July 24, (AP): Allisha Gray scored 28 points, Brittney Griner had 17 points and eight rebounds against her former team and the Atlanta Dream beat the Phoenix Mercury 90-79.

Griner made her return to Phoenix where she played 11 seasons with the Mercury, helping lead them to the 2014 WNBA title and an appearance in the 2021 finals. The Mercury honored Griner with a tribute video before the game, with longtime teammate Diana Taurasi sitting courtside.

Gray gave Atlanta an 84-71 lead with 3:03 left before Sami Whitcomb made 3-pointers on back-to-back possessions to get Phoenix within seven points. Griner answered with a basket in the lane to extend Atlanta’s lead to 86-77.

Jordin Canada added 14 points and Shatori Walker-Kimbrough scored 11 for Atlanta (14-10), which won for the second time in five games. Rhyne Howard, Atlanta’s second-leading scorer at 16.5 points per game, did not play. Gray made 10 of 16 shots for her 10th 20-point game this.

Satou Sabally and Kahleah Copper returned to the starting lineup for Phoenix (15-8) after being out since July 3 due to injuries.

Sabally finished with 13 points, Copper added 10 and DeWanna Bonner scored 18. Alyssa Thomas had seven points, 11 rebounds and nine assists.

Gray scored 13 points in the first half to help Atlanta take a 39-34 lead. Phoenix shot just 29.7% from the field, including 3 of 15 from 3-point range, but stayed close by making all nine of its free-throw attempts.

Fritz wins opener at DC Open, Venus out in doubles

Sakkari eliminates No. 2 Navarro

WASHINGTON, July 24, (AP): Top-seeded Taylor Fritz got his North American hard-court season off to a strong start by hitting 11 aces and saving the only break point he faced in a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Aleksandar Vukic at the DC Open.

The second-seeded woman, Emma Navarro, was eliminated at night by Maria Sakkari 7-5, 7-6 (1). Sakkari was the 2023 runner-up to Coco Gauff in Washington.

Fritz is coming off a semifinal run on the grass of Wimbledon. He will be trying to replicate last year's strong showing in this portion of the season, when he reached his first Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open.

After getting a first-round bye, Fritz now will play in the third round against Matteo Arnaldi, who eliminated No. 16 Lorenzo Sonego 7-5, 7-5. Seeded men advancing included No. 7 Alex de Minaur, No. 8 Daniil



Venus

Medvedev, No. 9 Flavio Cobolli, and No. 11 Jiri Lehecka, but No. 5 Andrey Rublev was a 7-5, 6-2 loser against 19-year-old American Learner Tien, and No. 10 Alexei Popyrin was defeated by qualifier Wu Yibing 7-5, 5-7, 6-3. Tien has four wins over opponents ranked in the top 10 this season.

Venus Williams' run in doubles with partner Hailey Baptiste ended in the second round with a 6-4, 3-6, 10-6 loss in a champion's tiebreaker to second-seeded Taylor Townsend and Zhang Shuai. The 45-year-old Williams is competing at her first tournament in more than a year - and first in doubles since 2022 - and she and Baptiste won their first-round match on Monday.

Williams will play her second-round singles match Thursday against

Magdalena Frech. On Tuesday, Williams became the second-oldest woman to win a tour-level singles match, beating Payton Stearns - who is 23 - in straight sets.

In women's singles play Wednesday, unseeded Anna Kalinskaya eliminated No. 8 seed Magda Linette 6-4, 6-0, and No. 4 seed Clara Tauson beat qualifier Caroline Dolehide 3-6, 7-5, 6-4.

Williams' return to professional tennis will not just be a one-tournament visit: She was awarded a wild-card entry for next month's Cincinnati Open.

Williams' winning return to the professional tennis tour also came with a surprise announcement: She is engaged.

After becoming the second-oldest woman to win a tour-level singles match, Williams gave thanks to her fiancé, who was in the stands at the DC Open. He is Andrea Preti, who is a Danish-born Italian model and actor, according to the website IMDB.

Madrid and other giants could lose official Club World champion status



A file photo of Real Madrid players and coaches celebrating after winning the Club World Cup.

