



Heat peaks, dust swirls

Kuwait to roast under ‘furnace-like’ forecast

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department has forecast extremely hot weather during the day and warm to hot conditions at night throughout Kuwait this weekend.

The acting Director of the Meteorological Department Dhirar Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is currently affected by the Indian monsoon low-pressure system, accompanied by an intense heatwave. Winds are expected to be northwesterly to variable in direction, light to moderate in speed, and occasionally active, which will raise dust, particularly in open areas. Scattered clouds may also appear.

Regarding Friday’s forecast, Al-Ali explained that the weather will remain extremely hot during the day, with northwesterly winds ranging between 12 km/h and 38 km/h. Maximum temperatures are expected to range between 47°C and 49°C. Sea conditions will be slight to moderate, with wave heights between two and four feet.

Friday night is expected to remain warm to hot, with scattered clouds and light to moderate northwesterly winds ranging between 12 km/h and 32 km/h. Minimum temperatures are forecast to range between 32°C and 34°C. Sea conditions will remain slight to moderate, with wave heights between two and four feet.

Extremely hot weather is expected during the day on Saturday, with light to moderate winds from the northwest to variable in direction, ranging between 10 km/h and 38 km/h. Scattered clouds may appear, and maximum temperatures are expected to range from 48°C to 50°C. The sea will remain slight to moderate, with waves between two and four feet.

Saturday night will be warm to hot and relatively humid, especially along coastal areas. Winds will be variable to northwesterly, light to moderate, ranging from 12 km/h to 32 km/h. Minimum temperatures are expected to range from 33°C to 35°C. Sea conditions will continue to be slight to moderate, with wave heights between one and four feet.



HH the PM chairs the ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace.

High-level meeting follows up on Kuwait-China deals

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (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 21st 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,

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HH the PM chairs a meeting on Thursday with Minister of Education along with several officials.

Education minister presents reform plan to Kuwait’s PM

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting on Thursday with Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei to present the Education Reform Plan for 2025-2027, at Al-Bayan Palace.

Minister Al-Tabtabaei presented the

plan, which included administrative, financial, engineering, education development, and automation steps to meet international standards.

The plan is comprised of 39 strategic goals; 61 percent of which have been

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Custody clashes take toll on kids

Visitation woes rise with Kuwait’s divorce wave

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: In light of the recent announcement by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) that divorce cases among Kuwaitis have surpassed 80,000 by mid-2025, and amid growing concern over the emotional toll on children, a number of legal and psychological experts have called for closing the loopholes that hinder justice in visitation centers established to facilitate meetings between divorced fathers and their children in maternal custody.

Lawyer Jamal Al-Khatib explained that many fathers face several problems at these centers for visiting their children. It is important to deal with these problems, such as by training staff on legal procedures to prevent bias or emotional favoritism toward one parent. Employees at these centers play a major role similar to that of prosecutors and judges in ensuring justice.

Overcrowding in some visitation centers has become a serious issue, with children often forced to stand in line, as if at school, waiting for their turn. This situation sometimes leads custodial mothers to leave the center with their children before the scheduled visitation

takes place.

Lawyer Al-Khatib called for better management of visitation appointments and an increase in the number of centers to accommodate the rising demand.

He stressed the importance of clear regulations governing fathers’ visitation rights and the strict enforcement of laws against violations.

Lawyer Al-Khatib proposed forming a committee that includes lawyers, judges, sociologists, psychologists, selected representatives from the divorced community, and relevant authorities to develop new mechanisms that address existing gaps and ensure a fair and efficient visitation system.

Meanwhile, Court of Cassation and Constitutional Court Lawyer Khaled Al-Dalmani emphasized that the law governing visitation rights for divorced fathers prioritizes the best interests of the child while seeking to balance the visitation rights of both parents.

He expressed concern over the presence of loopholes in the practical application of the law, which can sometimes result in one party gaining an unfair advantage over the other.

Lawyer Al-Dalmani explained that while the law is sound in principle, it requires stronger regulatory enforcement and amendments to close implementation gaps. These include more flexible visitation schedules, the possibility of extending visitation time, and allowing children to stay overnight with their fathers in cases where such rights exist but are not upheld.

He stressed the need to increase the number of visitation centers and to develop them under both psychological and legal supervision.

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Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah joins Moroccan Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Ben Issa, Minister of Social, Childhood and Family Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, and other distinguished guests for a commemorative photo during the celebration of Morocco’s Throne Day.

Morocco looks to strengthen trade, investment links

Bilateral relations with Kuwait model of Arab cooperation: Moroccan envoy

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Moroccan Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Ben Issa has affirmed that the presence of Minister of Social, Childhood and Family Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah at the Moroccan Throne Day celebration “is an embodiment of the good and strong relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the State of Kuwait.”

In a press statement during the Moroccan Embassy’s celebration of the 26th anniversary of the accession of King Mohammed VI to the throne, Issa asserted that relations between the two countries are historic; covering all aspects of cooperation and friendship between the brotherly peoples and leaders of the two countries.

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Ambassador Ali Ben Issa and Minister Al-Huwailah cut the cake in celebration of Moroccan Throne Day.

Other Voices

TICAD9 and the Japan-Kuwait partnership: Strengthening development cooperation

By MUKAI Kenichiro

Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait

The Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD9) will be held in Yokohama, Japan from August 20-22, 2025 under the theme “Co-create Innovative Solutions with Africa”. TICAD is a long-standing international conference and platform led by the Japanese Government since 1993. It is focused on promoting Africa-led sustainable development under the two principles, African ownership and international partnership, in the priority areas of human capital development, human security, private sector-led growth, and quality infrastructure. TICAD provides an opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders, including African countries and development partners such as regional and international organizations, donor countries, the private sector, academia and civil society organizations, to discuss how to respond to regional and international complex challenges.

Strengthening Cooperation with Kuwait:

TICAD plays a vital role in uniting various nations and organizations for promoting development in Africa, with Japan playing a central role in hosting the forum. Simultaneously, Japan has been actively developing cooperative relationships with key international partners to



MUKAI Kenichiro

amplify the impact of our cooperation in Africa. Notably, a strengthened partnership with Kuwait is pivotal. On the occasion of the successful visit of His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to Japan, in May 2025, Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on International Cooperation between Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) was signed to strengthen cooperation in the field of development. The areas of cooperation will include exchanging information and best practices, conducting consultations, and jointly identifying potential projects, and so on. The MoC also provides a foundation for various activities and collaborations, such as jointly aiding third countries in the region including Africa and delivering capacity-building workshops in Japan.

The Significance of the Japan-Kuwait Partnership:

The collaboration between Japan and Kuwait is especially important in the context of TICAD9. Japan warmly welcomes the presence of KFAED in the forum, as it represents the first meeting focused on development since the signing of the MoC between our nations, which is essential for sharing visions and finding the next step for further practical collaboration. Furthermore, the participation of KFAED, which has extensive knowledge and experience in the development sector in Africa and other regions, will further enhance the influence and importance of TICAD9 in bringing resilient and sustainable growth to Africa.

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Kuwait hails Canadian, Maltese recognition of Palestinian State

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait welcomed on Thursday Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney’s and Maltese Prime Minister Robert Abela’s announcement of their countries’ intention to recognize the State of Palestine.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry praised these positive decisions, which would contribute to achieving relevant UN Security Council resolutions; along with the Arab Peace Initiative, in enabling the Palestinian people of having their independent state on the 1967 border, with East Jerusalem as capital.

The statement underlined necessity for similar steps in the future to support a just and inclusive solution to the Palestinian cause.

Canada and Malta announced Wednesday they will recognize the state of Palestine in September, joining France and the United Kingdom in stepping up pressure to end the nearly 80-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Carney

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made the announcement after a Cabinet meeting. Christopher Cutajar, the permanent secretary at Malta’s Foreign Ministry, made his country’s announcement earlier at the U.N. General Assembly’s meeting on a two-state solution to the conflict which was extended to a third day because of the high number of countries wanting to speak.

Cutajar said Malta has long supported self-determination for the Palestinian people, and “as responsible actors, we have a duty to work to translate the concept of a two-state solution from theory into practice.”

“It is for this reason that the government of Malta has taken the principled decision to formally recognize the state of Palestine at the upcoming U.N. General Assembly in September,” he said.

Carney said Canada will also make its announcement at the annual gathering of world leaders which starts Sept. 23. He said the intention is predicated on the Palestinian Authority “holding general elections in 2026 in which Hamas can play no part, and to demilitarize the Palestinian state.” Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made those promises in a June 10 letter and it’s unclear what more Carney is seeking.

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2 When Kuwait’s diplomacy falters



8 Gulf Bank concludes the third edition of the ‘Fekrety’ innovation competition

11 Lure of Luoyang

Zain official sponsor of BPC TOUR 4 Padel Tournament in Marbella

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:38	Asr	15:30
Sunrise ..	05:07	Maghrib ..	18:41
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:07

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Very hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h.			
By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	Weather
Kuwait City	49	38	Salmiyah
Kuwait Airport	50	39	Ahmadi
Abdaly	51	32	Nuwaisib
Jahra	51	37	Wafra
			Salmiyah
			Ahmadi
			Nuwaisib
			Wafra
			Salmiyah
			Managish



Cadet officers and officials at the draw event.

200 applicants, 114 reservists nominated in public draw for cadets

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Ministry of Interior has conducted a public draw to select candidates for admission to the 49th batch of cadet officer courses at the Police College, as well as candidates for admission to external scholarship courses at the military and police colleges in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and the Coast Guard Specialty Course at Mohammad bin Ghanem College in Qatar.

The draw resulted in the nomination of 200 applicants and 114 reservists. It was held at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Halls Complex under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousuf Al-Sabah, with acting Undersecretary of the ministry Major General Ali Al-Adwani and a number of senior officers in attendance.

Director of the Registration and Admissions Department at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences

Colonel Ahmad Al-Juma pointed out that holding the public draw is a national step to promote justice, and it is a manifestation of the commitment to standards of integrity and transparency in selecting citizens to join the security forces.

On the other hand, Assistant Director of the Registration and Admissions Department at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences Colonel Mohammad Al-Mutairi made a brief presentation on the number of applicants to join all courses through the unified government e-services application like Sahel, which reached 4,203.

He revealed that "after the initial screening and review of the applications; 2,306 applicants who met the basic conditions and criteria for registration were selected."

Al-Mutairi confirmed that the applicants underwent aptitude, general culture and physical fitness tests in line with

military work requirements. He added that they passed personal interviews under the direct supervision of Al-Adwani with the participation of a specialized committee. The interviews resulted in 1,985 applicants who met the initial registration and admission requirements qualifying for the lottery.

He disclosed that the number required to join the 49th batch of Cadet Officers Course is 150, in addition to 50 reserve seats; while the number of seats for the external scholarship courses in GCC countries totaled 45, along with 45 reserve seats. He added the Coast Guard course at Mohammad bin Ghanem Al Ghanem College in Qatar has five seats and 19 reserve seats.

He said all candidates will undergo advanced medical examinations as the final stage of admission to ensure that all specified requirements and standards are met.



The draw in progress.

Kuwait rolls out relief drive for Gaza people

3-day donations begin Aug 3

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Ministry of Social Affairs has launched an urgent relief campaign to support the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. This campaign is in line with the directives of Kuwait's political leadership and reflects the country's firm and ongoing support for the Palestinian cause.

The campaign is being carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and involves the participation of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) along with several charitable organizations.

Iman Al-Enezi, the acting Director of the Charitable Associations and Foundations Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs, announced that collection of financial donations have been approved for a three-day period starting

Sunday, August 3, through the official online platforms of the participating relief organizations.

She explained that the ministry has authorized the collection of in-kind food donations beginning Thursday, July 31, for the remaining charities, in accordance with established guidelines and regulations.

The participating charities and foundations are required to purchase food supplies exclusively from the Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company, in accordance with Cabinet Resolution No. 1461. Approved charities are permitted to place their official labels on the aid packages, and all in-kind donations must be delivered to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), which will coordinate their transfer to the appropriate relief agencies in Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine.

The ministry does not allow the launch of new financial donation campaigns outside the designated framework. Funding is limited to existing relief project balances or personal contributions from the participating charities.

Al-Enezi affirmed that Kuwaiti charitable work represents a core pillar of the state's foreign policy and conveys a consistent message that reflects the values of Kuwaiti society and its long-standing tradition of humanitarian support.



KUNA photo Al-Mazrouei and Dr Saud Al-Zamanan at the meeting.

'Need to keep pace with auditing, finance hold'

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) chaired the 26th meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) audit institution undersecretaries on Wednesday via videoconference, headed by Deputy President Yousef Al-Mazrouei.

Al-Mazrouei highlighted the meeting's role in strengthening Gulf cooperation and enhancing joint oversight capacities.

He said participants reviewed the strategic training and development plan, a cornerstone for boosting human resource efficiency and keeping pace with advancements in auditing and financial control.

Al-Mazrouei stressed the bodies' commitment to international standards and modern methods, noting the development of new audit manuals to safeguard public funds.

He commended member proposals and studies aimed at improving workflows, hoping for constructive recommendations that advance Gulf cooperation.

Meanwhile, SAB's Acting Assistant Undersecretary of the Administrative and Financial Affairs and Information Technology Department Dr. Saud Al-Zamanan said the meeting examined outcomes of the 2023 25 strategic training plan.

It also reviewed a draft training plan for 2026-28 and the results of the sixth GCC research competition in auditing and accounting.

Delegates considered the UAE Audit Office's proposal on governance of GCC General Secretariat account reviews and a draft by law for the 2026-27 excellence award.

They discussed initiatives from the working group on audit rules, including a Gulf Financial Audit Week, impact assessment forms for GCC manuals, simplification tools, and a proposal to rename the group.

MoSA: 11 public benefit associations dissolved

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Ministry of Social Affairs dissolved 11 public benefit associations for failure to amend their legal status in accordance with the relevant law and bylaws.

In a press statement on Wednesday, the ministry clarified that it took such a decision after granting these associations a grace period and the issuance of three official warnings.

The ministry affirmed that this measure is in line with its efforts to regulate the work of public benefit associations and ensure their compliance with the regulations, while preserving their societal role and enhancing confidence in their performance.

It explained that the dissolved associations did not take the initiative to rectify their status after receiving the legal warnings, which necessitated taking action in accordance with the rules and regulations.

It also confirmed its commitment to provide an effective regulatory environment that ensures the continuation of civil society work in an institutional and organized manner.

It added that it continues to provide support and guidance to public benefit associations to improve their performance and strengthen their commitment to the legal framework, which contributes to the achievement of community development goals.

Illegal meds seized: Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, conducted an inspection campaign at a private medical clinic in Salmiya, based on directives from First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaign resulted in the seizure of unlicensed and unknown-source medications, as well as violations related to improper storage that did not meet health standards.

Legal action was taken against the clinic staff, with six individuals referred to the relevant authorities. Administrative deportation orders were carried out for the violators.

PAM affirmed its ongoing monitoring efforts, in coordination with concerned agencies, to protect public health and deter violations.

Other Voices

When Kuwait's diplomacy falters

By Abdulaziz Mohammad Al-Anjeri

From its earliest days as a modern state, Kuwait has viewed diplomacy as more than foreign representation. It is a reflection of national identity. A diplomat is not simply a messenger but a living expression of the country's intellect, awareness, and presence on the world stage.

During periods of stability, underwhelming diplomatic performance might go unnoticed. But in times of regional shifts and political uncertainty, the need for capable, strategic representation becomes critical.

This is not an attempt to single out individuals or assign blame to particular ambassadors. That would reduce a deeper issue to personal shortcomings. The real concern lies in the absence of vision, in the reliance on personal improvisation in place of structured guidance, clear standards, and institutional direction.

The issue is not a matter of isolated slip-ups. It is a repeated pattern. We see the effects when an ambassador lacks depth, shows no preparation, or



Al-Anjeri

confuses charm for credibility and social pleasantries for diplomatic messaging.

Some recent media appearances have unintentionally exposed these weaknesses. They leave us asking a difficult but necessary question. If this is what we see in public, what happens behind closed doors in private briefings in which the consequences are real, even if they are not immediate.

This perspective is informed by years of professional engagement with diplomats, journalists, and researchers in institutions stretching from Washington to Tokyo. As a member of leading international press and policy forums, I hear and see the reputation we carry.

Kuwait is not a newcomer. While many nations still struggle for a voice, we already have one. But unless we protect it, refine it, and strengthen it, we may wake up one day to find that voice gone. Not silenced by others, but diminished by our own neglect and lack of preparation.

This is why we must remember a truth that applies to any nation. Countries are built through steady effort. They fall through quiet complacency.

The question now is whether we have the courage to question the cracks, act with purpose, and restore what should never have been allowed to fade.



Kuwait University photo Kuwait University delegation meets the Tajik ambassador.

KU to strengthen academic cooperation with Tajikistan

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Vice President for Planning and acting Vice President for Academic Affairs at Kuwait University Prof. Osama Al-Omair recently met with Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the State of Kuwait Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda at Sabah Al-Salem University City.

The visit aimed to strengthen academic cooperation and explore opportunities for student exchange and joint cultural initiatives.

During the meeting, Al-Omair affirmed the commitment of the university to build global academic partnerships. He stressed that the meeting reflects the strategic focus of the university on enhancing student exchange programs, research collaboration, and joint cultural initiatives to enrich academic and scientific engagement.

Pledge to overcome customs staff perils

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Director General of the General Administration of Customs (GAC) Fatima Al-Qallaf, during an inspection tour of the Nuwaiseeb Customs Department, reaffirmed the authority's commitment to supporting customs staff and port employees, and overcoming all obstacles they face, to ensure the highest levels of discipline and efficiency in protecting Kuwait's security, reports Al-Anba daily.

The visit focused on assessing the readiness of customs inspectors, monitoring work procedures, and reviewing the quality of services provided to travelers and cargo movement.

Al-Qallaf was received by Deputy Director for Investigation and Research Sami Al-Kandari, along with several senior officials.

According to a statement issued by GAC, Al-Qallaf met with several port employees, including department heads and inspectors, who provided a detailed overview of daily workflows, inspection procedures, and methods to facilitate the movement of goods and passengers without compromising customs security.

She also toured customs inspection, audit, and documentation facilities, and reviewed the performance and readiness of technical equipment used to detect prohibited items and ensure accuracy in seizure and inspection operations. Al-Qallaf praised the dedication and efforts of the port staff, stressing the importance of continuously improving professional performance, enhancing interdepartmental coordination, and utilizing modern technology to strengthen oversight and facilitate procedures.

Life for Saudi poet in nationality fraud

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Criminal Court, headed by Counselor Abdulwahab Al-Muaili, sentenced a well-known Saudi poet to life imprisonment for forging Kuwaiti citizenship and embezzling public funds.

The court also imposed a fine of KD1,793,000 and ordered him to return the money he obtained unlawfully.

Investigations revealed that the accused obtained Kuwaiti citizenship in 1995, at the age of 34. After being added to the file of a deceased Kuwaiti citizen; he changed his name, renounced his Saudi citizenship, and obtained a birth certificate dated 1972 despite the fact that he was born 11 years earlier.

The decision to withdraw citizenship included his 27 children (male and female), because their nationality is linked to his forged citizenship; the case documents showed that the accused left Kuwait in 2016 and his citizenship was withdrawn in June 2024.

diwaniya

ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

2nd of August stays an unhealed wound

“ON August 2, 1990, the world woke up to a shocking event that changed the course of history in the Arabian Gulf. Iraqi forces, led by the regime of Saddam Hussein, launched a swift and brutal invasion of Kuwait. This painful memory, known as the “Invasion of Kuwait” remains deeply etched in the memory of the Kuwaiti people and the Arab world. It stands as a symbol of injustice and suffering, but also as a powerful testament to resilience and determination in the face of adversity.”

Kuwaiti journalist **Hamed Al-Hamli** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The roots of this conflict lie in a complex web of political, economic, and historical factors.

“Iraq, having just emerged from an eight-year war with Iran (1980–1988), was grappling with a severe economic crisis fueled by mounting debts and plummeting oil prices.

“The Iraqi regime accused Kuwait of exceeding its OPEC oil production quota, claiming this was harming the struggling Iraqi economy. It also revived historical border disputes, alleging that Kuwait had encroached on oil fields in the Rumaila area.

“However, these justifications served merely as a façade for the regime’s true ambitions, which was the annexation of Kuwait, one of the richest oil-producing countries in the region.

“Hence, in the early hours of August 2, Iraqi forces crossed the Kuwaiti border, marking the beginning of a dark chapter of occupation that would last for seven months.

“During those months, the Kuwaiti people suffered from immense injustice and oppression. The country witnessed systematic looting, arbitrary arrests, and severe human rights violations. Infrastructure was destroyed, and both government and private institutions were plundered and sabotaged.

“In one of the largest environmental disasters in history, oil wells were set ablaze, sending thick black smoke across the skies of the region for months.

“Yet amid these tragedies, the Kuwaiti people displayed extraordinary resilience. A popular resistance movement emerged, defying the occupation through covert operations and civic awareness campaigns. This resistance played a major role in preserving the spirit of hope and defiance until liberation was achieved on February 26, 1991, through the efforts of the U.S.-led international coalition in “Operation Desert Storm.”

“The painful anniversary of the invasion carries profound lessons, foremost among them is the vital importance of national unity in the face of adversity. The Kuwaiti people proved that their cohesion and inner strength were unmatched weapons in confronting the occupation.

“Secondly, the crisis highlighted the power of international solidarity in standing against aggression. The diplomatic and military efforts of the international coalition were instrumental in restoring Kuwait’s sovereignty and rights.

“Finally, this anniversary serves as a powerful reminder of the need to pursue lasting peace and stability in the region, free from conflict and greed.

“Following liberation, Kuwait embarked on an ambitious journey of reconstruction, reclaiming its role as a prosperous and active member of the international community.

“However, the psychological and material scars of the invasion remain etched in the memory of generations. Kuwaitis mark this day each year not only to remember the pain, but to renew their pledge to protect their homeland and uphold its sovereignty and independence.

“The painful anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is more than a historical event; it is a living lesson in steadfastness and sacrifice. It serves as a constant reminder of the true value of freedom and independence, and of the fact that resilient nations can overcome even the most daunting challenges.

“As we commemorate the martyrs who gave their lives in defense of Kuwait, let us also look ahead with hope to a future built on peace, cooperation, and mutual respect among nations, a future that is free from war and conflict.”

Also:

“Every year, on August 2, we do not simply remember a passing event, but we pause before a wound that still bleeds, a memory that continues to sting with the salt of time. The memory is filled with images of the invasion, then liberation, and then an endless period of waiting,” columnist Major General Eng. **Faisal Musaed Al-Jazzaf** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“For 34 years, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters have lived among us, still waiting for the remains of those who gave their lives for the nation. The issue of the martyrs is not just a humanitarian concern, rather, it is a national and sovereign priority that must stand at the forefront of both governmental and public action.

“It is not acceptable to manage this issue based on convenience or the logic of a “suitable moment.” Instead, it must be redefined as a central cause that demands professional research teams, a precise strategy, firm political will, and a clear timeline.

“We recognize the magnitude of the challenges this issue has faced over the past decades, and we understand that the passage of time does not mean turning the page. Instead, it signals that the moment has come for a thorough performance review, the introduction of new and qualified energies, and a renewed negotiation

with the relevant parties marked by transparency and determination.

“The fate of the martyrs must not remain unknown while their families continue to wait without end.

“On this day, we proudly remember the unity of the Kuwaiti people, their resilience, and the blood of their sons and daughters that nourished the homeland in defense of dignity and sovereignty. Glory to every martyr, male and female, and heartfelt appreciation to all who have served this cause with dedication, including committees, individuals, and institutions.

“The liberation of Kuwait is a powerful lesson in what a strong national can achieve. However, this lesson will not be complete until every martyr returns to their homeland. We must seize the opportunity offered by the recent improvement in our relations with top figures in the Iraqi government and other national leaders to resolve this issue with honesty, justice, and unwavering loyalty.”

