



China Baowu, CSCEC outline major projects in high-level meeting

PM chairs follow-up on key Kuwait-China initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (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 23rd meeting discussed the progress of joint Kuwait-China initiatives, particularly the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, renewable energy development, housing, environmental infrastructure for sewage treatment plants, eco-friendly recycling, cooperation in combating desertification, and sustainable agriculture.

His Highness the Prime Minister instructed committee members to coordinate with Chinese state companies on major development projects and expanded investment, praising their efforts under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

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PM Diwan photos

Left: HH the PM chairs a ministerial committee meeting to follow up on agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed with China. Right: HH the PM receives China Baowu Steel Group delegation, headed by Wang Jiang, as well as representatives from China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd. (CSCEC).

July wallet crunch

Food, health costs push Kuwait inflation higher

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) released data on Thursday showing an increase of 2.39 percent in the consumer price index (CPI) at the end of July, compared to the same month last year.

The bureau relayed to KUNA that the inflation rate rose by 0.22 percent in July compared to June, promoted by the increase of major groups affecting the CPI, especially food, health, clothing, and education, excluding transportation.

The CPI for the food and beverages group rose in July of last year by 5.63 percent compared to the same month in 2024, while the cigarettes and tobacco group rose slightly by 0.07 percent year-on-year.

The statistics agency indicated that the index for the clothing group rose by 3.7 percent, while prices for housing services group rose by 0.98 percent, and the inflation rate for the household furniture group increased by 3.22 percent.

It added that the price index of the health group rose by 2.85 percent, while the prices of the transportation group witnessed a decrease of 1.75 percent in July compared to the same month in 2024.

The CSB added that the price index of the communications group rose by 0.48 percent year-on-year, while

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Kuwait blocks Roblox over risks to children

CITRA hits pause amid rising parental complaints

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) has officially announced the temporary blocking of the game ROBLOX in Kuwait. This decision is based on its legal authority to protect users, particularly children.

The authority explained that the move comes in response to complaints from parents and relevant organizations about the risks the game poses to children's safety, including exposure to unsafe behavior, electronic exploitation, harmful conduct, inappropriate content, and unsafe purchasing practices.

The block is temporary, pending the completion of negotiations with the game's opera-

tor and verification of their commitment to removing any offensive or dangerous content and implementing adequate child protection measures, before reconsidering lifting the block.

Earlier, several citizens and public benefit organizations had petitioned CITRA to ban the game "Roblox" due to its negative impact on children.

According to informed sources, the demands stem from the game's widespread popularity among children, raising huge concerns among many parents and educators about its inappropriate content and harmful practices that threaten children's safety.

They explained that the game provides a fertile environment for harassers who exploit children, facilitated by the ease of communication and interaction within the platform. It also includes content that promotes homosexuality and intellectual deviations, and encourages the adoption of negative values that conflict with the religious and moral principles.

It is worth noting that several Gulf countries, including Qatar and the Sultanate of Oman, have banned the game. China and Turkey have also imposed similar bans.

Homebrew horror sparks alcohol debate in Kuwait

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: After 23 people died and more than 160 suffered health complications, including permanent vision loss, following the consumption of locally brewed alcoholic beverages in Kuwait, the issue of legally permitting the sale of alcohol has sparked widespread controversy between supporters and opponents.

Each side defended its position after the daily posed the question to them.

One group called for allowing the legal sale of alcohol in Kuwait, insisting that such a move would help prevent smuggling.

They stressed that several neighboring Gulf countries already permit its sale and asked, "Why do we bury our heads in the sand and pretend it isn't being circulated illegally?"

They argued that legalizing alcohol would reduce illegal production and the dangerous chemical compounds it often contains, which can severely harm human health or even lead to death, as seen in this recent incident.

Meanwhile, the opposing group insisted that Kuwait is an Islamic country, and the sale of alcohol is strictly prohibited under any circumstances.

In this regard, journalist Ahmed Al-Sarraf voiced support for tightly regulated permission to sell alcohol in the country, indicating that it is already present, sold, and manufactured illegally.

He asked, "Why do we bury our heads in the sand and pretend otherwise?"

Al-Sarraf explained that several Gulf states, despite sharing customs, traditions, religion, and language with Kuwait, permit the sale of alcohol.

Allowing the sale of alcohol would eliminate fraud, smuggling, and its secret manufacture. Legalizing it would protect people from consuming unsafe, unregulated products and would curb inflated prices, especially since the black-market "mafia" exploits the ban to charge exorbitant rates. Such matters must be dealt with realistically and rationally.

Al-Sarraf asked, "Are we more Islamic than the neighboring Gulf states that permit the consumption of alcohol?"

He also highlighted that alcoholic beverages are already consumed by foreign diplomats.

Furthermore, Al-Sarraf stressed that the continued ban on alcohol contributes to rising corruption and the growing spread of drugs, which are far more harmful than alcohol.

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Photo by Samer Shiger

Beneath the scorching Thursday sun, the fountain at Souk Al-Mubarakiya sparkles like a jewel, creating a refreshing haven of grace and serenity in the vibrant heart of Kuwait City.

NewsWatch

GAZA: Seventy Palestinians were killed and 356 others injured over the past 24 hours due to ongoing Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip.

The escalation of airstrikes has forced dozens of residents to flee the neighborhoods of **al-Zeitoun** and **al-Sabra** in southeastern Gaza City.

In its daily report, the health authorities said that the total death toll since Oct 7, 2023, has risen to 62,192, with 157,114 injured.

It added the Israeli strikes targeting aid led to 18 deaths and 117 injuries, bringing the total number of casualties related to food aid efforts to 2,036 killed and over 15,064 injured. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Lebanese President **Joseph Aoun** on Thursday affirmed that **Lebanon** is committed to implementing the recent cabinet decision to restrict possession of arms to the state.

Aoun, in a statement released by the presidency following a meeting with the visiting Arab League assistant secretary general Ambassador **Hosam Zaki**, said all sisterly and friendly states had been informed of the cabinet decision, stressing that Lebanon is committed to implementing it in a manner that preserves interest of all Lebanese. (KUNA)

3,239 traffic violations cited

Road raids snare 115 expat violators

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Highways Division at the General Traffic Department carried out intensive traffic campaigns on the Seventh Ring Road and various highways to arrest those proven to have violated the traffic regulations and laws, as well as

those wanted by law for involvement in different crimes on Aug 13-20.

These campaigns resulted in the issuance of 3,239 traffic violation citations, impoundment of two vehicles, referral of three individuals to the traffic police, impoundment of 56 wanted vehicles, in addition to the arrest of three wanted persons,

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Women do laundry at the Renk transit center, which hosts more than 12,000 people fleeing the war in Sudan, in Renk, South Sudan, Saturday, Aug 9, 2025. (AP)

Kuwait flags Sudan crisis

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's Foreign Ministry expressed its grave concern over the accelerated deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Sudan to critical levels.

In a statement on Thursday, the Ministry urged all parties to take urgent measures to protect civilians, allow and facilitate the flow of aid, as per stipulations of international humanitarian laws and the 2023 Jeddah declaration on protection of civilians in Sudan.

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Weekend temps to hit 47°C

Kuwait heat to ease from Sunday as Suhail ascends

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Al-Ojairi Scientific Center announced that the heat intensity will begin to ease and temperatures will start to drop in the country from Sunday, August 24, coinciding with the rise of the "Suhail" (Canopus) star. The "Suhail" season lasts for 52 days until October 14, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The center explained in a press statement that the "Suhail" season brings noticeable changes in weather conditions, with temperatures gradually decreasing and rising humidity levels raising hopes for rain. This marks the end of the "Kulaibin" season, which Kuwait is currently experiencing in its final days.

Temperatures during this season are expected not to exceed 50 degrees Celsius, and nights will become more pleasant, with humidity continuing to increase, especially in coastal areas.

The most prominent features of the "Suhail" rise are the temperature drop and the blowing of southeasterly winds, which help alleviate the severity of the dry "Samum" winds, making the weather more humid and moderate.

The ground temperature also begins to cool, and early signs of seasonal change start to appear, such as the emergence of leafy plants, longer shadows, and the presence of morning dew.

Other characteristics of this season include relatively cooler air and water, along with the sun beginning to tilt southward after being nearly vertical during the peak of summer.

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Saudi Arabia and its intellectual skyscrapers



A mother's eye: The making of a champion born for the water

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:55	Asr	15:26
Sunrise ..	05:19	Maghrib ..	18:23
Zohr	11:51	Isha	19:44

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate northwesterly wind changing to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-28 km/h.

By Night: Hot to rather hot and relatively humid over coast-

Weather

al areas with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	45	34
Kuwait Airport	46	29

Abdaly	47	28
Jahra	47	31
Salmiyah	42	34
Ahmadi	41	30
Nuwaisib	44	30
Wafra	46	27
Salmiyah	45	25
Managish	47	30

Other Voices

Saudi Arabia and its intellectual skyscrapers

By Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-Anjeri

DEBATES about Saudi Arabia's transformation often fall into two camps. Some highlight development successes, while others dwell on setbacks and delays. A third group focuses almost entirely on the Entertainment Authority, as if its events alone define the nation's new direction.

Every large-scale project inevitably encounters shortcomings, and no grand vision advances without adjustments. That is the normal rhythm of progress. My focus here, however, is not on economic benchmarks or entertainment spectacles. It is on another achievement — one of the most striking cultural successes of recent years. Saudi Arabia has witnessed a remarkable media transformation, driven by thoughtful talk shows and podcasts that appeal both to Arab intellectu-



Al-Anjeri

als and to ordinary audiences seeking substance.

A new generation of Saudi voices has reshaped the Gulf's media landscape. Programs now engage with history, politics and social issues with a seriousness long absent from regional broadcasting. They have created spaces where academics, writers and public figures speak with candor, while viewers encounter conversations that combine depth with accessibility.

What stands out is their ability to avoid the stale, formulaic rhetoric that once dominated traditional channels. Instead, they offer dialogue that opens intellectual horizons, explores personal journeys and presents ideas in clear, engaging ways. Only a few years ago, such programming would have been difficult to imagine in Saudi Arabia. Today it has become part of the mainstream media across the Kingdom and the Middle East.

This transformation reflects institutional effort and the determination of a younger generation of professionals who introduced fresh perspectives and higher standards. Their work has projected a confident im-

age of Saudi society and signaled a cultural awakening whose influence extends beyond national borders.

Equally important, this change has not been confined to elites. Broader segments of society are tuning in. Academics searching for rigorous analysis find it, while ordinary viewers drawn to timely debates also engage. Saudi media has leapt from light entertainment and passive consumption to programming that stimulates thought and dialogue.

Major national projects will always attract skeptics — some thoughtful, others hostile. Yet what cannot be denied is that the cultural and media dimension of Saudi Arabia's transformation has achieved genuine breakthroughs. It has opened new spaces for dialogue, left a lasting mark on Arab public consciousness and reshaped the Kingdom's image both near and far.

Just as every enduring structure rests on solid foundations, the foundations of Saudi Arabia's new era have already raised intellectual skyscrapers. These towers of culture and dialogue stand as achievements that few in the region can rival.



Workers are seen at an oil lake crude recovery project led by China's Jereh Group in Ahmadi Governorate, Kuwait, Aug. 20, 2025. Kuwait has kicked off a major environmental cleanup effort as the first unit of an oil lake crude recovery project led by Jereh completed its trial run Wednesday. (Xinhua)

Chinese group bags \$14mn deal

Kuwait kicks off project to recover crude from lakes

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (Xinhua) — Kuwait has kicked off a major environmental cleanup effort as the first unit of an oil lake crude recovery project, led by China's Jereh Group, completed its trial run Wednesday. The project falls under the Kuwait Environmental Remediation Program (KERP), which aims to tackle oil pollution and environmental damage left by the 1990-1991 Gulf War, when around 700 oil wells were set ablaze, creating vast oil lakes and contaminating large swathes of soil.

Valued at about 100 million yuan (14 million U.S. dollars), the contract tasks Jereh with delivering an integrated solution and supplying core equipment for the cleanup effort. "Representing Chinese energy enterprises, Jereh is actively participating in the development of Kuwait's oil and gas industry and environmental protection, demonstrating the combined strength of Chinese manufacturing and services," said Zhuang Guanghua, president of Jereh Group's Middle East Region. "We will continue to support Kuwait's energy tran-

sition and sustainable development with advanced technologies and high-quality solutions."

Zhang Hongwei, director of Jereh Group's Middle East Region, noted that advanced technologies from Chinese companies have significantly improved the efficiency of oil lake crude recovery, pushing the project toward ecological restoration and vegetation rehabilitation. "This marks an important step for Kuwait in environmental management and sustainable development," he said.

During a visit to the project site on the same day, Liu Xiang, charge d'affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait, said Jereh's successful practice not only contributed Chinese expertise to Kuwait's environmental remediation efforts, but also showcased the international competitiveness of Chinese environmental equipment and engineering technology. Liu added that China stands ready to further deepen cooperation with Kuwait in environmental governance and energy transition for the benefit of both peoples.

E-portal launched

Apply for licenses online: MoH

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has launched an electronic portal to facilitate the issuance and renewal of public health activity licenses in Kuwait.

This innovative service enables applicants to complete licensing procedures online, reducing the burden on clients and accelerating the overall process.

In a statement issued recently, the Ministry of Health explained that the new system allows for the issuance and renewal

of licenses directly between the two ministries, eliminating the need for beneficiaries to visit either ministry in person. This saves time while maintaining the highest standards of security.

The portal supports licensing for health institutes serving men, women, and children. It also covers disinfection services, pest and rodent control, warehouse storage, and the wholesale and retail sale of pesticides.

Ministry representatives described the initiative as a major milestone in improving Kuwait's business environment, strengthening institutional transparency, and increasing operational efficiency.

'From dream to reality'

Kuwait-grown bananas now available 1st time in market

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: 'From dream to reality'... this is how the story of farmer Eid Sari Al-Azmi can be described, reports Al-Rai daily.

The staff of the daily visited the farm of Al-Azmi last year and witnessed how his vision was growing steadily with patience and confidence.

Today, that dream became a reality with the first batch of 'luxury Kuwaiti bananas' reaching the markets and homes, marking the launch of the first commercial production of this fruit in Kuwait.

The first harvest of Kuwaiti bananas entered the Farzat Al-Sulaibiya market on Wednesday — the official start of Al-Azmi's commercial production.

Expressing his pride, Al-Azmi said he is happy to achieve this unprecedented agricultural milestone after years of continuous trials and effort.

Al-Azmi confirmed to the daily that production will be steady and plentiful in the coming period, with bananas available in the market daily. He added that he is currently establishing direct sales outlets for citizens and residents, sparing

them the need to visit the central vegetable market.

He unveiled his plan to expand production from 300 to 500 boxes starting in October, with the goal of serving the local community and providing fresh produce at affordable prices.

He emphasized the importance of giving local products priority in cooperative societies by allocating shelves or permitting direct purchases from farmers. "Such measures will benefit everyone by ensuring fresher produce at reasonable prices," he explained.

He also announced a new initiative to sell banana seedlings, enabling gardening enthusiasts to grow the fruit at home. He disclosed that the banana season extends from October to May each year, and that trees begin bearing fruit roughly three months after planting.

This achievement follows the exclusive feature of the daily last year, which shed light on Al-Azmi's pioneering experiment in banana cultivation in Kuwait—an effort that has now blossomed into full-scale commercial success.



Kuwaiti farmer Eid Sari Al-Azmi in his banana farm.

'25% Kuwaitis diabetic'

Half of children obese, overweight: expert

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Medical Group for Kuwaitis Studying in the United Kingdom (Al-Rayah List) held its sixth annual medical conference.

Present at the event were distinguished doctors, consultants and researchers who discussed the latest medical developments in various medical specializations, such as Orthopedics, Endocrinology, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy. They also reviewed important health data that highlight the need for more awareness and modification of treatment patterns.

Head of the Medical Group Rowan Jarkhi stressed the importance of the conference in shedding light on different medical specializations, early disease diagnosis methods, and ways to develop treatment and prevention methods.

The conference also tackled the latest medical research, aiming to strengthen knowledge exchange and open new opportunities for medical students and young researchers pursuing their studies in the United Kingdom.

Jarkhi praised the efforts of the organizing committee, affirming that the conference is a

valuable contribution to advancing medical research, an important step toward improving healthcare services, and a means of broadening the horizons of Kuwaiti medical students in the United Kingdom to enable greater participation in the national health sector.

Meanwhile, Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi pointed out the diversity of orthopedic surgery specializations and emphasized the significant progress achieved in Kuwait in this field. He confirmed Kuwaitis studying in Britain play a vital role in transferring international expertise back home, benefiting both the Ministry of Health and the private medical sector.

Al-Mutairi cited a range of orthopedic specializations like spine surgery, knee surgery, foot and ankle surgery, sports medicine, and pediatric orthopedics, all of which require high levels of expertise and skill in diagnosis and treatment — qualities found in the orthopedic surgeons in Kuwait.

Endocrinology Consultant Dr. Asrar Al-Sayed Hashem drew attention to the alarmingly high obesity and diabetes rates in Kuwait, revealing that one in four Kuwaitis (25 percent) suffers from diabetes, while obesity rate among adults have reached 43.7 percent.

She warned about the dangers of childhood and adolescent obesity, which often lead to early complications of diabetes.

According to statistics from the Dasman Diabetes Institute, half of the children in Kuwait are either obese or overweight. She underscored the need for collective efforts to raise public awareness about the health risks posed by obesity.

Senior Cosmetic and Implant Dentistry Con-

sultant Dr. Osama Behbehani underlined the importance the Kuwait puts on medical specializations, including Dentistry. He disclosed that the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties (KIMS) initially offered only one dental program, but has since expanded to five, enabling students to pursue advanced studies locally and saving time and resources.

He added that studying in Britain requires determination and perseverance, and advised future doctors to remain committed to continuous medical development in order to keep pace with the advancements in dental care.

Pharmacist Ali Abdullah, Head of the Nutrition Unit at Mubarak Hospital, emphasized the importance of multidisciplinary teamwork and highlighted the remarkable development of Pharmacy over the past decade. He explained that Pharmacy is no longer limited to dispensing medication but has expanded into technical, administrative and business fields. He cited the wide range of opportunities available to pharmacists in various sectors, including inspection and drug control departments, medical warehouses, oil industry, military and Ministry of Health. He asserted that pharmaceutical specializations have become broader and more diverse than ever before.

Physiotherapy specialist Mohammad Al-Farhan confirmed that Physical Medicine has expanded well beyond its traditional association with Sports Medicine and Orthopedics, as it now encompasses a variety of sub-specializations, such as cardiac rehabilitation, pediatrics, intensive care, neurological disorders, stroke management, chronic pain treatment, and many other vital fields.



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi receive residents of the Ahmadi Governorate.



Ahmadi Governorate photos Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi meets citizens residing in Ahmadi Governorate.

Need to quash Ahmadi clinics deficiencies: residents

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: In response to the invitation of Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi met with a number of citizens residing in various areas in Ahmadi Governorate at the headquarters of the governorate recently.

Also present at the meeting were Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Affairs Dr. Ahmad Asad, Director of the Office of the Health Minister Dr. Dhari Al-Hashash, Head of Primary

Care in Ahmadi Health District Dr. Fahad Al-Azmi, Director of the Office of the Assistant Undersecretary for Primary Care Dr. Khaled Al-Enezi and Eng. Fatima Ahmed Ali.

At the beginning of the meeting, Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah warmly welcomed Al-Awadhi and the accompanying ministry officials. He praised their commitment to engage directly with the citizens to know their health needs, address the obstacles they are facing, and urgently find appropriate solutions.

During the meeting, Al-Awadhi listened to

the comments of the residents regarding the deficiencies and needs of health centers. He promised to take these comments into consideration, and to visit the health centers and clinics in question to personally assess the situation and then find solutions — immediate, short-term or long-term.

The citizens praised Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for organizing this fruitful meeting. They also expressed their appreciation and gratitude to Al-Awadhi for his commitment to meet with them.

'Safety, security vital for workers in harsh climes'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Municipality on Thursday affirmed necessity to secure healthy and secure conditions for workers namely in the construction and industrial sectors.

Muhammad Al-Saedi, in charge of construction breaches in Al-Assima (Kuwait Capital), affirmed in a statement to KUNA necessity of taking pre-emptive and protective measures to avert accidents during the summer season. He also indicated that the precautions involve measures to prevent fires and grant the workers break time.

He indicated that inspectors have been examining construction sites to ensure that contractors abide by the municipality regulations.

The municipality has warned violating contracting companies to ensure their adherence to safety and security terms, he said, adding that warnings had been addressed to 18 plots in Bneid El-Gar.

Kuwait real estate prices to rise as foreigners set to enter field

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Real estate expert Qais Al-Ghanim confirmed that foreign investors can enter the Kuwaiti real estate investment sector through corporate investment funds and portfolios, provided they meet the conditions.

In a press statement, Al-Ghanim explained that the Kuwaiti government owns about 92 to 93 percent of the country's land, while the private sector owns only seven to eight percent — an extremely limited area for foreign investment.

He pointed out that since the 1960s, Kuwaiti laws have guaranteed that citizens main-

tain a dominant role in domestic investment. "Recently, the government introduced measures facilitating foreign investment without major obstacles, allowing investors to obtain up to 100 percent ownership in industrial projects within the country, subject to certain conditions. This has contributed to boosting the national economy," he elaborated.

He also warned about the astronomical rise in real estate prices in Kuwait and its negative impact on domestic investment activity. He said "in some areas, the price of a 1,000-square-meter land has reached around KD3 million. With construction costs ranging from KD1 million to KD1.5 million, the final price of a completed building could range between KD4 million and KD5 million.

Optimism plants hope, vital for success in life

“THERE was a man who worked as an employee in a government department in the holy city of Makkah. He had a difficult, ungrateful, and constantly nagging wife who made his life miserable. On top of that, he was involved in a heated dispute with his brothers over a piece of land. Tensions between them had escalated to the point where their relationship was on the verge of breaking down,” imam and preacher **Mohammad Fawzan** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Al-Fawzan

“One morning, after another round of his wife’s yelling and harsh criticism, he left the house in a state of deep frustration and anger. He arrived late to work and, unable to find a parking spot, temporarily parked in the space reserved for his manager, who had not yet arrived.

“In a rush to clock in before the attendance system was locked, he hurried upstairs, intending to move his car afterward once he was marked present. Unfortunately, the manager arrived, already in a bad mood, and began shouting, “Who’s the idiot who parked in my spot?”

“Our friend, still boiling with anger from earlier, stormed over to the manager and unleashed his fury in the form of punches, kicks, blows, and a barrage of insults. After the outburst, he got into his car and drove off. The stunned manager picked himself up and immediately called the undersecretary.

“By the end of the day, an official order had been issued transferring our friend to a remote location, from Makkah all the way to Ar’ar. When the news reached him, he immediately wrote his resignation letter. He then spent a few days reflecting on his situation and thought to himself, “What’s really stopping me from going to Ar’ar? No manager, no wife, no feuding brothers. Could it really be worse over there?”

“The man tore up the resignation letter and accepted the transfer order, which allowed him a few days before starting his new position.

Without hesitation, he went to the notary public and signed over the disputed land to his brothers. He also transferred ownership of the house to his wife. He then went to court, finalized the divorce, packed his clothes, and left for Ar’ar. Upon arriving in Ar’ar, he began his new job at the department. His colleagues and manager welcomed him warmly, as is customary.

“He quickly adapted to his new environment and began building connections with the people around him. They were generous and well-off. The people loved him, and he loved them in return.

“One day, the director of the administration in Ar’ar invited him and said, “You are a gift from Allah. You came at just the right time. I’ve grown tired of this place and have been waiting for an opportunity to return to Riyadh. What has kept me here until now is that none of the administration’s employees held a university degree. But now that you have arrived, I am leaving, and I am recommending you as my successor.”

“Weeks, or perhaps months, passed quickly, and the ministry soon approved the director’s transfer to Riyadh, officially appointing our friend to take his place. The man soon found himself a prominent figure among the notables of that small area. He would sit with the prince, local dignitaries, and heads of government departments, in their homes, offices, or farms.

“He received a well-deserved promotion that increased his income, and began to engage more with the community. He began hosting gatherings, inviting people, offering generous hospitality, and even slaughtering livestock for feasts. He was granted a valuable piece of land by the municipality, whose mayor he often sat with. With a loan from a friend, he built a beautiful, luxurious house and set up a large tent in its courtyard to host guests and dignitaries.