LONDON, July 24: FIFA is reportedly considering stripping several clubs — including record-holder Real Madrid — of the official “World Champion” title they earned under the previous Club World Cup format.

According to the British newspaper Daily Mail, FIFA has decided to recognize Chelsea, the winner of the revamped 2025 Club World Cup after a 4-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain, as the first official world champion in club football history. This marks a significant shift from

past editions of the tournament, which had been held annually since 2005.

Under the new classification, past winners such as Manchester United (2008), Liverpool (2019), and Manchester City (2023) would no longer be labeled world champions. Instead, they will be referred to as “FIFA Intercontinental Champions”, a separate title that should not be confused with the historic Intercontinental Cup, which once matched Europe's and South America's champions.

The new designation would also apply to eight other clubs, notably Real Madrid, which has lifted the trophy a record five times, as well as Barcelona (3 titles), Bayern Munich, Corinthians (2 titles each), and others like São Paulo (2005), Internacional (2006), AC Milan (2007), and Inter Milan (2010).

If the move is finalized, it would redefine the legacy of some of the most successful clubs in international football history.

Los Angeles Olympics in sight

McIntosh goes for 5 individual titles at worlds

SINGAPORE, July 24, (AP): Summer McIntosh won three individual gold medals a year ago at the Olympics, the star in the Paris pool alongside France's Léon Marchand.

Apparently unsatisfied with three, she'll go for five gold medals starting Sunday at the world swimming championships in Singapore. Call it a trial run for the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

The worlds is the highest profile swim meet since last year's Olympics, a showcase for newcomers as well as veterans who hope to stick around until Los Angeles.

McIntosh will be very busy during the eight days in the pool, packing her schedule with five individual events. She'll contend with prelims in some events, and she'll also add relays.

“This means 14 or 15 races she could swim in eight days, demanding races,” Canada's head coach Iain McDonald told The Associated Press. “It's a very challenging schedule she's set for herself.”

The 18-year-old Canadian set three world records in five days in June at the national trials. She broke her own 400-meter individual medley mark, dropping it to 4 minutes, 23.65 seconds, and set the 200 IM record (2:05.70) and the 400 freestyle record (3:54.18).

She was also a mere half-second behind the 200 butterfly record, which has stood since 2009, and just off the 800 freestyle record

set last month by American Katie Ledecky.

“She's such a versatile athlete, it's kind of tough to nail what her best events are,” McDonald said. “She's pretty good right across the spectrum.”

McIntosh will be the focus on Day 1 of the pool events in Singapore. She swims the 400 freestyle final, and comes back about 30 minutes later for a semifinal of the 200 IM.

Despite holding the world record in the 400 free, she's never won gold in the event at the Olympics or worlds. This time she's ready, and credits coach Fred Vernoux.

“I'm super pumped for the 400 freestyle and I'm really excited to see how I manage doing the double,” McIntosh told Canadian broadcaster the CBC.

McIntosh said Vernoux has boosted her endurance, pointing more to distance events.

“It's true that I haven't been able to do it on world stage yet,” she said of the 400. “I think going into past big meets I haven't had the confidence in my training and my freestyle in general - technique-wise and endurance-wise - that I have now.”

Ariarne Titmus was the gold medalist in Paris with silver for McIntosh, but the Australian swimmer is taking a year off. It's Titmus's record that McIntosh just broke. Ledecky, the bronze medalist in Paris, appears to be McIntosh's chief rival.

McIntosh will also face Ledecky in the 800, which might be the only race where McIntosh is not favored. It's probably 50-50, and it might be the biggest race of the championships.

Ledecky set the world record this year of 8:04.12, and McIntosh is right behind, having clocked 8:05.07.

“I think she loves it (the challenge),” Greg Meehan, the U.S. team director, said of Ledecky. “There are always threats coming at you because you've set yourself to be the gold standard.”

McIntosh dominates the two IM races, and should also be a favorite in the 200 butterfly.



In this file photo, Canada's Summer McIntosh holds a trophy for the Athlete of the Year at the World Short Course Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on Dec. 15, 2024. (AP)

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Ledecky's best race is the 1,500 where she holds the world record and also has the 23 top times in history in the event - and No. 25, too. McIntosh is not in the field here.