“We are closely monitoring how the Iraqi media and social platforms are dealing with the Khor Abdullah Agreement, signed in 2013 between Kuwait and Iraq, which has now evolved into a political, economic, and social point of contention between the Iraqi parliament and government,” **Kuwaiti writer Tariq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Some Iraqi parliamentarians and activists, who categorically reject the agreement and call for its cancellation, are fueling a new political, economic, and social crisis between the two sisterly countries.

“At such a time, reason must prevail. The common interests of both countries must take precedence, and all major issues should be resolved with wisdom.

“Despite the painful events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, we in Kuwait, both government and people, have always maintained political, economic, and social positions that support Iraqi civil society, its government, and its presidency. We are committed to building bridges of communication, understanding, and cooperation with our Iraqi brothers, in accordance with the constitutions of both countries and in respect of international agreements.

“Therefore, I believe it is essential for a Kuwaiti economic delegation to meet with its Iraqi counterpart at all levels to discuss the Khor Abdullah issue and explore ways to maximize benefits for both countries.

“All parties must clearly and publicly reject the notion of allowing the vital Khor Abdullah to become a point of conflict, like what happened between Panama and the United States over the Panama Canal.

“We urgently need to strengthen economic and social understandings between the two parties within the framework of existing agreements to ensure the success of this important project, resolve any controversy, and overcome ongoing challenges.

“A solution is both available and achievable, especially when the sea and land are part of one Arabian Gulf, shared by two sisterly countries and peoples. Therefore, a clear vision must be concluded to serve the interests of both sides.”

“In a qualitative step toward developing infrastructure and improving quality of life, several areas in the country are undergoing a major restructuring of the road network, a project considered one of the biggest achievements in recent years.

The project is led by a team of specialized engineers under the leadership of the Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan. They have devoted their expertise and efforts to implementing radical reforms that citizens have been waiting for years,” columnist **Abdullah Sahood Al-Fadhli** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The project has expanded to include comprehensive infrastructure upgrades ranging from rainwater drainage systems and water networks to resurfacing asphalt, improving sidewalks, and installing modern lighting in line with international safety standards. These efforts have not only eased traffic flow but also helped restore the city’s urban aesthetic.

“In recent months, the ministry has rehabilitated dozens of kilometers of roads and upgraded vital intersections previously plagued by frequent traffic congestion. The integration of smart technologies, such as digital traffic signals and road monitoring systems, has further enhanced traffic efficiency and safety.

“From the heart of the field and the core of the project, the names of many engineers and supervisors who dedicated their time and effort to this national endeavor resonate loudly. Chief among them is Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, whose meticulous leadership and visionary planning turned challenges into achievable goals and brought order to complexity.

“Thanks to every engineer who contributed to this achievement. Such projects succeed only through the quiet, persistent dedication of those committed to building a better present and a brighter future.

“These projects go beyond mere restoration; they form the foundation of a comprehensive infrastructure renaissance in line with sustainable development goals, opening new horizons for urban growth to meet the needs and hopes of future generations.”

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

Labor homes on boats prone to disaster: KFF



Goods stored in a boat haphazardly.



A KFF inspector searching the boat.

KFF photos

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) carried out an inspection campaign of wooden boats (dhows) in Shamlan Harbor on Wednesday evening, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The campaign was carried out in coordination with the General Directorate of Coast Guard, the General Department of Residency Affairs Investigations, Kuwait Ports Authority, the Public Au-

thority for Manpower (PAM), the Environment Public Authority (EPA), the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), and the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN).

In a press statement, KFF explained that several wooden boats were issued warnings to remove violations and comply with safety and fire prevention regulations. The

violations included using boats as worker housing, storing highly flammable materials, the presence of cooking stoves and gas cylinders on board, and insufficient spacing between boats, which could significantly increase the risk of fires and their rapid spread.

KFF urged boat owners to adhere strictly to safety and fire prevention guidelines to protect lives and property.

‘Keep beaches clean’

Over fishing, waste threaten environs

By **Inaas Awadh**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The official spokesperson of Kuwait Municipality and Director of the Public Relations Department, Mohammad Al-Sindan, has warned of growing threats to the marine environment due to ongoing violations, most notably over fishing and the dumping of waste into the sea and along beaches.

In a press statement, Al-Sindan lamented that these illegal practices are causing huge harm to marine life, including the depletion of fish populations and the destruction of coral reefs in the Gulf, which exposes many marine species to serious risk.

He said Kuwait Municipality’s cleaning teams are working continuously to clean the beaches, especially amid a rising number of beachgoers and the resulting increase in waste.

Al-Sindan stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation and unifying efforts among relevant agencies to protect coral reefs, describing them as a national resource and vital breeding ground for several marine species.

He called for the establishment of marine reserves and the implementation of a sustainable system to protect fishery resources, which contribute to the preservation of marine ecological balance.



Lt. Gen. Hashim Al-Rifai

KUNA photo

Al-Rifai promoted and referred for retirement

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah has issued a decision for promoting Lieutenant General Hashem Abdulrazzaq Al-Rifai, Deputy Commander of the National Guard, to the rank of Colonel General and approving his retirement upon his request, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In a brief statement, the National Guard confirmed that his retirement follows many years of honorable military service and a distinguished career marked by achievements in every position he held, leaving a lasting legacy in various fields.

Mol sheds light on bid to battle human trade

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior organized an introductory lecture on Thursday, in coordination with the National Diwan for Human Rights (NDHR), to commemorate the 2025 World Day Against Trafficking in Persons at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences.

During the lecture, an overview of Kuwait’s efforts in combating human trafficking was presented, shedding light on this serious crime that affects human dignity.

The Interior Ministry’s confirmed its commitment to supporting awareness and training programs that meet international standards, while enhancing cooperation with relevant bodies to entrench human rights principles with its security framework.

3 bags of drugs with Jleeb expat peddler

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Rescue officers referred an expatriate to the Drug Control General Department after arresting him in an abnormal condition in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh with three bags of narcotics in his possession, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

During interrogation, the expatriate confessed that he tried to sell the drugs to individuals he contacted by telephone. Detectives are currently tracking down these individuals.

The expatriate was arrested after rousing the suspicion of officers while he was walking, as he appeared disoriented. He was detained and legal action is being taken against him.

Duo acquitted of liquor trafficking

Invalid warrant: lawyer

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The **Misdemeanor Court acquitted two individuals charged with liquor trafficking after they were arrested in an entrapment set up by the Drug Control General Department, citing invalid arrest and search procedures.**

In its ruling, the court affirmed that the arguments presented by Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan – the defendants’ lawyer – regarding the invalidity of the arrest and search warrant, as it was issued after expiration, are valid and based on the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The court cited Article 44 of the Code, stipulating that a written search warrant must be issued when necessary, which was not the case when the defendants were arrested. It asserted that mere suspicion or observation of the defendants in an abnormal condition does not constitute a case of flagrante delicto that justifies an arrest without a warrant.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants with possessing alcoholic beverages for the purpose of trafficking, after they were arrested in Hawally when a secret agent gave them marked money to purchase the liquor. A total of 27 Chivas Regal bottles and 36 Black Label bottles were confiscated from the defendants, in addition to cash amounting to KD395.

The arresting officer indicated that the defendants admitted the confiscated items belong to them for the purpose of selling. However, Al-Qattan argued that the search warrant was not valid at the time of arrest, which renders the arrest and subsequent search invalid, as well as the evidence derived from such procedures. The court accepted this argument and acquitted the defendants.

Disability case won: The Administrative Division at the Court of First Instance ruled in favor of a Kuwaiti citizen, ordering the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) to classify a girl’s condition as ‘permanent and severe’ disability and to issue an official certificate reflecting this status, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The ruling is in response to a lawsuit filed by Attorney Obaid Al-Anzi on behalf of his client, who claimed that her daughter suffers from a physical disability that severely limits her ability to carry out daily activities. The condition, supported by a detailed medical report, meets the legal criteria for classification as ‘permanent and severe’.

Al-Anzi requested that a specialized medical committee be assigned to conduct a comprehensive physical and auditory assessment of the girl’s condition. The goals were to reevaluate her medical condition based on supporting documents, determine the nature and extent of the disability from the date it started, and challenge the earlier decision of the authority to exclude her from the official list of severe and permanent disability cases.

The court sided with the plaintiff, revoking the previous decision of the authority and instructing it to formally recognize the girl’s condition. The verdict paves the way for the girl to receive the full range of benefits and services for individuals with severe and permanent disabilities under Kuwaiti law.

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Education Minister launches probe into admin violations

MoE suspends staff over forged seals

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has issued a directive to refer several employees to the Legal Affairs Department and open a comprehensive investigation into the incident in which an employee committed serious administrative violations when he used unauthorized signature seals to issue transfer decisions, assignment to official duties, and exemptions from fingerprint attendance, although he has no authority to do so.

In a press statement on Thursday, the Ministry of Education con-

firmed that the directive is in line with the commitment to instill the principles of integrity and transparency among the employees, as well as to strictly implement laws and administrative regulations. It added this is part of ongoing efforts to address administrative violations and combat practices that undermine institutional discipline.

The ministry indicated that the investigation included a number of direct supervisors, as they are responsible for monitoring the work of the concerned employee, in accordance with the rules on administrative ac-

countability and compliance with oversight procedures in the work units.

It revealed that the violations were uncovered through the continuous implementation of the approved monitoring and auditing mechanisms, which ensure accurate and systematic implementation of oversight systems. It affirmed that legal action was taken immediately and a detailed report was prepared, based on which the concerned employees were referred for investigation.

Al-Tabtabaei also issued a ministerial decision to suspend the erring employee for three months, pending an investigation into the serious violations he committed. These violations include his unlawful use of his supervisor's signature stamp when issuing transfer decisions, use of another signature on official permits and assignments used for personal gain, and releasing official letters using seals without the knowledge of the competent authorities.



Al-Tabtabaei



A group photo of the commanders of the land forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Kuwait hosts 23rd GCC land forces meet

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): GCC land force commanders held their 23rd meeting on Wednesday in Kuwait, in coordination of the Unified Military Command.

In a statement, the General Staff of the Kuwait Army said the meeting was chaired by Commander

of the Land Forces Brigadier Hamad Al-Suweidi, and discussed military cooperation among land forces of the six-member bloc.

The meeting also tackled means of enhancing military capabilities and unifying efforts to achieve integrated collective defense among GCC land forces.

Farwaniya eyes faster project delivery

Governor meets acting MPW undersecretary



Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works Eid Al-Rashidi.

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah on Wednesday had a meeting with acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works Eid Al-Rashidi in his office at the Farwaniya Governorate headquarters where they discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation in the interest of the public.

They also talked about development projects, implementation mechanisms, and the citizens' suggestions and complaints regarding some roads in the governorate; particularly the vital roads.

During the meeting, the Governor expressed his gratitude to Al-Rashidi

for his cooperation and commitment to remove all obstacles to the implementation of development projects. He underscored the need to closely monitor projects and companies in charge of road maintenance contracts to ensure their compliance with the schedule.

At the end of the meeting, Al-Rashidi expressed his gratitude to the Governor for the warm welcome and his dedication to complete projects in order to better serve those residing in the governorate. He emphasized that the execution of development and road projects is ongoing, and that they will be completed soon according to the highest standards.

Clubs must submit forms, documents

PIFSS implements GCC insurance registration for Saudi sports staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) has called on owners of sports clubs and activities affiliated with the Public Authority for Sports to register their Saudi Arabian employees — players, coaches and administrative staff — under the unified Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) insurance protection extension system, effective July 1, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, PIFSS disclosed that the call is in response to a request from the General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI) in Saudi Arabia, requiring compliance with the unified insurance protection extension

system for Saudi citizens working in GCC countries.

PIFSS stressed the mandatory registration of all GCC citizens employed in Kuwait's sports sector, in accordance with Law No. 44/2007, which extends insurance coverage to GCC nationals working outside their home countries. This has been mandatory since Jan 1, 2006; except the Qatari and Emirati citizens, for whom the start date was Jan 1, 2007. Clubs were also instructed to submit the unified registration form along with the necessary documents, in line with the applicable civil retirement or social security system of the employee's home country.



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An engineering team from the Ministry of Public Works is following up on road maintenance developments in Rabia on the ground.

Al-Mashaan inspects Rabia roadworks

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan confirmed the presence of the engineering team at the work site in Rabia-Block One on Wednesday to personally look into the latest developments in the implementation of the new radical road

maintenance contracts.

On the other hand, Farwaniya Governorate Project Supervisor (Second Zone) Badr Al-Harees disclosed that the ongoing work includes laying Type Two asphalt as part of a comprehensive plan to improve road infrastructure and raise the efficiency of roads in the governorate.

KU Women's Center unveils new strategy aligned with Vision 2035

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Women's Research and Studies Center at Kuwait University launched its new strategy, which is aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035, at a press conference held Tuesday.

Present at the press conference were President of the center Dr. Noura Shuaibi, acting Dean of the College of Social Sciences Prof. Ali Al-Zoubi and a number of faculty members.

The event highlighted efforts to enhance the role of women in Kuwaiti society, in ad-

dition to the review of new plans and strategies to support women's issues.

Al-Zoubi confirmed that the center, which was established in 2010, prepared its strategy for the years 2025 and 2026 based on two key documents: the Amiri speeches and Kuwait Vision 2035. He disclosed that the new strategy includes a set of initiatives, training programs, seminars, and policies to be implemented in the coming period.

He underscored the importance of partnership between men and women in achieving community development, stressing that development can only be achieved through the cooperation of all members of society.

Phub Dorji appointed as Bhutan's envoy to Kuwait, UAE and Bahrain

By Fares Ghalib
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Royal Court of Bhutan has announced that King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck issued a decree on the Ambassador Extraordinary of Phub Dorji as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Kuwait, as well as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain.

The investiture ceremony for the new ambassador was held at the Royal Palace in the capital -- Thimphu, with the senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Bhutan in attendance. This marks the official commencement of his diplomatic duties.



Phub Dorji, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Kuwait, UAE and Bahrain

Phub Dorji is a prominent administrative figure who previously served as Governor of Thimphu. He has extensive experience in local administration and regional governance, and is known for his competence in institutional work and public service.

A statement from the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs in Bhutan revealed that the appointment of Dorji is within the framework of expanding and strengthening the diplomatic relations of Bhutan with the Gulf states; particularly Kuwait, whose relations with Bhutan are witnessing gradual development, especially in education, cultural exchange and multilateral cooperation.

Ensures merit-based appointments

Justice Minister launches reform for legal researcher recruitment

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, has tasked the institute with preparing a comprehensive study to establish a solid institutional framework for regulating the recruitment process for the position of “Junior Legal Researcher,” a role that qualifies candidates for appointment as “Public Prosecutor (C).”

In a press statement, Al-Sumait explained that the initiative reflects the ministry’s commitment to promoting transparency and integrity in appointment procedures, while also benefiting from the institute’s extensive national



Al-Seyassah photo
Nasser Al-Sumait, Minister of Justice

experience in training and qualifying judicial and legal professionals. This move is part of a comprehensive vision to enhance the justice system, based on principles of merit, equal opportunity, and strengthening public trust in state institutions.

MoHE offers scholarship for Kuwaitis at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Ministry of Higher Education announced the availability of scholarship seats for bachelor’s degree courses at Sultan

Qaboos University in Oman for Kuwaiti students for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The ministry stated that registration was opened on Thursday, July 31, and will continue until August 5 via the ministry’s website.

KNPC to build 16 fuel stations

Company eyes 7mn-liter sales by 2030

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) has obtained approval to build 16 fuel stations this year, say sources from the oil sector.

Sources disclosed that the stations will be located in new residential cities, while some densely populated residential areas will have additional fuel stations.

Sources said the company aims to increase its sales of all types of gasoline to at least seven million liters by 2030, considering that its sales exceed

ed 5.105 million liters of gasoline by the end of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025; compared to 5.016 million liters in the previous year and around 4.891 million liters in 2023.

Sources confirmed that the company is targeting increased revenues from car wash stations whose revenues declined in fiscal 2024/2025 to KD393,300 compared to KD432,000 in the previous fiscal year. Sources indicated that KNPC is planning to develop its car wash stations to achieve the targeted returns.

Sources stated that KNPC will establish new fuel stations in line with environmental cleanliness and international requirements, particularly the strategy of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to achieve carbon neutrality.

Sources added the company intends to implement many initiatives related to its projects and refineries in order to reduce carbon emissions.

Moreover, sources confirmed that Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of KNPC Wadha Al-Khatib ensured that around 120 Kuwaiti employees under contractor contracts are treated fairly as their salaries, which exceeded the top of the grade scale, were not affected. Sources said these employees remain entitled to promotions and job placements in accordance with the regulations.

Sources added the Kuwaitis employed at Al-Dar Company, which implements service projects for KNPC, will soon receive their end-of-service benefits.

Sources also stated that the executive management of KNPC prioritizes nation-

als, such that it periodically announces job advertisements to increase the percentage of nationals working in the company to compensate for the decline in 2025. They revealed that in the first quarter of this year, the number of Kuwaiti workers reached 5,864; compared to about 6,007 during the same period in 2024. The percentage of national workers in KNPC stands at 92.4 percent which, sources stressed, is a good percentage.

They went on to say that Al-Khatib’s recent instructions to the leadership of the company center on the need to increase the national human capital and develop their functional capabilities. They added that KNPC organized many training courses for the national workforce in cooperation with local and international institutions.

SAB reviews DGCA’s KD3.8 mln airport tenders

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

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The State Audit Bureau (SAB) is currently reviewing four requests submitted by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) regarding tenders and contracts for the operation, maintenance and development of services at Kuwait International Airport, with a total estimated cost of

KD3.819 million.

Reliable sources revealed that SAB will review and study these requests to issue a decision in this regard soon. Sources said these requests include the second extension of the contract for project management services to implement the 2012 Master Plan projects at the airport at an estimated value of KD1.3 million.

Sources cited other tenders as follows:

- Operation of engineering control rooms and the maintenance of associated devices and equipment valued at KD1.338 million;
- Maintenance of the automated baggage inspection system for weight areas One and Four in Terminal One with a total value of KD589,000;
- Maintenance of the baggage inspection system in luggage weight zones Two and Three and the arrivals lounge valued at KD 592,000.

Drive marks Liberation anniversary

MoH launches 10th blood donation campaign



KUNA photo
Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, with Director of Blood Transfusion Services Dr. Reem Al-Roudhan, Assistant Director General of Security Relations and Media Colonel Yousef Mirshed, and campaign participants.

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Thursday launched the 10th edition of the annual national blood donation campaign, coinciding with the 35th anniversary of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Speaking at the launch, Al-Awadhi said the three-days campaign honors the sacrifices of Kuwait’s martyrs and reflects national unity across government, military, and civil society sectors.

He urged citizens and residents to donate blood at all Ministry of Health centers, including the Central Blood Bank in Jabriya, noting that over 100 blood bags were collected in the first two hours of the campaign.

Assistant Director General of the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry of Interior, Colonel Yousef Mirshed affirmed the ministry’s continued support for such initiatives, emphasizing their humanitarian and social dimensions alongside security duties.

Director of Blood Transfusion Services Dr. Reem Al-Roudhan said the campaign has been running for a decade to promote voluntary donation and save lives. Last year, about 95,000 units were collected, with a 4 percent annual increase.

She pointed to the effective participation of the military corps, represented by the Ministries of Defense, Interior and the National Guard, in addition to civil society institutions and private sectors.



Farwaniya Governorate photo
Author Al-Sultan presents his latest book to Farwaniya Governor.

Farwaniya Governor honors Kuwaiti journalist, author Mansour Al-Sultan

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met with journalist and author Mansour Abdullah Al-Sultan at the Farwaniya Governorate headquarters on Thursday.

During the visit, Al-Sultan presented a copy of his latest book, ‘Amina and Karima: The Assassination of a Dream’, to the Governor.

After warmly welcoming Al-Sultan, Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi commended the valuable contributions of writers and intellectuals to the rich literary and cultural heritage of Kuwait.

He highlighted the vital role they play in raising public awareness and shedding light on significant national issues and events. He wished Al-Sultan continuous success in his literary endeavors and future publications.

On the other hand, Al-Sultan expressed his sincere gratitude to the Governor for his warm reception, his dedication to fostering dialogue with media professionals, and his ongoing support for the literary and journalistic communities in the country. He also appreciated the commitment of the Governor to encourage national talent.

TICAD9 and

Japan’s Strategic Approach and Cooperation:

Besides such initiatives, Japan has been developing a strategic approach and framework to engage multi-stakeholders to deliver practical cooperation in the region. The approach includes collaboration with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), development financial institutions, and the private sector. Furthermore, Japan newly introduced “Co-creation for common agenda initiative” in 2023. Under this initiative, Japan will proactively propose appealing cooperation menus to achieve development goals by the “co-creation” of social value through dialogue and collaboration with the partner countries, while mobilizing other official flows (OOF) and private finance in combination with ODA.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved solely through a single nation. Japan will continue to further deepen the partnership with Kuwait and relevant stakeholders and undertake efforts for a sustainable future in Africa and the world. With the renewed partnership between JICA and KFAED, we envision that this cooperation will contribute meaningfully to addressing economic, social and environmental challenges and realizing a sustainable development in the African continent to strengthen the partnership between the two countries.

Custody clashes

Lawyer Al-Dalmani also highlighted the importance of expanding judicial authority in setting visitation schedules, as well as strengthening the role of the family in resolving marital disputes to help prevent divorce.

Furthermore, Lawyer Athbi Al-Tahnoon said while young children often require greater care from their mothers, the father’s right to see his children must not be overlooked, insisting that the current visitation periods granted to fathers are insufficient.

He expressed regret that the current law does not incorporate the concept of joint custody once children reach the age at which they can choose to live with either parent, indicating that many countries have adopted joint custody models.

Lawyer Al-Tahnoon highlighted a serious issue, which is that some custodial mothers make false accusations against the father to hinder his access to the children, leading the children to assume that she alone is their legal guardian. Similarly, some custodial fathers may incite the children against their mother when they are in his care. As a result, when children reach the age where they are legally allowed to choose, they may naturally gravitate toward the parent who either emotion-

ally supported them, or manipulated them against the other parent.

In addition, Psychology professor Dr. Ahmed Salama stressed the importance of divorced couples reaching clear, detailed agreements regarding the fate of their children, particularly with respect to custody and visitation.

He explained that a number of children suffer from psychological and neurological disorders due to being deprived of seeing one parent, or as a result of ongoing incitement by one parent against the other. This applies to both mothers and fathers.

Persistent conflicts between parents over custody, alimony, and visitation contribute significantly to children’s psychological distress. These issues can negatively impact academic performance and, in some cases, may lead children down dangerous paths such as criminal behavior or drug abuse.

It is worth highlighting that according to PACI, divorce cases among Kuwaitis reached 83,320 by mid-2025. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice’s annual statistical report showed an increase in divorce cases from 7,865 in 2023 to 8,168 in 2024.

Education minister

completed so far, according to a cabinet statement.

Al-Tabtabaei also reviewed key achievements under the reform plan, which included the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity into 10th grade’s curriculum, aimed at upping students’ future skills.

The plan also included updating curriculums from kindergarten to ninth grade, focusing on instilling national identity, to be implemented starting from the 2025-2026 academic year.

The meeting was attended by Acting Chief of the Prime Minister Diwan, Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Acting Undersecretary of the Education Ministry Mohammad Al-Khalidi, and several officials from the Education Ministry.

Bilateral relations

He underscored the need for these strong relations “to raise the level of economic, trade and investment cooperation to the level of political relations.” He clarified there are existing agreements between the two countries and ongoing cooperation, but they need to be activated. He added “we are working hard in this regard, in coordination with various Kuwaiti institutions.”

Talking about tourism, he revealed that the Kingdom of Morocco has achieved very good results in attracting tourists. He said 17.5 million tourists visited Morocco last year; including 23,000 Kuwaiti tourists, compared to

the previous number of around 16,000 or 17,000. He stated that the increase in the number of Kuwait Airways flights to Morocco to four per week is an evidence of the high demand for this destination.