“Later, the ministry held a meeting that brought together department directors in Riyadh. There, he ran into his former manager, who was taken aback by how far he had come. As for his nagging wife, she was devastated by the divorce. Yet, she deeply admired him for what he had done, especially when he gave her the house and registered it in her name.

“She pleaded to return to him, but he refused. He set nearly impossible conditions, expecting her to reject them, but to his surprise, she agreed to all of them, and so he took her back. His brothers, after some reflection and consultation, agreed it was necessary to reconcile with the brother they had alienated and neglected. They began to make amends by inviting him over, hosting a feast in his honor, and restoring the bond between them.

“In time, he longed for Makkah once again, and returned to it, honored, respected, and full of dignity.

“Optimism is one of the main qualities of any successful person. It plants hope, strengthens self-confidence, and fuels motivation and action, all of which are vital for achieving success. Only optimistic souls pursue their goals with steadfastness, certainty, calmness, and serenity.

“The optimist looks for relief even before focusing on the hardship. He understands that ease is hidden within difficulty, that relief follows distress, and that victory comes through patience. In his world, hope always triumphs over despair, and optimism outshines pessimism.

mism. He sees relief as near and certain like the light that breaks at the end of the night.

“So, gentlemen, be optimistic about goodness, and you will find it. Know that Allah is Merciful to His servants, and that if He closes one door, He opens many others.

“Challenging circumstances and unexpected events may lead you down a path you never considered, only to discover that it is the very path that leads to success and prosperity.

“As Almighty Allah says, “...And perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you, and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you do not know.” (Qur’an 2:216).”

Also:

“Who bears the burden for those who have died, those still hospitalized, or those left temporarily or permanently blinded? Should we say they bear the sin of their own actions, or should we hold the government of the State of Kuwait responsible, or at least partly accountable? All those who have fallen victim to adulterated alcohol, or to a local industry producing alcohol from bottles sold in grocery stores, are workers who gulped down these liquids like water, trusting that the contents are legitimate alcohol produced in factories licensed by their country’s official authorities,” Kuwaiti journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“These workers leave behind homes, families, wives, children, and familiar customs to live in cramped quarters that are called apartments but are more like sardine cans. Groups of 15 to 20 workers share these rooms, some sleep standing up, others only get a few hours of rest. This is the harsh reality for expatriate workers who are separated from their families, stripped of life’s simple joys, and deprived of vacations spend time in parks, gardens, or cafés frequented by citizens or wealthier residents.

“After living in such miserable conditions, who can truly blame them if they consume or even produce adulterated alcohol? The Alcohol Prohibition Law was enacted in 1953. Although the late Amir, the wise Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (may God have mercy on him), expressed reservations about the law, telling its proponents that the ones harmed would be the poor, this proved true, to the extent that some of the original signatories later regretted the decision.

“In neighboring countries, alcohol is widely available, even in grocery stores, not just in hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. Many of our people travel to these countries to indulge in drinks like red, green, and modani, sometimes even smuggling a few bottles under their dishdasha for personal use.

“I know very well that only a handful of countries prohibit alcohol, and Kuwait is one of them. However, these countries usually have specific reasons for the ban, most of which are not religious.”

□ □ □

“The cooperative societies system is a newly introduced contractual framework with a special nature. It involves a combination of various contracts that vary depending on the nature of each transaction. Therefore, it cannot be classified under any of the named contracts recognized in private law. It is a hybrid system that combines shareholders’ funds with land provided by the state, serving the residents of the area by supporting cooperative activities. The state oversees their revenues and expenditures to protect the rights of shareholders,” Legal Advisor **Dr. Kazem Bou Abbas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Cooperative societies in Kuwait carry out their activities in accordance with Decree Law No. 24/1979 for providing food security in the consumer sector. This benefits both citizens and residents by offering goods at lower prices compared to their international counterparts.

“The cooperative sector enjoys strong financial liquidity, enabling it to trade in the face of challenges, commercial competition, and monopolisticism from companies and merchants. It also protects consumers and shareholders, who benefit not only from returns on their shares but also from a range of services, including maintenance and the development of facilities and infrastructure.

“Cooperatives have become an integral part of the lives of residents in various suburbs and residential areas of Kuwait. Kaifan Cooperative Society, established in 1962, was the first of its kind, followed by many others throughout the country.

“Studies have differed on the legal status of cooperative societies. Some classify them as joint-stock companies, others as closed joint-stock companies, while another study concluded that they represent a cooperative contract (see Dr. Omar Al-Shihabi’s research in the “Journal of Law”, Kuwait University).

“In general, a cooperative society is a legal entity established by natural or legal persons in accordance with the provisions of the law, for a specific or indefinite period, with the aim of improving the living, economic, and social standards of its members by adhering to cooperative principles (Article 1 of the law).

— Compiled by **Mohammad Wangengi/Simi K. Kutty**

Forgery cases ‘decades old’

Dependents too many

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Nationality Investigation Committee has reopened an old case dating back to the 1970s, which was documented in a report prepared by Captain Abdullah Al-Tayyar at the time, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed that investigation on the case started again after information circulated on social media about four Iraqis affiliated with a Kuwaiti tribe. Sources said Al-Tayyar wrote a report stating that the four Iraqis were associated with a Kuwaiti citizen as his sons, and the Kuwaiti father acknowledged then that he registered them “out of compassion.” Sources affirmed all of this information is documented in the case file.

Sources stated that when the case was reopened this year, DNA tests were conducted on the children of the deceased Kuwaiti citizen, and the results confirmed that they are his biological children. Sources disclosed that the children of one of the four forgers (the deceased) were also brought in for testing, and the test results proved they are not the children of the Kuwaiti.

Sources added that the case has three remaining files for three forged children, two of whom have been proven to be not the biological children of the supposed father. Sources confirmed that the third has been a fugitive for seven months, accompanied by his only daughter, and it is currently impossible to conduct DNA tests for them.

Sources indicated that the committee will revoke the citizenship of the fugitive and his daughter to finalize the case. Sources stated that genetic tests will be conducted if they file an appeal or grievance to prove they are the children of the deceased.

Sources affirmed that this decision is supported by a documented confession by one of the Kuwaiti citizen’s grandchildren (who were proven not to be his descendants), in which he acknowledged the truth, stating that they are originally from another tribe and not affiliated with the tribe with which they are officially registered.

Sources gave a breakdown of the affiliations of the four forgers as follows:

- First: 32 dependents
- Second: 55 dependents
- Third (fugitive): two (father and daughter)
- Fourth: 37 dependents (whose citizenship was revoked earlier)

Sources added that the committee closed this complex case through the presentation of conclusive evidence and DNA test results, except the fugitive and his daughter who bear the burden of proving otherwise.



Mol photo

Bottles of imported liquor seized by the patrol police. Suspects on the run as cars were impounded.

Suspects scoot leaving behind foreign booze in two vehicles

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Officers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Police Station impounded a four-wheel drive vehicle and a salon car, and put both vehicles at the station yard, during a routine patrol in the area, reports Al-Anba daily.

A total of 109 imported and 47 local liquor bottles were handed over to detectives, pending the arrest and interrogation of the suspects.

Once investigations are complete, the accused will be referred to the Public Prosecution on charges of possessing alcohol for the purpose of trafficking.

A security source disclosed that while patrolling the area, the officers noticed a vehicle left running in a school parking lot.

When they approached the vehicle, a man suddenly abandoned the vehicle and fled on foot between nearby houses.

The source added “the officers returned to inspect the vehicle and they discovered 109 imported liquor bottles inside. The General Traffic Department was notified and it identified the vehicle’s owner, who is now being pursued.”

The source clarified that the vehicle had no theft record, which entails the fugitive was either the owner or an individual known to the owner.

In a similar case, another unidentified individual abandoned his vehicle containing 47 bottles of locally produced liquor.



Mol photo

Map shows the areas to be closed for a period of three days.

Total shutdown of Gulf Street for 3 days: GTD

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The General Traffic Department (GTD) announced a complete closure of Arabian Gulf Street from the National Assembly intersection to Seif Palace Roundabout, starting from 4:00 pm on Thursday, August 21 to 6:00 am on Sunday, August 24, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Ruling in salary seizure case put off till Sept 15

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: In the first lawsuit of its kind filed by a citizen challenging the decision issued by the Enforcement General Department to permanently seize his salary and issue a warrant for his arrest, the Administrative Court decided to postpone the announcement of its ruling until Sept 15 and refer the contested law to the Constitutional Court.

In the recently concluded session of the court, Attorney Hani Hussein submitted a legal memorandum, requesting referral of the new law regarding salary seizure and arrest warrant to the Constitutional Court. He pointed out that the current provisions are suspected of being unconstitutional, particularly the stipulation on individuals’ financial rights and freedom of movement, which are guaranteed by the Constitution.

Hussein affirmed that the lawsuit is based on the contested decisions, which violated his client’s constitutional rights. He considered the permanent salary seizure a severe humanitarian and legal burden, while the arrest warrant is a violation of individual freedom and dignity.



Municipality photo

Municipality workers cleaning by the roadside in one of the areas.

‘Refrain from littering’

Robust campaign to clean highways, roads launched

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Field teams from the Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Department at the Kuwait Municipality branch in Jahra Governorate on Wednesday started cleaning highways in line with the commitment of the Municipality to maintain public cleanliness and the civilized appearance of the country.

Acting Director of the department Daham Al-Anzi stated that the cleaning teams and equipment are operating according to the schedule that covers all highways, indicating that the work will continue until the roads are fully cleaned.

He added that this campaign is part of a series of periodic inspection and cleaning drives carried out by the Municipality.

He stressed that the Municipality spares no effort in providing a healthy and safe environment for the community. He urged everyone to fully cooperate with the cleaning teams by refraining from littering in order to maintain the civilized appearance of the country.

KFF in Jahra, to monitor fire, safety regulations

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) recently carried out an inspection campaign in Jahra Industrial Area, in cooperation with several government agencies, including the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Public Authority for Industry (PAI) and Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Rai daily.

The campaign aims to monitor buildings and facilities to uncover violations of safety and fire prevention regulations.

This campaign resulted in the administrative closure of 85 industrial facilities and shops, and the issuance of 122 citations to other facilities for failing to meet the KFF requirements.

3 rowdy women refuse to pay taxi fare, insult cops

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: A woman, in her 50s, has been accused of insulting two female police officers and refusing to pay a mobile taxi fare in Abu Halifa, reports Al-Anba daily.

A case was registered against the woman at Abu Halifa Police Station on charges of insulting a public employee and threatening to cause harm.

A security source stated that the Interior Ministry’s Operations Unit received a report from an expatriate mobile taxi driver. He alleged that three women he transported refused to pay the fare upon arrival at their destination and threatened to harm him.

The report was immediately referred to the nearest patrol, and the three women were detained. However, they refused to cooperate with security personnel and resisted being taken to the police station. Two female police officers were summoned to assist in their arrest and transport. During the process, the women verbally abused the officers and used inappropriate language.

It is worth mentioning that Article 134 of the Penal Code stipulates that anyone who insults, by word or gesture, a public employee while performing their duties or because of them shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months and a fine not exceeding KD300 and not less than KD100 or either of these penalties.

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Minister Al-Mukhaizeem approves 1,292 promotions across job levels

Elevations cover grades eight up to A

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Minister of Finance, and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, approved selection-based promotion decisions for the ministry's employees in various job grades. The decisions included the promotion of 1,292 employees distributed for six programs and a special program.

Promotions from grade "B"



Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem – Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy

to grade "A" included seven employees in the first program, seven in the second, 10 in the third, seven in the fourth, three

in the fifth, and 12 in the sixth, totaling 46 employees.

Promotions from grade "one" to "two" included 18 employees in the first and second programs, 10 in the third, 12 in the fourth, three in the fifth, and 15 in the sixth, totaling 58 employees.

From grade two to grade one, the promotions included 24 employees in the first program, 36 in the second, 33 in the third, 36 in the fourth, seven in the fifth, and 38 in the sixth, bringing the total to 174 employees.

From grade three to grade two, the promotions included 35 employees in the first program, 28 in the second, 28 in the third, 70 in the fourth, 5 in the fifth, and 41 in the sixth, totaling 207 employees.

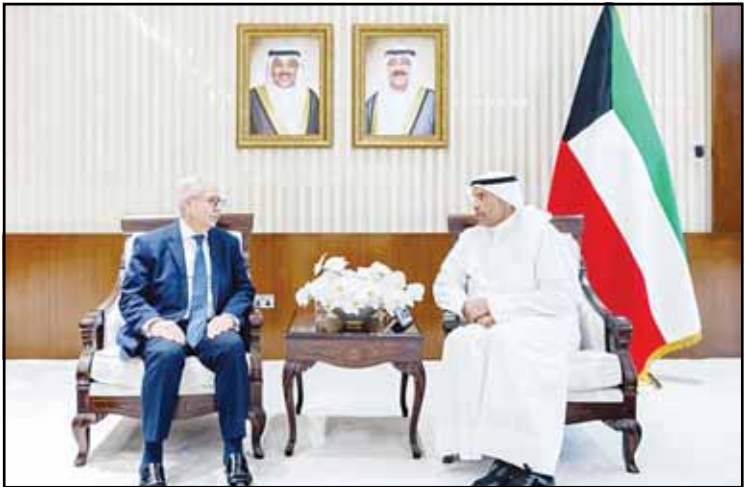
From grade four to grade three, the promotions included 54 employees in the first program, 60 in the second, 40 in the third, 46 in the fourth, 16 in the fifth, and 100 in the sixth, for a total of 316 employees.

From grade five to grade four, the promotions included 37 employees in the first program, 106 in the second, 25 in the third, 46 in the fourth, 20 in the special program, and 84 in the sixth, totaling 318 employees.

From grade six to grade five, the promotions included 6 employees in the first program, 28 in the second, 10 in the third, 15 in the fourth, 11 in the fifth, and 16 in the sixth, totaling 86 employees.

From grade seven to grade six, the promotions included 3 employees in the first program, 32 in the second, 6 in the third, 14 in the fourth, 2 in the fifth, and 3 in the sixth, totaling 60 employees.

Finally, from grade eight to grade seven, the promotions included 2 employees in the first program, 17 in the second, 6 in the fourth, and 2 in the sixth, bringing the total to 27 employees.



KUNA photo
Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout.

FM receives outgoing Egyptian envoy

Kuwait, Algeria discuss regional cooperation, int'l developments

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya discussed, over the phone on Wednesday, recent regional and international developments, along with bilateral relations with Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the National Community Abroad Ahmad Attaf.

Earlier, Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Wednesday received outgoing Egyptian Ambassador Osama Shaltout.

During the reception, the minister commended the diplomat's leading efforts and contributions to the promotion of relations, wishing him best of luck in future positions.

Over 17,000 seek spots as admissions results set for next week

PAAET starts interviews for 2025/2026 applicants

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Dean of Admissions and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Fawazi Al-Dokhi announced the start of personal interviews for applicants seeking admission to PAAET's institutes for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The interviews will be conducted over two days, according to a schedule prepared by the

Deanship of Admissions and Registration, following the conclusion of the initial application phase, which attracted over 17,000 male and female students.

Dr. Al-Dokhi noted that the results of institute admissions will be announced in the middle of next week on PAAET's official website and through local media.

He indicated that this year's high turnout reflects students' trust in PAAET's educational programs, which provide practical and professional specializations that meet the labor market needs.

Dr. Al-Dokhi further explained that PAAET has made all necessary arrangements to prepare interview committees and has assigned academic and administrative staff to support students and facilitate the review process.

The Dean concluded by affirming that the Deanship of Admissions and Registration will continue its efforts in the coming period to finalize admission procedures, ensuring that accepted students are fully prepared and committed at the start of the academic year.

Kuwait's IICO funds 1K Syrian refugee students in Lebanon

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) announced Thursday its sponsorship of 1,000 Syrian refugee students enrolled in its charitable schools in Lebanon for the 2024-2025 academic year.

The initiative, carried out in cooperation with Kuwaiti Humanitarian Excellence Association and the Lebanese Association for Scientific Research, is part of IICO's efforts to provide quality educational opportunities.

Speaking to KUNA, IICO Deputy Director General for Institutional Communication Ibrahim Al-Bader said the project reflects Kuwait's ongoing humanitarian commitment, providing full educational support including school supplies, transportation, and extracurricular programs.

The initiative also created 45 jobs for qualified teachers and administrators, contributing to reducing school dropout rates and curbing "child begging", while reinforcing moral and cultural values among refugee children.

Al-Bader emphasized the program's focus on students' psychological well-being and integration, affirming IICO's continued support for education-focused humanitarian projects.



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Official permits required for use

Ministry calls for strict adherence to national symbols, military uniforms

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Ministry of Information calls on artistic production companies to strictly adhere to regulations governing the use of military symbols and uniforms, emphasizing the necessity of complying with official laws and obtaining the required permits, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry highlighted the importance of Kuwaiti drama and artistic productions following all existing regulations, particularly those related to national symbols and military uniforms, which may only be used after securing official authorization from the relevant authorities.

Reaffirming its commitment to supporting and encouraging national artistic production, the ministry stressed the need to uphold national responsibility by preserving the dignity and prestige of state institutions and respecting their symbols.

It clarified that recent violations in this regard are being addressed by the appropriate authorities in accordance with the law, emphasizing that all violators will be held accountable without exception.



KUNA photo
Part of the inspection tour.

Assembly approves reports, 2025 budget

KSC stresses keenness to boost youth in science and tech skills

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Science Club (KSC) affirmed its commitment to developing scientific and technical skills among youth through various programs, including workshops, applied laboratories, training courses, and innovative competitions.

The club explained that it continues to enhance its training infrastructure and academic partnerships to empower a generation capable of keeping pace with transformations in the fields of science and technology. This came in a press statement issued Wednesday following its ordinary general assembly meeting, chaired by Chairman of the Board of Directors Talal Al-Kharafi, with the attendance of a delegation from the Ministry of Social Affairs headed by Director of the Civil Societies Department, Iman Al-Enezi.

During the meeting, the administrative and financial reports for 2024, the general budget, and the 2025 draft budget were approved. The general assembly unanimously endorsed the two reports, which included achievements, activities, programs, and participation in local and international exhibitions. It also approved the draft budget for the next fiscal year and authorized the Board of Directors to appoint Crowe Al-Muhanna & Partners to audit the current year's accounts.

The statement quoted Chairman Talal Al-Kharafi as expressing gratitude to the members of the Board of Directors, the General Assembly, volunteers, strategic partners from both public and private sectors, and all employees of the club for their efforts that contributed to the success of its activities and events.

For her part, Iman Al-Enezi, Director of the Civil Society Organizations Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs, praised the spirit of cooperation between the Ministry and the Science Club, commending the services and activities provided by the club throughout the year. She stressed that the Ministry values the club's efforts and its supportive role in advancing the country's goals of empowering Kuwaiti youth with scientific knowledge and skills.

The statement added that the Ministry's delegation was briefed during a tour of the club's departments and sectors, particularly the workshops and laboratories of the Youth and Science Sector, which target the 4-17 age group through programs designed to spread scientific awareness and stimulate creativity and innovation.

Government reforms link diplomacy with economic growth

Kuwait charts new development path through mega projects

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Integrated government action linking economic diplomacy with strategic partners and coupled with a comprehensive system of internal reforms are driving the significant transformation in major project development in Kuwait.

This transformation reflects a clear vision to improve performance efficiency, enhance transparency and accelerate implementation.

This comes within strategic plans aimed at diversifying income, developing infrastructure and achieving sustainable development in line with the New Kuwait 2035 Vision.

Governmental steps include the connection between recent legislative and regulatory reforms, the expansion of strategic development partnerships, efforts to accelerate major projects and encouraging economic indicators.

As part of this growing momentum, a Ministerial Committee for Monitoring Agreements with China held 22 meetings in which it outlined four main tracks to boost economic development.

These include accelerating coordination and consultations with China, increasing technical teams' visits, removing obstacles facing projects, setting plans and priorities, and supporting ministries and government agencies responsible for implementing memoranda of understanding (MoUs).

Government efforts have made notable progress in the implementation of the strategic Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, based on the MoU with China, leading up to the signing of the execution contract last March.

In the field of environmental infrastructure, the government is reviewing a detailed report prepared by a Chinese delegation that includes an action plan for bilateral cooperation in land reclamation.

It also discusses implementation plans for projects to develop and rehabilitate ecosystems, expand afforestation programs, protect the environment and combat sand encroachment.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah emphasized that the positive indicators in economic growth and attracting foreign investments confirm the government's steady progress and the ministerial committee's success in achieving the objectives of the comprehensive plan in all development paths, in line with the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Kuwait recently enhanced its international partnerships by elevating its his-

toric relationship with Japan to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

This step aims to deepen the development and economic impact of cooperation between the two countries.

Accordingly, the two countries intend to solidify their comprehensive strategic partnership across all economic, trade, investment, renewable energy and petrochemical sectors.

One of the most prominent projects is the second and third phases of the Al-Zour North Power Plant. It is one of the country's largest electricity projects and aims to meet the growing demand for power and water, while providing infrastructure for development projects.

This project encourages private sector participation, leveraging its expertise to reduce the costs of building and operating power stations, accelerate completion, and optimize the use of natural resources.

It also reflects the government's direction to involve the private sector in infrastructure development, helping reduce cost, speed up delivery, optimize resource use and attract foreign investment.

As part of its ongoing evaluation of project implementation, the government is recording all projects and contracts across ministries and agencies, preparing detailed lists of ongoing construction projects and related contracts, in addition to future projects, to monitor implementation mechanisms on the ground.

This step aims to create an accurate database that enables decision-makers to assess actual performance, ensure proper coordination among entities, and avoid overlapping responsibilities or duplication.

The government follows a unified methodology for integrating projects and initiatives into strategic plans. This includes phased goals with timelines, measurable key performance indicators and the identification of relevant coordinating entities.

Adopting new financing initiatives to support and implement major projects is also a core pillar of the government's strategy, particularly in energy, transportation, infrastructure, smart cities and industrial zones.

The government aims to reduce the burden on the public budget by around 30 percent, attract private and foreign investments worth up to 10 billion Kuwaiti dinars, generate annual revenues of KD one billion by 2030 and create more than 50,000 job opportunities.

The government has successfully implemented a package of legislative and regulatory reforms to support economic reforms. These include a real estate

brokerage system, a smart licensing project, amendments to the Companies Law, a project for taxation of multinational groups, and launching the first steps of the Real Estate Developer System.

Recently, Kuwait launched the second part of the third phase of the Capital Market Development Program, one of the strategic projects of the Capital Markets Authority included in the state's development plan.

It aims to build the regulatory and infrastructure framework necessary for upgrading Kuwait to be among advanced emerging markets, and to strengthen both local and international investor confidence.

These integrated efforts are reflected in the expectations of international institutions. The World Bank forecasts that Kuwait's economic growth will rebound significantly to 2.2 percent in 2025, driven by the gradual lifting of production caps by OPEC+, expansion in non-oil sectors supported by credit growth and major infrastructure projects.

In its recent report issued by the regional office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, titled "Smart Spending and Stronger Economic Outcomes: Fiscal Policies for Gulf Prosperity," the World Bank projected that economic growth would remain stable at 2.7 percent during the period 2026-27. It stated that long-term economic prospects depend on the successful implementation of structural reforms and efforts to diversify economic activity.

Meanwhile, S&P Global Ratings predicted continued economic growth in Kuwait thanks to its reforms, and EFG Hermes stated in its report that decision-making in Kuwait has improved significantly. The current focus is on government projects and the passage of key laws.

Hermes also predicted that this environment would support credit growth in the banking sector for several years and raised its forecast for overall banking sector growth starting from 2026.

Kuwait's annual development plan for 2025-26, approved last March, includes an unprecedented number of construction projects, 69 under the budgets of ministries and government departments, 21 for affiliated entities and 34 for independent institutions.

Kuwait signed several MoUs with China in 2023, covering the implementation of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, cooperation in electricity, housing development, wastewater treatment, free zones, economic zones, renewable energy projects, and collaboration on a low-carbon green system for waste recycling.

Eco-friendly solution cuts costs, energy use

KISR gets patent for innovative wastewater treatment system

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

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced that its Water Research Center has obtained a patent for a wetland system designed to treat wastewater produced through reverse osmosis.