McIntosh, who will swim this fall under Bob Bowman at the University of Texas at Austin, arrived on the scene aged 14 at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, finishing fourth in the 400 free.

“She's been such a strong performer through her entire career at such a young age,” McDonald said. “But she always manages to surprise you, upping her game a little bit.”

Some of the attention in Singapore will be on 12-year-old Chinese swimmer Yu Zidi. Yu has qualified in the 200 and 400 IMs and the 200 butterfly and could face McIntosh in all three finals. Unbelievably, she could win a medal - at 12.

Yu's time of 2:10.63 in the Chinese championships in May was the fastest by any 12 year old - female or male - in history. She's also swum 2:06.83 in the 200 fly and 4:35.53 in the 400 IM. Both of those times would have been good for fourth place in last year's Olympics.

Astoundingly, Yu is 12 to 15 seconds faster than McIntosh was at age 12, depending on the event. That's roughly a half-lap of a 50-meter pool.

“There is always somebody coming up next,” McDonald said.

Al-Fadhel is close to joining Arabi

Shabib Al-Khaldi cleared to rejoin training after doping ban reduced

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: The Kuwait Anti-Doping Agency has reduced the suspension of Kazma and Kuwait national team player Shabib Al-Khaldi, allowing him to resume training with his club starting August 25.

Initially banned for two years starting February 26, 2024, the sanction was imposed after Al-Khaldi refused to undergo a doping test during the Super Cup final between Kazma and Kuwait Club in January.

The Arab Club delegation departed today for the UAE to begin their second phase of preseason training, which runs until August 8. The camp includes two friendly matches against Hatta and Banayias before the team travels to the Maldives for a crucial AFC Challenge League playoff against Maziya Sports Club on August 12.

The team is led by Portuguese coach Marco Alves and recently completed its first training phase last week with most players in attendance. Arabi has bolstered its squad with two new foreign signings—French-Guinean midfielder Hassimi Fadiga and Ugandan striker Kenneth Semakula—joining existing Nigerian imports Ayano Iwuala and Christopher John. The club is also negotiating to sign a fifth foreign player.

Local additions include Hamed Al-Harbi and Aziz Nassari. Assistant coach Ahmad Hael and Kenneth Semakula are



Shabib Al-Khaldi

expected to join the camp today or tomorrow.

Meanwhile, sources suggest that former Kuwait Club midfielder Talal Al-Fadhel is close to joining Arabi after his release from the club.

According to Iraqi media reports, Qadisiya's Rashid Al-Dossari and Arabi's Bandar Al-Salama have drawn interest from multiple Iraqi clubs for potential transfers in the upcoming season.

Preseason training kicks off tomorrow for Salmiya, Fahaheel, and Nasr as they prepare for the new 2024-2025 Zain Premier League season, which begins on September 12.

Other teams including Arabi, Qadisiya, Kuwait Club, Kazma, and Yarmouk have already started training earlier this month.

China and US advance to final

GERMANY, July 24, (Xinhua): China defeated Poland 71-67 after overtime to reach the women's basketball final at the Rhine-Ruhr World University Games.

China will face the United States, who edged Hungary 73-71 in the other semifinal, for the championship on Friday.

Chinese guard Tian Yuanyuan emerged as the hero, scoring all seven of her points in overtime after the two teams were tied 62-62 at the end of regulation.

China's small forward Chen Yujie shot nine of 14 for a game-high 24 points, including four of five from beyond the arc. Center Liu Yutong and power forward Tang Zhiting added 14 points apiece.

Poland's shooting guard Magdalena Szymkiewicz led her side with 13 points, while 2.01-meter center Kamila Borkowska contributed 12.

China started strong, jumping out to a 15-7 lead after Liu, Chen and Tang hit back-to-back 3-pointers, prompting Poland's coach to call a timeout with four minutes left in the first quarter.

Poland responded with a 26-11 run to take a 33-26 halftime lead.

China surged back in the third quarter with an 11-0 run to go ahead 37-33 midway through the period. Poland answered with

a 10-0 run of its own, capped by two free throws and a layup from Anna Winkowska, to take a 48-45 lead into the fourth.