On investments, he emphasized that Kuwaiti investments in Morocco have existed for a long time and continue to exist. He confirmed that Morocco is keen on renovating its structures to attract more investments, especially from Arab countries and Kuwait in particular.

He added “there are conditions that encourage Kuwaiti investors from the public and private sectors to invest in Morocco, and trade exchange continue to grow. We intend to develop them to a higher level.”

High-level

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.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullah Al-Mishari, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Head of the Prime Minister’s Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammed Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Ateeq Al-Majed attended the meeting.

Kuwait hails

Malta’s Prime Minister Robert Abela earlier announced the decision by his country, a former British colony, to recognize a Palestinian state on Facebook, saying it is part of the nation’s efforts “for a lasting peace in the Middle East.”

The Mediterranean island nation and European Union member will join more than 145 countries, including over a dozen European nations, in recognizing the state of Palestine.

French President Emmanuel Macron announced ahead of this week’s meeting that his country will recognize the state of Palestine at the annual gathering of world leaders at the 193-member General Assembly which starts Sept. 23.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced Tuesday that Britain would recognize the state of

Palestine before September’s meeting, but would refrain if Israel agrees to a ceasefire and long-term peace process in the next eight weeks.

France and Britain are the biggest Western powers and, with Canada, three members of the Group of Seven major industrialized nations have now made such a pledge.

Israel opposes a two-state solution and is boycotting the meeting along with its closest ally, the United States.

Israel’s U.N. ambassador, Danny Danon, on Tuesday sharply criticized about 125 countries participating in the conference and new recognitions of a Palestinian state, saying “there are those in the world who fight terrorists and extremist forces and then there are those who turn a blind eye to them or resort to appeasement.”

“While our hostages are languishing in Hamas terror tunnels in Gaza, these countries choose to engage in hollow statements instead of investing their efforts in their release,” Danon said. “This is hypocrisy and a waste of time that legitimizes terrorism and distances any chance of regional progress.”

Malta’s Cutajar countered that “recognition is not merely symbolic - it is a concrete step towards the realization of a just and lasting peace.”

High-level representatives at the U.N. conference on Tuesday urged Israel to commit to a Palestinian state and gave “unwavering support” to a two-state solution, and they urged all countries that haven’t recognized the state of Palestine to do so quickly.

The seven-page “New York Declaration” sets out a phased plan to end the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the ongoing war in Gaza. The plan would culminate with an independent, demilitarized Palestine living side by side peacefully with Israel, and their eventual integration into the wider Mideast region.

A separate one-page statement titled the “New York Call” approved late Tuesday by 15 Western nations says they have recognized, “expressed or express the willingness or the positive consideration ... to recognize the state of Palestine, as an essential step towards the two-state solution, and invite all countries that have not done so to join this call.”

It included six that have recognized the state of Palestine and nine, including Malta and Canada, that had not. The seven that still haven’t are Andorra, Australia, Finland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal and San Marino.

Saudi Arabia’s U.N. ambassador, Abdulaziz Alwasil, suspended the meeting “until further notice” after the 128th and final speaker, saying an outcome document has been sent to all 193 U.N. member nations. States have until the beginning of September to endorse the document.

Uplifting vulnerable groups

MoSA rolls out summer drive

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Director of the Juvenile Department and acting Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Welfare and Development Sector at the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari said the Welfare Sector is utilizing the summer break to organize activities aimed at enhancing the psychological and social well-being of its beneficiaries, reports Al-Anba daily.

Speaking to the daily, Al-Kandari explained that summer is a valuable opportunity to support beneficiaries -- juveniles, elderly and residents of family nurseries -- through carefully designed field, cultural and recreational programs. He affirmed these initiatives are implemented under the close supervision and daily follow up of the concerned teams to ensure maximum benefit.

He disclosed that “each department within the Welfare Sector prepares a customized summer program suited to the specific needs of its target group. This is done in coordination with supporting departments; such as the Awareness and Guidance Department, Psychological and Social Counseling Center, and Activities Department.”

The most popular activity he highlighted is swimming sessions, which

are held in a safe environment under the supervision of certified trainers. He said the beneficiaries also participate in recreational trips to the sector’s chalet, in collaboration with the Activities Department, offering them relaxation and a much-needed change of scenery.

He affirmed the diversity of the summer agenda; citing visits to cultural and heritage landmarks, shopping malls, traditional markets, national museums, public parks and entertainment centers. “Internally, a variety of enriching events are held, such as art workshops, skill-building courses, competitions and value-based diwaniya sessions,” he added.

He stressed “these programs go beyond entertainment. They are designed to help the beneficiaries reintegrate into society, build self-confidence, and adopt positive behaviors in an environment of psychological support and mutual respect.” He reaffirmed the commitment of the ministry to empower its beneficiaries. “We believe that true investment is in people. Every elderly person, every juvenile under our care is entrusted us. We welcome collaboration from all entities that are willing to contribute,” he explained.

He concluded with a call to action “our mission is not just offering basic care. We aim for rehabilitation, empowerment and integration; so that tomorrow, our children become contributors to society, not dependents. This is not merely a job; it is a humanitarian mission and a national responsibility.”



Dr. Al-Kandari

Prominent lawyer and journalist Salah Al-Hashem passes away

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Following a distinguished career in both legal and media fields, renowned lawyer and journalist Salah Al-Hashem passed away on Thursday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers, deeply saddened by his passing, extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, and pray that God grants them patience and comfort during this difficult time.

‘Rules being misused by Democrats’

GOP considers changing Senate rules to speed up confirmation of Trump nominees

WASHINGTON, July 31, (AP): US Senate Republicans are considering changing Senate rules to speed up confirmation of President Donald Trump’s executive branch nominees. The move forces a possible clash with Democrats in the coming days as Trump pressures them to fill dozens of administration posts before they are scheduled to leave town for the monthlong August recess.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune has already more than doubled the number of executive branch and judicial confirmations from Trump’s first term by holding the Senate in session for more days and longer hours. Still, Trump says he wants more, and Democrats are delaying a vote on most every nominee, arguing that Trump’s picks are extreme.

“We may need to look at doing things differently on nominees generally if the Democrats continue on this path of obstruction that they’re on right now,” Thune said Wednesday morning, adding that the number of willing votes to change Senate rules “is growing quickly on our side right now.” The standoff between the two parties, with Trump encouraging Republicans to move even more swiftly or cancel their August recess, is likely to come to a head in the next week. Democrats have little desire to give in to Thune’s demand to confirm a tranche of nominees before they leave, even as senators in both parties are eager to skip town after several long months of work and bitter partisan fights over legislation.

The Senate clash over nominees is not new, though it has intensified over the last two decades as both parties have increasingly used stalling tactics to delay confirmations that were once quick, bipartisan and routine. In 2013, Democrats changed Senate rules for lower court judicial nominees to remove the 60-vote threshold for confirmations as Republicans blocked President Barack Obama’s judicial nominations. In 2017, Republicans did the same for Supreme Court nominees as Democrats tried to block Trump’s nomination of Justice Neil Gorsuch.

Still, Democrats have blocked more nominees than usual this year, denying any quick unanimous consent votes and forcing roll calls on each one, a lengthy process that takes several days per nominee and allows for debate time. It’s the first time in recent history that the minority party hasn’t allowed at least some quick confirmations.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said Democrats have blocked quick votes because “historically bad nominees deserved historic levels of scrutiny.”



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-SD, joined at left by Sen John Barrasso, R-Wyo, the GOP whip, speaks to reporters following closed-door strategy meetings, at the Capitol in Washington on July 22. (AP)

But Thune said the rules are being “misused” by Democrats, and there is a lot of interest in the GOP conference in potentially speeding up the process. A rules change, in the end, “could benefit both parties when they have the presidency.”

It’s unclear how Republicans would change the rules, but they could potentially cut the number of procedural votes, reduce or eliminate the standard two hours of debate time or somehow force nominations to be bundled together, among other possible options. A rules change would require a simple majority vote, so almost all of the Senate’s 53 Republicans would have to be on board.

North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven said that in discussions among GOP senators, “all options are on the table.”

“We’d rather not have to,” Hoeven said. “If they would follow the same approach we gave them as recently as Biden, we wouldn’t be in this situation.”

Democrats have discussed similar changes in the past when Republicans were blocking their own nominees, but they would be unlikely to support any move to change the rules. Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut said that if Republicans propose to eliminate any debate time, they would be “resisting scrutiny” for a president’s nominations.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., has said in the past that he would be open to changing Senate rules to reduce the number of Senate-confirmed positions in government. But he said he would not be open to reducing debate time for nominees.

“There can be non-controversial nominees where you don’t need two hours, but there are some super important ones where that’s not enough time,” Kaine said.

The GOP leader is facing his own pressure from Trump, who has publicly called on Republicans to cancel the August recess to confirm more nominees. Trump also criticized Senate Republicans on social media this week for continuing with the so-called “blue slip” process that allows home state senators to approve or block some judicial nominees.

In a Tuesday post on Truth Social, Trump called on Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, to have the “courage” to stop honoring the blue slip forms that are submitted to the home state senators, regardless of party. Trump said as a result of this “custom” only Democrats or “a weak and ineffective Republican” can get nominated.

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Former US vice president Harris will not run for Calif gov in 2026

LOS ANGELES, July 31, (AP): Former US vice president **Kamala Harris** will not run for California governor next year, leaving open the possibility that she could mount a third run for the White House in 2028.

“Over the past six months, I have spent time reflecting on this moment in our nation’s history and the best way for me to continue fighting for the American people and advancing the values and ideals I hold dear,” Harris said in a statement released by her office Wednesday.

“I have given serious thought to asking the people of California for the privilege to serve as their governor. I love this state, its people and its promise. It is my home. But after deep reflection, I’ve decided that I will not run for Governor in this election,” she said.

Harris’ decision extends a guessing game about her political



Harris

future that started after she lost last year’s presidential election to Donald Trump. Harris spent months privately considering whether to run for governor, stage another run for the White House or step away from electoral politics altogether after her bruising defeat by Trump.

She has not ruled out another run for president, after unsuccessful bids in 2020 and 2024. It’s not known when she will make that decision.

Harris didn’t mention Trump directly in her statement, but said “our politics, our government, and our institutions have too often failed the American people, culminating in this moment of crisis.”

“For now, my leadership - and public service - will not be in elected office. I look forward to getting back out and listening to the American people, helping elect Democrats across the nation who will fight fearlessly, and sharing more details in the months ahead about my own plans,” Harris said.

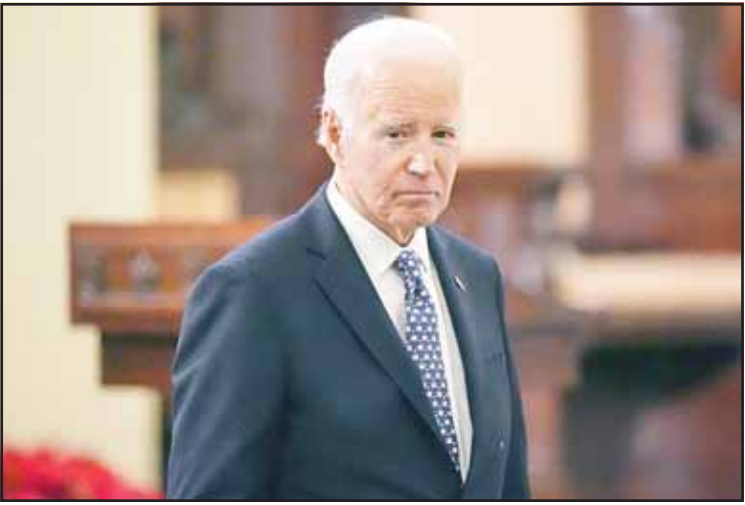
“In the United States of America, power must lie with the people. And We, the People must use our power to fight for freedom, opportunity, fairness and the dignity of all. I will remain in that fight,” the statement said.

Biden aide denounces GOP probe into ex-prez health as baseless and denies any cover-up

WASHINGTON, July 31, (AP): A longtime close aide to President Joe Biden on Wednesday denounced Republican investigations into the former president as “baseless” in testimony to lawmakers and defended Biden as capable of carrying out his presidential duties “at all times.”

Steve Ricchetti, a senior advisor to Biden during his presidency, wrote in his opening statement to the House Oversight Committee that he was willing to answer lawmakers’ questions about Biden’s mental state while in office despite Republicans’ effort to “intimidate officials who served in the previous administration.”

“I believe it is important to forcefully rebut this false narrative about the Biden presidency and our role in it,” Ricchetti said.



US President Joe Biden walks after speaking during an interfaith prayer service in New Orleans on Jan 6. (AP)

“There was no nefarious conspiracy of any kind among the president’s senior staff, and there was certainly no conspiracy to hide the president’s mental condition from the American people,” wrote Ricchetti, who has served as an aide to Biden since 2012. He said Biden was “fully capable” of carrying out his duties throughout his term.

Ricchetti’s testimony comes after weeks of appearances from former

Biden aides as House Republicans seek to build their investigation, which is central to their oversight agenda as they seek to turn the spotlight back to the last administration.

Some former staffers, including Biden’s physician, Kevin O’Connor,

and Anthony Bernal, a top aide to former first lady Jill Biden, invoked their Fifth Amendment rights and declined to answer questions from the committee. Others, including former White House chief of staff Ron Klain and Neera Tanden, former director of the

Domestic Policy Council, have answered the committee’s questions at length. The committee will hear from seven more senior Biden staffers in the coming weeks.

The Trump White House has launched its own inquiry into Biden. In June, Trump issued an executive order that argued there were “clear indications” that Biden “lacked the capacity to exercise his presidential authority” and ordered an investigation into “whether certain individuals conspired to deceive the public about Biden’s mental state and unconstitutionally exercise the authorities and responsibilities of the president.”

Ricchetti argued the Republican-led inquiries were “an obvious attempt to deflect from the chaos of this administration’s first six months.” He contrasted it with what he said were Biden’s accomplishments on issues like infrastructure, inflation, climate policy and the coronavirus response.

“I firmly believe that at all times during my four years in the White House, President Biden was fulfilling his constitutional duties. Did he stumble? Occasionally. Make mistakes? Get up on the wrong side of the bed? He did - we all did.

America

Brown University reaches deal with WH: Brown University on Wednesday announced an agreement with the **Donald Trump** administration to restore federal funding and resolve three ongoing nondiscrimination reviews.

“The agreement will reinstate payments for active research grants and restore Brown’s ability to compete for new federal grants and contracts, while also meeting brown’s core imperative of preserving the ability for its students and scholars to teach and learn without government intrusion,” the university said in a statement.

The agreement will restore Brown’s medical and health sciences research funding, including reimbursement of more than 50 million US dollars in unpaid federal grant costs.

The agreement also includes Brown’s commitment to pay 50 million dollars in grants over 10 years to workforce development organizations in Rhode Island, where the university is located.

“The University’s foremost priority throughout discussions with the government was remaining true to our academic mission, our core values, and who we are as a community at brown,” Brown President Christina H. Paxson said in a letter to the brown community.

“We stand solidly behind commitments we repeatedly have affirmed to protect all members of our community from harassment and discrimination, (and) we protect the ability of our faculty and students to study and learn academic subjects of their choosing,” Paxson said.

The president noted that the agreement “does not include any payments or fines to the federal government.”



Trump

Explaining why Brown “voluntarily negotiated toward an agreement,” Paxson said that for the last few months, the university’s mission and its community have been under threat. (AP)

Turbulence forces Delta flight to land: A Delta Air Lines flight from Salt Lake City to Amsterdam was hit by serious turbulence, injuring passengers and forcing the flight to divert to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the airline said.

The flight landed around 7:45 p.m. Wednesday. The airport fire department and paramedics met the flight and 25 passengers were taken to hospitals for evaluation and treatment, the airline said.

Serious injuries from in-flight turbulence are rare, but scientists say they may be becoming more common as climate change alters the jet stream.

A man was killed when a Singapore Airlines flight hit severe turbulence in May 2024, the first person to die from turbulence on a major airline in several decades. (AP)

Arkansas teacher charged: Arkansas police charged a 28-year-old schoolteacher in the killing of a married couple who were hiking with their children at Devil’s Den State Park, finding him in a nearby city after a five-day search and public pleas for trailgoers to look through their photos.

State Police arrested Andrew James McGann at a barbershop in Springdale, said Col Stacie Rhoads, commander of the department’s criminal investigation division. He was charged with two counts of capital murder and was being held Thursday in the state’s Washington County jail.

Police announced the arrest at a Wednesday night news conference but would not discuss a motive. McGann had been hired at Springdale Public Schools as a teacher candidate for the upcoming year but had not yet come into contact with any of its families or students, the district said in a statement. (AP)

Lithuania Prime Minister Paluckas steps down after investigations and protests

VILNIUS, Lithuania, July 31, (AP): Lithuania Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas stepped down on Thursday following investigations into his business dealings that prompted protests in the Baltic country’s capital calling for his resignation.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda announced Paluckas’ resignation to the media on Thursday morning. A spokesperson for Paluckas did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Paluckas, a newly established leader of the center-left Social Democrats, ascended to the role late last year after a three-party coalition formed following parliamentary elections in October. His entire cabinet is now expected also to resign, potentially leaving the country without an effective government weeks before Russia holds joint military exercises with neighboring Belarus.

Lithuanian foreign policy is unlikely to change as a result of the government shakeup. Nausėda, who was elected separately, is the country’s face on the world stage and has been one of the most stalwart supporters of Ukraine in its fight against invading Russian forces.



Lithuania’s Social Democratic party member Gintautas Paluckas, nominated as the next Prime Minister, speaks during a Lithuanian’s parliament session in Vilnius, Lithuania on Nov 21, 2024. (AP)

Paluckas has recently been dogged by media investigations into his business and financial dealings. Several media outlets published investigations in July regarding Paluckas’ past and present ventures and alleged mishandlings, including ones more than a decade ago. The Baltic country’s anti-

corruption and law enforcement agencies subsequently launched their own probes.

In a devastating blow to his reputation, the media also revealed that Paluckas never paid a significant part of a 16,500 euro fine (\$19,039) in connection with a 2012 criminal case dubbed the “rat poison scandal.”

Paluckas was convicted of mishandling the bidding process for Vilnius’ rat extermination services while serving as the capital city’s municipality administration director. Judges for the country’s top court in 2012 ruled that he abused his official position by illegally granting privileges to the company that offered the highest price in the bid. He was also sentenced to two years behind bars, but the sentence was suspended for one year and he ultimately was never imprisoned.

The Social Democratic party leader denied any wrongdoing regarding his business affairs, labeling the criticism as part of a “coordinated attack” by political opponents.

He resigned before the opposition could formally launch impeachment proceedings. New coalition talks are expected to start shortly to form a new cabinet.

Russian missile and drone attack hits Kyiv killing 9 and wounding 124, say authorities

KYIV, Ukraine, July 31, (AP): Russia attacked Ukraine’s capital with missiles and drones overnight, killing at least nine people, including a 6-year-old boy, and wounding 124 others, Ukrainian authorities said Thursday.

Ten children, the youngest being a 5-month-old girl, were among the injured, Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko said. A large part of a nine-story residential building collapsed after it was struck, he said.

Rescue teams were at the scene searching for people trapped under the rubble.



Rescuers work in a destroyed apartment building after a Russian missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on July 31. (AP)

Yana Zhabborova, 35, a resident of the damaged building, woke up to the sound of thundering explosions, which blew off the doors and windows of her home.

“It is just stress and shock that there is nothing left,” said Zhabborova, a mother of a 5-month-old infant and a 5-year-old child.

Russia fired 309 Shahed and decoy drones, and eight Iskander-K cruise missiles overnight, the Ukrainian air force said. Ukrainian air defenses intercepted and jammed 288 strike drones and three missiles. Five missiles and 21 drones struck targets.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Ministry of Defense said Thursday that it had shot down 32 Ukrainian drones overnight.

A drone attacked had sparked a blaze at an industrial site in Russia’s Penza region, local Gov. Oleg Melnichenko said. He didn’t immediately give further details other than to say that there were no casualties.

In the Volgograd region, some trains

were also halted after drone wreckage fell on local railway infrastructure, state rail operator Russian Railways said. Russia’s Defense Ministry also said that its forces took full control of the strategically important city of Chasiv Yar in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region.

Russian and Ukrainian troops have battled for control of Chasiv Yar for nearly 18 months. It includes a hilltop from which troops can attack other key points in the region that form the backbone of Ukraine’s eastern defenses.

Also:

KYIV, Ukraine: Ukraine’s Parliament on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a bill presented by President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** that restores

the independence of two of the country’s key anti-corruption watchdogs, reversing his contentious move last week that curbed their power and brought an outcry.

Last week’s measure by Zelenskyy to place the watchdogs under the oversight of the prosecutor-general prompted an outcry from Ukrainians, the **European Union** and international rights groups. It raised fears that the government could meddle in investigations and potentially shield its supporters from scrutiny.

Fighting entrenched corruption is crucial for Ukraine’s aspirations to join the EU and maintain access to billions of dollars of vital Western aid in the nearly 3½-year all-out war. It’s also an effort that enjoys broad public support.

Europe

UK authorities, airlines demand answers: British authorities and airlines are demanding answers from the nation’s air traffic control operator after a technology glitch led to widespread flight cancellations and delays for the second time in two years.

More than 150 flights were cancelled across the UK on Wednesday when a radar problem at the Swanwick control center forced the National Air Traffic Service, or NATS, to limit the number of aircraft flying in the London area.

The problem was reported at 4:05 pm Wednesday and the system was fully operational by 5:10 p.m., NATS said.

Transport Secretary **Heidi Alexander** met with NATS Chief Executive Martin Rolfe on Thursday, saying she wanted to know what happened and how to prevent a recurrence. Meanwhile, two major airlines criticized the control service for failing to learn from a 2023 incident that forced the cancellation of more than 2,000 flights.

NATS on Thursday said the flight disruptions were due



Alexander

to a “radar-related issue.” The controller initially said only that there had been a “technical issue” at the Swanwick air traffic control center on the south coast of England.

Wednesday’s problems were relatively limited when compared with the disruption that occurred on Aug 28, 2023, when a software issue severely limited the number of flight plans NATS could process. (AP)

Spain, Portugal battle wave of wildfires: Thousands of firefighters in Spain and Portugal on Thursday battled an ongoing wave of wildfires, some of which have been burning for days as temperatures are expected to rise in the Iberian Peninsula.

In central Spain, firefighters and a special military unit worked overnight to control blazes in the province of Avila, focusing on confining a fire burning near the village of El Arenal, about 100 km (62 miles) west of Madrid, emergency services said.

In the western province of Caceres, local authorities said firefighters had largely stabilized a fire that affected some 2,500 hectares (roughly 6,178 acres.) Most evacuation orders had been lifted, authorities said.

In Portugal, more than 2,000 firefighters were battling blazes across the country, particularly in the north.

Much of Spain and Portugal is under a high risk of wildfires and temperatures are expected to rise over the weekend. (AP)

Thailand and Cambodia plan border visits for diplomats as violence eases

BANGKOK, July 31, (Agencies): Thailand and Cambodia separately planned border visits for foreign diplomats to observe damages from the nearly week-long clash, as violence that continued after a ceasefire appears to have eased.

The ceasefire reached in Malaysia was supposed to take effect midnight Monday, but it was quickly tested as Thailand and Cambodia continued to accuse each other of violating the truce agreements.

Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Thursday it is organizing a trip to the border for military attachés of foreign missions and the media on Friday to show the impact of the clashes on the ground.

Cambodia is also organizing a border visit for foreign diplomats on the same day. It held a similar trip on Wednesday attended by representatives from 13 countries, including the US and China.

Thailand's government spokesperson Jirayu Hongsuab said Thursday that there had been no new clashes reported overnight Wednesday.

But tensions on other fronts continue to simmer. Officials in Thailand's border province of Surin, one of the critical locations of the conflict, on Thursday cautioned evacuees against returning home as they were surveying affected areas for any ammunition that might still pose a risk.