This patent is part of a project funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) entitled, "A Typical Study of Wetland Systems for Treating Wastewater Resulting from Reverse Osmosis Wastewater Treatment."

In a press statement on Thursday, KISR disclosed that the patent, secured by Dr. Mishari Khajah and Dr. Mohammad Al-Muntasir Ahmad from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (US 12,378,144 B1), is a qualitative leap in safeguarding and managing water security in the State of Kuwait.

The system treats wastewater by utilizing organic plastic materials with unique properties, saving energy and cost, while enabling the reuse of treated water for greening purposes. This is in contrast to traditional treatment methods, which are expensive and energy-intensive.

The institute explained that the project's research team used organic plastic materials with a large surface area to encourage bacterial growth and enhance water treatment efficiency. Their high porosity minimizes the blockages typically associated with conventional treatment methods, thereby, improving overall effectiveness. The experiments were conducted under Kuwait's arid climate, which provides favorable



Wetland system for treating wastewater from sewage treatment.



Dr. Mohammad Al-Muntasir Ahmad - Senior Scientific Researcher



KUNA photos
Dr. Mishari Khajah - Scientific Researcher

conditions for bacterial activity and reproduction.

It stressed that this achievement is a qualitative shift on the environmental level, particularly in the treatment of wastewater generated from reverse

osmosis processes. It helps mitigate pollutants in water, enhances national water security, and delivers developmental benefits that will positively support Kuwait's future plans for wastewater management and treatment.

Kuwait chairs GCC meet on Syria aid

Council pledges continued support

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC and Gulf Affairs, Ambassador Najeeb Al-Bader, chaired on Thursday a high-level Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministries senior official's virtual meeting, focused on strengthening cooperation and providing sustained support to Syria.

In remarks to KUNA following the meeting, Al-Bader emphasized that the event demonstrated the shared responsibility and collective commitment of GCC member states to closely monitor developments in Syria and uphold regional security.

He affirmed that GCC states have long been proactive in extending humanitarian and relief assistance to Syrians, while also adopting firm political stances that support international efforts aimed at preserving Syria's unity, sovereignty, stability, and territorial integrity.



KUNA photo
Assistant Foreign Minister, Ambassador Najeeb Al-Bader, during his chairing of the meeting.

Al-Bader stressed that this meeting represents a continuation of previous efforts and an implementation of the GCC Ministerial Council's 164th session decision, hosted by Kuwait in June, which highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation with Syria.

The participating GCC states

reaffirmed their determination to work alongside regional and international partners to enhance cooperation with Syria, particularly in economic, developmental, and investment fields, thereby contributing to rebuilding institutions, reviving social life, and easing Syrian suffering.

Continued from Page 1

PM chairs

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 Abdulatif 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.

Also on Thursday at Bayan Palace, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received China Baowu Steel Group delegation, headed by Wang Jiang, as well as representatives from China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd. (CSCEC).

Chinese Transport Ministry's CSCEC has been tasked with completing Mubarak Al-Kabeer port.

The Chinese delegation gave a presentation on the establishment of the corporation, its role on the international level in providing commodities and building major projects as well as the company's most notable projects.

His Highness the Prime Minister directed with exerting efforts towards progressing strategic bilateral ties, boosting cooperation on nationalizing industries and gaining benefit from the major Chinese capabilities, to achieve the instruc-

tions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Attending the meeting were Chief of Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif 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 Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Ateeq Al-Majed Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and Committee Rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat, and Chinese Charge d'Affairs in Kuwait, Liu Xiang.

Food, health

the inflation rate in the recreation and culture group rose by 1.76 percent, meanwhile the prices of the education group rose by 0.71 percent.

It pointed out that the price index of the restaurants and hotels group rose by 1.94 percent on an annual basis in July, while inflation of the miscellaneous goods and services group rose by 4.8 percent.

The bureau pointed out that the inflation rate in Kuwait, excluding food and beverages group, rose by 1.61 percent year-on-year in July and by 0.08 percent month-on-month.

Kuwait heat

The "Suhail" star becomes visible in the Kuwaiti sky starting September 4, and local astronomers tradi-

tionally document its sighting at dawn each year.

This period also marks a gradual decrease in daylight hours and a noticeable increase in nighttime hours.

In related news, the weather in Kuwait during the weekend will be hot during the day and warm to hot at night.

The acting director of the Meteorological Department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is affected by the extension of the seasonal Indian low-pressure system, accompanied by a relatively hot and humid air mass, with northwesterly to variable winds of light to moderate speed.

He explained that the weather during the day on Friday will be hot and relatively humid over the coastal areas, with northwesterly to variable winds of light to moderate speed ranging between 8 and 28 kilometers per hour. The expected maximum temperatures will range between 44 and 46 degrees Celsius, and the sea will be calm to moderate with waves between one and three feet.

The weather on Friday night will be warm to hot and relatively humid over the coastal areas, with variable to northwesterly winds of light to moderate speed ranging between 8 and 30 kilometers per hour. The expected minimum temperatures will range between 29 and 31 degrees Celsius, and the sea will be calm to moderate with waves between one and three feet.

The weather during the day on Saturday will be very hot, with northwesterly to variable winds of light to moderate speed ranging between 8 and 28 kilometers per hour. The expected maximum temperatures will range between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius, and the sea will be calm to moderate with waves be-

tween one and three feet.

Saturday night's weather will be warm to hot, with northwesterly winds of light to moderate speed ranging between 8 and 30 kilometers per hour. The expected minimum temperatures will range between 29 and 31 degrees Celsius, and the sea will be calm to moderate with waves between one and four feet.

Road raids

115 violators of the Residency and Labor laws, 12 juveniles for driving without a license, and referral of 36 individuals to the police station for failure to present a valid proof of identification.

The General Traffic Department affirmed the continuation of its security efforts on all roads to instill traffic discipline and reduce traffic violations, thus, contributing to the preservation of lives and properties while ensuring the smooth flow of traffic.

Homebrew horror

Also, Anwar Al-Rasheed, an international legal consultant, believes that the recent alcohol poisoning incident, which claimed the lives of 23 people, necessitates a re-evaluation of the alcohol ban law.

Given the widespread presence of alcohol, he stressed the need to assess both the positives and negatives of the current legislation.

Al-Rasheed said, "If the law is proven effective in curbing alcohol consumption, then it should remain in place. However, if it becomes clear that the ban is leading to more serious consequences, then alcohol must be permitted and regulated under strict controls and conditions."

He pointed out that alcohol is legal-

ly available in most countries around the world, with only a few exceptions, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Libya.

Al-Rasheed explained that the state's repeated seizures of alcohol clearly indicate the existence of a significant segment of society that consumes these products. This underscores the need to reopen this file, especially in light of the rising number of seizures and the growing rates of alcohol consumption. The government must open this topic for public and societal discussion, particularly as the increasing rates of addiction in Kuwait signal potentially dire consequences.

As evidence, he pointed to alarming data from the Addiction Treatment Center at the Psychiatric Medicine Hospital, which reflects a concerning rise in addiction cases. Given that permitting alcohol might actually help reduce addiction to more harmful substances, he wondered why not consider allowing it.

Meanwhile, Lawyer Ali Al-Attar strongly opposed the proposal to legalize alcohol in Kuwait, rejecting any notion of following the example of some Gulf countries or others that permit its sale.

He argued that the issue of rising crime and traffic accidents is not necessarily linked to addiction rates.

Lawyer Al-Attar called for the complete rejection of the idea, emphasizing that Islamic teachings, along with Kuwait's customs, traditions, and social norms, categorically prohibit alcohol.

He stressed that the tragic cases of poisoning and death caused by toxic homemade substances should not be used as justification to violate Islamic law and legalize something that is fundamentally forbidden.

Furthermore, Islamic preacher Sheikh Saleh Al-Ghanim emphasized that Islam strictly prohibits the con-

sumption of alcohol, stating clearly that it is forbidden (haram).

He said if any Islamic country permits the sale of alcohol, that is its own decision, and not a justification for others to follow suit.

Sheikh Al-Ghanim pointed to clear Qur'anic verses and prophetic hadiths that forbid the drinking, possession, and trade of alcohol.

Meanwhile, an internal medicine specialist, who requested anonymity, explained that adulterated alcohol is often made using toxic substances such as methanol and ethylene, along with other harmful chemicals that pose serious health risks.

He explained that methanol, in particular, is highly dangerous and can lead to rapid death, as it is composed of carbon and hydrogen compounds that are toxic to the human body. Methanol, along with other toxic substances, destroys the digestive system and has a dangerous impact on the nervous system, which can even lead to death, such as in the recent case where 23 people died after consuming poisoned alcohol.

Some alcoholic products manufactured in Kuwait are repackaged and falsely labeled as "Made Abroad" to deceive consumers, especially since alcohol sales increase significantly during Christmas and New Year's time. Many Asian, European, and Arab communities tend to be heavier consumers of alcohol during these times.

Kuwait flags

The Ministry also supports the statement issued by Aligned for Advancing Lifesaving and Peace in Sudan (ALPS) group in that regard, commending the steps taken to alleviate the suffering of Sudanese people.

‘In a democracy, people choose their representatives’

Texas House OKs redrawn congressional maps sought by Trump ahead of 2026 elections

AUSTIN, Texas, Aug 21, (AP): The Texas House on Wednesday approved redrawn congressional maps that would give Republicans a bigger edge in 2026, muscling through a partisan gerrymander that launched weeks of protests by Democrats and a widening national battle over redistricting.

The approval came at the urging of President Donald Trump, who pushed for the extraordinary mid-decade revision of congressional maps to give his party a better chance at holding onto the US House of Representatives in the 2026 midterm elections. The maps, which would give Republicans five more winnable seats, need to be approved by the GOP-controlled state Senate and signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott before they become official.

But the Texas House vote had presented the best chance for Democrats to derail the redraw.

Democratic legislators delayed the vote by two weeks by fleeing Texas earlier this month in protest, and they were assigned round-the-clock police monitoring upon their return to ensure they attended Wednesday’s session.

The approval of the Texas maps on an 88-52 party-line vote is likely to prompt California’s Democratic-controlled state Legislature this week to approve of a new House map creating five new Democratic-leaning districts. But the California map would require voter approval in November.

Democrats have also vowed to challenge the new Texas map in court and complained that Republicans made the political power move before passing legislation responding to deadly floods that swept the state last month.

Texas Republicans openly said they were acting in their party’s interest. State Rep. Todd Hunter, who wrote the legislation formally creating the new map, noted that the US Supreme Court has allowed politicians to redraw districts for nakedly partisan purposes.

“The underlying goal of this plan is straight forward: improve Republican political performance,” Hunter, a Republican, said on the floor. After nearly eight hours of debate, Hunter took the floor again to sum up the entire dispute as nothing more than a partisan fight. “What’s the difference, to the whole world listening? Republicans like it,



Protesters gather in the rotunda outside the House Chamber at the Texas Capitol as lawmakers debate a redrawn U.S. congressional map in Texas during a special session on Aug 20, in Austin, Texas. (AP)

and Democrats do not.”

Democrats said the disagreement was about more than partisanship.

“In a democracy, people choose their representatives,” State Rep Chris

Turner said. “This bill flips that on its head and lets politicians in Washington, D.C., choose their voters.”

State Rep. John H. Bucy blamed the president. “This is Donald Trump’s

map,” Bucy said. “It clearly and deliberately manufactures five more Republican seats in Congress because Trump himself knows that the voters are rejecting his agenda.”

The Republican power play has already triggered a national tit-for-tat battle as Democratic state lawmakers prepared to gather in California on Thursday to revise that state’s map to create five new Democratic seats.

“This is a new Democratic Party, this is a new day, this is new energy out there all across this country,” California’s Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom said on a call with reporters on Wednesday. “And we’re going to fight fire with fire.”

A new California map would need to be approved by voters in a special election in November because that state normally operates with a nonpartisan commission drawing the map to avoid the very sort of political brawl that is playing out. Newsom himself backed the 2008 ballot measure to create that process, as did former President Barack Obama. But in a sign of Democrats’ stiffening resolve, Obama Tuesday night backed Newsom’s bid

to redraw the California map, saying it was a necessary step to stave off the GOP’s Texas move.

“I think that approach is a smart, measured approach,” Obama said during a fundraiser for the Democratic Party’s main redistricting arm.

The incumbent president’s party usually loses seats in the midterm election, and the GOP currently controls the House of Representatives by a mere three votes. Trump is going beyond Texas in his push to remake the map. He’s pushed Republican leaders in conservative states like Indiana and Missouri to also try to create new Republican seats. Ohio Republicans were already revising their map before Texas moved. Democrats, meanwhile, are mulling reopening Maryland’s and New York’s maps as well.

However, more Democratic-run states have commission systems like California’s or other redistricting limits than Republican ones do, leaving the GOP with a freer hand to swiftly redraw maps. New York, for example, can’t draw new maps until 2028, and even then, only with voter approval.



White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Vice President JD Vance, greet members of the National Guard, at Union Station in Washington on Aug 20. (AP)

‘\$700 million budget cut’

Gabbard slashes intelligence office workforce

WASHINGTON, Aug 21, (AP): The Office of the Director of National Intelligence will dramatically reduce its workforce and cut its budget by more than \$700 million annually, the Trump administration announced Wednesday.

The move amounts to a major downsizing of the office responsible for coordinating the work of 18 intelligence agencies, including on counterterrorism and counterintelligence, as President Donald Trump has tangled with assessments from the intelligence community.

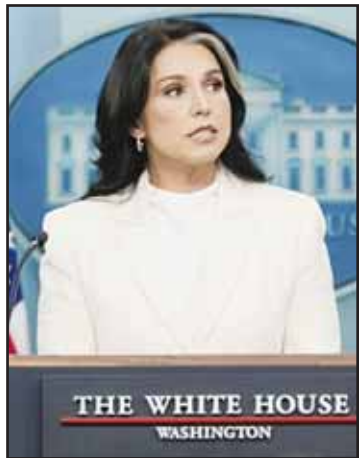
His administration also this week has revoked the security clearances of dozens of former and current officials, while last month declassifying documents meant to call into question long-settled judgments about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

“Over the last 20 years, ODNI has become bloated and inefficient, and the intelligence community is rife with abuse of power, unauthorized leaks of classified intelligence, and politicized weaponization of intelligence,” Tulsi Gabbard, the director of national intelligence, said in a statement announcing a more than 40% workforce reduction.

She added: “Ending the weaponization of intelligence and holding bad actors accountable are essential to begin to earn the American people’s trust which has long been eroded.”

Among the changes are to the Foreign Malign Influence Center, which is meant to track influence operations from abroad and threats to elections. Officials said it has become “redundant” and that its core functions would be integrated into other parts of the government.

The reorganization is part of a broader administration effort to rethink how it tracks foreign threats to American elections, a topic that has become politically loaded given Trump’s long-



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

running resistance to the intelligence community’s assessment that Russia interfered on his behalf in the 2016 election.

In February, for instance, Attorney General Pam Bondi disbanded an FBI task force focused on investigating foreign influence operations, including those that target U.S. elections. The Trump administration also has made sweeping cuts at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which oversees the nation’s critical infrastructure, including election systems. And the State Department in April said it shut down its office that sought to deal with misinformation and disinformation that Russia, China and Iran have been accused of spreading.

Reaction to the news broke along partisan lines in Congress, where Sen. Tom Cotton, Republican chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, praised the decision as “an important step towards returning ODNI to that

original size, scope, and mission. And it will help make it a stronger and more effective national security tool for President Trump.”

The panel’s top Democrat, Sen. Mark Warner, pledged to carefully review Gabbard’s proposals and “conduct rigorous oversight to ensure any reforms strengthen, not weaken, our national security.” He said he was not confident that would be the case “given Director Gabbard’s track record of politicizing intelligence.”

Gabbard’s efforts to downsize the agency she leads is in keeping with the cost-cutting mandate the administration has employed since its earliest days, when Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency oversaw mass layoffs of the federal workforce.

It’s the latest headline-making move by an official who just a few months ago had seemed out of favor with Trump over her analysis of Iran’s nuclear capabilities but who in recent weeks has emerged as a key loyalist with her latest actions.

The Foreign Malign Influence Center was created by the Biden administration in 2022 to respond to what the U.S. intelligence community had assessed as attempts by Russia and other adversaries to interfere with American elections.

Its role, ODNI said when it announced the center’s creation, was to coordinate and integrate intelligence pertaining to malign influence. The office in the past has joined forces with other federal agencies to debunk and alert the public to foreign disinformation intended to influence U.S. voters.

For example, it was involved in an effort to raise awareness about a Russian video that falsely depicted mail-in ballots being destroyed in Pennsylvania that circulated widely on social media in the weeks before the 2024 presidential election.

Top WH officials turn to public appearances with troops as tense Washington watches

WASHINGTON, Aug 21, (AP): US President Donald Trump’s law-enforcement crackdown on Washington expanded Wednesday and top administration officials visited National Guard troops to support a deployment that has left parts of the US capital looking like occupied territory. Anger and frustration dotted the city as the vice president lauded an operation that he asserted has “brought some law and order back.”

The tense situation, which began more than a week ago when Trump took control of the local police department, appeared primed for escalating confrontations between residents who say they feel under siege and federal forces carrying out the president’s vision of militarized law enforcement in Democratic cities. Other residents have said they welcome the federal efforts as a way to cut crime and bolster safety.

As Trump ratcheted up the pressure, Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth shared burgers with soldiers at the city’s main railroad

hub as demonstrators gathered nearby. The appearance, a striking scene that also included White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, illustrated the Republican administration’s intense dedication to an initiative that has polarized the Democratic-led city.

“You guys are doing a hell of a job,” Vance told the troops assembled in the Union Station Shake Shack. While protest chants echoed through the restaurant, he rejected polling that shows city residents don’t support the National Guard deployment as a solution to crime.

Someone booed Vance loudly and repeatedly as he left. The vice president grinned and said, “This is the guy who thinks people don’t deserve law and order in their own community.”

Trump has already suggested replicating his approach to DC in other cities, such as Chicago and Baltimore. He previously deployed the National Guard and the Marines in Los Angeles in response to immigration protests.

In the seven months since Trump

took office for the second time, the traditionally liberal city of Washington has buckled under his more aggressive presidency. Thousands of federal employees have been laid off, landmark institutions like the Smithsonian are being overhauled on grounds of doctrine, and local leaders have been increasingly wary of angering the commander-in-chief.

Now parts of the city are bristling with resentment over Trump’s approach. Spectators chanted “free D.C.” at a soccer game. Residents share sightings of immigration agents to help migrants steer clear. In the Columbia Heights neighborhood, crowds jeered federal officers and flipped middle fingers as they drove away. On some nights, people bang pots and pans outside their front doors in a cacophonous display of defiance.

Less than a mile from the US Capitol, an armored National Guard vehicle collided with a civilian car in the early morning Wednesday, trapping the driver inside until emergency crews arrived.

Russia hammers Ukraine with drones and missiles as peace efforts drag on

KYIV, Ukraine, Aug 21, (AP): Russia launched one of its biggest aerial attacks of the year on Ukraine, firing 574 drones and 40 ballistic and cruise missiles overnight, the Ukrainian Air Force said Thursday, while a recent diplomatic push to stop the three-year war is trying to gain momentum.

The attack mostly targeted western regions of the country, the air force said, where much of the military aid provided by Ukraine’s Western allies is believed to be delivered and stored. The strikes killed at least one person and injured 15 others, according to officials.

It was Russia’s third largest aerial attack this year in terms of the number of drones fired and the eighth-largest in terms of missiles, according to official figures. Most such Russian attacks have hit civilian areas.

The strikes occurred during a renewed US-led effort to reach a peace settlement following Russia’s February 2022 invasion of its neighbor. U.S. President Donald Trump discussed the war with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska last week, and at the start of this week hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders at the White House.

Russia has fired nearly 1,000 long-range drones and missiles at Ukraine since the White House talks.

Ukraine and European leaders have accused Putin of stalling in ongoing peace efforts, including Ukraine’s proposal of a ceasefire and Zelenskyy’s



Ukrainian servicemen of the 44th artillery brigade fire a 2s22 Bohdana self-propelled howitzer towards Russian positions at the frontline in the Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, on Aug 20. (AP)

offer to sit down with the Russian leader. The Kremlin has reacted coolly to those possibilities.

Zelenskyy condemned the overnight attack, saying it was carried out “as if nothing were changing at all.”

Moscow has shown no signs of pursuing meaningful negotiations to end the war, Zelenskyy said. He urged the international community to respond with stronger pressure on Moscow, including tougher sanctions and tariffs.

Ukraine, meanwhile, has kept up its attacks with domestically produced long-range drones on infrastructure

inside Russia that supports Moscow’s war effort. Among other targets, it has hit oil refineries, and Russian wholesale gasoline prices have reached record highs in recent days.

Almost all the overnight missiles were fired from inside Russia. They reached deep into western Ukraine, near the border with Hungary.

Western parts of Ukraine are far from the battlefield’s front line in the east and south of the country, where a grinding war of attrition has killed tens of thousands of soldiers on both sides.

Pope Leo XIV calls for peace in Mideast and Ukraine as he returns to Vatican

VATICAN CITY, Aug 21, (AP): Pope Leo XIV asked people to fast Friday to pray for peace and justice in the Middle East and Ukraine, issuing a special appeal as he returned to the Vatican from summer vacation.

At the end of his weekly general audience Wednesday, Leo recalled that Friday is a special feast day dedicated to the Virgin Mary. He urged people to spend the day fasting and “praying that the Lord grants peace and justice, and dries the tears of all those who are suffering as a result of the armed conflicts underway.”

Leo has called for ceasefires in Gaza and Ukraine and for dialogue to achieve peace.

Wednesday marked Leo’s first day back at the Vatican after a period of vacation at the papal summer retreat in Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

Going forward, the pope has some important appointments including special audiences for the Vatican’s 2025 Holy Year and the Sept 7 canonization of the Catholic Church’s first millennial saint Carlo Acutis.

At the end of Wednesday’s audience, Leo received a special gift: A Ping-Pong table decorated with his papal coat of



Pope Leo XIV greets faithful at the end of the Angelus prayer in Castel Gandolfo, Italy on Aug 15. (AP)

arms. Leo, an avid tennis player, gamely picked up a paddle and bounced a ball on it, but the ball rolled into the net.

Europe

Suspect in pipeline blasts arrested in Italy: A Ukrainian citizen man suspected to be one of the coordinators of the undersea explosions in 2022 that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines between Russia and Germany has been arrested, German prosecutors said Thursday.

The suspect, identified only as Serhii K. in line with German privacy rules, was arrested overnight by officers from a police station in Misano Adriatico, near the Italian city of Rimini, federal prosecutors said.

Explosions on Sept. 26, 2022, damaged the pipelines, which were built to carry Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea. The damage added to tensions over the war in Ukraine as European countries moved to wean themselves off Russian energy sources, following the Kremlin’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Investigators have been largely tightlipped on their investigation, but said two years ago they found traces of undersea explosives in samples taken from a yacht that was searched as part of the probe.

In a statement Thursday, prosecutors said Serhii K. was one of a group of people who placed explosives on the pipelines and is believed to have been one of the coordinators. They said he is suspected of causing explosions, anti-constitutional sabotage and the destruction of structures. He was arrested on a European arrest warrant that was issued on Monday.

The suspect and others used a yacht that set off from the German port of Rostock, which had been hired from a German company using forged IDs and with the help of intermediaries, prosecutors said. (AP)

‘Russia is provoking us once again’: Poland’s defense minister said that a flying object that crashed and



In this picture provided by Swedish Coast Guard, a leak from Nord Stream 2 is seen on Sept. 28, 2022. (AP)

exploded in a cornfield in eastern Poland early Wednesday was identified as a Russian drone, calling it a provocation by Russia.

At a news conference in Warsaw, Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz accused Russia of provoking NATO during a crucial moment, as peace talks over the war in neighboring Ukraine are underway, the country’s news agency PAP reported.

“Russia is provoking us once again,” Kosiniak-Kamysz said, just as peace talks have given hope that the war “has a chance of ending.”

Police said they received reports of the crash around 2 a.m. and found burned metal and plastic debris at the scene, near the village of Osiny. The blast broke windows in some nearby houses, but nobody was injured, PAP reported.