Li Xingnuo opened the final quarter with a 3-pointer to level the game at 48-48. The teams traded baskets down the stretch, tying at 58-58 with 1:50 to play.

Szymkiewicz gave Poland a 60-58 lead with two free throws, but China responded with four straight points on a pair of layups. Poland's Julia Piestrzynska attacked the basket to tie it 62-62. After Li's missed 3-pointer, the game went to overtime.

Poland managed just three points in the extra period, falling behind 69-65 with 18 seconds remaining. A timeout and late foul strategy couldn't prevent China from sealing the 71-67 win.

“We have tired legs after yesterday's hard-fought quarterfinal win against Japan, so you could see we only scored a few points in the second quarter,” said Chinese coach Zhao Xuetong.

“In the halftime break, I told the players to play as we planned and don't think much about the result. To tell the truth, we have already reached where we expect before the Games,” added Zhao. “Reaching the last four is OK for us, so everyone is relaxed mentally.”

Deignan retires from cycling after announcing pregnancy

LONDON, July 24, (AP): British cyclist Lizzie Deignan, a former world champion who won the 'triple crown' of monuments, is retiring with immediate effect because she is expecting her third child.

Deignan, who was the first British athlete to win a medal on home soil at the 2012 London Olympics, had previously announced that she would call it quits at the end of the season.

But she brought forward her retirement, her team said.

“The Deignan family is growing,” the Lidl-Trek team said. “The former world champion,

who announced at the end of last year that 2025 would be her final season, has shared the joyful news that she is expecting her third child, a moment that subsequently marks Deignan's immediate retirement from the peloton.”

The 36-year-old Deignan competed in her fourth Olympics in Paris last year and was 12th in the road race. She was successful on the track first and then morphed into a one-day race specialist.

Deignan won the rainbow jersey at the 2015 world championships, one of her many professional road victories at the biggest races.

She's won all three women's monuments: The Tour of Flanders in 2016, Liege-Bastogne-Liege in 2020 and the inaugural Paris-Roubaix Femmes in 2021.

Deignan put her career on pause in 2018 when she had her first child, and planned to retire earlier but was convinced to carry on by her team.

She made a successful comeback in 2019, winning The Women's Tour in her first year back to top-level competition. She missed the 2022 season to welcome her second child before returning for a second time in 2023.

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NEWS



Germany's Sophia Kleinherne, right, makes sliding challenge against Spain's Salma Paralelo, during the Women's Euro 2025 semifinal soccer match between Germany and Spain at the Letzigrund stadium in Zurich, Switzerland. (AP)

Sports

Spain one step from historic treble

Rematch with England looms

ZURICH, July 24, (AP): Aitana Bonmatí scored in extra time to send Spain to its first Women's European Championship final with a 1-0 win over Germany, setting up a repeat of the 2023 World Cup title match.

A stubborn Germany performance had seen it take the world champions to extra time and Spain needed a superb strike from the two-time Ballon d'Or winner to secure a first win in nine attempts against Germany.

"I feel so proud. We deserved this," Bonmatí said. "We have played a great tournament throughout. We had a hard fight tonight, of course, because we were playing Germany. First to beat Germany and then to advance to the final of the Euros, who could ask for more?"

In the 113th minute, Athenea del Castillo threaded the ball through to Bonmatí, who got past Rebecca Knaak with a clever dummy and turn before squeezing home an audacious attempt from the tightest of angles.

"We had analyzed her and knew that she would leave the near post unprotected, and that is what happened. I just slotted it home," Bonmatí said.

Spain moved within one victory of adding the European Championship trophy to its collection after winning the World Cup and Nations League in the past two years.

Montse Tomé's team will face defending champion England on Sunday in a repeat of the World Cup final that Spain won 1-0 two years ago.

England also needed extra time for a 2-1 win over Italy.

It was a tough end to a stellar tournament for Berger, who had been the star of Germany's dramatic quarterfinal against France.

"I take the blame for that. The near post must be shut, absolutely," Berger said. "That's why I'm even more disappointed in myself.

"I can make as many saves as I want, but that one should have been mine, and that's why I'm incredibly sorry. For the team, not for me, but for those who gave their all."