A spokesperson for Cambodia's Defense Ministry Maly Socheata said Thursday that Cambodia has received the body of one of its soldiers from Thailand.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said the military is now in contact with its Thai counterparts to facilitate the return of about 20 other soldiers captured by Thai forces.

"I hope that the Thai Army will return all our soldiers who are currently in the custody of the Thai Army to Cambodia as soon as possible," he said.

Thai foreign minister Maris Sanguanpong said the Cambodian soldiers were being well taken care of and would be sent back once Thailand is confident they no longer pose a threat. He said security officials would determine when the return would be.

Also:

BANGKOK: Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday set a deadline for suspended Prime Minister **Paetong-tarn Shinawatra** to submit a defense in her ethics violation case after granting a final extension.

In a statement, the court said a panel of judges agreed 5-4 to set a final deadline for Paetongtarn to respond to the allegations on Aug 4, citing her request to seek an additional 15 days to gather evidence necessary to complete the defense.

The court said this would be the final extension, and if no additional documents are submitted by the deadline, it will proceed with the case based on the existing evidence. On July 1, the court suspended Paetongtarn after accepting the case petitioned by a group of senators seeking her removal from office over a leaked phone call on border issue with Cambodia.



In this photo released by The Government Spokesman Office, Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, talks to Commander of the 2nd Army Area Lieutenant General Boonsin Padklang, (left) during a meeting with soldiers at Ubonratchathani province, northeast of Bangkok on June 20. (AP)

‘Elections will be held within six months after emergency period is lifted’

Myanmar ends state of emergency, military leader switches roles to prepare for polls

BANGKOK, July 31, (Agencies): Myanmar's military government announced Thursday it was ending the state of emergency it first declared after seizing power 4 1/2 years ago and restructuring its administrative bodies to prepare for a new election at the end of the year.

The plans for the polls on an unspecified date in December face serious obstacles, including a civil war raging over most of the country and vows by opponents of military rule to derail the election because they believe it can be neither free nor fair.

Under the restructuring, the head of the military government, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, gives up two posts but will serve in other positions that keep him at the center of power.

The joint announcements came as the last of seven consecutive six-month, emergency-rule decrees was set to expire Thursday at midnight.

The military imposed emergency rule and created new administrative structures after it ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb 1, 2021, arresting her and members of her ruling National League for Democracy party. The military claimed Suu Kyi's government failed to address fraud claims in the 2020 election, though independent observers did not find irregularities.

The emergency decree empowered the military to assume all government functions, giving legislative, judicial and executive powers to Min Aung Hlaing as head of the ruling military council, formally called the State Administration Council.

Despite losing his post as chief of the now-dissolved council and relinquishing the job of prime minister to his advisor, Gen Nyo Saw, Min Aung Hlaing will exercise more influence as Myanmar's acting president with increased authority under the restructuring.

May Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the military's spokesperson, said the state of emergency has been lifted to allow the election process to continue.

"Elections will be held within six months after the emergency period is lifted," he said.

The existing administrative bodies formed after the army takeover, including the State Administration Council, have been dissolved and all government functions have been handed



A voter casts ballot at a polling station on Nov. 8, 2020, in Yangon, Myanmar. A court in Myanmar on Sept 2, 2022 sentenced the country's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to three years' imprisonment after finding her guilty of involvement in election fraud. (AP)

ies formed after the army takeover, including the State Administration Council, have been dissolved and all government functions have been handed

administrative government body, but in practice is controlled by the military. Min Aung Hlaing, as acting president, is already its key member.

State-run MRTV television reported the National Defense and Security Council formed a new entity, the State Security and Peace Commission, also to be headed by Min Aung Hlaing, handing him another lever of power.

The army's 2021 takeover was met with widespread peaceful protests that security forces suppressed with lethal force, triggering armed resistance and embroiling the country in a civil war.

As of Wednesday, 7,013 people have been killed and 29,471 were arrested by the security forces since the takeover, according to tallies kept by the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners that the military government has challenged.

Opponents, as well as independent analysts, estimate the army controls less than half the country, but is holding on tenaciously to much of central Myanmar, including the capital, Naypyidaw. It is accelerating counter-offensives to retake areas controlled by

opposition forces ahead of the election.

The military originally announced elections would be held in August 2023, but has repeatedly pushed back the date until recently saying they would take place in December without a specific date.

Also:

YANGON: A total of 10,395 people from 2,298 households were evacuated to 24 temporary rescue shelters due to flooding in **Hpa-an** township of **Kayin** state, the state-owned **Myanmar** Radio and Television reported on Wednesday night.

The evacuation was carried out by members of disaster management committees, firefighters, the Myanmar Red Cross Society, and community-based organizations on Wednesday as the Thanlwin River rose above danger levels following heavy rain, the report said.

According to the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology on Thursday, the river in Hpa-an has risen to about six feet above the danger level and is expected to remain at risk for another day.

Pakistani opposition leader and nearly 200 Khan supporters sentenced over 2023 riots

LAHORE, Pakistan, July 31, (Agencies): A court in eastern Pakistan on Thursday sentenced an opposition leader and nearly 200 supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan to 10 years in prison each over the 2023 riots that erupted over Khan's arrest, officials said.

The court announced the verdict against 196 people, including opposition leader Omar Ayub, in three separate cases heard in the city of Faisalabad in Punjab province. The charges stemmed from the May 9, 2023 violence that spread nationwide after Khan's arrest.

The violence subsided only after Khan was released on the orders of Pakistan's Supreme Court. However, a trial court later convicted him in August 2023, and he has not appeared in public since. Some of his supporters have since been tried and sentenced by military courts.

Among those convicted by the court Thursday were at least six members of the National Assembly and a senator from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI.

"They were accused of participating in attacks on military officers, government buildings and vehicles during the 2023 riots", a defense lawyer Changaiz Kakar said.

He said it was the first time that political activists have been convicted and sentenced in such large numbers, and that appeals would be filed against these convictions and sentences.

Gohar Ali Khan, chairman of PTI, denounced the latest convictions, saying Ayub and others were sentenced in "baseless" cases. He said the verdicts came just ahead of planned rallies to mark the third anniversary of Khan's conviction in multiple cases.

Khan was ousted from power in 2022 through a no-confidence vote



Paramilitary soldiers from Frontier Corps stand guard outside their headquarters, where supporters of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan protest against the arrest of their leader, in Peshawar, Pakistan on May 9, 2023. (AP)

led by current Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. Khan after his ouster had accused the military and his political rival Sharif of ousting him under a U.S. plot, the charges which they denied.

Also:

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reaffirmed his government's resolve to combat human trafficking, calling it an organized crime threatening vulnerable populations and national security.

In a message marking the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, Sharif urged greater awareness and coordinated efforts to stop illegal migration and exploitation.

This year's theme, "Human Trafficking is an Organized Crime – End the Exploitation," underscores the urgent need for collective action at national

and international levels, the prime minister said.

He said several Pakistanis have lost their lives attempting to migrate unlawfully, exposing the dangers of transnational trafficking networks.

To address the issue, the government formed a special task force. Law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Investigation Agency and the Intelligence Bureau, have disrupted major trafficking rings and taken legal action against involved officials, he noted.

Sharif emphasized the importance of educating citizens about legal migration routes and expanding economic opportunities both domestically and abroad.

"Illegal migration not only endangers lives but also breaches national and international laws," he said.

Kenyan president signs new law to enhance fight against corruption

NAIROBI, July 31, (Xinhua): Kenyan President William Ruto on Wednesday signed the Conflict of Interest Bill into law to help intensify the fight against corruption in the country.

Ruto said the new law, which repeals the Public Officer Ethics Act, introduces a detailed structure to manage conflicts of interest in government to curb the abuse of power by public officers, ensuring that public resources are used for their intended purpose.

"This is a very consequential moment in Kenya. We are making it much more difficult for people to take advantage of the offices they occupy," he said in a statement issued in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, after signing the bill.

Ruto said the new law sets clear rules to ensure that public officers serve with integrity, transparency, and accountability. He pointed out that the new legislation also gives Kenyans the opportunity to hold public officers accountable in their exercise of power.

The law empowers the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) to oversee its implementation, and the anti-graft body



Kenyan President William Ruto gives an address at the State House in Nairobi, Kenya on June 26. (AP)

will deal with matters relating to wealth declaration for all public officers, not only in the Executive but also in the Legislature and Judiciary.

"To the EACC, you now have levers to make sure that you protect the resources of the Republic of Kenya and hold every officer to account," Ruto said.

He said the principal objective of the law is to establish a framework for managing such conflicts in the discharge of public duties

under the general supervision of the EACC.

"The new law brings conflict of interest provisions under a single law, creating a unified legal standard for public officers. It prohibits preferential treatment and external influence in contracts linked to a public officer's role," the president said.

The Conflict of Interest Act also restricts secondary employment that undermines official duties or creates a conflict of interest.

US sanctions Brazil Supreme Court justice overseeing trial against ex-prez Bolsonaro

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 31, (AP): The US Treasury Department has announced sanctions on Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes over alleged suppression of freedom of expression and the ongoing trial of former president Jair Bolsonaro.

De Moraes oversees the criminal case against Bolsonaro, who is accused of masterminding a plot to stay in power despite his 2022 election defeat to current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

"De Moraes is responsible for an oppressive campaign of censorship, arbitrary detentions that violate human rights, and politicized prosecutions - including against former President Jair Bolsonaro," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

The department cited the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which targets perpetrators of human rights abuse and corrupt officials, as its authority to issue the sanctions.

The decision orders the freezing of any assets or property de Moraes may have in the US.

Brazil's Supreme Court and the Presidential Palace did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Wednesday's sanctions follow the US State Department's announcement of visa restrictions on Brazilian judicial officials, including de Moraes, on July 18.



Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, right, stands with President Donald Trump during a dinner at Mar-a-Lago, Palm Beach, Florida on March 7, 2020. Bolsonaro's son, Eduardo is pictured in background on right. (AP)

They also come after US President Donald Trump announced a 50% tariff on Brazilian imported goods on July 9. In a letter announcing the tariff, Trump explicitly linked the import tax to what he called the "witch hunt" trial of Bolsonaro currently underway in Brazil.

Trump appears to identify with Bolsonaro, who is accused of trying to overturn the results of his 2022 loss to Lula. Similarly, Trump was indicted

in 2023 on allegations that he tried to overturn the results of the 2020 US presidential election.

Bolsonaro has been ordered to wear an ankle monitor after being deemed a flight risk.

Bolsonaro's son Eduardo celebrated the US Treasury Department announcement on X, calling it a "historic milestone" and a warning that "abuses of authority now have global consequences."

Bid to secure congressional majority

Costa Rican president's Cabinet resigns

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, July 31, (AP): Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves announced a mass exodus from his Cabinet Wednesday, a move to secure a congressional majority for his party in next year's election.

Six Cabinet ministers, as well as his vice president, resigned on the final day of eligibility to compete in the 2026 general election.

There had been talk that maybe even Chaves himself would step down before his term ends next year to run in order to give his party the best chance of winning, but he dismissed that possibility Wednesday.

"The decision was to stay president of the republic, I'm not going to resign," Chaves said in a news conference, adding that his administration's public support was so robust it wasn't necessary for him to lead the



Costa Rica President Rodrigo Chaves talks with reporters outside the White House on Aug 29, 2023, following his meeting with President Joe Biden. (AP)

campaign.

In addition to Vice President Stephan Brunner, the ministers in charge of the treasury, planning, housing and the well-being of women are among those leaving the administration Thursday.

While it remained unconfirmed if all would appear on the Sovereign Peoples Party ballot, Chaves said he admired "their desire to continue serving Costa Rica from other spaces."

Chaves says a supermajority in Congress would allow his party to make the deeper changes he wants, including a sweeping security agenda to address homicides and changes to labor laws that he hasn't been able to pass over congressional opposition.

Presidential reelection is prohibited under Costa Rican law.

Kuwaiti oil rises to \$75.80 pb

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil rose by USD 2.65, reaching US 75.80 per barrel on Wednesday, compared to USD 73.15 per barrel on Tuesday, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

Globally, price of Brent crude increased 73 cents to USD 73.24 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude increased 79 cents to USD 70 pb.

Business



Sami Mahfouz honors the winning ideas.



Part of the presentations from the contestants.



Part of the audience.

Continuing its commitment to encouraging innovative and creative ideas among employees

Gulf Bank concludes the third edition of the ‘Fekrety’ innovation competition

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: In line with its commitment to fostering innovation and creativity, Gulf Bank has successfully concluded the third edition of its internal innovation competition, “Fekrety” 2025. The initiative aims to encourage employees across departments to voice their ideas, develop innovative solutions, and contribute directly to the Bank’s strategic direction – supporting Kuwait Vision 2035, which focuses on digital transformation, customer experience enhancement, and the adoption of smart technologies to strengthen the national economy and quality of life.

This year, the competition welcomed a wide range of innovative ideas from employees, particularly those integrating digital transformation and creativity to reimagine the interior design of Gulf Bank branches – ultimately enhancing the overall customer experience. Following a comprehensive

screening and training process, the finalists presented their concepts before a judging panel of individuals from Gulf Bank’s senior management. Gulf Bank views “Fekrety” as a platform to drive innovation under the theme “Innovation for All.” The initiative encourages employees from all departments and functions to contribute bold, impactful ideas that can benefit not only the Bank but the wider banking industry.

The Bank emphasized that employees are given the freedom to present unconventional or out-of-the-box ideas, with no limitations. The Digital Transformation and Innovation Unit will continue to provide full support to participating employees by helping them refine and implement their ideas in ways that align with customer needs and aspirations – ultimately delivering innovative and accessible banking services.

The “Fekrety” innovation competition supports Gulf Bank’s broader

digital transformation journey – a core driver of performance excellence, cross-functional collaboration, and employee empowerment. The Bank firmly believes that continuous innovation begins by enabling employees to turn their ideas into reality.

This initiative also reflects Gulf Bank’s strong belief in investing in its human capital, tapping into a wide range of talents and capabilities while actively supporting the development of local skills in the community.

The Bank continues to play an active role in realizing Kuwait Vision 2035 by organizing programs such as the “Datathon” and “Hackathon”, which help train the next generation in harnessing data and digital technologies to advance sustainable development and strengthen the national economy.

All Share Index up 0.42%

Non-agricultural sectors to grow 4.2% in Q3

Boursa Kuwait ends higher

KUWAIT CITY, July 31, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended trading on Thursday with the All Share Index climbing 35.73 points (0.42%) to close at 8,617.83. Trading volume reached 455.2 million shares through 26,469 transactions, with a total value of KD 93.9 million (USD 306.8 million).

The Main Market Index increased by 36.57 points (0.48%) to 7,613.71, as 303.9 million shares changed hands in 18,186 transactions, valued at KD 39.6 million (USD 129.3 million). The Premier Market Index gained 37.29 points (0.40%) to reach

9,294.20, with 151.3 million shares traded in 8,283 transactions, totaling KD 54.2 million (USD 177.1 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index rose by 17.44 points (0.23%) to 7,604.67, with 217.8 million shares traded over 10,562 cash transactions, amounting to KWD 27.3 million (about USD 89.2 million).

These broad gains reflect robust trading activity and continued investor confidence in the Kuwaiti stock market, as noted by recent strong profit reports and trading volume growth for Boursa Kuwait in 2025.

Morocco forecasts 4.4% GDP growth in Q3 2025

RABAT, July 31, (KUNA): Morocco’s official statistical agency, the High Commission for Planning (HCP), expects national economic growth at 4.4 percent during the third quarter of 2025.

In a news release on the economic situation for the first quarter of 2025 and forecasts for the second and third quarters, HCP explained that “growth prospects for the third quarter of 2025 indicate a continuation of the momentum that began at the beginning of this year, albeit at a more moderate pace. According to preliminary estimates, GDP growth is expected to reach 4.4 percent during the third quarter of 2025.”

It reported that external demand for Morocco is expected to slow, while domestic demand will

continue to support economic growth, reaching 6.6 points.

Given the recovery momentum that began at the end of 2024, investment and consumption are expected to continue recovering during the third quarter of 2025, boosting non-agricultural activities by 4.2 percent year-on-year, compared to 4.4 percent in the previous quarter.

Meanwhile, the Mohammad VI Investment Fund (a Moroccan sovereign wealth fund) announced the selection of 14 companies to manage funds, to contribute to the strengthening of private capital in companies, enhance their investment capabilities and create sustainable job opportunities.

The 14 selected companies succeeded in raising

approximately 14.5 billion dirhams (about USD 1.5 billion) in national and international capital, it added.

It also pointed out that the companies guarantee broad coverage of priority sectors of the national economy, in line with the investment policy of the Mohammad VI Investment Fund, through three specialized industrial funds, one in agriculture and food industry, two in tourism, one in transportation and logistics and seven general funds.

These public funds have been divided according to the size of the targeted investment so that enterprises, particularly small and medium-size, can find offers tailored to their needs.

Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait see steady inflation around 2.3-2.4%

GCC price stability continues despite shocks in the region

By KAMCO Invest

Despite the heightened geopolitical instability during Q2-2025, driven by the Middle East war and the ongoing war on Gaza, the inflation rate across the GCC region remained stable throughout the period. The war in the Middle East affected crude oil prices that surged to almost USD 79 per barrel. But quietly receded in the subsequent weeks as OPEC+ accelerated the output hikes aiming to unwind the full 2.2 mb/d by September-2025.

Brent crude oil is trading at USD 68.4 per barrel, 8.3% lower than its level at the end of 2024. The quarter also witnessed the start of the global tariff war that affected financial markets and expectations for future economic growth. One key factor limiting the conflict’s inflationary impact on the region was the gradual nature of rising commodity and shipping costs, which tend to materialize over an extended period. Moreover, continued implementation of sound economic policies across the GCC has been instrumental in keeping inflationary pressures contained, resulting in inflation levels that remain significantly below those seen in other parts of the Middle East and globally.

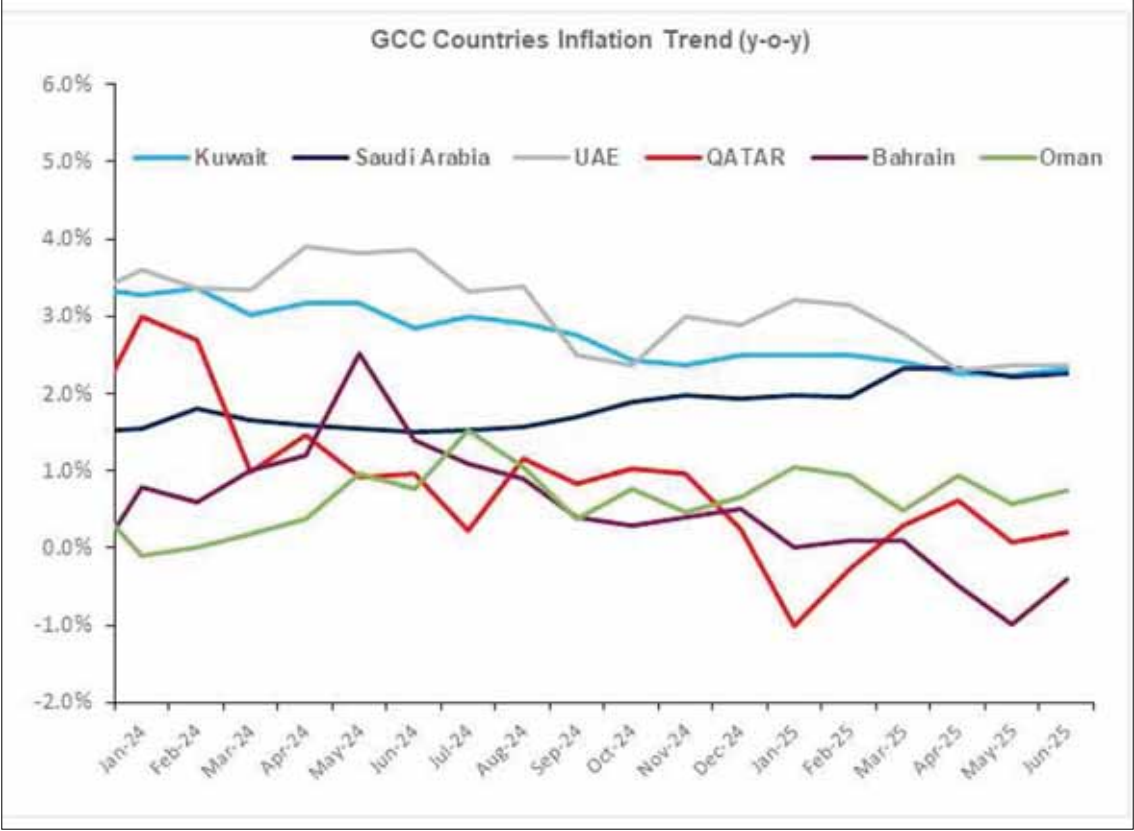
In contrast, inflationary pressures in the United States strengthened in June-2025. The annual inflation rate rose to 2.7%, the sharpest increase in five months, up from 2.4% in May-2025. This acceleration was primarily due to price hikes in core goods, which reached a two-year high.

These increases are largely attributed to new tariffs affecting household furnishings, appliances, electronics, apparel, and toys. Meanwhile, the U.S. consumer price index registered a m-o-m growth of 0.3% in June-2025. Excluding the typically volatile food and energy sectors, U.S. core inflation increased by 0.2% m-o-m, with the annualized core rate rising to 2.9% in June. It is important to highlight that prior to this uptick, U.S. inflation had been on a generally downward trajectory. Similarly, inflation in the Eurozone rose in June-2025, reaching 2.0%, down from 2.5% in June-2024 but slightly higher than May-2025’s rate of 1.9%. The Services sector experienced the highest y-o-y growth at 3.3%, followed by the Food, Alcohol, and Tobacco category, which rose by 3.1%.

Within the GCC, Dubai recorded a monthly inflation rate of 2.4% in June-2025, unchanged from May-2025. This was followed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both registering inflation rates of 2.3% in June. Overall, inflation remained steady across GCC countries during the month of June-2025. The Statistical Center for the Gulf Cooperation Council recently released data showing the average inflation rate in the GCC dropped to 1.7% in 2024, down from 2.2% in 2023. The GCC-Stat report highlighted notable disparities across the major expenditure groups. The Housing Group saw the largest increase at 5.7%, followed by Restaurants and Hotels and the Culture and Entertainment category, each rising by 1.8%. Education inflation came in at 1.7%, while Food and Beverages registered 1.5%, and the Goods and Services category recorded a 1.1% increase. Taking a broader view over the past five years, the region’s inflation peaked at 3.1% in 2022, compared to 1.7% in 2020, 2.4% in 2021, and 2.2% in 2023.

Global Food Prices

Global food prices registered moderate growth in June-2025, primarily driven by rising prices in the meat, dairy, and vegetable oil categories. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Food Price Index, global food prices rose by 5.8% y-o-y during the month, although the index remained 20.1% below its peak level recorded in March-2024. The overall increase was largely supported by gains in the indices for dairy products, meat, and vegetable oils, which more than offset declines observed in the cereal and sugar categories. The FAO Meat Price Index averaged 126 points in June-2025, representing a 6.7% y-o-y increase and reaching a new all-time high. This growth was driven by higher prices across all meat categories, except poultry. In particular, global bovine meat prices hit a record high, reflecting constrained export supplies from Brazil and robust demand from the United States, which in turn placed up-



ward pressure on Australian export prices. Conversely, the FAO Sugar Price Index averaged 103.7 points in June-2025, marking its fourth consecutive monthly decline and the lowest level recorded since April-2021. The decline in sugar prices was mainly attributed to improved supply prospects in several key producing countries.