Poland’s Armed Forces Operational Command said Wednesday on social media that no violations of Polish airspace from neighboring Ukraine or Belarus were recorded overnight. (AP)

New Zealand to buy US helicopters in \$1.6b army aircraft spending package

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Aug 21, (AP): New Zealand 's government announced new military spending Thursday of 2.7 billion New Zealand dollars (\$1.6 billion) to replace aging aircraft, including helicopters it plans to purchase from the United States, senior officials said.

Cabinet ministers unveiling the package cited rapidly growing global tensions and a deteriorating security environment. New Zealand's military spending has trailed that of its larger partners in the Five Eyes intelligence sharing group of countries - which includes the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia - and the bolstered budget reflects a shift in how the remote island nation is responding to strategic competition among major powers in the Pacific Ocean.

"We face the most challenging strategic circumstances in New Zealand's modern history and certainly the worst that anyone today working in politics or foreign affairs can remember," Foreign Minister Winston Peters, who entered Parliament in 1979, told reporters.

The purchase of military planes and helicopters was the first procurement announced in a government plan, disclosed in April, to double defense spending from 1% to 2% of GDP in the next decade.

The package includes five MH-60R Seahawk helicopters to replace



New Zealand's Defence Minister Judith Collins, speaks during a press conference on the sidelines of the Shangri-la Dialogue for the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) Defence Ministers' Meeting [FDMM], in Singapore on May 31, 2024. (AP)

the existing maritime fleet and two Airbus A321XLR aircraft, allowing the retirement of Boeing 757s that are more than 30 years old and were already secondhand when purchased. The helicopters accounted for more than NZ \$2 billion of the spending, officials said.

Defense Minister Judith Collins said

her government would "move at pace" to procure the helicopters directly through the United States' foreign military sales program instead of going to a wider tender. Cabinet ministers were expected to consider the final business case in 2026, she told reporters in Wellington on Thursday.

It would take "a few years" to acquire the helicopters, Collins added, because buying new meant New Zealand would need to "wait in line." She denied the choice to buy from the United States was an attempt to rectify the trade imbalance that has seen New Zealand goods targeted for an adjusted 15% levy when arriving in the US under the Trump administration's global tariffs plan.

Also:
WELLINGTON, New Zealand: A New Zealand soldier, who admitted trying to spy for a foreign power, was sentenced to two years in military prison followed by discharge from the army.

The sentencing by a judge and a panel of three senior military officers Wednesday came two days after the man pleaded guilty to three charges, including attempted espionage. It was the first conviction for spying in New Zealand's history.

The soldier's name was suppressed, as was the name of the country he sought to pass secrets to.



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, meets with Tran Quang Phuong, vice chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, in Beijing, capital of China on Aug 20. (Xinhua)

China's top legislator meets Vietnam's Tran Quang Phuong

China's top legislator Zhao Leji met with Tran Quang Phuong, vice chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, in Beijing on Wednesday.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said China is willing to work with Vietnam to enhance strategic communication, maintain solidarity and cooperation, join hands in advancing their respective

modernization, and accelerate the building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance.

He added that the NPC is willing to enhance exchanges with the National Assembly of Vietnam, engage in mutual learning on the building of a socialist country under the rule of law, and provide legal guarantees for practical cooperation between the two countries.

Tran Quang Phuong said the National Assembly of Vietnam is willing to work with the NPC to enhance exchanges and mutual learning in legislation and supervision in accordance with the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two parties and the two countries, and make legislative contributions to promoting reform and development in both countries. (Xinhua)



Thailand's suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, (center), leaves the Constitutional Court after giving testimony in Bangkok, Thailand on Aug 21. (AP)

Suspended Thai PM testifies

Thailand's suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra testified in a Bangkok court Thursday on her alleged breach of an ethics law in her handling of a border dispute with Cambodia, a case that could see her forced out of her job entirely.

Paetongtarn, the youngest daughter of billionaire ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, is accused of failing in her duties by not standing up for the country properly in a June 15 call with Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen

to discuss tensions over territory claimed by both nations. Despite her efforts, the two countries in late July engaged in five days of armed border clashes, resulting in dozens of deaths and the displacement of more than 260,000 people.

Critics said she went too far in appealing Hun Sen, Cambodia's former leader, and damaged Thailand's image and interests by referring to him as "uncle" while seemingly criticizing a Thai army general in charge of forces along the border. (AP)

BANGKOK, Aug 21, (Agencies): Myanmar 's military has regained control of a strategic town in eastern Kayah state from the opposition's armed forces after nearly two years, state media reported Wednesday.

The recapture of Demoso in Kayah state - also known as Karenni - came as the military has stepped up activity in recent months, on the ground and with airstrikes, to retake areas controlled by the resistance ahead of elections it has promised to hold on Dec. 28.

Demoso, located about 110 kilometers (70 miles) east of the capital Naypyitaw, has been a focal point for Myanmar's civil war since the military took power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

The town had been under the control of the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force, or KNDF, and allied resistance forces in Kayah since the groups launched joint offensives against army bases in the state in November 2023.

A report in the state-run Myanmar Ainn newspaper on Wednesday said Demoso, near the state's capital of Loikow, was captured by the army on Tuesday after 16 days of operations to retake it.

The report said six bodies and five weapons were seized, adding that some members of the security forces

5.1-magnitude quake hits Yangon

Myanmar's military retakes strategic town: state media



Army soldiers pose in front of the sign for the town of Demoso in Myanmar's eastern state of Kayah, which the military government claimed to have recaptured from resistance forces on Aug 19. (AP)

were also killed. The newspaper published photos of soldiers who recaptured the town in front of the hospital, fire department and town hall.

The KNDF and other local resistance groups did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In a statement posted Monday on Facebook, the KNDF accused the military of carrying out unlawful arrests of civilians, deliberate shootings and

killings without cause and the use of civilians as human shields in attacking Demoso.

Kayah, the smallest of Myanmar's seven states and dominated by the Karen ethnic minority, has experienced intense conflict.

The provisional government formed by resistance groups in Kayah, including the KNDF, said Monday that at least 32 civilians were killed, five were

wounded and several were missing after the military on Sunday bombed a hospital in the town of Mawchi, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Demoso.

In a separate incident, an airstrike killed at least 21 people Thursday in the town of Mogoke, the center of the Southeast Asian country's gem mining industry, according to reports in Myanmar's independent online media.

The army has not mentioned the strikes and usually says it only attacks legitimate targets of war, accusing the resistance forces of being terrorists.

Also:
YANGON: A 5.1-magnitude earthquake struck Yangon, Myanmar at about 9:28 a.m. local time on Thursday, the country's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) reported.

According to the DMH, the epicenter was located about 28 miles southeast of Kungyangon town in Yangon region.

The epicenter, with a depth of 28 km, was initially determined at 16.08 degrees north latitude and 96.22 degrees east longitude, the DMH said.

No casualties or property damage have been reported so far.

Residents in Yangon reported noticeable tremors on Thursday morning. The shaking lasted for less than one minute.

Guatemala grants temporary status to 161 Mexicans fleeing organized crime

GUATEMALA CITY, Aug 21, (AP): Guatemala on Wednesday granted temporary humanitarian status to 161 Mexicans who fled their country last week seeking refuge from organized crime, even as Mexican officials denied that anyone had been displaced.

The Guatemalan Immigration Institute said that 39 families, including 69 children, from the Mexican municipality of Frontera Comalapa would be allowed temporarily to remain legally in the country.

The families were staying in rented homes, with relatives or in temporary shelters in the Guatemalan border town of La Mesilla.

Also:
MEXICO CITY: At least 13 people allegedly involved in the killing of two members of Mexico City Mayor Clara Brugada's staff in May were arrested Wednesday for their alleged roles in what authorities described as a meticulously planned hit on two people close to the capital's leader.

Three of those arrested allegedly



Mexico City Attorney General Bertha Alcalde Lujan, (center), Mexico City Security Secretary Pablo Vázquez Camacho, (right), and the country's Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection Omar García Harfuch give a press conference on the arrest of those involved in the murder of two of Mexico City Mayor Clara Brugada's aides on Aug 20. (AP)

were directly involved in the killings and the others had roles in the logistics.

Brugada's personal secretary, Ximena Guzmán, and an adviser, José

Muñoz, were shot dead in Guzmán's car on a Mexico City street in broad daylight on May 20. Guzmán, as she did regularly, was picking up Muñoz at a subway station.

Brazilian police say ex-prez Bolsonaro had planned to flee to Argentina seeking asylum

BRASILIA, Brazil, Aug 21, (AP): Brazil's federal police said messages found on the telephone of former President Jair Bolsonaro showed he once wanted to flee to Argentina and request political asylum, according to documents seen Wednesday by The Associated Press.

Bolsonaro is currently awaiting a Supreme Court ruling about an alleged coup attempt and learned Wednesday he might face another case as police formally accused him and one of his sons, Eduardo Bolsonaro, of obstruction of justice in connection with his trial.

The 170-page report said Bolsonaro had drafted a request for political asylum from Argentine President Javier Milei's government dated Feb. 10, 2024. He saved the document two days after authorities searched his home and office as part of the alleged coup plot investigation.

Close to that date, Bolsonaro admittedly spent two nights at the Hungarian Embassy in Brasília, fueling speculation he may have been attempting to avoid arrest.

The Argentina plot is part of the wider police accusation of obstruction of justice, in which Bolsonaro



Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro, (center), temporarily allowed out of house arrest for medical exams, departs a hospital in Brasília, Brazil on Aug 16. (AP)

has allegedly ignored precautionary measures established for his house arrest and spread content to his allies "to directly hit Brazilian democratic institutions, notably the Supreme Court and even Brazil's Congress," according to the report.

The AP reviewed the police evidence, which included messaging app exchanges and voice messages, after police forwarded the documents to Brazil's Supreme Court. Bolsonaro would face another trial if the attorney-general decides to charge him.

Rwanda-backed M23 denies role in Congo massacres

DAKAR, Senegal, Aug 21, (AP): The Rwanda-backed rebel group M23 has denied involvement in a series of massacres in eastern Congo which were detailed in a report published by a rights group Wednesday.

Lawrence Kanyuka, spokesperson for the M23 military, called the Human Rights Watch report "fake and a falsification of reality" and accused the group of spreading "extremist propaganda" in a statement late Wednesday.

M23 is the most prominent of more than 100 armed groups fighting for control in Congo's mineral-rich east.

Both M23 and the Congolese military have previously been accused of violence against civilians. Earlier this year, Congolese authorities accused M23 of extrajudicial killings during its seizure of major cities.

In the report, Human Rights Watch accused M23 of killing over 140 civilians as part of a military campaign against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group made up mostly of ethnic Hutu fighters.

Nearly 2 million Hutus from Rwanda fled to Congo after the 1994 Rwandan genocide that killed 800,000



Former members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and police officers who allegedly surrendered to M23 rebels arrive in Goma, Congo on Feb 23. (AP)

Tutsis, moderate Hutus and others. Rwandan authorities have accused Hutus who fled of participating in the genocide, alleging that the Congolese army protected them.

Bertrand Bisimwa, an M23 leader, said on social platform X that the report was intended to influence the United Nations Security Council and was not based on evidence.

Pakistan, China and Afghanistan hold high-level meeting to boost cooperation

ISLAMABAD, Aug 21, (AP): Top diplomats from Pakistan, China and Afghanistan committed their countries to stronger anti-terrorism cooperation during a meeting Wednesday in Kabul aimed at boosting political and economic partnership, Pakistan's foreign ministry said.

The three sides also "reaffirmed their commitment to deepening collaboration in trade, transit, regional development, health, education, culture, and combating drug trafficking," according to a statement from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad.

The parties also reaffirmed an earlier agreement to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, the statement added.

It provided no further details on the meeting among Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and top Taliban officials, hosted by the Taliban government in Kabul.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor involves improving road and rail links between China's western Xinjiang region and Pakistan's Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea. Pakistan's authorities in recent weeks have said they hope the corridor will help attract more Chinese investment to revive its ailing economy, and that they are hopeful that extending it to Afghanistan will boost trade with Central Asia.

The meeting came more than a month after Russia became the first country to formally recognize the Taliban's govern-



In this photo, released by the Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar, (right), Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, (center), and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi jointly shake hands prior to their trilateral summit, in Kabul, Afghanistan on Aug 20. (AP)

ment in Afghanistan. While no country apart from Russian has offered formal recognition, the Taliban have engaged in high-level talks with many nations and established some diplomatic ties with countries including China and the United Arab Emirates.

Boursa Kuwait closes mixed

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's stock market closed Thursday on a mixed note, with the All Share Index edging down 0.82 points, or 0.01 percent, to settle at 8,665.84 points. Total market activity saw 519.3 million shares traded through 26,087 transactions, with a turnover of KD 104.4

million (USD 318.4 million).

The Main Market Index posted a solid gain, rising 70.04 points (0.89%) to finish at 7,910.75 points. Trading in this segment involved 348 million shares across 15,345 transactions, valued at KD 42.7 million (USD 130.2 million).

\$7 bln SME fund overlooks AI startups, underscoring need for targeted investment

Kuwait named 'AI Practitioner' by BCG, joins 30 global economies advancing AI integration

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Kuwait has been recognized as an "AI Practitioner" in a recent study by Boston Consulting Group (BCG). This positions the country among 30 forward-looking economies actively integrating AI across key sectors, according to the report titled "GCC AI Pulse: Mapping the Region's Readiness for an AI-Driven Future" by BCG.

The report, based on BCG's 2025 AI Maturity Matrix, revealed that Kuwait has earned the designation of AI Practitioner alongside 30 economies worldwide, including Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The maturity matrix identified four economic archetypes based on their AI readiness, ranging from AI Emergents at the lower end of the scale, followed by Practitioners, then Contenders, and Pioneers at the high end. With GCC countries yet to achieve AI Pioneer status, which includes the likes of the US, UK, and China, the report highlights substantial opportunities for advancing AI readiness and leadership in the region.

Dmitry Garanin, Managing Director and Partner, BCG, said: "Kuwait's commitment to integrating AI across pivotal sectors showcases a visionary stride towards digital transformation. The National AI Strategy underlines a significant ambition that, if supported by a concerted effort in skilling, policy innovation, and targeted investment, can transform Kuwait into a regional AI powerhouse. The challenge now is to evolve from strategy to execution, ensuring that initiatives like the AI Center of Excellence and enhanced data governance frameworks lead to tangible outcomes. Bridging the current gaps in investment and research is crucial for Kuwait, not just to catch up, but to lead."

Building a Competitive Edge in the Digital Era

The Kuwait National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence, developed by the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), outlines a comprehensive framework to responsibly harness AI for national development to help advance Kuwait's AI goals under Kuwait's Vision 2035. It emphasizes building a robust digital infrastructure, fostering AI talent, and ensuring ethical governance. The strategy aims to enhance public services, boost economic diversification, and position Kuwait as a regional leader in AI innovation. It also includes recommendations for policy, education, and collaboration with international partners to ensure sustainable and inclusive AI adoption across sectors.

Efforts to build AI capabilities include the National Skilling Program, which focuses on training government employees, though expanded initiatives are needed to cultivate a robust AI workforce. On policy and regulation, Kuwait is developing an AI governance framework to ensure



Dmitry Garanin, Managing Director & Partner



Dr. Lars Littig, Managing Director & Partner

- BCG's AI Maturity Matrix is a crucial indicator for future-oriented AI policy-making and strategic investment decisions.
- Elevating private-sector investment, nurturing a broader pool of domestic AI talent, and bolstering R&D and innovation are all crucial to maintaining momentum.
- BCG's ASPIRE framework offers a holistic view of AI readiness and paves the path for tailored, data-informed strategies to build and scale AI capabilities within national or regional ecosystems.

ethical and responsible AI implementation. While there exists a \$7 billion public fund for SMEs, it does not specifically allocate resources to AI, revealing the necessity of targeted financial investment.

To accelerate research and innovation, Kuwait plans to establish an AI Center of Excellence that fosters AI studies and collaboration between academia and industry, though additional measures are required to scale innovation. In terms of infrastructure, the country is enhancing its cloud and AI ecosystem, with Microsoft and Google Cloud spearheading efforts to build AI-powered data centers.

However, Kuwait's progress across various AI dimensions remains uneven, as illustrated by key metrics: ambition scores the highest at 5, while investments and research lag at 0.67 and 0.33, respectively. To improve AI readiness, Kuwait needs to strengthen data governance, increase investments in startups, and intensify workforce development initiatives.

"Kuwait's emergence as an AI Practitioner is a critical first step in the broader journey towards becoming a leader in the AI domain. The stark contrast between its ambitious goals and the current state of skills, investment, and innovation underscores a pivotal moment for policy and decision-makers. By doubling down on developing a deep talent pool, fostering a vibrant AI startup ecosystem, and ensuring responsible AI deployment, Kuwait has the potential to set a benchmark for AI integration not only regionally but globally. The foundation is set; now is the time for bold, decisive action to leverage AI for sustainable growth," said Dr. Lars Littig, Managing Director and Partner at BCG.

Approaches to Foster AI Maturity in the Gulf

BCG's GCC AI Pulse report supports the strategic advancement of national visions aimed at enhancing countries' global competitiveness. The expansion of the AI talent pipeline through dedicated upskilling programs and the acquisition of global talent will broaden the existing talent pool and infuse the regional market with international expertise and perspectives, critical for innovative leaps in AI.

In addition, governance structures must be realigned to better adhere to evolving AI ethics frameworks and international standards, ensuring responsible and sustainable AI development. Advancements in policies will solidify Kuwait's reputation as a leader in ethical AI practices, a benchmark against which global counterparts are measured.

Moreover, there is significant room for intensifying research and development investments to foster stronger academia-industry collaborations. This will spur innovation and cement Kuwait's position as a hub for cutting-edge technological advancements, matching and potentially surpassing global AI leaders such as the US, China, Singapore, the UK, and Canada in certain areas.

OPEC output rises on higher Saudi, UAE production

Crude oil slips below \$70, trades near \$66/b amid geopolitical uncertainty

By KAMCO Invest

Crude oil price slid back to below the USD 70/b levels after reaching the highest level in almost five weeks at the end of last month that were led by talks of sanctions on Russia and Iran. Prices have declined consistently since the start of August-2025 and traded at around the USD 66/b level mainly led by the speculations surrounding the talks between the US and Russia. Other factors also impacted prices including softening economic data from the US, hike in production announced by OPEC+, concerns about demand revival in China. On the other hand, the renewed talks around interest rate cuts by the US Fed resulted in some support to crude oil prices.

The first round of talks between the US and Russia indicated a softening of stance by the US as it did not announce any new measures that would disrupt oil supplies from Russia. Oil prices had seen some strength prior to the meeting as speculations showed threat of sanctions on Russian oil companies. The US also did not consider retaliatory tariffs on crude oil buyers from Russia that mainly included China and India. However, a recent statement from the US specifically targeted India's oil purchases from Russia. According to a report from Kpler, Indian refiners continued to purchase oil from Russia with close to 38% of imports this month or around 2 mb/d of crude oil were purchased from Russia. This comes as Indian oil refiners prioritize economic impact of abandoning purchases from Russia despite the announcement of additional tariffs of 25% by the US last week. India has been the biggest buyer of Russian crude oil and has imported around 1.75 mb/d of Russian oil during 1H-2025, as per data from Reuters. On the geopolitical front, the situation remained volatile after a number of drone attacks on Russian refineries and a recent attack on oil pipeline. This situation has forced the Russian government to extend the gasoline export ban through September in order to maintain stable situation in the domestic fuel market.

In terms of oil demand, data on crude oil inventory in the US showed steady demand at the start of the month with inventory falling by more than 3 million barrels during the week ended 1-August-2025. However, this reversed in the following week prompting concerns about the end of the summer driving season in the US. Also, according to data from the EIA, oil exports from the US declined due to the impact of the tariffs.

On the supply side, oil production in the US increased marginally during the week ended 8-August-2025 to 13.3 mb/d. Crude oil output in the US had reached the lowest level since January-2025 during the third week of July-



2025 reflecting the consistently falling oil rigs in the US due to lower crude oil market prices. On the other hand, oil production by the OPEC showed a steep increase last month, as per OPEC secondary sources, mainly led by higher production by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Oil Prices

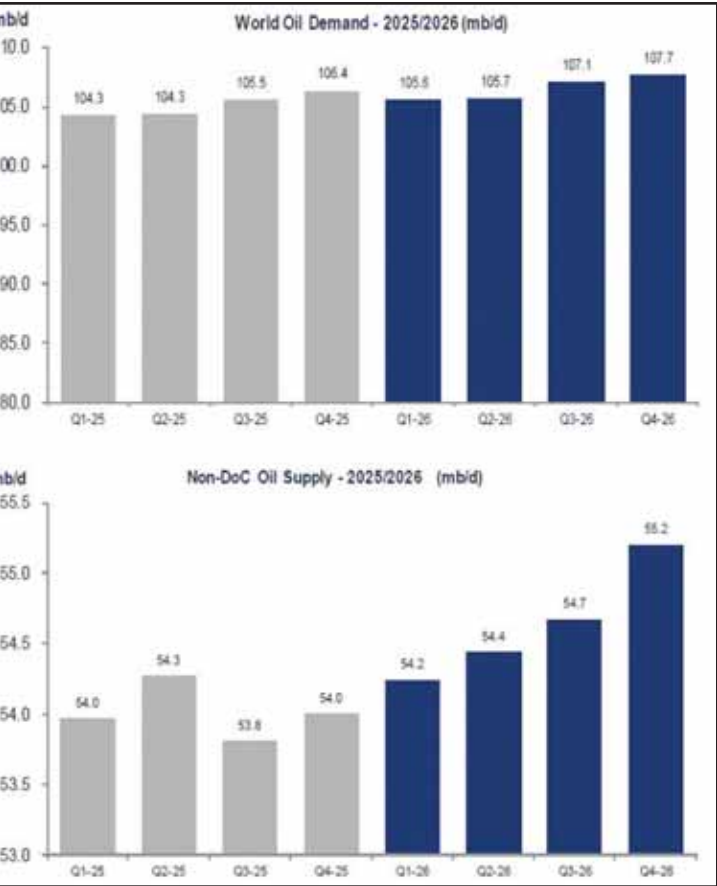
Crude oil prices declined to the lowest level in more than two months last week mainly led by fears of a supply glut in the near term, especially after the US refrained from imposing additional measures on Russian crude oil buyers after the meeting between the US president and his Russian counterpart last week. Crude oil futures showed marginal recovery and were trading around USD 66 per barrel at the start of this week after falling to USD 65.7/b last week. The market is now eyeing the next phase of talks to be held between the US and Ukraine as well as the impact of tariffs on global economic growth as recent data has shown the initial impact of the tariffs, especially related to consumer sentiments as well as wholesale price index numbers from the US. However, the data on net long positions in the oil market flagged concerns around gain in prices in the near term. Data from Bloomberg showed that the net long positions on rising oil prices fell to the lowest in 16 years led by the expected supply glut in the market. There were also concerns that any further sign of weakness in future oil demand would further push oil prices lower.

In terms of monthly price trend, average crude oil prices remained largely stable with prices of all crude grades showing marginal changes last month. Average spot Brent crude oil price showed a

marginal decline of 0.6% to reach USD 71.0/b during July-2025 as compared to an average of USD 71.4/b during June-2025. On the other hand, average OPEC reference basket price witnessed a marginal increase of 1.8% to reach USD 71.0/b vs. USD 69.7/b last month while Kuwait export grade crude prices witnessed a slightly bigger gain of 2.3% to average at USD 71.4/b during July-2025. Meanwhile, the consensus estimate for Brent crude showed mixed revisions for the next six quarters. The median consensus forecast for Brent crude grade for Q3-2025 stood at USD 67/b, according to data from Bloomberg, a decrease from a forecast of USD 66/b last month. The revisions for the next five quarters, however, showed downward revisions with prices expected to reach USD 63.0/b by Q2-2026.