Germany coach Christian Wück absolved Berger of any blame, and instead acknowledged her "saves that got us to where we are."

"We imagined it differently and to concede just before the end because of such a stroke of genius, that makes it incredibly bitter," he added.

Germany was bidding for a record-extending ninth European title but it was up against the world champion and pre-tournament favorite.

It almost surprised Spain early on when Klara Bühl ran onto a long ball from goalkeeper Berger, but her angled drive went narrowly past the right post.

Germany managed to stifle Spain's attack, which didn't have a real sight of



Spain's team cheers after winning the Women's Euro 2025 semifinal soccer match between Germany and Spain at the Letzigrund stadium in Zurich, Switzerland. (AP)

goal until the 21st minute when Berger made a fantastic save to tip a shot over the bar from the tournament's top goalscorer Esther González.

Giovanna Hoffmann should have given Germany the lead in the 29th but she missed the ball right in front of goal, with a fresh air shot, after excellent play by Jule Brand.

Spain ended the half strongly, however, and went closest to breaking the deadlock shortly before the interval when Irene Paredes headed a corner off the post and González's overhead kick was blocked.

Berger also had to make two smart saves in stoppage time, to deny first Gotham FC teammate González and then Clàudia Pina.

Germany managed to keep Spain star Bonmatí relatively quiet for almost an hour until she carved out some space for herself and curled in a shot that Sophia Kleinherne slid to stop.

Cata Coll had had little to do all night but the Spain goalkeeper kept her team in the tournament with a superb double save right at the end of regulation time, first to parry from Bühl and then to deny Carlotta Wamser.

Kostic describes tournament as a valuable opportunity for the young players

Kuwait takes on UAE as Arab Basketball Championship begins in Bahrain

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, July 24: Kuwait will tip off its campaign in the 26th Arab Basketball Championship this evening with a match against the UAE national team at 6:00 pm, as part of the first round of the tournament currently being hosted in Bahrain until August 2.

The opening day will also feature two other matches: Tunisia vs Algeria at 4:00 pm, and host Bahrain plays Qatar at 8:00 pm.

A total of seven teams are competing for the title: UAE, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait. The competition will follow a single round-robin format, with all teams facing each other once. The team with the highest points at the end will be crowned champion. All matches are being held at Khalifa Sports City Hall.

As part of its preparation, the Kuwaiti held an external training camp in Turkey, where it played three friendlies against Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Azerbaijan. The



Players preparing for the championship.

team is led by Serbian head coach Oliver Kostić and assistant coach Khaled Al-Qallaf.

Coach Kostić described the tournament as a valuable opportunity for the squad's young players, many of whom are experiencing their first major international competition.

"We played a number of friendly matches in the Istanbul camp, which helped create harmony among the players," Kostić said upon arriving in Bahrain. "We have a young team that we are trying to prepare for the future by giving

some players the opportunity to participate alongside the experienced players."

Ahmed Al-Balushi echoed the coach's sentiment, calling the tournament a chance to build a new core of players and allow emerging talent to gain experience at a high level.

"The tournament is very strong, with teams that have long histories in this competition," he said. "But we will give our best to perform at a decent level and present a respectable image to Kuwaiti fans."

Bahrain ends Kuwait's title hopes in West Asia Volleyball Championship



Players battling for the ball.

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, July 24: Kuwait bowed out of the inaugural West Asia Volleyball Championship after a straight-sets defeat to host Bahrain (0-3) in the quarterfinals, held at the Isa bin Rashid Hall in Manama. The tournament continues until July 27.

In other quarterfinal matchups, Saudi Arabia swept Jordan, Oman beat the UAE, and Qatar cruised past Lebanon – all by identical 3-0 scores.

Meanwhile, the semifinals will see Bahrain face Saudi Arabia and Qatar take on Oman.

In the group stage, Kuwait placed fourth in Group B with 3 points, narrowly missing third place to Oman due to set difference. Qatar topped the group with 8 points, followed by Saudi Arabia with 4.

Despite their efforts, Kuwait was unable to match Bahrain's performance. The hosts dominated the match and claimed the sets 25-15, 25-22, and 25-20, sealing a convincing and well-earned victory.