FED and ECB Rate Hike Expectations

So far in 2025, interest rates in the European Union have been cut from 3.75% deposit facility rate in June-2024 to 2.0% in deposit facility rate in June-2025, reflecting a sustained easing cycle, while the U.S. Federal Reserve has not mirrored this downward trend due to persistent inflationary pressures and concerns over elevated tariff risks. With the U.S. inflation rate reaching 2.7% in June-2025, the Federal Reserve is maintaining a cautious stance and we expect the impact an inflation from the tariffs would determine the future cause of rates cuts. Additionally, the continued impact of U.S. import tariffs, currently nearly 20% higher than they were at the beginning of 2025, further limits the Fed’s flexibility to lower rates. Meanwhile, the European Central Bank (ECB) has kept interest rates unchanged for the first time since it started cutting rates, as recent data indicates the eurozone economy is maintaining a stable growth trajectory amid low inflation. Since June-2024, the ECB has cut interest rates eight times, bringing them down from a peak of 4.0% to the current 2%. In the GCC region, most countries are expected to align their monetary policy with the U.S. Federal Reserve, given that their currencies are pegged to the U.S. dollar, with the exception of Kuwait, which pegs its dinar to a basket of currencies that includes the dollar. In 2024, the majority of GCC central banks followed the Fed’s rate cuts; however, Kuwait diverged by implementing a modest 25 bps cut compared to the 100 bps cuts adopted by other central banks in the region.

Kuwait

According to official government statistics, Kuwait’s Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 2.3% y-o-y in June-

2025, reaching 136.9 points. The increase was primarily driven by a 5.1% rise in the Food & Beverages group, followed by a 3.9% increase in the Clothing and Footwear group. Notable price hikes were recorded across key food subcategories, including cereals, bread, meat, poultry, fish, and seafood. The rise in the Clothing and Footwear index stemmed mainly from higher prices for personal apparel and footwear. The Furnishing, Equipment & Household Maintenance group recorded a 3.3% y-o-y gain, closing at 114.3 points. Meanwhile, the Health index, which holds significant weight in Kuwait’s CPI basket, increased by 2.9% compared to the previous year.

The Communication group showed only a marginal uptick of 0.6%. Conversely, the Transport index accounts for 7.5% of the overall CPI, contracted by 1.8% y-o-y, primarily due to falling vehicle prices and lower operating costs for personal transport. On a monthly basis, Kuwait’s CPI edged up by 0.3% in June-2025 relative to May. The Food & Beverages group rose by 0.6% m-o-m, while the Housing Services group, the largest CPI component, increased by 0.4%, contributing to the marginal monthly inflation rise.

Saudi Arabia

In June-2025, Saudi Arabia’s inflation rate climbed to 2.3% y-o-y, the highest in two years, largely due to a 6.5% increase in the Housing, Water, Electricity, and Other Fuels group. This was driven by a 7.6% jump in rents paid for housing, including a 7.1% rise in villa rental prices. Given this group’s 25.5% weight in the CPI, its increase had a notable impact on overall inflation. Additionally, the Food and Beverages group grew by 1.5%, mainly due to a 2.4% rise in meat and poultry prices. The Personal Goods & Services index recorded a 4.1% y-o-y increase, fueled by a 26.5% surge in prices for jewelry, watches, and antiques. The Restaurants & Hotels group rose by 1.6%, reflecting higher hospitality service charges. Meanwhile, the Furnishing & Household Equipment group saw prices decline by 1.7%, led by a 3.5% drop in furniture and flooring costs. The Clothing & Footwear index fell marginally by

0.6%, primarily due to a 1.4% decrease in garment prices. The Transport group also declined by 0.7%, impacted by a 1.7% fall in vehicle prices.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Dubai’s CPI increased by 2.4% y-o-y in June-2025, remaining unchanged from May-2025. The Housing, Water, Electricity, and Gas group, the most heavily weighted CPI component, posted a strong 6.6% y-o-y increase, exerting significant upward pressure on headline inflation. The Healthcare group rose by 3.0% y-o-y, mirroring the rate recorded in May, while the Education group also remained stable at 2.5%. The Food and Beverages group experienced marginal growth of 0.6%, while the Hotels & Restaurants group rose by 0.7% during the same period. However, the Transport group, the second largest weighted category, continued its downward trend, falling 7.4% y-o-y in June, following an 8.8% drop in May, thus dampening overall inflation. Only three of Dubai’s twelve CPI subgroups recorded y-o-y declines in June-2025. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UAE’s inflation is forecast to average 2.1% in 2025, up from 1.7% in 2024. Inflation is projected to ease slightly to 2.0% in 2026, reflecting continued price stability.

Qatar

Qatar’s CPI rose modestly by 0.2% y-o-y in June-2025, reaching 107.7 points. The limited inflation was a result of declines in seven of the eleven CPI subgroups, which offset price gains in the remaining four categories. The Food & Beverages group rose by 2.6% y-o-y, while the Housing, Water, Electricity, and Gas group recorded a significant 3.6% decrease. Conversely, the Communication group posted a substantial 10.3% y-o-y increase, while Education saw a moderate 1.7% gain. Tobacco prices remained unchanged. On a monthly basis, Qatar’s CPI edged up by just 0.1% in June 2025. Historically, Qatar’s m-o-m inflation has averaged 0.09% between 2009 and 2024, with a record high of 1.59% in December 2023 and a record low of -2.6% in January-2022. The highest monthly rise in March 2025 was recorded in the Clothing and Footwear group (0.8%), while Housing, Water & Electricity rose by 0.3%.

Bahrain

Bahrain inflation also witnessed minimal changes in June-2025, with the CPI declining by 0.4% y-o-y to close at 101.4 points. On a monthly basis, however, CPI rose by 0.9%, making Bahrain the second lowest-inflation country in the GCC for the month. The subdued annual inflation was primarily attributed to price declines in five of the twelve CPI categories. Notably, Housing, Water, and Electricity fell by 1.7%, Recreation & Culture dropped by 2.3%, and Health declined by 0.1%. Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages also fell sharply, down 3.6%. Among the few groups that saw price increases, Communications rose by 2.6% y-o-y. Looking ahead, the IMF projects Bahrain’s average inflation rate to remain the lowest in the GCC at just 1.0% in 2025. Qatar and Oman follow, with projected inflation rates of 1.2% and 1.5%, respectively.

Oman

Oman recorded a modest 0.8% y-o-y increase in CPI for June-2025, slightly up from 0.6% in May-2025. The low inflation environment reflects widespread price stability across consumer categories. According to Oman’s National Centre for Statistics and Information, the largest increases were noted in Miscellaneous Goods & Services (7.5%), followed by Transport (3.1%) and Restaurants (1.4%). Meanwhile, the Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages index declined by 0.5%, mainly driven by an 8.1% drop in vegetable prices and a 3.8% fall in seafood prices. Oman continues to maintain one of the lowest inflation rates in the region, supported by prudent fiscal policy and a rise in non-oil exports. On a m-o-m basis, Oman’s CPI decreased by 0.3% in June-2025 compared to May.

In line with its commitment to social responsibility and youth development

NBK sponsors Youth Leadership Program (YLP) in collaboration with LOYAC

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: In line with its deep commitment to social responsibility and continued support to the development of Kuwait’s youth, National Bank of Kuwait sponsored the Youth Leadership Program (YLP), which aims to develop skills of leadership, self-awareness, and resilience for the youth, in collaboration with a non-profit organization.

The program, which targets 14- to 18-year-old high school students, took place in the United Kingdom in a period that extended from the 13th until the 19th of July 2025, with the participation of 12 students.

The Youth Leadership Program is a transformative and unique experience in which participants get the opportunity to undergo a life-changing adventure for one week in Bedfordshire’s breathtaking nature where they unleash their hidden abilities and energies.

Moreover, the program aims to develop leadership skills by teaching the students the habits of effective people, which help them achieve current and future successes and face future challenges confidently.

In this extensive journey, the students participated in outdoor activities, including walking down the green fields and exploring UK’s enchanting towns, in addition to building relationships and creating connections un-



Youth Leadership Program

der friendly competitions.

The program also gave the students a view on practical leadership skills, based on Steven R. Covey’s prominent book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, through which the students obtained valuable tools to manage their thoughts, actions, and feelings and consequently provide them with remarkable and confident future leadership abilities.

This sponsorship comes in line with NBK’s strategic partnership with LOYAC, which echoes the bank’s unwavering support for Kuwait’s youth by enabling them to invest in their future and become part of an aware and leading generation”.

NBK will continue to sponsor and support initiatives that align with its social responsibility values among all society segments and non-profit organizations, especially the ones that nurture youth development and their future needs, as it strongly believes in the significant effect they carry upon society.

It is worth noting that LOYAC is a non-profit organization that aims to support the youth by providing training opportunities and specialized educational and volunteering developmental programs.



President Donald Trump speaks during an event to announce new tariffs in the Rose Garden at the White House, on April 2, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

Trade talks victory for Trump, tariffs under judicial scrutiny

WASHINGTON, July 31, (AP): President Donald Trump has been getting his way on trade, strong-arming the European Union, Japan and other partners to accept once unthinkable high taxes on their exports to the United States.

But his radical overhaul of American trade policy, in which he’s bypassed Congress to slam big tariffs on most of the world’s economies, has not gone unchallenged. He’s facing at least seven lawsuits charging that he’s overstepped his authority. The plaintiffs want his biggest, boldest tariffs thrown out.

And they won Round One.

In May, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of International Trade, a specialized federal court in New York, ruled that Trump exceeded his powers when he declared a national emergency to plaster taxes - tariffs - on imports from almost every country in the world. In reaching its decision, the court combined two challenges - one by five businesses and one by 12 U.S. states - into a single case.

Now it goes on to Round Two.

On Thursday, the 11 judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, which typically specializes in patent law, are scheduled to hear oral arguments from the Trump administration and from the states and businesses that want his sweeping import taxes struck down.

That court earlier allowed the federal government to continue collecting Trump’s tariffs as the case works its way through the judicial system.

The issues are so weighty - involving the president’s power to bypass Congress and impose taxes with huge economic consequences in the United States and abroad - that the case is widely expected to reach the U.S. Supreme Court, regardless of what the appeals court decides.

Trump is an unabashed fan of tariffs. He sees the import taxes as an all-purpose economic tool that can bring manufacturing back to the United States, protect American industries, raise revenue to pay for the massive tax cuts in his “One Big Beautiful Bill,” pressure countries into bending to his will, even end wars.

The U.S. Constitution gives the power to impose taxes - including tariffs - to Congress. But lawmakers have gradually relinquished power over trade policy to the White House. And Trump has made the most of the power vacuum, raising the average U.S. tariff to more than 18%, highest since 1934, according to the Budget Lab at Yale University.

At issue in the pending court case is Trump’s use of the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose sweeping tariffs without seeking congressional approval or conducting investigations first. Instead, he asserted the authority to declare a na-

tional emergency that justified his import taxes.

In February, he cited the illegal flow of drugs and immigrants across the U.S. border to slap tariffs on Canada, China and Mexico. Then on April 2 - “Liberation Day,” Trump called it - he invoked IEEPA to announce “reciprocal” tariffs of up to 50% on countries with which the United States ran trade deficits and a 10% “baseline” tariff on almost everybody else. The emergency he cited was America’s long-running trade deficit.

Trump later suspended the reciprocal tariffs, but they remain a threat: They could be imposed again Friday on countries that do not pre-empt them by reaching trade agreements with the United States or that receive letters from Trump setting their tariff rates himself.

The plaintiffs argue that the emergency power laws does not authorize the use of tariffs. They also note that the trade deficit hardly meets the definition of an “unusual and extraordinary” threat that would justify declaring an emergency under the law. The United States, after all, has run trade deficits - in which it buys more from foreign countries than it sells them - for 49 straight years and in good times and bad.

The Trump administration argues that courts approved President Richard Nixon’s emergency use of tariffs in a 1971 economic crisis. The Nixon administration successfully cited its authority under the 1917 Trading With Enemy Act, which preceded and supplied some of the legal language used in IEEPA.

In May, the trade court rejected the argument, ruling that Trump’s Liberation Day tariffs “exceed any authority granted to the President” under the emergency powers law.

“The president doesn’t get to use open-ended grants of authority to do what he wants,” said Reilly Stephens, senior counsel at the Liberty Justice Center, a libertarian legal group that is representing businesses suing the Trump administration over the tariffs.

In the case of the drug trafficking and immigration tariffs on Canada, China and Mexico, the trade court ruled that the levies did not meet IEEPA’s requirement that they “deal with” the problem they were supposed to address.

The court challenge does not cover other Trump tariffs, including levies on foreign steel, aluminum and autos that the president imposed after Commerce Department investigations concluded that those imports were threats to U.S. national security.

Nor does it include tariffs that Trump imposed on China in his first term - and President Joe Biden kept - after a government investigation concluded that the Chinese used unfair practices to give their own technology firms an edge over rivals from the United States and other Western countries.

WASHINGTON, July 31, (Agencies): The Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation gauge ticked higher last month in a sign that President Donald Trump’s broad-based tariffs are starting to lift prices for many goods.

Prices rose 2.6% in June compared with a year ago, the Commerce Department said Thursday, up from an annual pace of 2.4% in May. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, prices rose 2.8% in the past year, the same as the previous month, which was revised higher. The figures are above the Fed’s 2% goal.

The uptick in prices helps explain the central bank’s reluctance to cut its key interest rate this week, despite repeated demands from Trump that it do so. On Wednesday, the Fed left its key rate unchanged at 4.3%, and Chair Fed Powell suggested it could take months for the central bank to determine whether the import duties will cause just a one-time rise in prices, or a more persistent increase in inflation.

Trump has attacked Powell personally and repeatedly, and did so again on Thursday for the Fed’s reluctance to cut rates, calling him “TOO ANGRY, TOO STUPID, & TOO POLITICAL” to have the job of Fed Chair.” On a monthly basis, prices ticked up 0.3% from May to June, while core prices also rose 0.3%. Both figures are higher than consistent with the 2% target.

“The above-target rise in core prices in June, upward revisions to previous months’ data and the sharp rise in core goods inflation will do little to ease the Fed’s concerns about tariff-driven inflation,” said Harry Chambers, assistant economist at Capital Economics, a forecasting firm.

“If these pressures persist, as we expect, a September cut looks unlikely.” The government’s measure of gas prices jumped 0.9% from May

to June, while grocery costs rose 0.3%. Many longer-lasting goods that are heavily imported saw clear price increases, with furniture prices up 1.3% just last month, appliances up 1.9%, and computers up 1.4%.

The cost of some services fell dramatically last month, offsetting some of the price pressures from goods. Air fares dropped 0.7% from May to June, while the cost of hotel rooms plunged 3.6% just in one month.

Thursday’s report also showed that consumer spending rose 0.3% from May to June, a modest rise that suggests Americans are still spending cautiously. Adjusted for inflation, the increase was just 0.1%, the government said.

Americans’ incomes also picked up just modestly, rising 0.3% last month, a rebound after a 0.4% drop in May. But adjusted for inflation and taxes, incomes were flat in June.

Consumers have been cautious all year. On Wednesday, the government said the economy expanded at a 3% annual rate in the second quarter, a solid showing but one that masked some red flags. Consumer spending, for example, rose at a lackluster 1.4% pace, after an even smaller gain of 0.5% in the first three months of the year. A sharp drop in imports in the April-June quarter, which followed a surge in the first quarter, provided a big lift to the government’s calculation of U.S. gross domestic product.

Earlier this month, the government reported that its more closely-watched consumer price index, its primary inflation measure, also ticked higher in June as the cost of heavily-imported items such as appliances, furniture, and toys increased.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Rising uncertainty, tariff tensions, and inflation disparities continue to cloud the outlook, International Monetary Fund warned in a statement on Tuesday.

Layoffs remain low despite trade policy uncertainty

US jobless claims rise slightly to 218,000

WASHINGTON, July 31, (AP): The number of Americans filing for jobless benefits inched up modestly last week as business continue to retain staff despite economic uncertainty around U.S. trade policy.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims for the week ending July 26 ticked up by 1,000 to 218,000, less than the 225,000 new applications analysts forecast.

It was the first time in seven weeks that benefit applications rose, although layoffs remain at historically low levels.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are seen as representative of U.S. layoffs and have mostly settled in a historically healthy range between 200,000 and 250,000 since COVID-19 throttled the economy in the spring of 2020, wiping out millions of jobs.

Earlier in July, the Labor Department reported that U.S. employers added a surprisingly strong 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



Katy Frank, a former computer scientist at the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab, who lost her job, protests outside the John D. Dingell Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Detroit, Friday, Feb. 28, 2025. (AP)

the unemployment rate ticked down 4.1% from 4.2% in May.

The government issues its July jobs report on Friday.

Though the top line numbers reflect a broadly healthy labor market by historical standards, some weakness has surfaced as employers contend with fallout from Trump’s poli-

cies, especially his aggressive tariffs, which raise prices for businesses and consumers. If consumers continue to pull back on spending, a decline in demand could push businesses to freeze hiring or cut staff.

This week, government data showed that employers posted 7.4 million job vacancies in June, down from 7.7 million in May. The number of people quitting their jobs - a sign of confidence in their prospects elsewhere - fell in June to the lowest level since December. Hiring also fell from May.

The deadline on most of Trump’s stiff proposed taxes on imports were extended again until Friday, though some deals have been made and other deadlines to negotiate have been extended. Unless Trump reaches deals with countries to lower the tariffs, economists fear they could act as a drag on the economy and spark another rise in inflation.

Companies that have announced job cuts this year include Procter & Gamble, Dow, CNN, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Microsoft, Google and Facebook parent company Meta. Most recently, Intel and The Walt Disney Co. announced staff reductions.

The Labor Department’s report Thursday also said that the four-week average of claims, which evened out some of the week-to-week fluctuations, fell by 3,500 to 221,000.

The total number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits for the previous week of July 19 was unchanged at 1.95 million.

Pakistan and US reach a trade agreement to develop oil reserves and reduce tariffs

ISLAMABAD, July 31, (AP): The United States and Pakistan reached a trade agreement expected to allow Washington to help develop Pakistan’s largely untapped oil reserves and lower tariffs for the South Asian country, officials from both nations said Thursday.

Officials did not specify where the exploration would take place, but most of Pakistan’s reserves are believed to be in the insurgency-hit southwestern province of Balochistan, where separatists say the province’s natural resources are being exploited by the central government in Islamabad.

“We have just concluded a deal with the country of Pakistan, whereby Pakistan and the United States will work together on developing their massive oil reserves,” U.S. President Donald Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

“We are in the process of choosing the oil company that will lead this partnership,” Trump added. “Who knows, maybe they’ll be selling oil to India someday!”

Total U.S. trade with Pakistan was an estimated \$7.3 billion in 2024, according to the Office of the United States Representative, which said on its website that U.S. exports to Pakistan in 2024 were \$2.1 billion, up 4.4% (\$90.9 million) from 2023. U.S. imports from Pakistan totaled \$5.1 billion in 2024, up 4.9% (\$238.7 million) from 2023, it said.

There was no immediate comment from the Baloch nationalists and separatist groups. Balochistan has long been the center of violence mostly blamed on groups including the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army, or B.L.A., which the U.S. designated a terrorist organization in 2019.

Separatists in Balochistan have opposed the extraction of resources by Pakistani and foreign firms and have targeted Pakistani security forces and Chinese nationals working on multibillion-dollar projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Oil reserves are also thought to exist in the southern Sindh, eastern Punjab and northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the “long-awaited” deal and thanked Trump for playing a key role in finalizing it.

Pakistan had been pursuing a trade agreement since May, when Trump mediated a ceasefire between Pakistan and India following an escalation triggered by Indian airstrikes on Pakistani territory in response to the killing of 26 tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Moscow’s shift to China, India and Iran has dulled Western economic pressure

Sanctioning ghosts: US threats to Russia lack impact



A sail catamaran floats in the Finnish Gulf in St. Petersburg, Russia, on July 28, 2025, with the Lakhta Center skyscraper, the headquarters of Russian gas monopoly Gazprom in the background. (AP)

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Keith A. Preble, East Carolina University and
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‘Economic sanctions imposed to change the behavior of a target country can range from restrictions on exports and imports to asset freezes, banking restrictions and travel and visa bans.’

One way or other, it looks like Russia could soon be slapped with a fresh round of U.S. sanctions. On July 23, 2025, a bipartisan push to impose a 500% levy on imports from Russia or any country buying Russian oil was put on hold - but only to allow President Donald Trump’s separate threat of imposing new economic measures to play out first. Trump had previously said he would unilaterally impose new sanctions if President Vladimir Putin failed to agree to a ceasefire with Ukraine by a date the U.S. president originally set at Aug. 30, but later indicated would be shorter.

Adjectives such as “harsh,” “punishing” and even “bone-crushing” have been attached to both proposed measures. But what impact will they really have if the threats turn into action?

As experts on economic sanctions, we argue that such efforts are akin to sanctioning ghosts. The reality is the economic relationship between Russia

and the U.S. is a shell of its former self, with trade between the two countries down 90% since 2021, the year before the invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia has developed a network of critical partners to support its war effort, including China, Iran and North Korea. While the Russian economy remains challenged to some degree, it has largely weathered the impact of Western sanctions since 2022. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that Russia’s economy will grow by 1.5% this year, although inflation appears to remain stubborn.

Economic sanctions imposed to change the behavior of a target country can range from restrictions on exports and imports to asset freezes, banking restrictions and travel and visa bans. They can be comprehensive, encompassing an entire country’s economy; sectoral - that is, targeting specific economic activity; or directed at specific people and entities.

Talk of new sanctions on Russia represents a turn in strategy for the second Trump administration. After taking office again in January 2025, Trump took what has widely been seen as a softer line on Russia than the previous president, Joe Biden.

On Feb. 24, the anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Trump White House did not, for example, announce any new economic sanc-

tions against Russia - the first time the United States had failed to do so on the date since Russia’s invasion. And while the broad sanctions landscape has remained largely unchanged under the Trump administration - it hasn’t relaxed any of those imposed on Russia under Biden - the ability to impose additional penalties may be impacted by other actions and changes in approach.

For one thing, the State Department - one of three main departments responsible for sanctions - has shed nearly 3,000 employees as part of Trump’s mass layoffs of federal workers. That loss of expertise could make it difficult for the U.S. to wield its economic power against Russia.

The U.S. has also been less willing to work multilaterally with other countries. Not only has the Trump administration shown a willingness to shut out Ukraine and European allies in peace negotiations, but it has also been less willing to adapt its sanctions to better coordinate with the European Union. The bloc, for example, recently unveiled its 18th package of economic sanctions against Russia on its own, after the U.S. declined to join the bloc in lowering the price cap on Russian oil.

While EU and U.K. efforts seek to bolster the existing sanctions regime, the proposals currently being looked at in the U.S. could do more harm than good.

The legislation pending before Congress includes what sanctions experts call secondary sanctions. Those are imposed on a sanctioned nation’s trading partners.

While the Senate has, for now, stepped back from its threats to legislate new sanctions against Russia, the Trump administration has threatened both tariffs on Russia and secondary tariffs on nations that continue to trade with Russia.

These measures could be diplomatically challenging as Trump negotiates trade deals with India and China - two of Russia’s key trading partners. Such actions by the Trump administration raise the prospect of retaliatory measures against the U.S.

Also, any additional sanctions and tariffs could be disruptive to a global economy already jittery from Trump’s on-off tariffs.

A problem with lengthy sanctions regimes is that as trade diminishes, they tend to become less effective. As economist Albert Hirschman argued in his seminal work on trade and power, trade is both a means of acquiring power as well as a source of power that can be wielded coercively.

U.S. trade with Russia has fallen significantly - from US\$38 billion in 2021 to just under \$4 billion in 2024. U.S. exports to Russia and imports from Russia have declined precipitously since 2021, down 73% and 51%, respectively.

As trade links between the two nations decline, the United States’ ability to coerce through trade diminishes significantly.

While the Trump administration has not announced any definitive sanctions against Russia, talk of even a “100% tariff” is unlikely to harm the Russian economy, since it currently exports so little to the U.S. In 2024, this amounted to \$3 billion - a nearly 90% decline in trade since 2021.

As such, new tariffs on goods coming into the U.S. economy are unlikely to push Putin to the negotiating table.

The warnings of many economists over the impact of tariffs bears repeating here: Tariffs are taxes. And the costs of those taxes are borne by firms importing foreign goods into the U.S., not the Kremlin, who then pass the costs onto consumers and other businesses purchasing those goods.