World Oil Demand

Global oil demand growth forecast for 2025 was kept unchanged in the latest monthly report from OPEC at a growth of 1.3 mb/d with demand expected to reach 105.1 mb/d during the year. However, there were changes at the country level mainly reflecting actual data for Q1-2025 and Q2-2025. The revisions included lower-than-expected actual data for Q1-2025 for the OECD Asia Pacific region that resulted in a downward revision in estimates by 0.06 mb/d for Q1-2025 and by 0.05 mb/d for Q2-2025. These downward revisions were partially offset by upward revision to demand data for OECD Europe and for the OECD Americas regions reflecting stronger-than-expected actual data. The net impact was a small downward revision to demand for the OECD during Q1-2025. For the second quarter, data for OECD Europe



was revised up by 0.07 mb/d that more than offset downward revision to demand data for OECD Asia Pacific region resulting in an upward revision to demand data for the OECD during Q2-2025. There were revisions to data for the non-OECD countries during Q1-2025. There were downward revisions to demand data for Latin America, Middle East and Other Europe regions partially offset by an upward revision to data for Other Eurasia. Data for Q2-2025 showed downward revisions to demand data for India and China for around 0.1 mb/d in total that was partially offset by upward revision to demand data for the Middle East and Other Eurasia. The net impact was a downward revision of 0.04 mb/d to demand data for the non-OECD region and an upward revision of 0.02 mb/d during Q2-2025.

For 2026, global oil demand growth forecast was revised upwards by the OPEC reflecting supportive economic activities. As per the OPEC report, demand growth for 2026 was revised by 0.1 mb/d to a growth of 1.4 mb/d with total demand expected to reach 106.5 mb/d during the year. The revision reflected upward revisions to demand data for both the OECD and non-OECD regions. At the country level, OECD Americas and OECD Europe showed upward revision in demand growth while OECD Asia Pacific showed a downward revision of data.

World Oil Supply

World oil supply remained largely unchanged during July-2025 as compared to the previous month despite the ongoing unwinding of output cuts announced by the OPEC+ countries. Total world oil supply stood at 105.6 mb/d, according to data from the

IEA. As per the report, OPEC+ output declined by 230 tb/d last month but this decline was fully offset by an equal increase in output from non-OPEC+ countries. The IEA expect global crude runs to reach a record high level of 85.6 mb/d this month resulting in an expected increase of 1.6 mb/d during Q3-2025 vs. a much smaller average increase of 130 tb/d during 1H-2025.

Meanwhile, the OPEC kept its forecast for non-DoC liquids supply growth unchanged for 2025 in its latest monthly report. The supply from the group is expected to grow by 0.81 mb/d this year and average at 54.01 mb/d. There were revisions in quarterly data with upward revision to supply forecast during Q2-2025 that was fully offset by downward revision to forecasts for Q3-2025 and Q4-2025. At the country level, supply forecasts for the US was revised upwards by 0.15 mb/d for Q2-2025 but an almost equal downward revision was made for supply from the US during Q4-2025. Supply forecast for the OECD Europe region underwent a downward revision during Q2-2025 and Q4-2025 resulting in a downward revision to supply forecast for the OECD region for full year 2025. Data on supply from non-OECD countries showed an upward revision in data for Q2-2025 mainly reflecting higher supplies from Latin America, China and Other Asia was offset by marginal downward revisions for supply from the region during the last two quarters of the year.

For 2026, non-DoC liquids supply growth forecast was revised marginally down by the OPEC reflecting lowered forecasts for both OECD and non-OECD countries. As per the new

forecast, supply growth forecast in 2026 was lowered by 0.1 mb/d to 0.63 mb/d with average supply expected to come in at 54.64 mb/d during the year.

OPEC Oil Production & Spare Capacity

OPEC crude oil production increased for the fifth consecutive month during July-2025 led by the unwinding of production cuts announced by the OPEC+ group. Data from OPEC secondary sources showed average OPEC production reaching 27.5 mb/d during July-2025, the highest in 20 months. The increase was once again led by higher production mainly in Saudi Arabia and the UAE that was partially offset by a fall in output in Iraq and Iran. OPEC data also showed higher output in Libya and Nigeria during July-2025. On the other hand, data from Bloomberg showed flattish production by the OPEC during July-2025. As per Bloomberg, production from the group declined marginally by 20 tb/d to reach 28.31 mb/d during the month. Data from Bloomberg showed a steep decline in production in Saudi Arabia that was almost fully offset by higher production by the UAE and Kuwait.

Based on the data for July-2025, the spare capacity for OPEC producers stood at 5.36 mb/d or 15.9% of the total production capacity as per Bloomberg estimates.

Output from the broader DoC producers group showed a production growth of 335 tb/d to reach an average of 41.9 mb/d during July-2025. The growth reflected higher output from both OPEC and non-OPEC DoC countries. In the latter group of countries, Russia showed a sharp increase of 99 tb/d during month reaching average output of 9.1 mb/d. This increase was partially offset by a decline in production reported by Kazakhstan by 36 tb/d with average output reaching 1.8 mb/d during July-2025.

Meanwhile, the OPEC+ once again announced to increase daily crude oil production for the fifth consecutive month by announcing the same level of production hike in September-2025. The producers decided to increase output by 547 tb/d starting next month indicating an earlier than-planned reversal of the most recent output cut announced by the group. The group cited healthy economy and low inventories as reasons behind its decision to raise output. The output hikes announced for September-2025 along with the announced increases for the previous months would mean a total increase of 2.5 mb/d by the end of next month equivalent to around 2.4% of total world oil demand. As per a report from Reuters, the OPEC+ group may consider another wave of output hikes in its meeting next month to reinstate around 1.65 mb/d of oil production that are in place until the end of 2026.

Why Federal Reserve’s independence matters?

WASHINGTON, Aug 21, (AP): President Donald Trump this week called on a Federal Reserve governor to resign over an accusation of mortgage fraud, the latest effort by his administration to exert greater control over one of the few remaining independent agencies in Washington.

Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook says she won’t leave her post.

Trump has repeatedly attacked the Fed’s chair, Jerome Powell, for not cutting its short-term interest rate, and even threatened to fire him. Powell, who will speak Friday at an economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, says the Fed wants to see how the economy responds to Trump’s sweeping tariffs on imports, which Powell says could push up inflation.

Powell’s caution has infuriated Trump, who has demanded the Fed cut borrowing costs to spur the economy and reduce the interest rates the federal government pays on its debt. Trump has also accused Powell of mismanaging the U.S. central bank’s \$2.5 billion building renovation project.

Firing the Fed chair or forcing out a governor would threaten the Fed’s venerated independence, which has long been supported by most economists and Wall Street investors. Here’s what to know about the Fed:

The Fed wields extensive power over the U.S. economy. By cutting the short-term interest rate it controls - which it typically does when the economy falters - the Fed can make borrowing cheaper and encourage more spending, accelerating growth and hiring. When it raises the rate - which it does to cool the economy and combat inflation - it can weaken the economy and cause job losses.

Economists have long preferred independent central banks because they can more easily take unpopular steps to fight inflation, such as raise interest rates, which makes borrowing to buy a home, car, or appliance more expensive.

Inflation

The importance of an independent Fed was cemented for most economists after the extended inflation spike of the 1970s and early 1980s. Former Fed Chair Arthur Burns has been widely blamed for allowing the painful inflation of that era to accelerate by succumbing to pressure from President Richard Nixon to keep rates low heading into the 1972 election. Nixon feared higher rates would cost him the election, which he won in a landslide.

Paul Volcker was eventually appointed chair of the Fed in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter, and he pushed the Fed’s short-term rate to the stunningly high level of nearly 20%. (It is currently 4.3%). The eye-popping rates triggered a sharp recession, pushed unemployment to nearly 11%, and spurred widespread protests.

Yet Volcker didn’t flinch. By the mid-1980s, inflation had fallen back into the low single digits. Volcker’s willingness to inflict pain on the economy to throttle inflation is seen by most economists as a key example of the value of an independent

Fed.

An effort to fire Powell would almost certainly cause stock prices to fall and bond yields to spike higher, pushing up interest rates on government debt and raising borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans, and credit card debt. The interest rate on the 10-year Treasury is a benchmark for mortgage rates.

Most investors prefer an independent Fed, partly because it typically manages inflation better without being influenced by politics but also because its decisions are more predictable. Fed officials often publicly discuss how they would alter interest rate policies if economic conditions changed.

If the Fed was more swayed by politics, it would be harder for financial markets to anticipate - or understand - its decisions.

Members

Fed chairs like Powell are appointed by the president to serve four-year terms, and have to be confirmed by the Senate. The president also appoints the six other members of the Fed’s governing board, who can serve staggered terms of up to 14 years.

Those appointments can allow a president over time to significantly alter the Fed’s policies. Former president Joe Biden appointed four of the current seven members: Powell, Cook, Philip Jefferson, and Michael Barr. A fifth Biden appointee, Adriana Kugler, stepped down unexpectedly on Aug. 1, about five months before the end of her term. Trump has already nominated his top economist, Stephen Miran, as a potential replacement, though he will require Senate approval. Cook’s term ends in 2038, so forcing her out would allow Trump to appoint a loyalist sooner.

Trump will be able to replace Powell as Fed chair in May 2026, when Powell’s term expires. Yet 12 members of the Fed’s interest-rate setting committee have a vote on whether to raise or lower interest rates, so even replacing the Chair doesn’t guarantee that Fed policy will shift the way Trump wants.

Congress, meanwhile, can set the Fed’s goals through legislation. In 1977, for example, Congress gave the Fed a “dual mandate” to keep prices stable and seek maximum employment. The Fed defines stable prices as inflation at 2%.

The 1977 law also requires the Fed chair to testify before the House and Senate twice every year about the economy and interest rate policy.

The Supreme Court earlier this year suggested in a ruling on other independent agencies that a president can’t fire the chair of the Fed just because he doesn’t like the chair’s policy choices. But he may be able to remove him “for cause,” typically interpreted to mean some kind of wrongdoing or negligence.

It’s a likely reason the Trump administration has zeroed in on the building renovation, in hopes it could provide a “for cause” pretext. Still, Powell would likely fight any attempt to remove him, and the case could wind up at the Supreme Court.

Powell faces tough call on rates amid mixed jobs, inflation data

Fed’s rate decision at crossroads

WASHINGTON, Aug 21, (AP): Just three weeks ago, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell spoke to reporters after the central bank had kept its key interest rate unchanged for a fifth straight meeting and said the job market was “solid.”

His assessment was important because if the job market is healthy, there is less need for the Fed to cut its key interest rate, as President Donald Trump has demanded. Two days later, the Labor Department issued a report that cast doubt on that assessment, showing hiring was weak in July and much lower than previously estimated in May and June.

So, there will be a lot of attention paid by Wall Street and the White House to Powell’s high-profile speech Friday at the Fed’s annual economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. If the famously data-dependent Powell shifts gears and takes a gloomier view of the job market, that could open the door for a rate cut at the Fed’s next meeting in September.

Powell could also stick to the cautious approach he’s maintained all year and reiterate that the central bank needs more time to evaluate the impact of Trump’s sweeping tariffs on inflation.

Most economists expect Powell to signal that a rate cut is likely this year, but won’t necessarily commit to one next month. That could disappoint Wall Street, which has put high odds on a September cut.

Powell’s speech, his last address at Jackson Hole as chair before his term ends in May, will occur against a particularly fraught backdrop. About a week after the jobs numbers, the latest inflation report showed that price growth crept higher in July. Core prices, which exclude the volatile food and energy categories, rose 3.1% from a year ago, above the Fed’s 2% target.

Stubbornly elevated inflation



Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, and Board of Governors member Lisa Cook, right, listen during an open meeting of the Board of Governors at the Federal Reserve, June 25, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

pushes the Fed in the opposite direction that weak hiring does: It suggests the central bank’s short-term rate should stay at its current 4.3%, rather than be cut. That would mean other borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans, and business loans, would stay elevated.

“So the plot has thickened,” said David Wilcox, a former top Fed economist and now director of economic research at Bloomberg Economics and also a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute. “The dilemma that the Fed is in has become, if anything, more intense.”

Powell is also navigating an unprecedented level of public criticism by Trump, as well as efforts by the president to take greater control of the Fed, which has long been independent from day-to-day politics.

Most observers credit Powell for his nimble handling of the pressures. An iconic moment in his ten-

ure was Trump’s visit to tour the Fed’s renovation of its office buildings last month. Trump had charged that Powell mismanaged the project, which had ballooned in cost to \$2.5 billion, from an earlier estimate of \$1.9 billion.

With both the president and Fed chair in white hard hats on the building site, in front of cameras, Trump claimed the cost had mushroomed even further to \$3.1 trillion. Powell shook his head, so Trump handed him a piece of paper purporting to back up his claim.

Powell calmly dismissed the figure, noting that the \$3.1 billion included the cost of renovating a third building five years earlier.

“That was just such a classic Powell,” said Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG. “He just doesn’t get fazed. He’s got a humility that oftentimes I think is lacking among my colleagues in economics.”

Powell appeared to at least tempo-

rarily assuage Trump during the tour, after which the president backed off his threats to fire the Fed chair over the project.

The attacks from Trump are the latest challenges for Powell in an unusually tumultuous eight years as Fed chair. Not long after being appointed by Trump in 2018, Powell endured the president’s criticisms as the Fed slowly raised its key rate from the low levels where it had remained for years after the 2008-2009 Great Recession.

Powell then found himself grappling with the pandemic, and after that the worst inflation spike in four decades that occurred as government stimulus checks fueled spending while crippled supply chains left fewer goods available.

Powell then oversaw a rapid series of rate hikes that were widely predicted to cause a recession, but the economy continued plugging ahead.

Unemployment benefits spike to 1.97 mln

US jobless claims rise amid weak hiring

WASHINGTON, Aug 21, (AP): More Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week, but U.S. layoffs remain in the same historically healthy range of the past few years.

Applications for unemployment benefits for the week ending Aug. 16 rose by 11,000 to 235,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That’s slightly more than the 229,000 new applications that economists had forecast.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are seen as a proxy for layoffs and have mostly settled in a historically healthy range between 200,000 and 250,000 since the U.S. began to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic more than three years ago.

While layoffs remain low by historical comparisons, there has been noticeable deterioration in the labor market this year and mounting evidence that people are having difficulty finding jobs.

U.S. employers added just 73,000 jobs in July, well short of the 115,000 analysts forecast. Worse, revisions to the May and June figures shaved 258,000 jobs off previous estimates and the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.2% from 4.1%.

That report sent financial markets spiraling, spurring President Donald Trump to fire Erika McEntarfer, the head of Bureau of Labor Statistics, which tallies the monthly employment numbers. The BLS does not contribute to the weekly unemployment benefits report except to calculate the annual seasonal adjustments.

The BLS reported earlier this week that the unemployment rate in Washington, D.C. eclipsed 6% in July, the third straight month that it was the highest in the U.S. The rising D.C. jobless rate is a reflection of the mass layoffs of federal workers by Trump’s Department of Government Efficiency earlier this year. An overall decline in international tourism - a main driver of D.C.’s income - is also expected to have an impact on the climbing unemployment rate in the District.

Neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia, where many federal employees reside, also saw an uptick in unemployment rates in July.

Since the beginning of Trump’s second term, federal workers across government agencies have been either laid off or asked to voluntarily resign, spurring

lawsuits from labor unions and advocacy groups.

Another recent report on the U.S. labor market 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 finding a better job - fell in June to the lowest level since December.

Some major companies have announced job cuts this year, including Procter & Gamble, Dow, CNN, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Microsoft, Google and Facebook parent company Meta. Intel and The Walt Disney Co. also recently announced staff reductions. Many economists contend that Trump’s erratic rollout of tariffs against U.S. trading partners has created uncertainty for employers, who have grown reluctant to expand their payrolls.

The Labor Department’s report Thursday showed that the four-week average of claims, which softens some of the week-to-week swings, rose by 4,500 to 226,500. The total number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits for the previous week of Aug. 9 jumped by 30,000 to 1.97 million, the most since November 6, 2021.

EU suspends retaliatory tariffs until 2026

US-EU trade deal imposes 15% tariffs, leaves key sectors unresolved

BRUSSELS, Aug 21, (AP): American and European Union officials released a bare-bones account Thursday of their trade deal that imposes a 15% import tax on 70% of European goods exported to the United States, but they left blank key areas such as wine and spirits as well as steel and indicated that talks would continue on those and a slew of other important sectors.

The two sides said the document was only “a first step in a process that can be further expanded to cover additional areas.” They are dealing with the vast range of goods traded between the two economies in what is the largest bilateral trading relationship in the world, involving \$2 trillion in annual trans-Atlantic business.

The 3 1/2-page text represents a political commitment and is not legally binding. It contrasts with the typical format for trade agreements, which can be hundreds of pages long and carry legal force.

The key provisions are the 15% tariff on most EU goods, a zero rate on U.S. cars and other industrial goods exported to the 27-member EU, and a range of exceptions to the 15% rate for aircraft and aircraft parts, generic pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical ingredients, with other sectors to be added for goods crucial to each other’s economies. Those goods would face lower tariffs from before President Donald Trump’s tariff onslaught.

“The EU has agreed to open its \$20 Trillion market,” Trump’s commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, said on X. “The second largest in the world behind the great USA.”

He said the deal was “a major win for American workers, US industries, and our national security. Tariffs should be one of America’s favorite words.”

European officials have had to defend the deal against dismay from businesses and member governments at the higher tariffs and criticism that the EU gave away too much. European Commission President Ursula von der

Leyen sold the deal as granting quick relief from the even higher U.S. tariff on EU cars of 27.5% and as opening the way for further negotiations that could exclude more goods from the 15% tariffs. The deal provides that the lower tariff on cars would apply retroactively from Aug. 1 if the EU can introduce legislation to implement its part

of the deal by then, which EU officials say they will do.

“Faced with a challenging situation, we have delivered for our member states and industry and restored clarity and coherence to transatlantic trade,” von der Leyen said. “This is not the end of the process.”

The chief EU trade negotiator, Maros Sefcovic, echoed



US President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen talk after reaching a trade deal at the Trump Turnberry golf course in Turnberry, Scotland. (AP)

those sentiments. “The alternative was a trade war with sky high tariffs ... it builds confidence. It brings stability,” he said.

Economists say higher tariffs slow economic growth and will be reflected in higher consumer prices.

One category of goods not excluded from tariffs on EU goods was wine and spirits, which had enjoyed zero tariffs on both ends since a 1997 trade deal. Sefcovic, said EU officials had not won an exemption “yet” but hoped to in future talks and that “doors are not closed forever” on that issue.

That means American distillers face zero tariffs in Europe the short term, but also the possibility of EU retaliation down the line, said Chris Swonger, president and CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. “Without a permanent return to zero-for-zero tariffs on spirits, American distillers do not have the certainty to plan for future export and job growth without the fear of retaliatory tariffs returning,” Swonger said in a statement.

The EU has suspended retaliatory tariffs on US goods including wine and spirits until Feb. 5, 2026.

Proposals to exempt a certain amount of EU steel imports, known as a tariff rate quota, have been left unresolved pending more talks.

The 15% tariff is much higher than tariff levels on both sides from before Trump began imposing his tariffs, when they averaged in the low single digits. The tariffs are paid on the U.S. end, either absorbed by American businesses importing the goods, lowering their profits, or passed on to U.S. consumers in the form of higher prices at the cash register.

The deal also includes nonbinding EU commitments to purchase \$750 billion in U.S. energy and for EU companies to invest \$600 billion in the U.S. In both cases, the money would come from private companies and is based on assessment by the European Commission on what companies were planning to spend.



SPECIAL REPORT

A mother’s eye: The making of a champion born for the water

By Sara Al-Awadhi
Special to the Arab Times

Behind Mansour Al-Mansour’s success is the love of a mother, Rehab Al-Medlej, and the fire of a son who refused to quit. Together, they turned hardships into hope, and a childhood spark into a global triumph.

For Mansour, water has always been more than just a pool, it has been a constant thread woven through his life. He was just a young boy when he first stood behind a starting block in Kuwait, unaware that the moment would shape his destiny. It wasn’t instant love, but a bond that deepened with every lap and every challenge, until the pool eventually became his sanctuary.

This isn’t the story of a child prodigy destined for automatic success, but it is a story of perseverance. Life pulled Mansour away from competitive swimming for nearly two decades, but discovering finswimming gave him a way back. It was something new, yet it preserved his bond with the water.

Finswimming is a sport where athletes use a monofin or bifins to glide through the water. It combines speed, technique, and stamina. Success depends on respecting all three, as speed is useless without technique, and stamina is wasted without speed.

Mansour Al-Mansour made history by winning Kuwait’s first-ever international gold medal in the 50m underwater race. He has broken multiple records, including a world record in the Masters Category. He earned these achievements without a coach or funding, and after years away from the sport.

He reminisced about the moment the world went quiet, his lungs burning, legs trembling, and his heartbeat louder than everything else. “I thought of every early morning, every lonely training session, and knew it had all led here,” Mansour recalled.

His achievements were not born out of luck, but of persistence. Mansour is not a full-time athlete, as he balances intense training and recovery with a 12-hour full-time job that requires commuting to Khafji, Saudi Arabia.

It may not be easy, but it is simple. Al-Mansour puts it plainly, “Disciplined sleep, clean nutrition, and focused training. And I always carry my fin. It has been with me from the mountains of Zermatt to the waters of Zanzibar. It is my reminder that I am never off-duty.”

Beyond the hours spent in the water, the gym sessions, and mental conditioning, lies another challenge - the mental one.

Before a big race, Al-Mansour grounds himself with a simple truth, “I remind myself I have been through worse than this. That knowledge gives me calm. I visualize the race, I breathe deep, and I let the pressure become fuel.”

His biggest challenge, however, was returning after 18 years to a competitive environment that was often hostile to his success. During his time away from the sport, he built a successful career, supported his family, and recovered from injuries. “My comeback was built on patience, strategy, and a willingness to start from zero,” he says.

With finswimming still flying under the radar compared to more mainstream sports, resources are scarce and support is limited. This has pushed athletes like Al-Mansour to become their own coaches, funders, and advocates. He calls for proper facilities, qualified leadership, and real investment in the sport. With time and persistence, he believes, the potential of finswimming will be recognized—and inch closer to its place on the Olympic stage.

Mansour Al-Mansour’s message to those aspiring to succeed in finswim-



Mansour Al-Mansour

ming is a reminder that their dreams are valid, even if others don’t understand them.

“Work in silence, fight for your space, and let your results speak,” he says. “Every dream comes with a cost. For me, it meant giving up stability, comfort, and even relationships. It meant training alone, funding myself, and standing against systems that tried to break me. Was it worth it? Absolutely. I’d rather live with scars from fighting for my dream than regrets from never trying.”



Young Mansour Al-Mansour



Kuwait’s Mansour Al-Mansour reacts after winning gold in the men’s 200m butterfly, 2 December 2005, on the second day of the West Asian Games in Doha. The third edition of the West Asian Games is a 10-day extravaganza featuring women for the first time in competitions. (AFP photo/Rabih Moghrabi)

Mother’s love at the heart of Mansour’s success

By Sara Al-Awadhi
Special to the Arab Times

Behind Mansour Al-Mansour’s success is the unwavering support of his mother, who believed in his talent from the very beginning. Her encouragement and sacrifices helped shape his journey from a young boy in the pool to a world-record finswimmer.

In this interview, Rehab Al-Medlej shares personal stories and the values that fueled Mansour’s determination, revealing the vital role she played in his remarkable career.

Question: When did you first see that spark in Mansour, that special love for the water?

Answer: Oh, it was so clear from the very beginning. When Mansour was just a little boy, he felt completely at ease in the water... calm, happy, and alive. It wasn’t just swimming to him; it was like he had finally found where he truly belonged.

Q: Was there a moment when you thought, “He’s not just good, this is something extraordinary”?

A: Absolutely. I remember his very first competition race. Watching him move with such focus and determination, I just knew... This wasn’t a simple hobby. This was something truly special. His passion was shining right there in his eyes.

Q: In those early years, how did you encourage and nurture his passion?

A: I encouraged him with love and consistency. I never forced him, but I always made sure he knew I believed in him. I celebrated his small victories as much as his big ones.

Q: What were the biggest challenges you faced as a mother supporting this dream?

A: The biggest challenge was finding balance, and making sure he trained enough without losing his childhood. It was also tough dealing with people who didn’t understand why I was so invested in his dream.

Q: Were there moments when you had to sacrifice your own time, comfort, or plans for his training?

A: Absolutely. I gave up time, comfort, and even my own plans, but I never saw it as a burden. To me, it was planting seeds for his future and watching him grow made every sacrifice worth it.

Q: When things got tough for him, how did you help him keep moving forward?

