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Opinion

Have mercy on those who profit from agricultural and industrial holdings ... and impose taxes

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

MANY questions are directed to the Cabinet and its affiliated institutions about the diversification of income sources and the strengthening of the national product. These questions are valid, considering that those involved in these matters – owners of agricultural, industrial or service holdings – are keen on revitalizing the national economy and freeing it from procedures that burden citizens and hinder the development of commercial, industrial, and most impor-

tantly, agricultural activity in the country. Before delving into the heart of the matter, it must be emphasized that food security is not a luxury, and agricultural holdings are not meant to benefit one party or another. Rather, they were established to secure a food source that can help stem the outflow of funds spent on imports and ensure a reasonable level of food security. This principle has been followed by cabinets since the establishment of the modern State. Successive governments have even reinforced the role of this vital sector, recognizing its potential for economic diversification, maximizing the contribution of the private sector, and moving beyond the monopoly of State revenues.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the agricultural sector proved its resilience, significantly mitigating the food crisis. Moreover, in the recent war, it played a crucial role in stabilizing the local market and ensuring food security when supply chains were disrupted. This underscores the need to further strengthen the sector through flexible and supportive measures for farmers and companies operating within it. Unfortunately, the recent decisions concerning this sector can be described as short-sighted, as they hinder its development. In contrast, in other countries, agriculture is considered a cornerstone of national security, inviolable and protected by all measures designed to bolster it. Therefore, the recent measures

taken are not in line with this principle at all. When a citizen acquires agricultural land and works hard to develop it, transforming it from a barren desert into a fertile oasis, he invests his money, effort and time. When he grows old and no longer able to care for it, he will not relinquish it. Instead, he will sell it to someone who understands its value and manages it to ensure it continues to contribute to food security.

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Drug 'sting' sinks teeth into dentist

Raids yield major seizures

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Officers from the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) in the Interior Ministry, led by Director of the department Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard and his assistant, Brigadier General Sheikh Hamad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, arrested a well-known dentist in Jahra for the possession of cocaine and narcotic pills.

A security source revealed details of the arrest to

the newspaper, confirming that the anti-narcotics officers received information about the suspicious activities of the prominent dentist who had an undisclosed quantity of cocaine and narcotic pills in his possession. The source stated that this is part of ongoing efforts to track down drug dealers and users. The source added that based on this information, the officers set up an entrapment, which led to the arrest of the suspect in Salmiya.

The source affirmed that the suspect and the seized contraband were referred to the concerned authorities.

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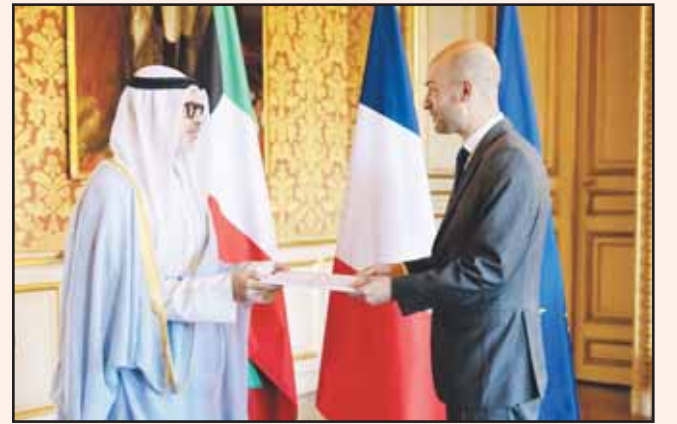
Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot

HH Amir sends letter to Macron

PARIS, May 16, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a letter to French President Emmanuel Macron on the close historical relations between the two friendly countries and peoples, as well as ways to further strengthen bilateral ties alongside regional developments.

In a statement on Friday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah delivered the

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs photos
Kuwait FM hands a letter from HH the Amir to the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

New pedia surgery unit opens at Jahra Hospital

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The Ministry of Health announced on Thursday the opening and commissioning of a fully equipped specialized pediatric surgery ward at Jahra Hospital, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Shammari, Head of the Medical Staff, explained in a press release that the ward, located in Tower A, includes various pediatric surgical specialties, providing a comprehensive treatment environment that addresses the medical and psychological needs of children. The ward covers general pediatric surgery, urology, otolaryngology (ENT), and ophthalmology.

Meanwhile, Dr. Yaqoub Jaafar, Head of the Pediatric Surgery Unit at Jahra Hospital, highlighted that the ward's proximity to pediatric departments facilitates rapid coordination with pediatricians and simplifies postoperative follow-up care for children.

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Kuwait energy sector fortifies digital future

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) implemented digital transformation, artificial intelligence and all technological means in its marketing and operational processes, confirming the continuous leadership of the Kuwaiti oil sector in the technological field, according to an official report obtained by the newspaper.

The report revealed that Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), in cooperation with the Global Marketing Sector at KPC, digitized the loading documents.

KNPC also utilized drones in technical inspections, implemented augmented reality technologies

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Towering through a haze of swirling dust, Kuwait Liberation Tower is barely visible on Saturday as fierce north-westerly winds sweep across Kuwait amid searing temperatures.



'InvestGB' launches the fourth edition of the IGB Internship Program to empower Kuwaiti youth & develop national talent



Kuwait Insurance Company achieves KD 2.2 mln as gross profit for period ending March 31, 2026

KNG debunks fake statement

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The National Guard denied issuing a statement on Friday that was falsely attributed to the Government Communication Center, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

It clarified that the circulated image is a fabricated statement published by an account impersonating the official Government Communication Center on social media.