Data from the United Nations Comtrade database shows that the top Russian export to the U.S. in 2024 was fertilizer. Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia was the largest exporter of fertilizers globally - with China and Canada second and third, respectively. Further tariffs on Russian fertilizer are not likely to be welcome by U.S. farmers already suffering from the higher costs of imports elsewhere.

Meanwhile, U.S. exports to Russia have fallen sharply since 2021 and are now a mere fraction of the levels four years ago. Since then, Russia has replaced Western trade with that of other countries, mainly developing economies, or has simply avoided sanctions by routing goods through third-party states.

Looking at Russia’s network of trading relationships is key to understanding when sanctions work and when they don’t. We argue that sanctions’ limited impact on the Russian economy is largely due to the Kremlin’s ability to find trading partners willing to ignore the United States’ and other countries’ sanctions.

China, Turkey, Germany, India and Italy export significant amounts to Russia. Meanwhile China, India, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Brazil remain critical markets for Russian goods.

And North Korea, along with providing Russia with manpower on the front lines, has also pledged to expand its economic cooperation with Russia.

For its part, China’s trade with Russia appears to be increasing despite the two countries’ complicated history.

A key catalyst for China-Russia economic cooperation has been the Trump administration’s tariffs. Both countries have long aimed to supplant the U.S.-led liberal world order, and the notion of a new world order has only gained support among members and prospective members of the BRICS bloc of low- and middle-income nations, of which China and Russia are a part.

The decline in trade between the U.S. and Russia means that tariffs are, in our opinion, a nonstarter if Washington is truly looking for a measure to push Putin toward a ceasefire. And secondary tariffs against Russia’s trading partners have the potential to harm U.S. consumers and businesses.

As such, we believe that sanctions - either through Congress or the White House - will do little to alter the course of the Ukraine-Russia war, or advance Trump’s longed-for peace deal. (AP)

CEOs roll back DEI, temper criticism amid tariff shocks and fear of retaliation

Caution in C-suite: How business leaders navigating Trump 2.0

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By Erran Carmel, American University Kogod School of Business and
Joseph Garbowski, American University

‘Silence was often a strategic choice, with many leaders staying mum due to fear of retaliation.’

In the first months of Donald Trump’s second term as president, his policies - from sweeping tariffs and aggressive immigration enforcement to attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion - have thrown U.S. businesses into turmoil, leading to a 26-point decline in CEO confidence. Yet despite this volatility, many American corporations have remained notably restrained in their public responses.

This might come as a surprise. After all, in recent decades, CEOs have become increasingly willing to speak out about social and political issues. But while some universities and law firms have publicly pushed back against the Trump administration, business leaders are seemingly opting for caution.

What would it take for these titans of corporate America to speak out against Trump’s policies? We are a professor and a graduate student who study business, and back in 2018,

one of us - Dr. Carmel - conducted an analysis asking this very question. More recently, we gathered new data looking at how business leaders are responding to Trump’s second term. The 2018 analysis, involving data from about 200 leading U.S. CEOs, found that most business leaders remained publicly neutral on Trump, and only a handful expressed strong opposition. Silence was often a strategic choice, with many leaders staying mum due to fear of retaliation. The evidence also suggested that Trump could one day cross a line that would prompt a broader CEO backlash.

Seven years later, that line hasn’t yet appeared, even as Trump’s footprint on corporate America is now far more direct and substantial. Most notable are Trump’s tariffs, first announced in April 2025, which have roiled global markets and unnerved CEOs. And there are many other ripples: Some companies, such as CBS’ parent company, Paramount - which is seeking the Trump administration’s approval for a merger - have decided to self-censor. Others, including Disney and Meta, gave in to Trump’s lawsuits and paid multimillion-dollar settlements, against the counsel of many outside experts. CEOs also have to deal with the threat of backlash from both the right and left.

Against this backdrop, we col-

lected new public data to see how corporate leaders are responding to the second Trump administration. Just as in 2018, we examined the 232 companies that make up the Business Roundtable - a club of the most powerful American businesses.

We assessed the actions that these companies took regarding DEI and whether they experienced any backlash. We focused on these criteria as a way to assess whether CEOs are seeking either to support or placate Trump, or to stand on other principles. We also collected other data, including public statements from CEOs and campaign donations.

Corporate DEI actions were an early, useful way to gauge a business’s stances, since, from the outset, the Trump administration identified DEI as a “scourge” to be eliminated. Although the White House’s anti-DEI directives have applied to the executive branch and federal contractors, some private businesses rushed to make changes as well.

By May, just a bit over 100 days into Trump’s second term, a significant number of companies had decided to go along with Trump’s preferences. Sixty-nine of the 232 companies in the Business Roundtable rolled back their DEI initiatives in some way, while just 20 companies announced that they kept their DEI programs in place. There’s no information either way on

the remaining 61% - likely because they decided it’s better to stay out of the news.

DEI-related actions have tapered off since May, but there’s still an impact. For example, the Federal Communications Commission pressured T-Mobile to eliminate DEI. Only then was its merger approved.

Companies that scaled back their DEI initiatives sometimes pointed to the political environment as a factor. Meta, for example, said in an internal memo that it was ending its DEI efforts due to a “shifting legal and policy landscape.” Other companies, including Verizon and Comcast, reportedly rolled back DEI programs because they feared legal action by the federal government.

Some corporations announced changes through internal announcements, legal filings or quiet updates to their websites, suggesting they want to stay out of the media spotlight.

A small number of Business Roundtable companies stood firm on their DEI policies - to mixed results. When Marriott’s CEO voiced support for DEI at a corporate leadership event, he reportedly received 40,000 appreciative emails from employees. On the other hand, after Coca-Cola reiterated its “commitment to sponsoring an inclusive workplace,” the right-wing activist Robby Starbuck - who The New York Times has described as “the

anti-DEI agitator that companies fear most” - said Coca-Cola “should be very nervous about continuing with its woke policies.” Overall, 22% of Business Roundtable companies saw some sort of backlash to their actions. Most came from the political right: 36 companies were called out by conservatives, another eight by progressives, and eight more faced bipartisan backlash.

With more than three years left in Trump’s second term, it’s worth asking what lies ahead. We think the most likely scenario is that companies will continue to try to stay off the president’s radar and placate him when they must. After all, following the split with Elon Musk, Trump quite explicitly threatened to use presidential powers to hurt Musk’s businesses. Any CEO gets the implications.

While our analysis primarily focused on social issues, policies at the business core may push U.S. companies to confront Trump. Tariff policy is a prime example. Back in April, major retailers like Walmart quietly warned Trump that tariffs could lead to empty shelves and higher prices. More recently, the CEO of Goldman Sachs publicly warned that tariffs “have raised the level of uncertainty to a degree I do not think is healthy for investment and growth.” These are voices of criticism - but worded quite softly. (AP)

SPECIAL REPORT

Lure of Luoyang

Ancient arteries with modern pulse



Delegates explore the historic Dingding Gate Museum, immersing themselves in the rich cultural heritage and ancient legacy of Luoyang.



Xinhua News Agency photos



Hebah Abbas of Kuwait poses with a maiden in traditional Chinese attire at the historic Dingding Gate Museum, celebrating cultural exchange and friendship.

By Marlon Aquino Malinao
Managing Editor, Arab Times

From the first breath I took in Luoyang, nestled in the heart of Henan Province, China, I knew this journey would not just fill my notebook — it would fill my senses. By the time our coach eased off the highway and into this ancient capital, the air itself seemed to hum with expectation. The sunlight glided across tiled rooftops as if intent on illuminating the city's stories, old and new.

Before the sightseeing, before the deep dives into history, before even the legendary dishes were set before us, Luoyang's welcome arrived — genuine and dazzling. The true gift of Luoyang is its people: everywhere I looked; their faces greeted us with unguarded warmth. Laughter mingled with the aroma of tea. The city's spirit was right there in the open, not something locked away in museums, but alive in every handshake, every shared grin.

Our first stop, as part of the unforgettable Shanghai Cooperation Organization Media and Think Tank Summit, was the Dingding Gate Museum. Standing at the southern entrance that once welcomed emperors and merchants, I ran my hand over rugged flagstones, imagined horses' hooves clicking across centuries-old paths, and felt the hum of life that once pulsed here. The restored Tang Dynasty towers rose sharply above us, their wooden beams shining like gold in the sunlight, as if eager to tell their stories again.

The past whispered in every corner — caravans approaching, silks rustling, voices mingling in market-places — memories etched deep in the stones and soil. This wasn't just a relic; it was the beating heart of a world long gone but never forgotten.

A banquet of hospitality begins

From the gate of power, we traveled into the heart of Tang dynasty opulence. Wuhuang Banquet set a new gold standard for welcomes. As we walked into a hall dressed in crimson and silk, time felt fluid; this could have been the Tang Dynasty, or yesterday, or some magical blend of both. Conversations faded to a hush as Mayor Zhang Yujie and Deputy Mayor Ren Lijun stepped forward. They didn't merely recite official greetings — they welcomed us as guests, as fellow storytellers, as friends. Their pride sparkled in every word, but so did gratitude, as though we were an integral part of Luoyang's ongoing legend. It wasn't a podium moment — it was a human one, warm and profoundly sincere.

Then the spectacle began: plates appeared, each a sensory story in itself. Golden Plate Braised Carp, glossy and aromatic, broke apart gently under my chopsticks, releasing a perfume of ginger and sweet soy. Di Gong Bafang Pot steamed from the center of the table, its broth swirling with green onions, goji berries, and earthy mushrooms. The flavors



A royal feast fit for emperors — delegates indulge in an array of traditional Chinese dishes served at the elegant Wuhuang Banquet, capturing the flavors of Luoyang's imperial past.



Delegates gather for a group photo during their insightful tour of YTO Group, one of China's leading agricultural machinery manufacturers.



His Excellency Jassem Al-Najem, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the People's Republic of China, listens to a briefing during the official delegation's tour of YTO Group.

were richly layered — salty, sweet, a hint of fire — and each was matched by the traditional music, the rustle of silk robes, and the hypnotic rhythm of servers gliding by.

Held in a lavishly decorated hall, this afternoon feast was no ordinary lunch. It was a mesmerizing performance of taste, sound, and spectacle dedicated to Wu Zetian, China's only female emperor. Holograms shimmered with her story, dancers floated through the hall like calligraphy come to life, and every dish told a tale.

I could almost feel the triumphant pulse of a dynasty's festival running through my feet, as though history

rose up from the floorboards. The lunch stretched on, unrushed — the kind of meal where conversation lingers, and every new dish is a cause for celebration.

Muscle and innovation: The heartbeat of YTO Group

Back outside, Luoyang's history yielded to its modern pulse.

Luoyang is not just about relics and ruins — it's an industrial powerhouse. Nowhere is this more evident than at YTO Group Corporation, China's first tractor manufacturer, founded in 1955.

It was here that the first "Dongfanghong" crawler tractor was born

in 1958. Today, YTO leads China's agricultural machinery sector with advanced tractors, harvesters, diesel engines, and transmission systems. With over 3.87 million tractors and 3.57 million power machines produced, its reach spans more than 90 countries.

YTO's modern offerings — including driverless, hybrid, CVT, and hill-climbing tractors — showcase the technological leap Luoyang has made. It's a testament to how this city builds not just monuments, but momentum.

The future here is not a cold abstraction but something you can

reach out and grasp — hot, solid, alive in your hands.

Innovation powerhouse: Where science and industry intersect

Luoyang's vision stretches far beyond agriculture. With 3,949 innovation platforms and nearly 450,000 technicians, including three academicians from China's top science academies, the city is a hub of forward-looking research.

As part of the Zhengzhou-Luoyang-Xinxiang National Innovation Demonstration Zone, Luoyang is advancing in aerospace, new materials, and electronic information. It houses 108 national-level innovation



One of the many delicacies served at the Wuhuang Banquet — a taste of Luoyang's rich culinary heritage inspired by imperial traditions.

platforms and boasts strong contributions to China's national development strategies.

Nature's embrace and strategic location

Beyond its industries, Luoyang thrives on natural beauty. With its forest coverage reaching 46.27%, and 68 major scenic spots, the city offers a lush escape from the steel and stone of industry. It is famed for the Luoyang peony, a national symbol of wealth and grace, attracting millions during bloom season.

Beneath its mountains lie rich mineral reserves, including one of the world's largest molybdenum deposits, a key global resource.

A transport crossroads since antiquity

Known since ancient times as "the crossroads of China," Luoyang still lives up to its title. Major railways and expressways intersect here, and though we arrived by tourist bus, the city is well-connected by high-speed rail, subways, and an airport with routes to 15 cities. Infrastructure development is fast and modern — a perfect blend of accessibility and progress.

Longmen Grottoes: A spiritual stone symphony

At day's end, I stood before the mighty cliffs of the Longmen Grottoes. Here, you touch stone and it returns warmth — an ancient heat shaped by artisans' hands, by centuries of devotion. Over 100,000 statues are tucked into caverns and niches: from the massive 17-meter Vairocana Buddha, more serene than the moon, to tiny figures etched delicately as grains of rice.

Close your eyes and the rhythm of chisel and mallet nearly echoes in the hollow space, mingling with wind and the hush from the Yi River. You almost feel the memory of incense, the weight of prayers, and the soft brush of travelers' hands tracing the same stone a thousand years ago.

A goodbye that lingers

As our bus finally rolled out of Luoyang, dusk painted the skyline with hues borrowed from peonies and lanterns. I tasted the city on my lips — sweet, savory, smoky, alive. I felt the press of ancient stone on my skin, the ghost of laughter echoing in my ears, and the Mayor's warm welcome still settled on my heart. Luoyang had embraced me not as a tourist, but as a guest, perhaps even as temporary kin.

If you ever come to Luoyang, bring more than your camera. Bring your appetite, your curiosity, your willingness to be still and feel. Because here, history isn't framed on a wall — it's handed to you, piping hot and fragrant, with a smile so genuine it makes you forget you're new.

In Luoyang, the past has flavor, the present has heart, and the future — like the best meal — always promises one more course, one more story, one more reason to stay just a little longer.

And for me, as a journalist and a traveler, I can say this with certainty: The story was absolutely worth the trip.

Festival shines light on Black filmmakers, creators, and culture

MVAAFF returns with star power, creativity, and cultural legacy

LOS ANGELES, July 31, (AP): No matter the time on Martha's Vineyard, a shimmering glow will be powered by the star presence of Black filmmakers, actors and tastemakers like Issa Rae, Mara Brock Akil and Michelle Obama who are shaping culture on their own terms.

For two-plus decades, the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAAFF) has been a cultural reunion, a summer sanctuary and a safe haven where some of the industry's most influential voices converge in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. This week marks the return of the 23rd annual nine-day celebration, which kicks off Friday with a stacked slate that includes appearances from singer-actor Jennifer Hudson and Hall of Fame basketball player Dwyane Wade, screenings like Spike Lee's "Highest 2 Lowest" and intimate conversations with figures such as the Rev. Al Sharpton.

Over the years, the festival has drawn the who's who of Black Hollywood - including Colman Domingo, Taraji P. Henson, Tyler Perry and Regina King. The Obamas made a surprise appearance in 2022.

"It's a moment when so many of us converge and gather in a location that has historically received us incredibly well," said Tracee Ellis Ross, who will screen her new Roku Channel series "Solo Traveling with Tracee Ellis Ross."

Ross said sharing her project at MVAAFF felt right, noting that the Vineyard-set episode of Akil's "Forever" captures the spirit and beauty of the picturesque island.

"It felt like the perfect location to kind of share," she said. "The timing was perfect from when the show came out."

Set on the campus of the Martha's Vineyard Performing Arts Center and the Vineyard Lounge, the festival has grown from a grassroots gathering into a premier destination where Black creatives can find inspiration, connection and support.

Akil paid homage to festival founders Stephanie and Floyd Rance, crediting them for building a creative pipeline where stories rooted in Black culture live



This combination of photos shows Jennifer Hudson, (left), Michelle Obama, (center), and Issa Rae. (AP)

and are seen.

"They know the value. They know the need," said Akil, who will screen "The Vineyard" episode from the Netflix series "Forever" at the festival. "Regardless of what the institution or systems of Hollywood sees as valuable, we claim the value of our stories. We have a chance to celebrate them, complete them, tell them, view them and share them with an audience. It allows for the completion of the story, so that we can move on to many, many, many more stories that need to be told."

Floyd Rance described MVAAFF as a vital part of the entertainment ecosystem, offering a platform where Black voices and stories are given the spotlight

they deserve.

"It's always good to have somewhat of a convergence for folks of like mind in the arts and entertainment to gather, coalesce, share ideas, rekindle friendships and fellowship," said Floyd, who along with Stephanie said they did not expect their festival to become such a main attraction.

"Despite the political climate and what's going on in entertainment, it's always a good time for birds of a feather to flock together."

In addition to the panels and screenings, Stephanie Rance said this year's festival centers on the theme of joy, focusing more on celebration than struggle. She's especially excited for attendees to experience a range of conversations, from little-known moments in Black history to a panel on Ralph Lauren's Oak Bluffs collection with Morehouse and Spelman.

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture will host a discussion on Black dandyism, paying tribute to fashion icon André Leon Talley.

"The community at large on the Vineyard and the folks that come from all over the world to the festival really embrace the filmmakers," she said. "Everybody loves the studio and the streaming content and the talent that comes in. But we really are a filmmakers' film fest at heart."

This year's festival is delivering a dynamic slate that blends star power, conversation and creative insight.

Spike Lee will unveil exclusive clips from his upcoming film "Highest 2 Lowest" starring Denzel Washington. Courtney B. Vance is set to lead a panel on Black storytelling, diving into how content creation can retain cultural authenticity.

Jennifer Hudson will open up about her Emmy-nominated daytime talk show, while Dwyane Wade will participate in a men's luncheon with industry leaders to discuss leadership, legacy and capital in today's evolving media space.

People

'Genes vs jeans'

Sweeney's ad sparks race, beauty debate

NEW YORK, July 31, (AP): US fashion retailer American Eagle Outfitters made a splash with its new advertising campaign starring 27-year-old actor Sydney Sweeney. The ad blitz included "clever, even provocative language" and was "definitely going to push buttons," the company's chief marketing officer told trade media outlets.

It has. The question now is whether some of the public reactions the fall denim campaign produced is what American Eagle intended.

Titled "Sydney Sweeney has great jeans," the campaign sparked a debate about race, Western beauty standards, and the backlash to "woke" American politics and culture. Most of the negative reception focused on videos that used the word "genes" instead of "jeans" when discussing the blonde-haired, blue-eyed actor known for the HBO series "Euphoria" and "White Lotus."

Some critics saw the wordplay as a nod, either unintentional or deliberate, to eugenics, a discredited theory that held humanity could be improved through selective breeding for certain traits.

Marcus Collins, an assistant professor of marketing at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, said the criticism could have been avoided if the ads showed models of various races making the "genes" pun.

"You can either say this was ignorance, or this was laziness, or say that this is intentional," Collins said. "Either one of the three aren't good."

Other commenters accused detractors of reading too much into the campaign's message.

"I love how the leftist meltdown over the Sydney Sweeney ad has only resulted in a beautiful white blonde girl with blue eyes getting 1000x the exposure for her 'good genes,'" former Fox News host Megyn Kelly wrote Tuesday on X.

Volatile

American Eagle didn't respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

The ad blitz comes as the teen retailer, like many merchants, wrestles with sluggish consumer spending and higher costs from tariffs. American Eagle reported that total sales were down 5% for its February-April quarter compared to a year earlier.

A day after Sweeney was announced as the company's latest celebrity collaborator, American Eagle's stock closed more than 4% up. Shares were volatile this week and trading nearly 2% down Wednesday.

Like many trendy clothing brands, American Eagle has to differentiate itself from other mid-priced chains with a famous face or by saying something edgy, according to Alan Adamson, co-founder of marketing consultancy Metaforce.

Adamson said the Sweeney campaign shares a lineage with Calvin Klein jeans ads from 1980 that featured a 15-year-old Brooke Shields saying, "You want to know what comes in between me and my Calvins? Nothing." Some TV networks declined to air the spots because of its suggestive double entendre and Shields' age.

"It's the same playbook: a very hot model saying provocative things shot in an interesting way," Adamson said.

Chief Marketing Officer Craig Brommers told industry news website Retail Brew last week that "Sydney is the biggest get in the history of American Eagle," and the company would promote the partnership in a way that matched.

The campaign features videos of Sweeney wearing slouchy jeans in various settings. She will appear on 3-D billboards in Times Square and elsewhere, speaking to users on Snapchat and Instagram, and in an AI-enabled try-on feature.

American Eagle also plans to launch a limited edition Sydney jean to raise awareness of domestic violence, with sales proceeds going to a nonprofit crisis counseling service.

In a news release, the company noted "Sweeney's girl next door charm and main character energy - paired with her ability to not take herself too seriously - is the hallmark of this bold, playful campaign."



Sydney Sweeney poses for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'Echo Valley' on June 10, 2025, in London. (AP)

Film



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Liam Neeson in a scene from 'The Naked Gun.' (AP)

Satire struggles in comedy comeback

Neeson tries to fill Nielsen's gumshoes in new 'Naked Gun'

LOS ANGELES, July 31, (AP): Some say directing is 90% casting. In the case of Leslie Nielsen as Lt. Frank Drebin, it was more like 110%.

The choice of Nielsen for "Police Squad!" and the subsequent "Naked Gun" movies deserves a special place in the annals of brilliant casting choices. Surely you could say that the masters of spoof - David Zucker, Jim Abrahams and Jerry Zucker - first struck gold in putting Nielsen in "Airplane!" But why, exactly, Nielsen was so perfect for 1988's "The Naked Gun" is natural to ponder during Akiva Schaffer's spirited but just off-the-mark reboot, starring Liam Neeson.

Neeson, like Nielsen, has lived largely in dramatic roles most of his career, so he's seemingly a good candidate to not just play it straight, but deadly serious. Nielsen, a '50s leading man reborn in '80s slapstick, once said he had been cast against type all his career until "Police Squad!" came along. So when he, as Drebin, suggested "a great, little out of the way place that serves Viking food," Nielsen wasn't just delivering a line with perfect deadpan. He was self-actualizing.

You can't say the same for Neeson in "The Naked Gun." He's plenty game; commitment isn't the issue. But in this sometimes witty ode to the Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker style of satire, the role never feels quite right for him, despite the phonetic connections.

There have been a few notable exceptions, but the big-screen comedy has grown almost nonexistent lately. So it would be easy to hail "The Naked Gun" as something better than it is, since it simply existing is cause for celebration. But like most reboots, particularly com-

edy ones, the best thing about the new "Naked Gun" is that it might send you back to the original.

This one comes from an entirely new generation. Schaffer, the behind-the-scenes member of Lonely Island, directs and Seth MacFarlane produces. The script is by Schaffer, Dan Gregor ("Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers," "Dolittle") and Doug Mand.

Those are some disparate comic sensibilities, but they together prove fairly adept at channeling the wry rhythms of Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker. David Zucker, himself, has been skeptical; he's said he couldn't "unsee" the trailer. The scene from that trailer happens to be the first in movie. During a bank heist, a little schoolgirl calmly walks in before Lt. Frank Drebin Jr. (Neeson) reveals himself. Unmasked, he stands up tall still wearing a now very skimpy schoolgirl uniform.

Trailer

The tone of that moment - a little grotesque, straining to be eye-catching, seemingly made for the trailer - belongs more to contemporary comedies than "The Naked Gun." The good news is that there's no worse scene in the movie.

"The Naked Gun" soon enough stabilizes in a more deadpan register. Neeson's Drebin is the son of Nielsen's lieutenant. The film gives him a quick hat tip when Drebin pauses in front of a plaque of his father in the police department. If you're wondering how the movie handles O.J. Simpson's legacy, another officer momentarily stands before the same plaque for Nordberg before deciding not to.