A: I reminded him of who he truly is. I would tell him, “You were born to do this... don’t let the storms ever make you forget your strength.” That belief kept him going through the hard times.

Q: What was little Mansour like... driven, playful, or curious?

A: He was all three. One moment he’d be laughing and playful, the next completely focused. That beautiful balance shaped who he is today.

Q: Was there a time when his determination or resilience really surprised you?

A: Many times. Even when he was sick or exhausted, he never missed training or complained. That kind of discipline is rare, even in adults. I’ll never forget the time he injured his knee just 10 days before his world record attempt. He couldn’t even climb the stairs to his room. But he still found the strength to travel to Serbia, and he broke the world record.

Q: Could you share a funny or touching behind-the-scenes

story from his training days that most people don’t know?

A: Once, just moments before a race, his fin broke. Instead of panicking, he calmly grabbed some duct tape, patched it up, and swam the race anyway... just to finish what he started. We laughed about it later, but in that moment, I saw how nothing could shake his determination.

Q: How did it feel to watch him win his first major medal?

A: I cried. Not just because he won, but because I knew the mountain he had climbed to get there. Every early morning, every sacrifice...

Q: The moment he broke the world record, what was running through your mind?

A: My mind went completely blank and my heart was racing. All I could think was, “He really did it.” In that moment, I saw the 9-year-old boy who once dreamed big, now living that dream.

Q: Seeing your son become a symbol of Kuwaiti sporting excellence, what does that mean to you personally as a mother?

A: It fills me with so much pride and also quiet joy. I’ve seen the behind-the-scenes struggles and sacrifices, so that makes it even more meaningful.

Q: What values do you think were key to Mansour’s success? How did you try to instill them in him growing up?

A: Discipline, humility, and patience. I always told him, “Talent opens the door, but character keeps it open.”

Q: What advice would you share with other parents whose children have big, ambitious dreams?

A: Listen to your children. Protect their passions. Your belief in them and your support could be the difference between a dream that dies and one that changes their life.

Q: When people talk about your son in the future, how do you hope they remember him, not just as an athlete, but as a person?

A: I hope he is remembered as more than a champion... as a man of perseverance, humility, and courage in everything he did... a man who inspired others to believe in themselves and chase their own dreams.



Mansour Al-Mansour with his mother Rehab Al-Medlej



Mansour Al-Mansour gives his mother a kiss at the 2024 World Finswimming Championships in Belgrade.

editor’s choice



‘Caught in Providence’ host battled with pancreatic cancer

Judge Frank Caprio, known for his courtroom empathy, dies at 88

PROVIDENCE, R.I., Aug. 21, (AP): Frank Caprio, a retired municipal judge in Rhode Island who found online fame as a caring jurist and host of “Caught in Providence,” has died. He was 88.

His official social media accounts said Wednesday that he “passed away peacefully” after “a long and courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.”

Caprio billed his courtroom as a place “where people and cases are met with kindness and compassion.” He was known for dismissing tickets or showing kindness even when he handed out justice.

Last week, Caprio posted a short video on Facebook about how he had “a setback,” was back in the hospital and was asking that people “remember me in your prayers.”

Caprio’s show was filmed in his courtroom and featured his folksy humor and compassion. Clips from the show have had more than 1 billion views on social media.

During his time on the bench, Caprio developed a persona at odds with many TV judges - more sympathetic and less confrontational and judgmental.

In his bite-sized segments on YouTube, Caprio is often seen empathizing with those in his courtroom. Many of the infractions are also relatively minor, from failing to use a turn signal to a citation for a loud party.

Caprio also used his fame to address issues like unequal access to the judicial system.

“The phrase, ‘With liberty and justice for all’ represents the idea that justice should be accessible to everyone. However it is not,” Caprio said in one video. “Almost 90% of low-income Americans are forced to battle civil issues like health care, unjust evictions, veterans benefits and, yes, even traffic violations, alone.”

Caprio’s upbeat take on the job of a judge drew him millions of views. His most popular videos have been those where he calls children to the bench to help pass judgment on their parents. One shows him listening sympathetically to a woman whose son was killed and then dismissing her



Providence Municipal Court Judge Frank Caprio sits on the bench in Providence, R.I., Aug. 10, 2017. (AP)

tickets and fines of \$400.

In another clip, after dismissing a red-light violation for a bartender who was making \$3.84 per hour, Caprio urged those watching the video not to duck out on their bills.

“If anyone’s watching I want them to know you better not eat and run because you’re going to get caught and the poor people who are working hard all day for three bucks an hour are going to have to pay your bill,” he said.

His fame reached as far as China, where clips of his show have been uploaded to social media in recent years. Some fans there posted about his death, recalling and praising the humanity he showed in his rulings.

His family described Caprio “as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and friend.”

“Beloved for his compassion, humility, and unwavering belief in the goodness of people, Judge Caprio touched the lives of millions through his work in the courtroom and beyond,” the family wrote online. “His warmth, humor, and kindness left an indelible mark on all who knew him.”

State and local politicians mourned his passing and celebrated his life.

“Judge Caprio not only served the public well, but he connected with them in a meaningful way, and people could not help but respond to his warmth and compassion,” Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee said in a statement. “He was more than a jurist - he was a symbol of empathy on the bench, showing us what is possible when justice is tempered with humanity.”

Robert Leonard, who co-owned a restaurant with Caprio, said he was “going to be sorely missed” and was “all around wonderful.”

“There is nothing he wouldn’t do for you if he could do it,” Leonard said.

Caprio retired from Providence Municipal Court in 2023 after nearly four decades on the bench.

According to his biography, Caprio came from humble beginnings, the second of three boys growing up in the Federal Hill neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island.

“I hope that people will take away that the institutions of government can function very well by exercising kindness, fairness, and compassion in their deliberations. We live in a very contentious society,” he said in 2017. “I would hope that people will see that we can dispense justice without being oppressive.”

People

Mental review

Combs’ request faces challenge

NEW YORK, Aug. 21, (AP): Federal prosecutors are urging a federal judge to quickly reject **Sean “Diddy” Combs’** request that he throw out a jury verdict or order a new trial after a jury



Combs

convicted the music maven of two prostitution-related charges.

Prosecutors stated in filings late Wednesday that Combs organized

private events for two former partners between 2008 and last year, involving arrangements that required participants to travel across state lines.

A jury in July exonerated the Bad Boy Records founder of racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking charges that carried the potential penalty of a mandatory 15 years in prison up to life behind bars. But it convicted him of two lesser Mann Act charges that prohibit interstate commerce related to prostitution.

The Mann Act charges each carry a potential penalty of 10 years behind bars. Combs has been denied bail despite his lawyers’ arguments that their client should face little to no additional jail time for the convictions. Prosecutors said he must serve multiple years behind bars.

Combs has been in a federal jail in Brooklyn since his September arrest at a Manhattan hotel. Sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 3.

Prosecutors wrote that Combs’ attorneys were mistaken when they contended in a submission to the judge late last month that the Mann Act was unduly vague and violates his due process and First Amendment rights.

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A man charged with fatally shooting an “American Idol” music supervisor and her husband in their Los Angeles home will undergo mental evaluation to determine whether he’s fit to stand trial, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Raymond Boodarian, 22, was set to be arraigned in a courthouse in Los Angeles but did not enter a plea. A judge suspended the criminal proceedings against him while a psychiatrist examines him to determine his competency.

He’s charged with two counts of murder in the killing of longtime “American Idol” producer Robin Kaye and her husband Thomas Deluca, both 70, who were shot when they came home unexpectedly during a burglary on July 10.

A judge at a court that specializes in mental health will consider the evaluation and decide whether Boodarian will proceed toward trial or be placed in a state hospital.

Boodarian stood behind a window in a custody area of the courtroom, and appeared to try to remain out of sight. His attorney declined comment, and the district attorney’s office had no immediate comment.

Boodarian will undergo the same evaluation in the same small courthouse on Hollywood Boulevard where a man charged with stalking Jennifer Aniston and driving into the front gate of her home was recently found to be not competent to go to trial.

Film



This image released by Vertical Entertainment shows Sydney Sweeney in a scene from ‘Eden.’ (AP)

Howard’s film ponders how far humans will bend

Sweeney shines amid island chaos in ‘Eden’

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 21, (AP): Ron Howard’s “Eden” opens with a bold statement: “Fascism is spreading.”

It’ll surely carry weight in modern society, but the phrase is referencing events from nearly a century ago. Based on a true story, “Eden” retraces what happened when a group of Europeans attempted to start anew on the remote island of Floreana, only to encounter the earthly failings they hoped to escape: chaos, blackmail, betrayal and even murder.

Howard assembles an impressive cast, though it isn’t always enough to make up for the overambitious plot of a film that drags in the middle.

1920s Germany, haunted after accepting blame for World War I, was on the brink of demise, as mass poverty and broad social unrest laid ground for the extremism that birthed the Nazi party.

“Eden” shows us none of that, instead dropping us on a small island of the Galápagos, where Dr. Friedrich Ritter (Jude Law) and his loyal partner, Dore Strauch Ritter (Vanessa Kirby) found solace after fleeing their native country. The idealist doctor is inspired by a newfound purpose of penning radical philosophy that will “save humanity from itself.”

Yet the historical resonance, which could have provided pointed commentary on the parallels between today and the 1920s, falls flat amid the film’s overlong runtime, unlikable characters and shaky accents that most actors stumble in and out of. In the midst of the film’s crafted chaos, the story inevitably loses focus. Still, “Eden”

made room for some memorable performances.

More adventurists eventually arrive on the island, and just like that, human interaction starts to breed madness.

The doctor’s philosophical work has spread through letters and newspapers across Europe, attracting settlers like Heinz Wittmer, a veteran of the Great War played by Daniel Brühl, and his much younger second wife Margaret, played by Sydney Sweeney.

Disrupted

The Ritters’ quiet isolation is disrupted by the couple, who arrive with Wittmer’s young son, chasing the promise of an island utopia to ease their deep disillusionment with everyday reality. The tension between the two groups further exacerbates when Eloise Bosquet de Wagner Wehrhorn (Ana de Armas), who calls herself the Baroness, arrives with her two lovers, determined to build a resort on the island.

What results is a cat-and-mouse game between the three groups, ripe with betrayal, distrust and tension. The battle for resources exposes just how much of their morality these people are willing to give up for survival, at least attempting to - but never fully succeeding - in addressing the question: When do people bend to human instinct?

The film lacks depth in exploring questions of morality and human nature while depicting Ritter’s lofty goals to save humanity. His philosophy spirals into madness throughout the film, reduced to brief, sometimes painful and surface level sound bites that eventu-

ally devolve into incoherent ramblings.

The movie is at its most compelling when its three female actors are on the screen. Different motivations bring them to the island, each of which ultimately centers on the same blind faith in the idea of the masculine leader. They all end up vastly disappointed.

Dore is consumed by an unwavering devotion for Ritter, a man who never lives up to the image she’s crafted in her mind. Margaret, having married an older man expecting guidance, is instead forced to build her family’s future from the ground up, only to fight tooth and nail to preserve it after her husband nearly destroys them. And the Baroness, who confidently declares herself “the embodiment of perfection,” oozing with seduction, ultimately crumbles at the rejection of a man.

Arguably, Sweeney - who is almost unrecognizable as the timid and brunette Margaret - steals the show. She easily delivers the most impactful scene of the movie, as she was forced to give birth to a baby boy alone in the middle of the desolate island.

It’s not hard to guess who won’t makes it off the island, either by choice or by force. It is a true story after all. The bloody ending feels unavoidable from the beginning, almost as predictable as human nature itself. But maybe that was the point all along.

“Eden,” a Vertical release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for “some strong violence, sexual content, graphic nudity and language.” Running time: 129 minutes. Two and half stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: “South Park” continued its cartoon assault on the Trump administration Wednesday, with an episode that addressed the federal takeover of Washington, D.C.’s police department.

The latest installment on Comedy Central depicted the recurring character “Towelie” - a walking, talking towel - riding in a bus past landmarks like the Supreme Court building and the Capitol as armed troops marched in the streets. A tank rolled by in front of the White House.

The half-hour episode, which primarily satirized artificial intelligence, also roasted world leaders and tech CEOs for kowtowing to President **Donald Trump**. Eventually Towelie ended up with the president in the Oval Office.



Trump

former South Dakota governor’s biography where she said she killed the family dog because of its behavioral issues. Noem was also depicted being trailed by a team of beauticians having to reattach her face.

(AP)

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STAMFORD, Conn.: WWE’s partnership with ESPN will start earlier than first announced.

The WWE’s first premium live event on the network’s platforms will be Wrestlepalooza from Indianapolis on Sept. 20. John Cena, who will retire from professional wrestling at the end of the year, will be part of the card.

The other two premium live events this year - Crown Jewel on Oct. 11 and the Nov. 29 Survivor Series - will also be available to subscribers of ESPN’s direct-to-consumer streaming service who have the unlimited plan.

ESPN’s direct-to-consumer package and upgraded app will debut on Thursday. When ESPN announced its deal with WWE on Aug. 6, the premium live events were supposed to move from Peacock in early 2026. A date was not announced, but it was supposed to happen before WrestleMania. (AP)

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BEIJING: China’s first 8K movie shot in space, titled “Shenzhou 13,” is set to premiere nationwide on Sept. 5. China Media Group (CMG) has announced with the release of a trailer. The movie features footage captured by Shenzhou-13 astronauts Zhai Zhigang, Wang Yaping and Ye Guangfu.

The story is based on the crew’s six-month orbital mission in the country’s space station, according to the CMG. The movie, largely told from Wang’s perspective, showcases never-before-seen cosmic vistas and intimate glimpses of life aboard the space station. As China’s first space-based film project, it was shot using fully domestically developed 8K ultra-high-definition cameras.

The creative team, working alongside aerospace engineers, overcame significant challenges, including rocket vibration tests, space environment simulations and adapting equipment for safe charging and storage within the space station. (Xinhua)

Pixel phones add AI Magic cue, Super Res, and instant translation

Google’s Pixel 10 phones raise the ante on artificial intelligence

NEW YORK, Aug 21, (AP): Google on Wednesday unveiled a new line-up of Pixel smartphones injected with another dose of artificial intelligence that’s designed to do everything from fetch vital information stored on the devices to help improve photos as they’re being taken.

The AI expansion on the four Pixel 10 models amplifies Google’s efforts to broaden the use of a technology that is already starting to reshape society. At the same time, Google is taking a swipe at Apple’s Achilles’ heel on the iPhone.

Apple so far has only been able to introduce a few basic AI features on the iPhone while failing to deliver on last year’s promise to deliver a more conversational and versatile version of its often-blundering virtual assistant Siri.

Without mentioning the iPhone by name, Google has already been mocking Apple’s missteps in online ads promoting the four new Pixel models as smartphones loaded with AI technology that consumers won’t

have to wait for more than a year to arrive.

“There has been a lot of hype about this and, frankly, a lot of broken promises, too,” Google executive Rick Osterloh said during a 75-minute presentation in New York about the new Pixel phones. The event was emceed by late-night TV show host Jimmy Fallon.

Google, in contrast, has been steadily increasing the amount of AI that it began to implant on its Pixels since 2023, with this year’s models taking it to another level.

“We think this year we have a game-changing phone with game-changing technology,” Osterloh said.

Taking advantage of a more advanced processor, Google is introducing a new AI feature on the Pixel 10 phones called “Magic Cue” that’s designed to serve as a digital mind reader that automatically fetches information stored on the devices and displays the data at the time it’s needed. For instance, if a Pixel 10 user is calling up an airline, Magic Cue is



This undated photo released by Google shows a new smartphone loaded with an array of artificial intelligence features, including the Pixel 10 Pro. (AP)

supposed to instantaneously recognize the phone number and display the flight information if it’s in Gmail or a Google Calendar.

The Pixel 10 phones will also come with a preview feature of a new AI tool called “Camera Coach” that will

automatically suggest the best framing and lighting angle as the lens is being aimed at a subject. Camera Coach will also recommend the best lens mode to use for an optimal picture.

The premium models - Pixel 10 Pro and Pixel 10 Pro XL - will also include a “Super Res” option that deploys a grab bag of software and AI tricks to zoom up to 100 times the resolution to capture the details of objects located miles away from the camera. The AI wizardry could happen without users even realizing it’s happening, making it even more difficult to know whether an image captured in a photo reflects how things really looked at the time a picture was taken or was modified by technology.

The Pixel 10 will also be able to almost instantaneously translate phone conversations into a range of different languages using the participants own voices.

Google is also offering a free one-year subscription to its AI Pro plan to anyone who buys the more expensive Pixel 10 Pro or Pixel 10 Pro XL models in hopes of hooking more people on the Gemini toolkit it has assembled to compete against OpenAI’s ChatGPT.

The prices on all four Pixel 10 models will remain unchanged from last year’s Pixel 9 generation, with the basic starting at \$800 and the Pro selling for \$1,000, the Pro XL at \$1,200 and a foldable version at \$1,800. All the Pixel 10s expect the foldable model will be in stores on August 28. The Pixel 10 Pro Fold will be available starting October 9.

Although the Pixel smartphone remains a Lilliputian next to the Gulliverian stature of the iPhone and Samsung’s Galaxy models, Google’s ongoing advances in AI while holding the line on its marquee devices raise the competitive stakes.

“In the age of AI, it is a true laboratory of innovation,” Forrester Research analyst Thomas Husson said of the Pixel.

Apple, in particular, will be facing more pressure than usual when it introduces the next-generation

iPhone next month. Although the company has already said the smarter Siri won’t be ready until next year at the earliest, Apple will still be expected to show some progress in AI to demonstrate the iPhone is adapting to technology’s AI evolution rather than tilting toward gradual obsolescence. Clinging to a once-successful formula eventually sank the BlackBerry and its physical keyboard when the iPhone and its touch screen came along nearly 20 years ago.

Apple’s pricing of the next iPhone will also be under the spotlight, given that the devices are made in China and India - two of the prime targets in President Donald Trump’s trade war.

But Apple appeared to gain a reprieve from Trump’s most onerous threats earlier this month by adding another \$100 billion on top of an earlier \$500 billion investment pledge to the U.S. The tariff relief may enable Apple to minimize or even avoid price increases for the iPhone, just as Google has done with the Pixel 10 models.



These photos taken on Aug. 20, show artifacts during an exhibition of sunken antiquities recovered from the Mediterranean Sea at Alexandria National Museum in Alexandria, Egypt. (Xinhua)

Egypt showcases rare sunken artifacts at Alexandria museum

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt, Aug. 21, (Xinhua): Egypt opened on Wednesday an exhibition for sunken antiquities at the Alexandria National Museum, showcasing treasures from the Mediterranean seabed.

Dubbed the “Secrets of the Sunk-en City Exhibition,” the exhibition showcased 86 rare artifacts recovered from several sites in Alexandria, including the two submerged cities of Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus, and the submerged Royal Quarter in the Eastern Harbor of ancient Alexandria.

According to the Egyptian Tour-

ism and Antiquities Ministry, Thonis-Heracleion, a once-flourishing port city active between the 6th century BC and 4th century AD, gradually sank over the centuries due to earthquakes, land subsidence and rising sea levels. It was known for its multiple harbors and Egyptian and Greek temples, including Amun, Khonsu and Heracles.

The submerged city of Canopus was renowned for its sacred sanctuaries dedicated to Osiris and Serapis. The city was also known for its extravagant celebrations during the Roman era, the ministry said.

Variety

LOS ANGELES: The Menendez brothers will make their cases for parole starting Thursday, marking the closest they’ve been to winning freedom from prison since their convictions almost 30 years ago for murdering their parents.



Erik

Erik and Lyle Menendez were sentenced in 1996 to life in prison for fatally shooting their father, Jose Menendez, and mother, Kitty Menendez, in their Beverly Hills mansion in 1989. While defense attorneys argued the brothers acted out of self-defense after years of sexual abuse by their father, prosecutors said the brothers sought a multimillion-dollar inheritance.

The brothers became eligible for parole after a Los Angeles judge in May reduced their sentences from life in prison without the possibility of parole to 50 years to life, making them immediately eligible under California law because they were under the ages of 26 when they committed their crimes.

But even if the board grants their parole, it could be months before the brothers walk free - if at all.

A panel of parole hearing officers will evaluate the brothers individually, Erik Menendez will have his hearing Thursday morning, followed by Lyle Menendez on Friday. They will appear over videoconference from prison in San Diego.

The board will assess whether the brothers pose an “unreasonable risk of danger to society” if released, considering factors such as criminal history, motivation for the crime, signs of remorse, behavior while in prison

and plans for the future, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

If the board grants each brother’s parole, the chief legal counsel has 120 days to review the case. Then Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom has 30 days to affirm or deny the parole. Newsom had previously ordered the state parole board to conduct a risk assessment of the brothers in response to a clemency request. He hasn’t said if he’s likely to support parole, but he has denied recommendations in high-profile cases in the past - most notably for Sirhan Sirhan, who assassinated presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy in 1968. (AP)

AMSTERDAM: Crowds packed vantage points along a major canal and took to the water themselves Wednesday to watch a flotilla of hundreds of historic ships sail into Amsterdam at the start of a five-day festival celebrating the Dutch capital’s maritime history.

Ships from all over the world, many with their masts and rigging decorated with flags, sailed from the North Sea coastal town of IJmuiden on an hourslong journey up the North Sea Canal and into Amsterdam’s IJ waterway for SAIL 2025, the first edition in a decade.

A puff of orange smoke erupted into the sky and ships’ horns sounded as the replica three-masted clipper Stad Amsterdam passed through a lock to mark the official start of the event. Each ship is greeted with two cannon shots and its country’s national anthem as it enters the harbor.

Hugo Peek was one of the thousands of people who sailed in smaller boats together with the tall ships. Along with his grandfather and several other family members, he traveled on a smaller boat that accompanied the tall ship Europa.

“There was almost no water. It’s almost all boats,” the 21-year-old student said. (AP)

Fashion

Koniaków women weave heritage and high fashion together

Polish lace crochet emerges as fashion favorite

KONIAKOW, Poland, Aug 21, (AP): Wiesława Juroszek was only 6 years old when she learned the intricate handicraft of lace crocheting from the women in her family as part of a long tradition in their little mountain village.

Now, 53 years later, she is part of a new generation of women using those skills to make Koniaków famous far beyond Poland’s borders. Their uniquely crocheted lingerie, beautiful wedding dresses, skirts, blouses and even traditional tablecloths are enjoying a surge of popularity and elevated prices for the skilled work.

“In Koniaków almost all the women do ‘hekle,’ as we call it,” Juroszek told The Associated Press. “For us it’s a passion, for us it’s our whole life.”

Around 700 women work as lace makers in Koniaków, which is nestled high in the Beskid Mountains in southern Poland near the border with Slovakia.

The techniques have been passed down for years by Koniaków women, who were following the tradition of previous generations of Polish women who embellished bonnets worn over their hair by crocheting lace ribbons to be tied around their foreheads.

“It was a decorative element. When a woman was married, she had her own,” Juroszek said. “Later, women started making them as table decorations, like napkins, and the shape became round. And the women sold them, which was a way to earn money.”

What began more than 100 years ago simply as work to support household budgets has been transformed into a prized craft. Blouses sell for at least 3,000 to 4,000 złoty (\$750 to \$1,000) and wedding dress prices reach up to tens of thousands of złoty.

The steep costs are based on the amount of time the women need for



Models showcase handmade wedding dresses crafted from traditional lace at a fashion show in the village of Koniaków, in Poland’s Beskid Mountains, Saturday, Aug. 16. (AP)

their needlework, with even a simple blouse requiring several weeks.

Unlike some other traditional craftworks around the globe, crocheting lace is not fading, it’s flourishing.

Koniaków lace is known for unique patterns that are often inspired by the landscape surrounding the highland village.

“In this tiny village ... women create unique patterns from their imagination, compositions of thin threads, flowers and stars,” said Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut, president of the Koniaków Lace Foundation.

“They are surrounded by beautiful nature, so it inspires their motifs,” she added. “We have no templates,

no patterns. We create everything from our imagination, and that’s why fashion houses want to work with us, because every design, every napkin, every new dress is something new for us.”

The ladies of Koniaków say each of their lace creations is one of a kind, so it comes as no surprise that international fashion designers noticed the pieces.

Ligocka-Kohut lists brands that have been captivated by the work coming out of the mountain village including Christian Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Magda Butrym, Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons.

“Koniaków lace has already appeared twice at Paris Fashion Week,” she said.