Kuwait U-16 basketball team departs for Egypt ahead of Arab Championship

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Kuwaiti under-16 basketball team is set to travel to Egypt for a 15-day training camp as part of its final preparations for the Arab Championship, which will take place in Cairo from August 10 to 17.

The delegation is led by Thamer Al-Shanfa, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Basketball Federation, and includes Mishaal Mohammed and Fahad Al-Bous as administrators. The team will be managed by Taleb Al-Kandari, with Talal Al-Qallaf serving as head coach and Yahya Al-Bahr as assistant coach.

The 16-player squad consists of: Abdulaziz Al-Tahous, Ali Abbas, Abdulrahman Al-Marzouq, Ali Al-Salahi, Omar Al-Asaq, Fareej Al-Freej,



Thamer Al-Shanfa

Ali Al-Hindal, Abdulaziz Al-Mutawa, Musaed Al-Obaidi, Omar Al-Saleh, Ali Al-Rabah, Abdulrahman Al-Rabah, Mishaal Al-Azmi, Abdullah Al-Jarid, Suwait Al-Dhafiri, and Abdulrahman

Al-Qatifi.

Speaking ahead of the trip, Al-Shanfa emphasized that this training camp is a key part of the national team's broader preparation strategy.

"This championship brings together some of the strongest teams in the Arab world, giving our players valuable experience and exposure," he said.

Al-Shanfa also reaffirmed the association's commitment to developing junior and youth teams by encouraging participation in regional and international tournaments.

"We're focused on creating opportunities for our young players to compete and grow by playing against top Arab teams," he added.

Sports icon Al-Hamad passes away

KUWAIT CITY, July 24: Kuwait lost one of its most prominent sports figures, Khaled Ahmed Marjan Al-Hamad, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Hamad made a lasting impact on the development of local sports and came from a family known for its passion for athletics.

He began his career as a player and was a founder of Al-Jazeera

Club. Later, he helped establish Al-Qadisiya Club in 1960 and served as its president for three consecutive terms.

He also chaired the Kuwait Volleyball Federation from 1964 to 1972 and became the first president of the Public Authority for Youth and Sports upon its establishment in 1992, a role he held until retiring in 2000.

Best of the Rest

New Zealand stays perfect: New Zealand stayed perfect at the T20 tri-series with a crushing 60-run win over host Zimbabwe on Thursday.

Tim Seifert (75) smashed his second successive half century and Rachin Ravindra made an entertaining 63 runs off 39 balls as New Zealand posted the tournament's highest total of 190-6 with its fourth straight win of the league stage.

New Zealand and South Africa had already secured their places in Saturday's final. (AP)

O'Connor claims Tour mountain stage

Pogacar withstands Vingegaard attacks to keep lead

COURCHEVEL, France, July 24, (AP): Ben O'Connor won Thursday's monster Alpine stage to the ski resort of Courchevel as three-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar responded to attacks from archrival Jonas Vingegaard and dropped him to cement his grip on the yellow jersey.

With just three stages left before the race ends in Paris, Pogacar looks poised to retain his title, with a comfortable lead of more than four minutes over Vingegaard, a two-time champion.

Stage 18 featured three extremely difficult ascents, including the 26.4-kilometer (16.5-mile) daunting climb of the Col de La Loze up to the finish. At 2,304 meters of altitude, La Loze is the highest sum-



Australia's Ben O'Connor crosses the finish line to win the eighteenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 171.5 kilometers (106.6 miles) with start in Vif and finish in Courchevel Col de la Loze, France. (AP)

mit in this year's Tour.

Two years ago, Vingegaard dropped Pogacar on that mountain on his way to his second Tour title but could not deal a decisive blow this time.

Riding behind O'Connor, Vingegaard and Pogacar closely watched each other in the final climb. Vingegaard attacked his Slovenian rival but Pogacar responded with ease. Vingegaard and his teammates had also tried to hurt the defending champion earlier in the day in the Col de La Madeleine, but their efforts left Pogacar unfazed.

The reigning world champion never panicked and accelerated near the end to drop Vingegaard in the last 500 meters and increase his overall lead.