The quips are good, though. Drebin,

watching footage of him enraged on a previous case, seethes, "I was furious about the Janet Jackson Super Bowl." "That was 20 years ago!" someone replies. Another exchange: "You can't fight City Hall." "It's a building."

You could make a good case that a diet of such wordplay is all one, really, needs. There are definite pleasures in seeing this tradition of dumb-but-smart comedy carried on. Also giving the film a lift is Pamela Anderson, playing the distraught sister of a man killed in an electric vehicle crash. The villain this time is a tech mogul, played with typical sleazy panache by Danny Huston. Once again, a police procedural serves as the movie's framework, complete with shadow-forming Venetian blinds and hardboiled monologuing. This time, though, thanks to Nielsen's flinty presence (and all those "Taken" thrillers), you half believe him as a tough detective.

Who might have played Drebin? The best answers I could come up with are Bryan Cranston or maybe Morgan Freeman. But I also, after going back to re-watch the original, suspect there's just no topping Nielsen. It has to be up there among the greatest comic performances, and the Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker wit surrounding him only feels more out of reach after this well-meaning homage. But if you disagree, I'm sure that we can handle this situation maturely, just like the responsible adults that we are. Isn't that right, Mr. Poopy Pants?

"Naked Gun," a Paramount Pictures release is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for crude/sexual material, violence/bloody images and brief partial nudity. Running time: 85 minutes. Two stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: A federal judge says Russian soprano **Anna Netrebko** can move forward with her case claiming national origin discrimination by the Metropolitan Opera, which dropped her after she refused to repudiate President Vladimir Putin over Russia's campaign against Ukraine.

The decision by US District Judge Analisa Nadine Torres in Manhattan was made public Wednesday, a day after it was issued. The case, which will proceed alongside Netrebko's claim of gender discrimination, has yet to be scheduled for trial.

The Met said in a brief statement that the case "was reinstated on technical grounds" and expressed confidence that Netrebko's claims would not succeed.

Met General Manager Peter Gelb had demanded that she repudiate Putin shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, but she refused and was withdrawn from three Met productions. (AP)

□ □ □

SANTA FE, N.M.: A New Mexico judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed by actor Alec Baldwin for malicious prosecution and civil rights violations in the 2021 fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of the Western movie "Rust."

The judge in a ruling made public Wednesday dismissed the case without prejudice for lack of any significant action with the claim, which was filed in state district court earlier this year. Baldwin's attorneys will have 30 days to file a motion seeking reinstatement.

Luke Nikas, Baldwin's lead attorney, told The Associated Press in an email that the dismissal amounted to a nonevent since his team has been waiting to prosecute the case.

"We have been in good-faith settlement discussions with the parties to the lawsuit and will be refiled promptly if those discussions are not promptly and favorably resolved," he said. (AP)

□ □ □

BIRMINGHAM, England: The "home of metal" is honoring one of its most cherished sons.

Thousands of Black Sabbath fans were paying their respects Wednesday to frontman Ozzy Osbourne as his hearse made its way through the streets of Birmingham, the English city where he grew up and where the band was formed in 1968.

The hearse carrying Osbourne, who died last Tuesday at the age of 76, was making its way down Broad Street, the city's major thoroughfare, to the Black Sabbath bench, which was unveiled on the Broad Street canal bridge in 2019.

Six vehicles carrying the Osbourne family, who paid for the procession, followed. The family emerged briefly, with his wife of 43 years Sharon visibly moved. (AP)

□ □ □

MONTREAL: Former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Katy Perry had dinner together in Montreal this week.

A communications consultant for the restaurant Le Violon confirmed Tuesday that the former prime minister and the singer spent about two hours at the fine-dining spot Monday evening. Photos of the meetup published by TMZ sparked speculation of a budding romance.

Samantha Jin said the pair kept to themselves and neither the staff nor other patrons approached them for a photo. "We kind of got the vibe that they were a little more chill," she said.

Jin added that there was no indication of romance in the air, noting: "No visual signs of PDA or anything." (AP)

Maternal mental health at a crossroads

FDA panel questions SSRI safety in pregnancy

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

By Nicole Amoyal Pensak, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and Andrew Novick, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

At a meeting held by the Food and Drug Administration on July 21, 2025, a panel convened by the agency cast doubt on the safety of antidepressant medications called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, in pregnancy. Panel members discussed adding a so-called black box warning to the drugs - which the agency uses to indicate severe or life-threatening side effects - about the risk they pose to developing fetuses. Some of the panelists who attended had a history of expressing deep skepticism on antidepressants. SSRIs include drugs like Prozac and Zoloft and are the most commonly used medicines for treating clinical depression. They are considered the first-line medications for treating depression in pregnancy, with approximately 5% to 6% of North American women taking an SSRI during pregnancy. We are a psychologist certified in perinatal mental health and a reproductive psychiatrist and neuroscientist who studies female hormones and drug treatments for depression. We are concerned that many claims made at the meeting about the dangers of those drugs contradict decades of research evidence showing that antidepressant use during pregnancy is low risk when compared with the dangers of mental illness. As clinicians, we have front-row seats to the maternal mental health crisis in the U.S. Mental illness, including suicide and overdose, is the leading cause of mater-

nal deaths. Like all drugs, SSRIs carry both risks and benefits. But research shows that the benefits to pregnant patients outweigh the risks of the SSRIs, as well as the risks of untreated depression. The panel did not address the safety of SSRIs following delivery, but numerous studies show that taking SSRI antidepressants while breastfeeding is low risk, usually producing low to undetectable drug levels in infants. Pregnancy and the months following childbirth are characterized by so many emotional, psychological and physical changes that the transition to motherhood has a specific name: matrescence. During matrescence, the brain changes rapidly as it prepares to efficiently take care of a baby. The capacity for change within the brain is known as "plasticity." Enhanced plasticity during pregnancy and the postpartum period is what allows the maternal brain to become better at attuning to and carrying out the tasks of motherhood. For example, research indicates that during this period, the brain is primed to respond to baby-related stimuli and improve a mother's ability to regulate her emotions. These brain shifts also act as a mental buffer against aging and stress in the long term. On the flip side, these rapid brain changes, fueled by hormonal shifts, can make people especially vulnerable to the risk of mental illness during and after pregnancy. For women who have a prior history of depression, the risk is even greater. Clinical depression interferes with brain plasticity, such that the brain becomes "stuck" in patterns of negative thoughts, emotions and behaviors. This leads to impairment in brain functions that are essential to motherhood. New mothers with depression have decreased brain activity in regions responsible for motivation, regulation of emotion and problem-solving. They are often withdrawn or overprotective of their infants, and they struggle with the relentless effort needed for tasks that arise with child-rearing like soothing, feeding, stimulating, planning and anticipating the child's needs.

Research shows that SSRIs work by promoting brain plasticity. This in turn allows individuals to perceive the world more positively, increases the experience of gratification as a mother and facilitates cognitive flexibility for problem-solving. Prescription drugs like SSRIs are just one aspect of treating pregnant women struggling with mental illness. Evidence-based psychotherapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, can also induce adaptive brain changes. But women with severe symptoms often require medication before they can reap the benefits of psychotherapy, and finding properly trained, accessible and affordable psychotherapists can be challenging. So sometimes, SSRIs may be the most appropriate treatment option available. Multiple studies have examined the effects of SSRIs on the developing fetus. Some data does show a link between these drugs and preterm birth, as well as low birth weight. However, depression during pregnancy is also linked to these effects, making it difficult to disentangle what's due to the drug and what's due to the illness. SSRIs are linked to a condition called neonatal adaption syndrome, in which infants are born jittery, irritable and with abnormal muscle tone. About one-third of infants born to mothers taking SSRIs experience it. However, research shows that it usually resolves within two weeks and does not have long-term health implications. The FDA-convened panel heavily focused on potential risks of SSRI usage, with several individuals incorrectly asserting that these drugs cause autism in exposed youth, as well as birth defects. At least one panelist discussed clinical depression as a "normal" part of the "emotional" experience during pregnancy and following birth. This perpetuates a long history of women being dismissed, ignored and not believed in medical care. It also discounts the rigorous assessment and criteria that medical professionals use to diagnose reproductive mental health disorders. (AP)

Plan to simplify patient health record access

US launches new health data tracking system for easier wellness monitoring

WASHINGTON, July 31, (AP): President Donald Trump has announced a plan for a new private health tracking system that will make it easier for patients to access their health records and monitor their wellness across health care systems and technologies. The system, however, is raising a host of privacy questions. The collaboration between the federal government and Big Tech would allow patients to more seamlessly track and share their medical records or data among doctors, hospital systems and health apps, the administration and participating companies say. Details of the system were announced Wednesday during a White House event dubbed "Making Health Technology Great Again." The system would be maintained by the federal government through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, pulling health data kept by Big Tech companies like Amazon, Google and Apple as well as major health companies like hospital system Cleveland Clinic and insurer United-Health Group. Patients will need to opt in to have their medical records and data shared, which CMS says will be kept secure.



President Donald Trump speaks at an event to promote his proposal to improve Americans' access to their medical records in the East Room of the White House, Wednesday, July 30, in Washington. (AP) Once a patient is in the system, their information could be shared across apps or health systems that have joined the initiative. So, for example, the Apple Health app on your iPhone that tracks your daily step count or your sleep could access lab results from your doctor's office. Putting that information together, the Trump administration says, will offer a fuller picture of your health. Apps and AI technology could also help people make better choices at the grocery store or identify patterns in their day-to-day life that might be af-

fecting their health, said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. during Wednesday's White House event. "Now if you have your medical records, you can get personalized advice," Kennedy said. Currently, there's no unified database where a person's health data and medical records are kept. Each health system stores, shares and releases patients' records in different ways. That's a big reason a lot of systems still rely on fax machines, because it's a guaranteed way to share records between offices and hospitals. Faxing is also a secure way to send information that complies with federal privacy laws. Some health networks also have their own apps, electronic systems or websites that allow patients to look up their records online or share information with other providers. The US Department of Health and Human Services says that 60 companies have signed on to work with the system and that they have pledged to "deliver results to the American people in the first quarter of 2026." The Trump administration, however, made a similar proposal back in 2018 that never fully came to fruition.

A game-changer for natural disaster forecasting

India, NASA launch radar satellite to track subtle shifts in Earth's surface

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., July 31, (AP): NASA and India paired up to launch an Earth-mapping satellite on Wednesday capable of tracking even the slightest shifts in land and ice. The \$1.3 billion mission will help forecasters and first responders stay one step ahead of floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions and other disasters, according to scientists. Rocketing to orbit from India, the satellite will survey virtually all of Earth's terrain multiple times. Its two radars - one from the US and the other from India - will operate day and night, peering through clouds, rain and foliage to collect troves of data in extraordinary detail. Microwave signals beamed down to Earth from the dual radars will bounce back up to the satellite's super-sized antenna reflector perched at the end of a boom like a beach umbrella. Scientists will compare the incoming and outgoing signals as the spacecraft passes over the same locations twice every 12 days, teasing out changes as small as a fraction of an inch (1 centimeter). "Congratulations India!" India's minister of science and technology, Jitendra Singh, said via X once the satellite safely reached orbit. The mission "will benefit the entire world community." NASA's deputy associate administrator Casey Swails, part of a small delegation that traveled to India for the launch, said it "really shows the world what our two nations can do. But more so than that, it really is a pathfinder for the relationship building."



This image provided by NASA shows an Earth-mapping satellite, the first collaborative mission between NASA and the Indian Space Research Organization, launching from India on Wednesday, July 30. (AP) It will take a full week to extend the satellite's 30-foot (9-meter) boom and open the 39-foot-in-diameter (12-meter) drum-shaped reflector made of gold-plated wire mesh. Science operations should begin by the end of October. Among the satellite's most pressing measurements: melting glaciers and polar ice sheets; shifting groundwater supplies; motion and stress of land surfaces prompting landslides and earthquakes; and forest and wetland disruptions boosting carbon dioxide and methane emissions. It's "a first-of-its-kind, jewel radar satellite that will change the way we study our home planet and better predict a natural disaster before it strikes," NASA's science mission chief Nicky Fox said ahead of liftoff. She was part of the NASA delegation that attended the launch in person. NASA is contributing \$1.2 billion to the three-year mission; it supplied the low-frequency radar and reflector. The Indian Space Research Organization's \$91 million share includes the higher-frequency radar and main satellite structure, as well as the launch from a barrier island in the Bay of Bengal. It's the biggest space collaboration between the two countries. The satellite called NISAR - short for NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar - will operate from a near-polar-circling orbit 464 miles (747 kilometers) high. It will join dozens of Earth observation missions already in operation by the US and India.

New effort aims to curb suicide among young men

Calif. moves to improve male mental health

SACRAMENTO, Calif., July 31, (AP): California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order Wednesday aimed at supporting men and boys and improving their mental health outcomes, in an effort to lower suicide rates among young men and help them feel less isolated. The order directs the state Health and Human Services Agency to recommend ways to address suicide rates among young men and help them seek services to improve their mental health and well-being. It also requires the state to connect them with education and career opportunities. "Too many young men and boys are suffering in silence - disconnected from community, opportunity, and even their own families," Newsom, a Democrat, said in a statement. "This action is about turning that around. It's about showing every young man that he matters and there's a path for him of purpose, dignity, work, and real connection." The issue has come increasingly into focus for Democrats since last year's election, when the party lost young men to President Donald Trump, who framed much of his campaign as a pitch to men who felt scorned by the country's economy, culture and political system. More than half

men under 30 supported Trump, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters, while Democrat Joe Biden had won a similar share of that group four years earlier. Newsom, a possible 2028 presidential candidate, has talked about the need to support men and boys on his podcast. The majority of his guests, which have included MAGA figures, Democratic politicians and book authors, have been men. He released an episode Wednesday with Richard Reeves, the founder and president of the American Institute for Boys and Men, a group that researches issues affecting the well-being of men, to discuss what can be done to better meet their needs. Newsom said at the beginning of the episode that it's an important issue to address beyond just discussing it as a political hurdle for Democrats. "If you tune into the podcast, you may have noticed a theme - a theme that continues to emerge around men and boys," Newsom said. "What is going on with our men and boys? Increasingly isolated, increasingly feeling disengaged, disconnected, depressed."

China makes meteorite diamond harder than Earth's

BEIJING, July 31, (Xinhua): Chinese researchers have succeeded in synthesizing the hundred-micron-scale hexagonal diamond, a material primarily found in meteorites, which is harder than the ordinary diamond found on Earth. The study, published on Wednesday in the journal Nature, promises to redefine the limits of superhard materials, according to the researchers. The Earth diamond owes its reputation as the king of hardness to its carbon atoms arranged in a tetrahedral lattice, making it extremely hard and wear-resistant. However, this structure has a weakness -- certain planes can easily slip and shift when force is applied, thereby limiting its strength. As a consequence, scientists have turned their attention to another type of super diamond

with a more exquisite structure and superior properties, namely the hexagonal diamond. Chinese researchers involved in the published study innovatively proposed a method for transforming graphite into a hexagonal diamond. Under controllable high-temperature, high-pressure and quasi-hydrostatic conditions, they compressed and heated graphite single crystals to ultimately obtain a high-purity hexagonal diamond. Previous attempts to synthesize a hexagonal diamond were largely unsuccessful due to extremely stringent formation requirements. Under high-temperature and high-pressure conditions, the end result tends to be the formation of a cubic diamond and not a hexagonal diamond.

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Lynx edges Liberty in WNBA Finals rematch

Fever tops Mercury for 3rd straight win

MINNEAPOLIS, July 31, (AP): Napheesa Collier had 30 points and nine rebounds, Kayla McBride added 24 points, and the Minnesota Lynx beat the short-handed New York Liberty 100-93 in a rematch of last year’s WNBA Finals.

Bridget Carleton made a 3-pointer from the corner with 7:08 remaining in the fourth quarter to give Minnesota a 79-66 lead. She added Minnesota’s 14th 3-pointer - on just 27 attempts - less than two minutes later to make it 84-69.

Minnesota’s lead reached 92-77 before New York scored 11 straight over a two-minute stretch to get within four. Collier ended the run on a three-point play with 50.1 seconds left for a seven-point lead.

Collier went 11 of 16 from the field and 6 of 9 at the free-throw line to record her fifth 30-point game of the season for Minnesota (23-5). The Lynx connected on a season-high 15 3-pointers and reached 100 points for the fourth time this season.

Sabrina Ionescu countered with 31 points for New York (17-9), which did not have star Breanna Stewart due to a bone bruise in her right knee. Isabelle Harrison added 15 points and Marine Johannes scored 14.

Alanna Smith added 12 points for Minnesota, and Carleton and Natisha Hiedeman each scored 10. Courtney Williams had a career-high 13 assists to go with six points and nine rebounds.

Collier drained a 3-pointer with 14.3 seconds left in the first half for a 51-42 lead. She scored 19 points in the first half, including the Lynx’s final 11 of the second quarter.

Fever 107, Mercury 101

In Indianapolis, Aari McDonald scored a career-high 27 points, Aliyah Boston had 22 points and 12 rebounds, and the short-handed Indiana Fever beat the Phoenix Mercury for its third straight victory.

Indiana star Caitlin Clark was sidelined with a right groin injury and there’s no timetable for her return. The Fever improved to 7-7 without Clark this season.

Boston scored Indiana’s opening 14 points of the fourth quarter for an 88-79 lead. She finished with her fourth straight double-double.

Indiana’s 10th 3-pointer came on Chloe Bibby’s shot from the corner with 5:27 remaining to make it 91-83. Then Sophie Cunningham was fouled while making a 3-pointer and she made the free throw for an 11-point lead.

Cunningham and Damiris Dantas each scored 12 points for Indiana (15-12), which scored 100-plus for the third time this season. Kelsey Mitchell, who scored a season-high 35 points on Sunday, was held to eight points on 3-of-10 shooting.

Alyssa Thomas led Phoenix (16-10) with 32 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists. Kahleah Copper, who played in her 10th game this season, added 22 points and Sami Whitcomb scored 18. The Mercury have lost four of their last five games.

Dream 88, Wings 85

In Arlington, Naz Hillmon made the tiebreaking 3-pointer with 2.6 seconds left and scored 12 of her career-high 21 points in the fourth quarter, leading the Atlanta Dream to victory over the Dallas Wings.

Allisha Gray had 15 points, Brionna Jones scored 14 and Maya Caldwell



Minnesota Lynx guard Courtney Williams (10) shoots while trailed by New York Liberty center Jonquel Jones (35) in the second quarter in a WNBA basketball game in Minneapolis. (AP)

added a season-high 13 points for Atlanta (16-11).

Paige Bueckers scored 21 points for the Wings, nine in the last five minutes, and has 11 20-point games this season.

Bueckers hit a 3-pointer that gave Dallas a one-point lead with 2:36 to play. Brionna Jones answered with a bucket inside but Bueckers was fouled as she made a driving layup and hit the free throw to make it 83-81 with 2 minutes remaining.

Te-Hina Paopao hit a driving layup and then made a backdoor cut, caught a pass from Jones and made a layup to give the Dream a two-point lead with 34 seconds left. Arike Ogunbowale answered with a fadeaway jumper with 21

seconds to go before Hillmon hit the winner.

Gray scored 11 points to help Atlanta take a 26-21 lead going into the second quarter. The Wings are 2-13 this season when trailing at the end of the first.

Atlanta’s Brittney Griner was called for two technical fouls moments apart while arguing a foul called and was ejected less than a minute into the third quarter. Jordyn Canada (illness) did not play.

Dallas (8-20) went into the game following a 92-82 win over the New York Liberty, the defending WNBA champions.

The Wings wrap up a four-game homestand Friday against Indiana and the Dream take on Phoenix at home.

Farrell makes two changes to starting lineup for third test

Tupou & White return as Wallabies aim to avoid British and Irish Lions’ series sweep

SYDNEY, July 31, (AP): Taniela Tupou has been recalled at tighthead and Nic White will return for his final international appearance in a reworked Wallabies lineup trying to prevent the British and Irish Lions completing a 3-0 series sweep on Saturday night.

Australia coach Joe Schmidt on Thursday unveiled three injury-enforced and one tactical change to his starting XV and another two on the bench after the contentious, last-gasp 29-26 loss in the second test at Melbourne last weekend.

Lions coach Andy Farrell made two changes to his starting lineup for the third test, with Blair Kinghorn replacing James Lowe on the left wing and James Ryan replacing Ollie Chessum to join skipper Maro Itoje in the second row.

The Lions are 8-0 in Australia, including the victory in the first test in Brisbane, the second test in Melbourne, wins over Super Rugby franchises Western Force,

Queensland Reds, Waratahs and Brumbies and two invitational teams.

They’re aiming to be the first Lions squad to record an unbeaten tour since 1974, which finished with a 13-13 draw in the third test against the Springboks, and the first to sweep a three-test series since the lopsided victories in Argentina in 1927.

“We have put ourselves in position to finish this tour with our best performance to date and create our own piece of history,” Farrell said. “Last weekend’s test match was an incredible spectacle. We are expecting another epic battle this weekend.”

Hooker Dan Sheehan is starting again alongside Irish teammate Tadhg Furlong, who is starting his ninth consecutive Lions test, and said before the squad was announced that there’d be no relenting from the tourists.

“We’ve always been pretty clear on our goals - to go unbeaten overseas and win the series 3-0,” he said. “So we just need to stick to what we said.”

For the Lions, the halves pairing of Finn Russell and Jamison Gibson-Park has been pivotal to their success in both tests so far, along with a consistent backrow featuring No. 8 Jack Conan and flankers Tom Curry and Tadhg Beirne.

For Australia, Tupou replaces the injured Allan Ala'alatoa and will combine with hooker David Porecki and 146-test veteran James Slipper in the front row.

Tom Hooper moved into the starting lineup on the side of the scrum to replace Rob Valetini and join a backrow containing No. 8 and captain Harry Wilson and openside flanker Fraser McReight.

The 35-year-old White missed selection in the first two tests against the Lions but has won a starting spot over Jake Gordon at No. 9 and will form another new



Huw Jones of the British & Irish Lions is tackled by Australia's Len Ikitau during the second rugby union test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

partnership with flyhalf Tom Lynagh in one of two changes to the backline. It will be the 72-test veteran’s last test before retirement. Dylan Pietsch replaced Harry Potter on the left wing.

“The squad was certainly deflated after the gut-wrenching end to last week’s test in Melbourne,” Schmidt said, “but they have started to gather momentum in the back half of the week and will be ready to go again on Saturday.”

Hugo Keenan’s last-gasp try in Melbourne capped an extraordinary comeback win for the British and Irish Lions in the second test last, played in front of 90,000 fans at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The Lions rallied from 23-5 down in the first half to win the match and seal an unassailable 2-0 lead.

Wallabies captain Wilson remonstrated with the match officials, asserting that replacement flanker Carlo Tizzano had illegally been taken out of play as he stood over the ball. But Keenan’s try stood.

In 2001 and 2013 the Lions lost in Melbourne after winning the first match of a three-test series against the Wallabies and those series went to a decider in Sydney. A sweep is on the minds of both teams this

time in what will be a sold-out former Olympic stadium in Sydney.

Squads:

Australia: Tom Wright, Max Jorgensen, Joseph-Aukuso Sua’ali’i, Len Ikitau, Dylan Pietsch, Tom Lynagh, Nick White; Harry Wilson (captain), Fraser McReight, Tom Hooper, Nick Frost, Taniela Tupou, David Porecki, James Slipper. Reserves: Billy Pollard, Angus Bell, Zane Nonggorr, Jeremy Williams, Langi Gleeson, Tate McDermott, Ben Donaldson, Andrew Kellaway.

British and Irish Lions: Hugo Keenan (Ireland), Tommy Freeman (England), Huw Jones (Scotland), Bundee Aki (Ireland), Blair Kinghorn (Scotland), Finn Russell (Scotland), Jamison Gibson-Park (Ireland); Jack Conan (Ireland), Tom Curry (England), Tadhg Beirne (Ireland), James Ryan (Ireland), Maro Itoje (England, captain), Tadhg Furlong (Ireland), Dan Sheehan (Ireland), Andrew Porter (Ireland). Reserves: Ronan Kelleher (Ireland), Ellis Genge (England), Will Stuart (England), Ollie Chessum (England), Jac Morgan (Wales), Ben Earl (England), Alex Mitchell (England), Owen Farrell (England).

suit of the level of performance Ferrari has to aim for.”