The most traditional Koniaków lace is mostly made in white or soft ecru. Bolder shades such as deep red, rich black and vivid green are typically reserved for lingerie and swimwear.

The bras, panties, thongs and G-strings are sold online for those who can’t travel to southern Poland for lace shopping.

Homemaker Ewa Lesiewicz, one of the regular Polish customers, is a true fan of the famous lace works.

“I already have a lace blouse, a lace bra, a set with panties and I really like it,” the 63-year-old said. “I also want a set like this: a blouse and a skirt.”

US expands school cellphone bans to 17 states

Students adjust to fresh cellphone restrictions

NEW YORK, Aug 21, (AP): Jamel Bishop is seeing a big change in his classrooms as he begins his senior year at Doss High School in Louisville, Kentucky, where cellphones are now banned during instructional time.

In previous years, students often weren’t paying attention and wasted class time by repeating questions, the teenager said. Now, teachers can provide “more one-on-one time for the students who actually need it.”

Kentucky is one of 17 states and the District of Columbia starting this school year with new restrictions, bringing the total to 35 states with laws or rules limiting phones and other electronic devices in school. This change has come remarkably quickly: Florida became the first state to pass such a law in 2023.

Both Democrats and Republicans have taken up the cause, reflecting a growing consensus that phones are bad for kids’ mental health and take their focus away from learning, even as some researchers say the issue is less clear-cut.

“Anytime you have a bill that’s passed in California and Florida, you know you’re probably onto something that’s pretty popular,” Georgia state Rep. Scott Hilton, a Republican, told a forum on cellphone use last week in Atlanta.

Phones are banned throughout the school day in 18 of the states and the District of Columbia, although Georgia and Florida impose such “bell-to-bell” bans only from kindergarten through eighth grade. Another seven states ban them during class time, but not between classes or during lunch. Still others, particularly those with

traditions of local school control, mandate only a cellphone policy, believing districts will take the hint and sharply restrict phone access.

For students, the rules add new school-day rituals, like putting phones in magnetic pouches or special lockers.

Students have been locking up their phones during class at McNair High School in suburban Atlanta since last year. Audreanna Johnson, a junior, said “most of them did not want to turn in their phones” at first, because students would use them to gossip, texting “their other friends in other classes to see what’s the tea and what’s going on around the building.”

That resentment is “starting to ease down” now, she said. “More students are willing to give up their phones and not get distracted.”

But there are drawbacks - like not being able to listen to music when working independently in class. “I’m kind of 50-50 on the situation because me, I use headphones to do my schoolwork. I listen to music to help focus,” she said.

In a survey of 125 Georgia school districts by Emory University researchers, parental resistance was cited as the top obstacle to regulating student use of social and digital media.

Johnson’s mother, Audrena Johnson, said she worries most about knowing her children are safe from violence at school. School messages about threats can be delayed and incomplete, she said, like when someone who wasn’t a McNair student got into a fight on school property, which she learned about when her daughter texted her during the



Doss High School student Mia Rivera demonstrates how she puts her phone away before the start of school on Friday, Aug. 15, in Louisville, Ky. (AP)

school day.

“My child having her phone is very important to me, because if something were to happen, I know instantly,” Johnson said.

Many parents echo this - generally supporting restrictions but wanting a say in the policymaking and better communication, particularly about safety - and they have a real need to coordinate schedules with their children and to know about any problems their children may encounter, said Jason Allen, the national director of partnerships for the National Parents Union.

“We just changed the cellphone policy, but aren’t meeting the parents’ needs in regards to safety and really training teachers to work with students on social emotional development,” Allen said.

Some researchers say it’s not yet clear what types of social media may cause harm, and whether restrictions have benefits, but teachers “love the policy,” according to Julie Gazmararian, a professor of public health at Emory University who does surveys and focus groups to research the effects of a phone ban in middle school grades in the Marietta school district near Atlanta.

“They could focus more on teaching,” Gazmararian said. “There were just not the disruptions.”

Another benefit: More positive interactions among students. “They were saying that kids are talking to each other in the hallways and in the cafeteria,” she said. “And in the classroom, there is a noticeably lower amount of discipline referrals.”

Gazmararian is still compiling numbers on grades and discipline, and cautioned that her work may not be able to answer whether bullying has been reduced or mental health improved.

Social media use clearly correlates with poor mental health, but research can’t yet prove it causes it, according to Munmun De Choudhury, a Georgia Tech professor who studies this issue.

“We need to be able to quantify what types of social media use are causing harm, what types of social media use can be beneficial,” De Choudhury said.

Some state legislatures are bucking the momentum.

Wyoming’s Senate in January rejected requiring districts to create some kind of a cellphone policy after opponents argued that teachers and parents need to be responsible.

Fund underscores health investments to aid poor, marginalized

KFAED reaffirms support for global disease, epidemic control

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) reiterated continued support for anti-disease and epidemic efforts around the globe, especially in developing nations and around the African continent as part of embodying the State of Kuwait’s vision on the importance of cooperating and achieving development and decent living for people of the world.

All the efforts exerted to support several health affairs-related institutions and organizations contribute to boosting those countries’ capacity to fight diseases, back investment in the health field, and reach health-related millennium development goals as part of eradicating poverty and focusing on poor and marginalized populations, KFAED said in a statement on the sidelines of its participation in an event to celebrate World Mosquito Day.

The Fund also said that its global initiatives and contri-

butions in the health field stem from Kuwait’s belief that controlling diseases and epidemics is a decisive factor in eradicating poverty and other health issues, adding that the disadvantages of these diseases are not only limited to weakening people’s innate abilities, but also exacerbating their misery, increasing their poverty, and forcing them to give up their sources of livelihood.

Kuwait Fund took part in the event, held in Mubarak Hospital, through displaying its media prints and issuances that highlight its development role on local, regional, and international levels.

In this context, Dr. Meriam Mansouri, Head of Public Health Services section in the Hawalli Health District, said the event aims at raising public awareness of the dangers of mosquito-borne diseases, especially during travel seasons, and to bolster preventive behaviors among all segments of society.

“Visitors can check out the Travelers’ Clinic, provid-

ed by the public health services section in the Hawalli Health District, four to six weeks prior to their travel to conduct all necessary medical examinations and learn about the preventive medications and vaccinations they need for their travel destinations,” Mansouri mentioned.

World Mosquito Day, observed annually on 20 August, is celebrated around the world to raise awareness of the risk of diseases transmitted by this flying insect such as malaria, dengue fever, Zika virus, and West Nile virus.

It is worth noting that Kuwait Fund backs the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership, founded in 1998 under the supervision of World Health Organization (WHO) and aims at coordinating with international finance institutions to accelerate efforts to eradicate malaria disease worldwide, in addition to financing the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund), which was established in 2002.



A photo from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development event to mark the World Mosquito Day.

1 in 5 flesh-eating bacteria cases prove deadly

How to protect from Vibrio vulnificus, the bacteria found along US coasts

NEW YORK, Aug 21, (AP): States are warning beachgoers about a summertime surge in infections from a frightening, flesh-eating bacteria found in coastal waters.

Vibrio vulnificus are becoming an annual threat along the Gulf Coast and - increasingly - up the Eastern Seaboard.

People should listen to the warnings, said Bernie Stewart, a 65-year-old retired bounty hunter in Florida who counts himself lucky to have survived an infection.

In August 2019, Stewart’s right leg was infected while he was kayak fishing in Pensacola Bay. What at first appeared to be a sun blister led to three months in the hospital, where doctors performed 10 surgeries to remove decaying skin and prevent the bacteria from killing him.

“This ain’t nothing to play with,” Stewart said.

Vibrio bacteria thrive in seawater and in the mix of fresh and saltwater found in estuaries and lagoons. Most infections are reported from May to October, and most happen in states along the Gulf Coast.

The Gulf’s water is “the perfect convergence of the right amount of salt and the right amount of heat to let this organism proliferate,” said Dr. Fred Lopez, an infectious diseases specialist at the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans.

The nastiest type is Vibrio vulnificus. It accounts for around 200 of the more than 1,000 Vibrio illnesses each year, according to CDC data.

As many as 1 in 5 of those infections are fatal - a much higher rate than other types of Vibrio bacteria.

Some people become infected by eating raw or undercooked shellfish - particularly oysters. But a large percentage fall ill when the person is in ocean or brackish water and the bacteria enter the body through small breaks in the skin.

The antibiotics used to treat food poisoning cases don’t work as well when the germ enters through breaks in the skin, Lopez said.

“They may require multiple surgeries to remove dead or infected tissue, and sometimes require amputation,” he said.

Doctors say severe cases are seen more often in elderly patients, people with weakened immune systems, and those with liver disease, diabetes and certain chronic illnesses.

Louisiana has seen an alarming jump in cases this summer, but other states are not. More cases are expected, as this is peak season for Vibrio vulnificus infections.

“It is really easy to sound unnecessary alarms because cases have increased, or feel too complacent because cases are low,” when data is incomplete, said Salvador Almagro-Moreno, a St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital who has studied the germ.

Infections have been reported as far north as New England - Massachusetts recently issued an alert after someone



This photo provided by Karrienne Stewart shows the leg of her husband, Bernie Stewart, at a hospital in Pensacola, Fla., at the start of an August 2019 Vibrio infection. (AP)

reportedly was infected on Cape Cod.

Scientists say climate change is helping the germs proliferate and spread northward. A 2023 study found that the northernmost case has been shifting by about 30 miles each year, and that cases overall have been rising.

As of late last week, 20 cases of Vibrio vulnificus had been reported among Louisiana residents this year. All were hospitalized and four died, the state’s health department said. That’s more than twice the average number of cases for this point in the season, and four times the death toll, state officials said.

Cases are not unusually higher in other Gulf States, however.

Florida, which tends to have more infections than other states, has reported 17 Vibrio vulnificus cases and five deaths this year, compared with 82 cases and 19 deaths at the same point last year.

Global review raises alarm over teen vaping

Youth vaping linked to increased health risks and future smoking

LONDON, Aug. 21, (Xinhua): Young people who use e-cigarettes are significantly more likely to later take up cigarette smoking and face a heightened risk of respiratory and mental health issues, according to a global review on youth vaping.

The comprehensive umbrella review, conducted by researchers from the University of York and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, analyzed 56 systematic reviews spanning 384 studies worldwide. Of these, 21 reviews directly examined the relationship between e-cigarette use among young people and subsequent cigarette smoking habits.

In findings published recently in the journal Tobacco Control, researchers identified a “striking” consistency: young vapers were not only at greater risk of taking up smoking, but were also likely to smoke more frequently and intensely later in life.

The analysis further uncovered an increased likelihood of respiratory illnesses such as asthma and exacerbation of asthma, as well as links to substance abuse, including alcohol and marijuana use.

The study went beyond respiratory concerns, suggesting correlations between youth vaping and other health problems such as pneumonia, bronchitis, lowered sperm counts, dizziness, headaches, migraines, depression, and even suicidal ideation.

The publication of the review coincides with Britain’s recent ban on the sale and supply of disposable vapes, including those without nicotine, as of June. This measure aims to curb the growing popularity of vaping among children aged 11-15, with NHS data from last year indicating nearly a quarter of children in this age group had tried vaping, and almost one in ten used vapes regularly.

Hope for psoriasis, burns, and grafts

Experts grow world’s first fully functioning lab-made human skin with blood supply

SYDNEY, Aug. 21, (Xinhua): Australian scientists have grown the world’s first fully functioning lab-made human skin with its own blood supply.

Researchers used stem cells to grow skin with blood vessels, capillaries, hair follicles, nerves, tissue layers and immune cells, paving the way for better treatment of skin diseases, burns, and grafts, according to a statement released Thursday by Australia’s University of Queensland (UQ).

“This is the most life-like skin model that’s been developed anywhere in the world and will allow us to study diseases and test treatments more accurately,” said the study’s lead researcher, Abbas Shafiee, a tissue engineering & regenerative medicine scientist from UQ’s Frazer Institute.

The team used recent advancements in stem cell research to create three-dimensional “skin organoids,” before engineering tiny blood vessels that allowed the tissue to develop like natural human skin, according to the research published in Wiley Advanced Healthcare Materials.

“We took human skin cells and reprogrammed them into stem cells, which can be turned into any type of cell in the body,” Shafiee said, adding the skin model took six years to develop.

Co-author Professor Kiarash Khosrotehrani from UQ’s Frazer Institute said the engineered skin could improve grafts and treatments for inflammatory and genetic skin disorders like psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, and scleroderma.



Tibetan sheep graze at a solar farm in Hainan prefecture of western China’s Qinghai province on Tuesday, July 1, 2025. (AP)

China rushes to build out solar, emissions edge downward

TALATAN, China, Aug 21, (AP): High on the Tibetan plateau, Chinese government officials last month showed off what they say will be the world’s largest solar farm when completed - 610 square kilometers (235 square miles), the size of the American city of Chicago.

China has been installing solar panels at a blistering pace, far faster than anywhere else in the world, and the investment is starting to pay off. A study released Thursday found that the country’s carbon emissions edged down 1% in the first six months of the year compared to a year earlier, extending a trend that began in March 2024.

The good news is China’s carbon emissions may have peaked well ahead of a government target of doing so before 2030. But China, the world’s biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, will need to bring them down much more sharply to play its part in slowing global climate change.

For China to reach its declared goal of carbon neu-

trality by 2060, emissions would need to fall 3% on average over the next 35 years, said Lauri Myllyvirta, the Finland-based author of the study and lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

“China needs to get to that 3% territory as soon as possible,” he said.

China’s emissions have fallen before during economic slowdowns. What’s different this time is electricity demand is growing - up 3.7% in the first half of this year - but the increase in power from solar, wind and nuclear has easily outpaced that, according to Myllyvirta, who analyzes the most recent data in a study published on the U.K.-based Carbon Brief website.

“We’re talking really for the first time about a structural declining trend in China’s emissions,” he said.

China installed 212 gigawatts of solar capacity in the first six months of the year, more than America’s entire

capacity of 178 gigawatts as of the end of 2024, the study said. Electricity from solar has overtaken hydropower in China and is poised to surpass wind this year to become the country’s largest source of clean energy. Some 51 gigawatts of wind power was added from January to June.

Li Shuo, the director of the China Climate Hub at the Asia Society Policy Institute in Washington, described the plateauing of China’s carbon emissions as a turning point in the effort to combat climate change.

“This is a moment of global significance, offering a rare glimmer of hope in an otherwise bleak climate landscape,” he wrote in an email response. It also shows that a country can cut emissions while still growing economically, he said. But Li cautioned that China’s heavy reliance on coal remains a serious threat to progress on climate and said the economy needs to shift to less resource-intensive sectors.

“There’s still a long road ahead,” he said.

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Miami tames Tigres without Messi in Leagues Cup



Wesley of Brazil's Internacional, center, is challenged by Saul Niguez of Brazil's Flamengo during a Copa Libertadores round of sixteen second leg soccer match at Beira Rio stadium in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Wednesday, Aug. 20, 2025. (AP)



Inter Miami forward Luis Suárez kicks a penalty to score a goal during the second half of a Leagues Cup quarterfinal soccer match against Tigres UANL in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

De Arrascaeta, Pedro fire Flamengo into Copa quarters

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Aug 21, (Agencies): Luis Suarez scored twice on penalty kicks and Inter Miami overcame Lionel Messi's absence to beat Tigres UANL from Mexico 2-1 in a Leagues Cup quarterfinal Wednesday night.

After leading his team to victory over the LA Galaxy, Messi did not train ahead of the game.

"We all go off what Messi is feeling. Today, Javier (Mascherano) spoke with him and he wasn't feeling the best. We preferred to not risk him and take a step back," Inter Miami assistant coach Javier Morales told reporters postgame.

Suarez converted his first penalty after Jordi Alba's cross hit the arm of sliding Tigres defender Javier Aquino. Ángel Correa scored for Tigres, slicing through the defense for the equalizer. Then, the ball once again hit Aquino's arm in the box and Suarez scored the winner from the penalty spot.

A late header from Tigres' Edgar Lopez ricocheted off both posts.

Mascherano was given a red card before the second half began. Mascherano was seen talking on the phone and giving instructions after being sent off, which is prohibited per Leagues Cup rules.

"We were complaining about the time. They said four minutes (off added time) and we ended up playing like six," Morales said.

"I didn't see what was going on. To be honest, a lot of things happened on the bench," Morales said when asked about Mascherano giving instructions

by phone.

Inter Miami's Jordi Alba left early in the second half after hurting his lower leg in a collision late in the first half.

"We don't have the medical report yet, but from what I understand, he took a hit to the knee."

□ □ □

Giorgian de Arrascaeta and Pedro scored in each half as Flamengo advanced to the Copa Libertadores quarterfinals with a 2-0 away win over Brazilian rivals Internacional.

De Arrascaeta struck with a lunging volley after Gonzalo Plata's headed pass and Pedro tapped home at the far post following Leo Pereira's cross.

The result at Porto Alegre's Estadio Beira-Rio gave Flamengo a 3-0 victory on aggregate.

"I'm happy to be able to help the team in any way I can and if that is by scoring or assisting, all the better," Uruguay international midfielder De Arrascaeta said. "But the most important thing is that we're now through to the next stage."

In other round-of-16 second-leg clash, Argentina's Estudiantes advanced despite a goalless home draw with Paraguayan side Cerro Porteno. The La Plata-based side progressed by virtue of a 1-0 victory in last week's first leg. Enditem qqk Peru international winger Kevin Quevedo scored a late winner as Alianza Lima reached the Copa Sudamericana quarterfinals with a 2-1 away victory over Ecuador's Universidad Catolica on Wednesday.

The host took the lead on the night when Azarias Londono finished clinically in the 18th minute after Mauro Diaz's through ball.

Eryc Castillo equalized with a 39th-minute strike before Quevedo sent a long-range effort into the top-right corner after combining with Hernan Barcos.

The result at Quito's Estadio Olimpico secured a 4-1 aggregate victory.

In Cusco, Martin Cauteruccio and Damian Batallini struck first-half goals as Bolivian club Bolivar clinched a 2-0 away win over Peru's Cienciano. The La Paz-based side prevailed 4-0 on aggregate.

Cauteruccio converted a 15th-minute penalty and Batallini doubled the advantage by running onto Robson Matheus' defense-splitting pass and lashing home from distance.

A Copa Sudamericana match between Independiente and Universidad de Chile was suspended in the second half Wednesday due to spectator violence at the Argentine club's stadium.

Universidad de Chile supporters reportedly threw objects from the visitor section at the home fans, forcing police intervention and a partial evacuation of the Libertadores de América stadium in Buenos Aires.

Despite security intervention, the violence continued and led to clashes between rival supporters before Uruguayan referee Gustavo Tejera ordered the Round of 16 return match to be stopped with the score tied at 1-1.

Soccer's South American governing body, CONMEBOL, later announced in a social media post that the game had been canceled.

That allowed Universidad de Chile to advance 2-1 on aggregate to the quarterfinals after a 1-0 win at Santiago in the first leg.

Dallas and Chicago eliminated from playoff contention

Plum banks in buzzer-beater as Sparks sink Wings to spoil Bueckers' 44-pt night

LOS ANGELES, Aug 21, (AP): Kelsey Plum banked in the winning shot just before the final buzzer and the Los Angeles Sparks beat the Dallas Wings 81-80 on Wednesday night to spoil rookie Paige Bueckers' career-high 44-point performance.

Bueckers scored the most points by a player in a single game in the WNBA this season and tied Cynthia Cooper's 28-year-old record for most points in a game by a first-year player.

Bueckers scored Dallas' final 13 points, the last on a technical free throw with 1:03 remaining for an 80-79 lead. But the Wings (9-27) turned it over after winning the ensuing jump ball and Aziha James missed a corner 3-pointer with about 20 seconds left to give Los Angeles the final shot.

Plum used a high screen from Dearica Hamby to get into the lane for a left-handed floater that banked in before she was surrounded by Rickea Jackson and Rae Burrell in celebration.

Plum finished with 20 points for Los Angeles (17-18). Jackson had 25 points and a career-high six 3-pointers. Hamby added 14 points and Cameron Brink had 11 points and eight rebounds.

The Sparks' victory eliminated the Wings and Chicago Sky from playoff contention.



Dallas Wings guard Paige Bueckers (5) dribbles during the first half of a WNBA basketball game. (AP)

Bueckers, whose previous high was 35 points against the Phoenix Mercury on June 11, went 17 of 21 from the field, including 4 of 4 from 3-point range, and 6 of 6 at the free-throw line.

Bueckers moved past Cooper for third-longest streak of consecutive double-digit scoring games by a rookie in

WNBA history with 29. Las Vegas forward A'ja Wilson holds the record of 33.

Dallas and Los Angeles met last Friday, with the Sparks securing a 97-96 victory despite Bueckers scoring a game-high 29. The teams will meet again in Los Angeles on Sept. 7. The Sparks have won eight of the last 11 meetings with the Wings.

"I've always prided myself and the team on winning so that's obviously the main goal," she said. "Honestly, I think I'm just most proud of this team, like, the way we fight. This team just means so much to me."

Bueckers, who scored Dallas' final 13 points, credited her teammates.

"Just my teammates getting me open. Screening for me, running some off-ball actions, trying to get myself open looks," she said. "Just bringing the ball up the floor. (Luisa Geisselsoder) set amazing screens for me the entire night and then my teammates just looking for me, getting me the ball, getting me open."

Bueckers' teammate Arike Ogunbowale, who did not play on Wednesday night, posted "ROY" (Rookie of the Year) on X.

Bueckers is 60 points shy of Ogunbowale's franchise rookie scoring record of 630 points, set in 2019.

"Unreal, honored to play with you," teammate Maddy Siegrist posted on X.

Even the Sparks fans realized they were witnessing something special, cheering every Bueckers basket.

"It means a lot specifically because people have gotten to see the struggle and people have gotten to see the injuries, and the ups and downs," said Bueckers, who struggled with injuries at UConn.

West African derby looming as Mali, Senegal to clash in semis

LUANDA, Aug 21, (Xinhua): The 31st FIBA AfroBasket quarterfinals commenced in Angola's capital Luanda, with Mali narrowly defeating last edition's runner-up Cote d'Ivoire, while Senegal snatched another semifinal berth from 2015 champion Nigeria.

In the first clash of the day, both Mali and Cote d'Ivoire traded quarters. With three seconds remaining until the final buzzer, a dunk from Mali's Aliou Fadiala Diarra evened the score, forcing a timeout call from Cote d'Ivoire.

Upon returning to the court, Matt Costello's jumper rimmed out, sending the game into the tournament's first overtime, where Mali gained dominance from start to finish, particularly highlighted by Siriman Kanoute's two shots from beyond the arc.

Cote d'Ivoire could only score from the free throw line, unable to establish any offensive rhythm, while Mali steadily pulled away to secure a 102-96 overtime triumph.

Elsewhere, Nigeria led Senegal narrowly 24-23 after the first quarter, but Senegal intensified their offense in the second quarter, unleashing an 11-2 run early on.

Jean-Jacques Boissy was particularly outstanding, single-handedly recording four three-pointers in

the period, helping Senegal extend their lead to 53-42 by halftime.

Senegal continued their momentum in the second half with an 8-0 run to open the third quarter before increasing their winning margin to 19 points. Nigeria mounted a comeback in the final quarter, hitting five three-pointers, but ultimately fell short, dropping 75-91 to the West African heavyweights.

Senegal captain Brancou Badio top-scored with 32 points, including four three-pointers; 25-year-old Boissy contributed 21 points with five three-pointers; and Pape Moustapha Diop added a double-double with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Senegal also dominated the paint with a 53-35 rebounding advantage over Nigeria.

"We started out kind of flat, and they came out with a lot of energy. It's a high-level team. They have a lot of high-level players, and you can't give them a cushion like that," Nigeria captain Ike Nwamu told Xinhua.

"We had a new group, and we had a lot of fun together. It was a long journey getting here, and we didn't have the outcome that we wanted, but I think there are a lot of positives to take from it," added Nwamu, who notched a team-high 15 points.

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Napoli opens title defense

Serie A remains most unpredictable of Europe's top 5 leagues

MILAN, Aug 21, (AP): Expect the unexpected when the Italian league season kicks off this weekend.

Serie A has become the most unpredictable of Europe's five biggest soccer leagues with four different champions over the last six seasons.