Vasseur joined Ferrari as team principal at the start of 2023. He was Hamilton’s team boss in junior series in the mid-2000s and played a role in convincing the seven-time champion to leave Mercedes for Ferrari for 2025 in a move which shook up F1. Vasseur also previously worked with Renault and Sauber in F1.

Hamilton, who hasn’t finished on the podium in a Grand Prix race since joining the Italian team, has been holding meetings with senior executives to push for improvements and a voice in developing the team’s car for 2026. Next year brings sweeping changes to the regulations.

“I’m grateful for the trust Ferrari continues to place in me. This renewal is not just a confirmation - it’s a challenge to keep progressing, to stay focused, and to deliver,” Vasseur said.

“Over the past 30 months, we’ve laid strong foundations, and now we must build on them with consistency and determination. We know what’s expected, and we’re all fully committed to meeting those expectations and taking the next step forward together.



Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur walks through the paddock at the Hungaroring race-track, in Mogyoród, Hungary ahead of the Hungarian Formula One Grand Prix. (AP)

Ferrari renews team principal contract despite difficult season

BUDAPEST, Hungary, July 31, (AP): Ferrari handed team principal Fred Vasseur a new contract on Thursday in a sign of “trust in Fred’s leadership” following speculation about his future, with the Italian team yet to win a Formula 1 race in 2025.

In an announcement ahead of the Hungarian Grand Prix, Ferrari said the new deal was a “multiple-year contract,” without giving further details. Lewis Hamilton gave Vasseur his backing last month after reports in Italian media suggested his job could be in question.

Ferrari last won a race in October and, while it’s second in the constructors’ championship behind McLaren, neither Hamilton nor Charles Leclerc has consistently been able to challenge the leading McLaren drivers this year.

“Today we want to recognize what has been built and commit to what still needs to be achieved,” Ferrari chief executive Benedetto Vigna said in a statement.

“It reflects our trust in Fred’s leadership - a trust rooted in shared ambition, mutual expectations and clear responsibility. We move forward with determination and focus, united in our pur-

Muller to join MLS side Whitecaps

BERLIN, July 31, (Xinhua): Bayern Munich veteran Thomas Muller is close to sealing a move to Major League Soccer (MLS).

According to German and Canadian media reports, only minor details remain before the 35-year-old signs a two-year contract with the Vancouver Whitecaps as a free agent on August 1.

The 131-time capped German international is expected to further boost the MLS’ profile alongside Argentine superstar Lionel Messi, who plays for Inter Miami. Reports say Muller’s debut for the Whitecaps could come on August 9 against the San Jose Earthquakes.

The Bavarian forward recently expressed a desire to gain international experience to round out a decorated career that includes two UEFA Champions League titles, 13 Bundesliga championships and six German Cup trophies.

Muller has called the MLS an intriguing competition, noting that “we see a World Cup played in the United States, Canada and Mexico, in 2026.” German ties to the Canadian west coast club may have influenced his decision. Canadian international full-back Alphonso Davies joined Bayern from Vancouver in 2018, while Whitecaps managing director Alexander Schuster previously worked for German sides Mainz 05 and Schalke 04. In 2022, Nick Salihamidzic, son of former Bayern sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic, played for Vancouver.

“I am looking forward to playing in the MLS and meeting figureheads such as Messi,” said Muller, who leaves Bayern after contributing 250 goals and 276 assists in 756 competitive appearances.

He follows in the footsteps of fellow Bayern and German greats Franz Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller, Lothar Matthaeus and Bastian Schweinsteiger, who all played in the MLS after their European careers.

The Whitecaps have won the Canadian Championship four times, including three in the past three years.

Muller acknowledged the challenge of adapting to new surroundings, saying, “When you leave a club like Bayern, you meet different circumstances.” He added that he still feels “the desire for football burning in my chest.” Turning 36 in September, Muller saw his wish for a one-year contract extension turned down by Bayern as his playing time declined in recent seasons, when he primarily served as a substitute and mentor for younger players.

Celta signs Zaragoza

Spain defender Laporte close to leaving Al-Nassr

MADRID, July 31, (Xinhua): Spain international defender Aymeric Laporte looks to be on the verge of leaving Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr after coach Jorge Jesus confirmed he was looking to sign a replacement.

Laporte has been left out of Al-Nassr’s pre-season training in Austria with rumors of a return to Athletic Bilbao.

That move seems to have come closer after Jesus confirmed the 31-year-old was on his way out.

“We need a central defender. Laporte will leave Al-Nassr and a replacement will come in,” the coach confirmed.

Laporte has spent two seasons at Al-Nassr after joining from Manchester City in the summer of 2023, but is keen to return to Europe to try and win a place in Spain’s squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Athletic Bilbao looks best placed to sign the player who began his career in the youth system of the Basque side, playing 222 times for the first team before moving to Manchester City in 2018.

Bilbao finished fourth in La Liga last season to qualify for the UEFA Champions League, but suffered a setback in the summer when it was confirmed that defender Yeray Alvarez has been suspended after a positive doping test for a product he used to prevent hair loss after cancer treatment.

As well as losing Alvarez for an as yet unconfirmed period, central defender Unai Egiluz suffered a knee injury in Athletic’s 2-1 friendly game defeat to Racing Santander, leaving Daniel Vivian as the club’s only fit central defender.

□ □ □

Celta Vigo has completed the signing of Spain international winger Bryan Zaragoza ahead of the club’s return to European competition next season.



In this file photo, Al-Nassr defender Aymeric Laporte celebrates after scoring.

Zaragoza arrives on a season’s loan from Bayern Munich, with Celta Vigo having an option to make the deal permanent at the end of the campaign.

He will help to cover for the departures of Alfonso Gonzalez and Fer Lopez, who were vital in Celta’s seventh-place finish in La Liga last season to book a ticket to the UEFA Europa League.

Gonzalez has moved to Sevilla this summer, while Lopez joined Wolverhampton Wanderers, robbing coach Claudio Giraldez of much of his attacking capability.

23-year-old Zaragoza enjoyed a breakout season with Granada in 2023-24, which earned him a move to Bayern Munich in February 2024.

But after playing just a handful of matches, the German giants decided to loan him to Osasuna, where he impressed in the 27 games he played, although his season was limited by an ankle injury and with Bayern’s signing of former Liverpool winger Luis Diaz, he has been loaned out again.

One of the largest sporting events uniting Kuwaitis and Gulf nationals abroad

Zain official sponsor of BPC TOUR 4 Padel Tournament in Marbella

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Kuwait is the Official Sponsor of the BPC TOUR 4 Padel Tournament for the third consecutive year, held in Marbella in the heart of Spain. The tournament brought together over 30 teams from across the Gulf region, making it one of the largest sporting events uniting Kuwaitis and Gulf nationals abroad.

The tournament, supported by Zain as part of its strategy to empower athletic talent locally, regionally, and globally, was joined by Fahad Al-Riyahi, Head of the Kuwait Consular Office in Málaga, and Waleed Al-Khashti, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer at Zain Kuwait. Both officials took part in crowning this year's champions, Bader Al-Saeed and Mohammad Al-Fahad.

Zain's continued sponsorship of this prominent sporting event reflects its firm commitment to supporting emerging sports like padel, which has gained remarkable popularity among youth in Kuwait and the wider region. The company is keen to support initiatives that provide athletes with platforms to showcase their talents and shine on the international stage.

This support comes as part of Zain's ongoing support for padel, which has become one of the fastest-growing sports among young



Fahad Al-Riyahi and Waleed Al-Khashti honor the tournament winners.



Al-Riyahi and Al-Khashti pictured with tournament officials and several participants.

people in Kuwait and across the region. Over the years, Zain has sponsored major local and regional tournaments and organized internal activities for its employees to

promote physical activity and encourage a healthy lifestyle. Zain believes that padel embodies values the company stands for, such as teamwork, positive competition,

and community connection.

The BPC TOUR has grown into one of Marbella's most prominent summer events, attracting padel enthusiasts from all over the Gulf. It

also provides a valuable opportunity for Gulf communities to connect in a spirited and enjoyable sports setting. Zain takes pride in sponsoring events that enhance Kuwait's pres-

ence on the global sports stage and aligns with its belief that sports are a powerful tool for fostering cultural exchange, team spirit, and social belonging among youth.

Qadsia signs veteran handball star Al-Shammari on one-year contract

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Qadsia Sports Club has bolstered its handball roster ahead of the upcoming season by signing veteran player Nawaf Al-Shammari on a one-year deal. Al-Shammari joins from Kuwait Club, bringing with him a wealth of experience and a legacy of achievements after a decade with the club.

Over the past ten seasons, Al-Shammari played a key role in establishing Kuwait Club's golden era in handball. During his tenure, the club dominated the domestic scene—clinching 13 consecutive league titles and 12 straight cup

championships. His contributions also extended to the international stage, helping the team capture prestigious titles such as the Asian and Arab Championships.

Qadsia's signing of Al-Shammari is part of a strategic push to attract top local talent and mount a serious challenge for silverware in the upcoming campaign.

In parallel with player reinforcements, Qadsia has finalized its handball administrative structure. The department will be led by Sami Bouyabes as General Director, with Baqer Khuraibet as Assistant Director, Hadi Nassir as First Team Manager, and Hayder Bahman and Osama Mosameh



Nawaf Al-Shammari in action.

serving as team administrators.

The club's leadership is focused on ensuring administrative stability in the handball division, with hopes that it will foster consistent performance across all levels and help restore Qadsia's position as a strong contender for titles.

Qadsia experienced an up-and-down season last year, falling short of Premier League qualification. However, they made a strong impression in the First Division, ultimately securing the title and earning promotion back to the top tier. The team also reached the final of the Kuwait Cup, where they narrowly lost to Kuwait Club by a single goal.

Ishaq extends stay with Burgan Club

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Burgan has officially renewed the contract of volleyball standout Mohammed Ishaq for another season, aiming to bolster the team's strength for the upcoming campaign.

Ishaq, a seasoned middle blocker, brings extensive experience to the squad. He began his career in the youth ranks of Kazma and went on to become a prominent figure for both Kazma and Kuwait's national volleyball team.

Over the past two seasons, Ishaq has delivered impressive performances for Burgan, which led the club's management to extend his contract. His consistency and leadership on the court have made him a key asset to the team's structure.

Despite the recent departures of talented players Youssef Mandil and Abdulrahman Jassim—who joined Al-Arabi SC on loan for one season—Burgan remains focused on building a competitive team. Following a strong showing last season, the club is determined to main-



In this file photo, Mohammed Ishaq prepares to return a shot.

tain its momentum and contend for titles in the upcoming year.

Messi delivers again, Miami escapes with last-minute victory over Atlas

De Paul makes debut for Inter in Leagues Cup opener



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi, right, is pursued by Atlas defender Doria (5) during the first half of a Leagues Cup group stage soccer match in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., July 31, (AP): Lionel Messi had two assists, including one in the final seconds of the match, to help lift Inter Miami over Atlas 2-1 in their Leagues Cup opener.

It was Messi's first game since he and teammate Jordi Alba were suspended one match by Major League Soccer for skipping its All-Star game. He connected with Marcelo Weigandt for the winning score in the final minute of stoppage time.

"It's a competition that we always do well in," Messi said in Spanish during a post-match interview with Apple TV. "I think we did a great job against a great team."

Messi also assisted on Telasco Segovia's goal that opened the scoring. He received a through ball from Sergio Busquets and sent it to Segovia for an easy finish in the 58th.

Rivaldo Lozano scored the equalizer for the Guadalajara club in the 80th minute before Weigandt's goal in the 96th minute, which had to be confirmed by VAR after he was originally ruled offside.

That meant five assists in July for Messi, who was named the Major League Soccer Player of the Month after netting eight goals and helping Miami go 4-1-1 in league play.

Both sides had their chances during a chippy first half that saw a brief heated exchange between Inter Miami coach Javier Mascherano and Atlas coach Gonzalo Pineda after an Atlas player

went down.

"It's just a soccer situation," Pineda said through an interpreter, adding that he was upset when play continued. "I was protesting that play. I told him (Mascherano) that it was nothing against him, just a soccer play. We talked about it in the dressing room, nothing beyond that."

Miami goalkeeper Rocco Ríos Novo had three saves in the first half, including one in which he slid over to deny Eduardo Aguirre on a header to the back post. Luis Suárez blasted a shot off the crossbar on the final play of the first half.

Argentine midfielder Rodrigo De Paul made his debut for Inter Miami. De Paul, Messi's national team buddy, officially signed with the club last week.

After Weigandt's goal was con-

firmed, fireworks erupted at Chase Stadium. Messi pumped his fist in celebration as he embraced De Paul and Suárez.

Pineda said he was surprised to see Messi so happy to win the match, given how many high-stakes games the 38-year-old has played in.

"He's won so much," Pineda said. "He's usually quite (even-keeled) in general."

Mascherano said the celebrations were a response to winning a tense match.

"We play to win," Mascherano said through an interpreter. "That's what this beautiful sport is about. ... The way that we celebrated is probably just a way to vent how we felt at the time. We won a game that we didn't play brilliantly, and at the final second, epically, we were able to win it."

Best of the Rest

Nottingham Forest signs Ndoye: Nottingham Forest signed Switzerland international Dan Ndoye from Bologna on Thursday.

The 24-year-old forward has joined on a five-year deal. Forest did not say what the fee was for Ndoye, who helped his team to the Coppa Italia title last season by scoring the winning goal in the final.

"Dan is an exciting new addition to our squad and a player we have tracked extensively over a long period of time," said Forest chief football officer Ross Wilson.

Forest has also signed Igor Jesus and Jair Cunha this offseason.

Ndoye has won 22 caps and played at last year's European Championship.

"It is a really exciting time at Forest and I knew straight away that I wanted to be a part of the project. It's a really ambitious team with a fantastic history and I can't wait to get started," he said. (AP)

Musiala expected to return late '25: Jamal Musiala is still using crutches after breaking his leg at the Club World Cup but Bayern Munich hopes he'll be back by the end of the year.

The 22-year-old attacking midfielder was stretchered off in pain after colliding with Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma as his team lost 2-0 to Paris Saint-Germain in the quarterfinals this month.

"Jamal still has crutches but the process is very, very positive," Bayern board member for sport Max Eberl said Thursday at an event to present new signing Luis Díaz.

Eberl added that the club expects Musiala could return around the same time as wing back Alphonso Davies. The Canadian player has been out since sustaining a severe knee ligament injury with his national team in March, but Eberl said he had his "first exercises on the field" Thursday.

"So far there have been no complications with both of them. We need to knock on wood that it stays that way and then we obviously hope that they will be available at the end of the year," Eberl said. (AP)

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NEWS



Gold medalists team Australia pose after the women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay final at the World Aquatics Championships in Singapore. (AP)

Sports

Belgian Ngoyi joins Al-Arabi training in Abu Dhabi

Qadsia announces 31-player squad for preseason camp in Turkey

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: Qadsia Sports Club has begun the second phase of its preparations for the upcoming season. The football team's delegation departed early today for Izmit, Turkey, for a training camp that will last until July 29 and includes six friendly matches.

The first phase of Qadsia's preseason began in mid-July under the guidance of Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul.

Leading the delegation is club director Madi Al-Mutairi, accompanied by team manager Shaker Al-Shatti, administrators Faisal Niroz and Faisal Al-Shammari, media coordinator Abdullah Al-Ansari, security coordinator Mohamed Al-Najjar, coach Nabil Maaloul, assistant coach Saleh Al-Sheikh, fitness coaches Ahmed Al-Hammadi and Talal Bouaban, goalkeeping coach Elias Ben Abdelkader, technical analyst Mohamed Bourawi, and medical staff Haitham Hussein, Denis, and Jessie.

Coach Maaloul selected 31 players for the Turkey camp, including Ahmad Al-Yahya, Muadh Al-Dhafiri, Rashid Al-Dosari, Faisal Al-Shatti, Khalid Sabah, Abdullah Mtaweh, Mubarak Al-Fanini, Eid Al-Rashidi, Talal Fadel, Abdulaziz Wadi, Abdullah Al-Awadi, Badr Al-Mutawa, Athbi Shehab, Ali Jaragh, Abdulaziz Abdeen, Rakan

Al-Saeed, Mohammad Al-Sharifi, Hamid Al-Gallaf, Khalid Ibrahim, Abdulrahman Al-Dhafiri, Moroccan Ismail Khafi, Libyan Mohammad Sola, Moroccan Mehdi Barhama, Algerian Sofiane Bouchare, Mohammad Al-Omran, Jassim Al-Matar, Ahmad Bodi, Salem Al-Reis, Fadel Al-Sarraf, Turki Al-Yousef, and Saud Al-Qassem.

Belgian footballer of Congolese descent, Julian Ngoyi, joined Al-Arabi's training camp in Abu Dhabi two days ago.

Ngoyi expressed his enthusiasm about joining Al-Arabi and said he is ready to contribute to the team's success.

"I'm excited to play alongside my teammates and compete in matches. Our goal is to win championships," he said.

Al-Arabi will resume training tomorrow after playing a friendly match against the UAE's Hatta Club yesterday. The team is preparing for a second friendly match against Bani Yas Club scheduled for Wednesday.

Al-Arabi is also preparing to face Maldives' Maziya Sports on August 12 in the Asian Challenge League playoff. The team will travel to the Maldives on August 8.

The club's foreign player roster is now complete with Belgian Julian Ngoyi, French-Guinean Hassimi Fadiga, Ugandan Kenneth Semakula, and Nigerians Ayano Iwala and Christopher John.



Players undergo light training.

Winter Games Club celebrates strong Kuwait-Egypt sports relations in farewell to Ambassador Shaltout

KUWAIT CITY, July 31: The Winter Games Club held a special farewell ceremony in honor of Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait, Osama Shaltout, marking the conclusion of his diplomatic mission. The event, held the day before yesterday, was attended by the club's president, senior members, and distinguished guests from the Egyptian Embassy.

Ambassador Shaltout expressed heartfelt appreciation for the warm hospitality he received throughout his four-year tenure in Kuwait, which he fondly referred to as his second home. He emphasized that the gathering reflected the strong and enduring bonds of brotherhood and mutual respect that unite the peoples of Egypt and Kuwait.

Highlighting the power of sports as a bridge between nations, Ambassador Shaltout noted that he had witnessed the participation of several Egyptian teams in Arab and international tournaments hosted by the Winter Games Club. He praised the club's high level of professionalism in organizing these events and fostering regional cooperation through sport.

Club President Fahid Al-Ajmi described the celebration as a symbol of the deep affection Kuwaitis hold for Egypt. He praised Ambassador Shaltout for his dedication and consistent presence at the club's major



Al-Ajmi presents a commemorative shield to the Egyptian Ambassador Shaltout.

tournaments and sporting occasions. Al-Ajmi reaffirmed the club's commitment to strengthening sports relations between Kuwait and Egypt,

particularly in support of young winter sports athletes from both nations. He concluded by wishing continued progress and prosperity to the

Egyptian government and people, and extended his best wishes for the ambassador's health and future endeavors.

Kuwait seeks first win in Arab Championship

MANAMA, July 31: Kuwait will play its fifth match today against Qatar at 6:00 pm in the 26th Arab Basketball Championship, currently underway in Bahrain. This game is part of the tournament's sixth round, with the event concluding tomorrow. Earlier today, Egypt faces the UAE at 4:00 pm, while Algeria meets Bahrain at 8:00 pm.

Kuwait fell to Algeria 74-86 in the fifth round. Meanwhile, Qatar secured a 78-71 win over the UAE, and Tunisia defeated Egypt 85-73.

Led by Serbian head coach Oliver Kostic and assistant Khaled Al-Gallaf, Kuwait showed a solid effort against Algeria, one of the tournament favorites.

Currently, Kuwait is at the bottom of the standings with 4 points, having lost four matches so far—against the UAE, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria.



Players fighting for the ball.

Despite the setbacks, the team's performance has been encouraging, especially given the youthful roster featuring many players competing in their first major tournament.

Today, Kuwait aims to achieve its first win of the championship by overcoming Qatar.

Marchand grabs gold; McIntosh continues flawless run

Popovici sizzles in 100m freestyle as Americans add more titles as relay goes to Australia

SINGAPORE, July 31, (AP): Léon Marchand of France clinched gold in the 200-meter individual medley at the swimming world championships, headlining a podium that carried a distinct Texas connection.

Marchand, American Shaine Casas (silver), and Hungary's Hubert Kós (bronze) all train under legendary coach Bob Bowman at the University of Texas in Austin — the same coach who guided Michael Phelps to Olympic greatness.

Just 24 hours after shattering the world record in the semifinals with a time of 1:52.69, Marchand nearly repeated the feat in the final, clocking 1:53.68 — still well under the previous world best of 1:54.00 set by American Ryan Lochte in 2011.

"It was a bit tough today, but it was great," Marchand said. "I know Shaine always goes out super fast, so I knew I couldn't be far off. It was a battle all the way to the end, and that was cool for me."

Marchand, who won four individual Olympic titles in Paris last year, is contesting only two individual events in Singapore. He already holds the 400 IM world record (4:02.50) from the 2023 worlds and hinted at another possible record attempt in that event on Sunday, the final day of competition.

"That's still a whole new challenge," Marchand said. "I know I've gained a lot of power, but I'm not sure it makes a big difference over the 400. We'll see."

Canada's Summer McIntosh continued her stellar run, winning the women's 200-meter butterfly in 2:01.99 — the second-fastest time in history. She was on world-record pace through 150



Summer McIntosh of Canada competes in the women's 200-meter butterfly final at the World Aquatics Championships in Singapore. (AP)

meters, but faded slightly over the final stretch. The current record of 2:01.81 was set by Liu Zige of China in 2009 during the super-suit era.

"My coach and I had one goal — to

break the world record," McIntosh said, visibly disappointed. "That's what I've been training for. I missed it by that little and messed up the last 15 meters. I didn't reach my goal today."

Still, it was McIntosh's third gold of the meet. American Regan Smith earned silver (2:04.99), followed by Australia's Elizabeth Dekkers (2:06.12). China's 12-year-old sensa-

tion Yu Zidi finished fourth (2:06.43) — her second fourth-place finish of the championships. McIntosh is set to begin training with Bowman in Texas this fall.

Romanian star David Popovici stormed to gold in the men's 100 freestyle, clocking 46.51 — the second-fastest time in history. Only American Jack Alexy (46.92) and Australia's Kyle Chalmers (47.17) rounded out the podium.

"Usually the one who wins is the one who can isolate themselves from others," Popovici said, describing his mental tactics. "I imagine I'm alone and do what I trained for."

In other events, American Katharine Berkoff edged teammate Regan Smith in the women's 50 backstroke, winning in 27.08 seconds. Smith took silver in 27.25, her second runner-up finish of the night, while Wan Letian of China claimed bronze (27.30).

Despite battling a lingering stomach bug picked up during a pre-competition camp in Thailand, the U.S. team collected its fourth gold over five days. Head coach Greg Meehan reported that team health is improving, although Gretchen Walsh withdrew from the women's 100 freestyle due to illness.

Australia took gold in the women's 4x200 freestyle relay (7:39.35), followed by the U.S. (7:40.01) and China (7:42.99). It marked Australia's fifth gold medal of the meet, pushing them to the top of the medal standings. China's Yu Zidi earned a bronze medal for her contribution in the relay preliminaries. China's Pan Zhanle has gone faster (46.40), but Pan failed to reach this year's final.

In the four semifinals, Marrit Steenberg of the Netherlands led the women's 100 freestyle qualifiers, and Pieter Coetzee of South Africa did the same in the 200 backstroke as he looks to complete the double.

Neutral Athlete Evgenila Chikunova led the women's 200 breaststroke and Japan's Ippei Watanabe topped the men's 200 breaststroke.