Add in that last season marked the second time in four years the title race went down to the last round and it could be considered the most competitive, too.

By comparison, only Liverpool or Manchester City have won the Premier League in the last eight seasons; Spain is mostly a two-team show with Real Madrid and Barcelona; Bayern Munich has won 12 of the last 13 Bundesliga titles; and Paris Saint-Germain is just as dominant in France.

So while Napoli is favored to repeat as champion this season, there's a handful of serious challengers: Inter Milan, AC Milan, Juventus, Roma and Atalanta.

Napoli edged Inter by one point last season in a race that was so close it raised the

possibility of a single-match playoff to determine the title - a rule that remains in place for this season if two teams finish level.

Here's what to know about Serie A:

When Napoli won the title in 2023 it followed up the championship with a highly disappointing 10th place finish.

Demanding coach Antonio Conte, who was hired after the 2023-24 debacle, is not likely to permit a similar letdown as he begins his second season in charge of the southern club.

Kevin De Bruyne's arrival from Manchester City could make for one of the finest midfields in Europe alongside Serie A MVP Scott McTominay and passing wizard Stanislav Lobotka.

But there is already concern with the club saying this week that striker Romelu Lukaku could require surgery for an injured left thigh muscle.

Inter should be motivated under new coach Cristian Chivu after seeing the possibility of a treble last season fall apart in

spectacular fashion: A 5-0 rout by PSG in the Champions League final meant that the Nerazzurri went trophyless.

Lautaro Martinez and Marcus Thuram remain one of the best strike tandems in Italy but Inter's bench remains thin.

A coaching carousel saw Milan rehire Massimiliano Allegri after missing out on Europe, Gian Piero Gasperini move his attack-minded tactics from Atalanta to Roma, and Maurizio Sarri back at Lazio a year after resigning his position at the capital club.

There are also four World Cup winners among the 20 coaches: Cesc Fabregas at Como (Spain, 2010); Patrick Vieira at Genoa (France, 1998), Alberto Gilardino at promoted Pisa (Italy, 2006) and Fabio Grosso at promoted Sassuolo (Italy, 2006).

Luka Modric's transfer to Milan - the club he supported as a boy - after 13 seasons at Madrid, is not just a sentimental move, the 39-year-old former Ballon d'Or winner says.

Modric indicated that he won't put up with a repeat of Milan's eighth-place finish last season.

"Milan cannot be satisfied with average," Modric said. "It needs to have (the) biggest goals possible, to win titles, to compete with the best teams in the world. And that's why I'm here."

Canada striker Jonathan David has impressed in the preseason after signing a five-year deal with Juventus.

"If he gets the ball, he scores," Juventus coach Igor Tudor said.

The first impressions of the 25-year-old David have led Juventus to put center forward Dusan Vlahovic on the market.

A Serie A match between two teams located about 50 kilometers (30 miles) apart could be held in Australia later this season.

A plan is in motion for Milan and Como to play in Perth in February - when both Milan and Inter will have to go on a long road trip because of the Milan-Cortina Olympics. FIFA is yet to provide approval, though.

Barhama dispute strains management

Qadsia races to finalize foreign squad

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Qadsia is the only Premier League team yet to finalize its foreign player roster, currently featuring Libyan Mohamed Soula, Algerian Sofiane Bouchar, and Moroccan Mehdi Barhama.

This week, Bouchar returned to Algeria following his mother's passing and will re-join the team after mourning. Meanwhile, Moroccan Ismail Khafi also left after mutually terminating his contract.

Although reports suggested that Libyan international Hamdou Elhouini had signed with Qadsia, he did not join the squad in Turkey, as his season with Al-Ahli Tripoli had just concluded. The player's situation has been unclear, with conflicting reports about his contract status.

Barhama has recently clashed with club management, missing Qadsia's match against Al-Wehda last Tuesday. He met with the Professional Committee and Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul, insisting on leaving the club before the new season. The dispute centers on the financial terms the club would recover from him and efforts to find a compromise have so far failed.



Qadsia squad in celebratory mood during the game.

Barhama joined Qadsia last season from Kuwait Club. The club is under pressure to complete its foreign player roster ahead of the Zain Premier League opener against Al-Salmiya on September 12 and its Gulf Club Champions League campaign beginning September 30.

Algerian midfielder Osama Cheta, 29, has emerged as a top target for Qadsia. Cheta recently announced his departure and retirement from USM Alger after eight

successful years, during which he won four domestic titles and earned caps with the Algerian national team. Over 175 matches with USM Alger, he secured the Algerian league, Algerian Cup, CAF Confederation Cup, and African Super Cup.

Qadsia has also submitted an official offer to USM Alger for forward Andy Delort on a one-year deal, which has reportedly been accepted by both the player and his club.



Al-Tadamon squad poses for a group photo in Alexandria.

Al-Tadamon camp kicks off in Alexandria

Al-Tadamon has kicked off its pre-season training in Alexandria, Egypt, with a camp scheduled to run until early September, including three friendly matches.

The team is preparing for its Zain Premier League opener against Kuwait Club on September 12.

The club has strengthened its squad with several key signings, including Nigerian Folabi, French duo Jona-

than Bamba and Zakaria Slimani, Portuguese Pedro, and Syrian Ahmed Al-Dali. Al-Tadamon aims to deliver strong and competitive performances in the upcoming season.

Local talent has also been added, with Abdulmohsen Al-Ajmi, Salman Al-Ajmi, Turki Al-Mutairi, and Ali Fadel joining the squad, while the club continues negotiations to bring in additional local players.

Atletico aims to bounce back as Barcelona, Real seek second win



Osasuna's Ruben Garcia, left, and Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior fight for the ball during the La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Osasuna in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Osasuna hosts Valencia

MADRID, Aug 21, (Xinhua): The second round of the new La Liga season features last season's top three teams facing newly-promoted sides, with FC Barcelona and Real Madrid playing away to Levante and Oviedo respectively, while Atletico Madrid hosts Elche.

Barcelona travels to Valencia on Saturday evening to take on a Levante side that was only denied a point on its return to the top flight by an injury-time goal against Deportivo Alaves.

Barca coach Hansi Flick is likely to field the same team that cruised to a 3-0 win over Mallorca last weekend, with Robert Lewandowski still out injured and Fermin Lopez and Ferran Torres both in the starting 11.

The club also hopes midfielder Oriol Romeu will have rescinded his contract by the weekend to allow for defender Gerard Martin to be included in the squad.

Real Madrid started its campaign on Tuesday night with a 1-0 win at home to Osasuna thanks to Kylian Mbappe's second-half penalty. Coach Xabi Alonso was content with his side's defensive performance, but will be looking for more in

attack away to Oviedo this Sunday.

Oviedo got an early indication of how tough life in La Liga can be with an opening day defeat to Villarreal, and will be without suspended midfielder Albert Reina after his early red card.

Atletico Madrid disappointed in an opening day defeat away to Espanyol, losing 2-1 after having taken the lead, and coach Diego Simeone has lost forward Alex Baena to a muscle injury sustained in training.

Simeone has other attacking options, however, and could start either Antoine Griezmann or Alexander Sorloth against Elche on Saturday.

Atletico, the biggest-spending team in Spain for two consecutive summers, needs a win to prevent Barcelona and Real Madrid from pulling ahead early in the season.

Elche showed plenty of fighting spirit at home to Real Betis on its return to the top flight, although the team's possession-based style may allow Atletico to cause trouble on the break.

The round of matches kicks off on Friday night with Betis hosting Alaves, and coach Manuel Pellegrini will likely be frustrated to have only three days to prepare after Monday's draw at Elche.

Mallorca is without suspended duo Vedat Muriqi and Manu Morales for the visit of Celta Vigo. Both sides lost their respective opening games, with Mallorca going down to Barcelona while

Celta suffered a surprise defeat at home to Getafe.

Osasuna hosts Valencia on Sunday and will be without defender Abel Bretones, who faces a two-match ban following his injury-time red card at the Bernabeu on Tuesday night.

Espanyol visits Real Sociedad, with Sheraldo Becker and Umar Sadiq on the verge of leaving the Basque club.

Girona needs to improve drastically from its opening day display to Rayo Vallecano ahead of a difficult trip to Villarreal, who will hope to have completed the signings of Tani Oluwaseyi and Renato Veiga in time to include them in the squad.

Rayo Vallecano, competing in UEFA Conference League action on Thursday, may have limited preparation for a Monday visit to Athletic Bilbao. Oihan Sancet could be back for Athletic after suffering a knee injury in a friendly against Liverpool, while Rayo's team selection could be conditioned by the Conference League first-leg result against Belarusian side Neman Grodno.

The weekend action concludes at Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium, where Sevilla hosts Getafe. The visiting team caused a shock by beating Celta Vigo on matchday 1, while Sevilla hit the woodwork and played exciting football against Bilbao, with striker Akor Adams and winger Dodi Lukebakio impressing.

Kazma loses to Al-Khalidiya in Turkey preseason friendly

ISTANBUL, Aug 21: Kazma suffered a 3-1 defeat to Bahrain's Al-Khalidiya in its second friendly match of the training camp in Turkey.

The lone goal for Kazma came from its Algerian forward Idriss Chaoubi. In its first friendly, Kazma drew 0-0 with Saudi side Damac. It is scheduled to play two more friendlies against Bahraini clubs Al-Muharraq and Sitra on August 24 and 27.

Croatian coach Dragan Tadic is working to prepare his squad ahead of the Zain Pre-

mier League opener against Al-Salmiya on September 12.

Kazma has strengthened its roster with several signings, including Sultan Al-Anzi and Khalifa Raheel, the return of Shbib Al-Khaldi, and the addition of Othman Al-Shammari. Foreign players include Algerian Idriss Chaoubi and Jordanians Ali Azaiza and Youssef Abu Al-Jazar. The club also renewed contracts for Jordanian Anas Al-Awadat and Beninese Samouel Akinola.



Players compete for the ball during the match.

Best of the Rest

Kounde pens new Barca contract: FC Barcelona defender Jules Kounde has signed a contract extension that adds three years to his current deal to keep him at the La Liga champion until the end of June 2030.

The French international signed the agreement on Thursday lunchtime in a ceremony alongside Barca president Joan Laporta and director of sport, Deco.

"I am very happy to have renewed my contract. It was all very simple because I am happy here and so it was easy to reach an agreement with the club," said the player, who joined Barcelona from Sevilla in July 2022 for 50 million euros (58 million US dollars).

The 26-year-old has played 142 times for Barcelona in both central defense and also at right back. Speaking to the Barcelona club TV station, he highlighted two key moments in his career. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Leeds signs Okafor from Milan: Leeds completed the signing of Noah Okafor from AC Milan on Thursday for a fee of around 21 million euros (\$24.5 million).

The newly-promoted Premier League team announced that Okafor had signed a four-year contract "subject to a work permit and international clearance." The Switzerland international is Leeds' ninth signing since it earned promotion back to the Premier League, where it won its first match of the season on Monday, against Everton.

Okafor - who can play on either wing or as a central striker - joined Milan in 2023 from Red Bull Salzburg for around 14 million euros (then \$15.5 million), penning a five-year contract.

The 25-year-old never really lived up to his potential with the Rossoneri, although he arrives off a promising pre-season, where he scored four goals in Milan's Asia tour - including two against Liverpool. (AP)

Kehl closely reviewing new arrivals for the back line

Dortmund faces injury crisis ahead of season opener

BERLIN, Aug 21, (Xinhua): Injury concerns weigh on 2024 UEFA Champions League finalist Borussia Dortmund ahead of its 2025-26 league season opener against St. Pauli this Saturday evening.

Back and Yellow coach Niko Kovac is trying to figure out the suitable starting lineup, while dealing with several sidelined defenders.

Due to the increasing list of losses, the club is reportedly changing its transfer plans, with sporting director Sebastian Kehl closely reviewing new arrivals for the back line.

With Waldemar Anton and Ramy Bensebaini as the only two regulars available, players like Nico Schlotterbeck, Niklas Sule, Yan Couto, Julian Ryerson, and Emre Can are all battling injuries.

While former Bayern coach and media pundit Felix Magath named BVB as the "only rival that can challenge Bayern on their way to the 2025-26 title," 53-year-old Kovac is hesitant to make predictions.

Media reports suggest that only



Borussia Dortmund players celebrate after a goal scored by teammate Serhou Guirassy, right, during a German Cup first-round soccer match between Essen and Borussia Dortmund, at Stadion an der Hafenstrasse in Essen, Germany. (AP)

14 players are likely to make the first flight to meet both domestic and international ambitions. However, behind the scenes, Kovac is

demanding additional arrivals to fill the gaps. Although reports mention a total of 18 players on his list, the club's budget appears to allow for

only one or two new signings, as they must stay within a 30 million euro spending limit.

Achieving consistency appears to be the coach's biggest challenge, especially given Dortmund's struggle for stability since the departure of legendary coach Jurgen Klopp to Liverpool.

Only a few players, such as Swiss international goalkeeper Gregor Kobel and French striker Serhou Guirassy, seem to reach the highest performance levels this season.

Much of Dortmund's hopes depend on Guirassy and Jobe Bellingham, the brother of Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham.

"I expect the BVB to challenge Bayern if Kovac can work without internal pressure," Magath said. That might include new arrivals, the 1983 Champions League winner said.

Beyond the league, Dortmund aims to advance beyond last season's last-minute Champions League qualification, targeting a top-eight finish in Europe.

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NEWS



Andrea Vavassori, left, of Italy, and Sara Errani, of Italy, hold up the championship trophy after defeating Iga Swiatek, of Poland, and Casper Ruud, of Norway, in the mixed doubles final at the U.S. Open tennis championships in New York. (AP)

Sports

Al-Mousawi and Shaaban earn a historic Karate World Championship qualification

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: Kuwait's national karate stars, Said Salman Al-Mousawi and Abdullah Shaaban, have made history as the first Kuwaitis to qualify for the individual Karate World Championship through the international ranking system.

The tournament will take place in Cairo from November 27-30. Al-Mousawi secured his spot by achieving fifth place in the individ-

ual Kata international ranking, while Shaaban qualified in the individual Kumite 60 kg category after finishing fourth in the international standings. Speaking about the achievement, Al-Mousawi expressed his pride:

"This is a historic moment, as the World Championship is now held separately for individual events. Previously, the individual and team competitions were combined, but now they alternate annually."

He added, "Only 32 athletes qualify for each category in the Karate World Cup, ei-

ther through continental medals or by accumulating points in international competitions under the World Karate Federation. Our qualification through the ranking system highlights the level of dedication and consistency required."

Al-Mousawi emphasized that this milestone demonstrates the rapid development of karate in Kuwait and thanked everyone who supported him in reaching the World Cup, allowing him and Shaaban to proudly represent Kuwait on the global stage.



Kuwait's national karate stars, Said Salman Al-Mousawi and Abdullah Shaaban.

Al-Shabab's youth handball teams begin training camp

Friendly success for Kazma ahead of Championship



The Al-Shabab delegation.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

IZMIR, Turkey, Aug 21: Kazma's first-handball team edged past Turkish side Eskişehir 40-36 in a friendly match. The game was part of Kazma's current training camp in Izmir, Turkey, where the team is preparing for the new season and the upcoming Arab Clubs Handball Championship. The tournament, hosted by Kuwait Club from September 12-22, will also feature Al-Arabi and Al-Salmiya. Kazma has two more friendlies scheduled before returning to Kuwait on August 28.

The Kazma delegation is led by team director Salem Abdul-Salam and includes administrator Hamza Al-Wazzan, Serbian coach Božo, technical analyst Waleed Al-Anzi, fitness coach Abdullah Maseer, goalkeeping coach Omar Al-Mulaih, physiotherapist Na-

der Qassem, and 16 players.

Hamza Al-Wazzan praised the organization and progress of the Izmir camp, highlighting the players' commitment to the technical and administrative staff's guidance. "With important competitions ahead, including the Premier League and Arab Championship, we must maximize the benefits of this Turkish camp to represent Kuwaiti handball at its best," he said. He also thanked Kazma's board and management for facilitating all team preparations.

Meanwhile, Al-Shabab's youth handball teams for the U-12 and U-14 categories have begun their training camp in Cairo, arriving yesterday to prepare for the new season.

The Al-Shabab delegation is headed by board member Jaber Al-Zanki and includes team director Mubarak Dahal, administrator Abdulwahab Haider, coaches Imad Youssef

and Hassan Al-Hassan, along with players Omar Al-Muraished, Hussein Al-Qattan, Badr Al-Salem, Imran Al-Omran, Omar Khaled, Mohammed Al-Ajmi, Ahmed Talal, Bani Al-Fadhli, Ahmed Al-Sarraj, Ali Karam, Khalid Al-Saad, Abdulrahman Faisal, Ismail Al-Masri, Mohammed Marhej, Ahmed Marhej, Abdullah Hamed Mz'al, Ali Hamed Mz'al, Ali Ahmed Al-Shammari, and Shoaib Al-Youha.

Mubarak Dahal emphasized that the Cairo camp aims to build strong, competitive youth teams and develop a new generation capable of joining the first team in the future. "The club has entrusted me with building new teams, and we are working to fulfill the management's ambitions by developing the sport from the grassroots through youth programs, schools, and modern training methods," he added.

Repeat glory for Errani, Vavassori

Swiatek and Ruud beaten

NEW YORK, Aug 21, (AP): Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori weren't even sure they would get to defend their U.S. Open mixed doubles title. Organizers revamped the tournament because they wanted singles superstars, not doubles specialists.

They not only made it back to New York, they made it back to the top.

The Italians beat No. 3 seeds Iga Swiatek and Casper Ruud 6-3, 5-7 (10-6), winning four matches over two days to earn \$1 million- a huge raise over their earnings in New York last year in a format that looked nothing like this one.

Errani and Vavassori were among the many critics of the changes to the event that shut out every other traditional doubles pairing, but had nothing but smiles - and plenty of hugs - after building a quick lead in the match tiebreaker and holding on in front of a large crowd inside Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I think it was important for us to play," Vavassori said. "Like, I have to say the initiative was also important because it was really a statement that doubles can become something better. The stadium was packed. The people were enjoying it. If something doesn't work - like, we showed today

that it's working. Like, the people were going crazy."

It was a setting rarely enjoyed by doubles players and what U.S. Open organizers sought when they overhauled their tournament, moving it to well before singles play starts Sunday in hopes that tennis' best-known players would play.

Many of them did. But in the end, the event belonged to the doubles duo.

Eight teams in the 16-team field qualified by their players' combined singles rankings, with the remaining teams given wild cards. Errani doubted the Italians were going to get one.

They eventually did and became the first repeat mixed doubles champions in Flushing Meadows since Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Jamie Murray in 2018-19. Both repeatedly said they were representing the many doubles players who never had the chance to come to New York with them this year.

"I think this one is also for them," Errani said.

The event drew past U.S. Open singles champions Carlos Alcaraz, Emma Raducanu, Novak Djokovic, Naomi Osaka and Daniil Medvedev, all of whom lost on the first day. Even without them, almost all the seats were full for the three matches Wednesday night in Arthur Ashe Stadium, with the roof closed after it rained most of the afternoon.

Kuwait U-20 impresses in win over Al-Jazeera



Players celebrate their win over Al-Jazeera.

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 21: The Kuwait U-20 national team secured a convincing 3-0 victory over Al-Jazeera in a friendly match held at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium's secondary field.

Abdullah Al-Rashidi, Mubarak Al-Ajmi, and Abdullah Al-Eibani were on target for the youth team.

Kuwait's senior national team coach, Portuguese Helio Sousa, attended the match to follow the team's performance.

Kuwait is now gearing up for the Gulf Youth Cup in Abha, starting on August 28. Kuwait is drawn in Group A with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, while Group B features Oman, Iraq, Bahrain, and Egypt, which is participating as a replacement for the UAE.

Ronaldo looks to maintain perfect record against Al-Ahli

HONG KONG, Aug 21: All eyes will be on the Hong Kong International Stadium at 3:00 PM on Saturday, as Al-Ahli and Al-Nassr face off in the Saudi Super Cup final.

Portuguese star and Al-Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo brings a strong record against Al-Ahli into the showdown, aiming to secure another Super Cup title. Al-Ahli reached the final after a 5-1 win over Qadsia, while Al-Nassr defeated Al-Ittihad 2-1.

Ronaldo has faced Al-Ahli four times in the Roshn Saudi Professional League, winning three matches and drawing once, remaining undefeated against the team.

Among Saudi clubs backed by the Public Investment Fund — Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad, and Al-



Al-Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ahli — Ronaldo boasts his best goal-scoring average against Al-

Ahli. He has scored three goals in four matches, averaging 0.75

goals per game. By comparison, he scored five goals in seven matches against Al-Ittihad (0.71 goals per game) and three goals in eight matches against Al-Hilal (0.37 goals per game).

Al-Ahli enters the final aware that past results cannot determine tomorrow's outcome. Following a dominant offensive performance against Qadsia, the team is eager to break Ronaldo's unbeaten streak and claim the Super Cup.

Al-Nassr, on the other hand, enters the match with high confidence, looking to extend its recent dominance over Al-Ahli. With Portuguese stars Cristiano Ronaldo and João Félix, guided by experienced coach Jorge Jesus, the "Global Club" is well-positioned to contest the title.

A new era begins at Everton while Eze and Isak sagas rumble on

LONDON, Aug 21, (AP): Everton will be showing off its new stadium this weekend. Might Arsenal be showing off a bold new signing?

The second round of the Premier League will see Everton finally begin life away from its long-time home of Goodison Park when the team plays the first competitive game at its waterfront, 53,000-seat arena at Bramley-Moore Dock.

Brighton will be the visitor on Sunday for the start of a new era for Everton, which - on the field - began the season in miserable fashion with a 1-0 loss at Leeds on Monday.

As for Arsenal, Saturday's home match against Leeds could be an opportunity to introduce Eberechi Eze to the fans at Emirates Stadium, should his reported move from Crystal Palace go through.

British broadcaster Sky Sports reported Thursday that Arsenal had agreed to sign Eze for 67.5 million pounds (\$90.8 million), beating fierce rival Tottenham to the signature of

the England forward in what would be a dramatic twist.

Eze is set to make his final appearance for Palace in a Europa Conference League qualifier on Thursday. Neither Arsenal nor Palace has made an official comment about his potential move.

Liverpool's trip to Newcastle on Monday is the standout match and it has added spice given the clubs' dealings during the offseason regarding Alexander Isak.

Liverpool has had a bid rejected for the Sweden striker, who told Newcastle he wanted to explore his options and has been training away from the squad in recent weeks. Isak even released an explosive post on social media this week, saying his club had broken promises and that their relationship "can't continue."

Newcastle says the club hasn't received an appropriate bid for Isak, who missed the 0-0 draw at Aston Villa in Round 1. Liverpool opened with an incident-filled 4-2 win over Bournemouth.

In another high-profile matchup, Manchester City hosts Tottenham on Saturday after both teams got off to a fast start to league play. City won 4-0 at Wolves and Tottenham triumphed 3-0 at home to Burnley.

Viktor Gyokeres had an overwhelming debut for Arsenal last weekend following his \$85 million offseason move from Sporting Lisbon, touching the ball just 21 times, having no shots and getting substituted after 59 minutes of the 1-0 win at Manchester United. He'll hope for more opportunities against Leeds.

Jack Grealish might get a first start for Everton after his loan move from Manchester City, having only been on the bench against Leeds.

Similarly, will Manchester United give a start to striker Benjamin Sesko away to Fulham on Sunday and therefore play together its three offseason signings in attack - Sesko, Bryan Mbeumo and Matheus Cunha?

Expect Isak to be missing again for Newcastle against

Liverpool after his midweek social-media outburst. It leaves his team without a senior striker, having released Callum Wilson this summer and failed to bring in a replacement.

Liverpool was without Ryan Gravenberch against Bournemouth while he served a suspension, but the Netherlands midfielder is available again.

Arsenal is set to be without forward Kai Havertz against Leeds because of a reported knee injury, a development that likely ensures more game time for Gyokeres and might have been the spark for the club to make the move for Eze.

Watch out for some potential vitriol between the supporters of Crystal Palace and Nottingham Forest at Selhurst Park on Sunday.

Palace, the FA Cup winner last season, was demoted from the Europa League to the Conference League last month for breaching UEFA rules on club ownership, in a saga the club believes was influenced by Forest, which benefited by being promoted to the Europa League at Palace's expense.