The official spokesperson for the National Guard, Brigadier

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Friday mourned the passing of Sheikh Fadhel Khaled Jaber Al-Fadhel Al-Sabah at the age of 79.

The funeral was said to take place Saturday after Asr (afternoon) prayers. (KUNA)

Kuwaiti women hailed as pillars of development

By Inaas Awadh and Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The country celebrates Kuwaiti Women's Day on May 16 each year, in appreciation of the long journey in which women have been indispensable partners in building the nation and supporting its

progress.

From the Kuwait of the 'Wall' to the Kuwait of the Constitution, and onward to the Kuwait of the modern and contemporary State, successive stages of development were built by Kuwaiti men and women, working side by side. The once silent feminine presence, armed with determination and steadfast

will, evolved into an active and influential force.

Today, the 'sister of men' stands strongly in all sectors of the nation – an active and influential force in most important State institutions and leading development sectors.

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Al-Kulaib



Al-Baqsam



Bin Salamah



Al-Mudhaf



Al-Hashash



Al-Farsi



Al-Zaid



Al-Livan



Al-Sultan



Al-Kuraibani



Al-Saeedi



Al-Kandari



Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Kuwait Songchai Chaipatiyut speaks at the event.

'Kuwait safe home'

Thai Embassy hosts 'Thai Night Market'

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Kuwait Songchai Chaipatiyut confirmed that the Embassy of Thailand is keen on strengthening ties among the Thai community in Kuwait and providing them with a supportive and safe environment.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:25	Asr	15:20
Sunrise ..	04:55	Maghrib ..	18:34
Zohr	11:44	Isha	20:01

Kuwaiti women radiate in politics, are progress key

Prowess shared equally with men: Dr Al-Mashaan

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): Kuwait marks Kuwaiti Women's Day on Saturday, an annual occasion celebrated on May 16 to commemorate a pivotal milestone in the country's democratic journey when Kuwaiti women gained full political rights in 2005.

The occasion recognizes the vital role Kuwaiti women continue to play in national development, honoring decades of contributions across political, economic, academic, and social spheres as key partners in advancing the country's progress.

Over the past 21 years, Kuwaiti women have steadily expanded their presence in political leadership, reflecting the state's commitment to empowering women in decision-making positions.

Women first participated as voters and candidates in the 2006 National Assembly elections, while Dr. Massouma Al-Mubarak became Kuwait's first female minister on June 14, 2005, serving as Minister of Planning and Minister of Administrative Development.

Kuwait's current government includes three female ministers: Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works; Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs; and Dr. Reem Al-Fulaj, Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs. Since 2005, 18 women have served in ministerial positions.

Recent years have also seen women appointed to prominent leadership posts, including Dr. Dina Al-Mailem as Director of Kuwait University, Abeer Al-Awadhi as head of the National Cybersecurity Center, Mona Fajhan Al-Mutairi as Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Dr. Dalal Al-Othman as Director-General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs, Manal Al-Asfour as Director-General of Kuwait Municipality, Rabab Al-Usaimi as Director-General of the Public Authority for Manpower, and Dr. Rana Al-Fares as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha).

In 2024, four women were appointed as directors in the Public Prosecution, while Kuwait now has 19 female judges, around 88 female prosecutors, 19 women in the Amiri Guard, and more than 900 women serving in the police force.

Kuwaiti women also maintain a strong presence in the workforce, representing 60 percent of the national labor force in the government sector and nearly 48 percent in the private sector in



Dr Al-Mashaan



Dr Al-Huwaila

2025, while holding 28 percent of senior leadership positions nationwide.

Their growing achievements in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, research, and international innovation further underscore Kuwaiti women's rising influence and enduring role in shaping the nation's future. Kuwaiti Women's Day remains a tribute to their accomplishments and a renewed commitment to supporting their continued advancement.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Saturday that Kuwaiti women have long been, and continue to be, a fundamental pillar in the nation's achievements and progress and an influential force in shaping the country's future.

The remarks came in a statement issued by the ministry on Kuwaiti Women's Day.

The ministry expressed great pride in the remarkable achievements and pioneering national contributions made by Kuwaiti women, noting that their efforts have played a significant role in supporting the country's development journey and enhancing Kuwait's standing regionally and internationally.

Over the decades, Kuwaiti women have demonstrated outstanding competence and maintained a distinguished presence across various sectors, contributing effectively to progress and decision-making processes, it added.

The statement attributed these accomplishments to the continued support and patronage of the country's wise political leadership and to Kuwait's longstanding approach to promoting women's participation in positions of responsibility.

Dr Noura Al Mashaan

Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mashaan said Saturday that May 16 represents a major turning point and a pivotal milestone in Kuwait's history.

In a statement to KUNA on the occasion of

Kuwaiti Women's Day, Al-Mashaan said Kuwaiti women have played a pioneering role in the country's development process, noting that women have long stood alongside men as equal partners in society since the pre-oil era.

She stressed that Kuwaiti women have demonstrated competence across various sectors and assumed leadership and supervisory positions while proving their capabilities at the local, regional, and international levels.

Al-Mashaan also recalled the role of Kuwaiti women during the Iraqi invasion in 1990, saying history would not forget their honorable sacrifices and courage in confronting the occupation, with many Kuwaiti women earning recognition among the nation's martyrs.

She said celebrating Kuwaiti Women's Day reflects the distinguished legacy of Kuwaiti women and highlights the supportive environment that strengthened their political, social, and economic presence, giving them the confidence to excel across different fields.

Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila

Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila affirmed Saturday that Kuwaiti Women's Day, which falls on May 16, represents historical symbolism and great national significance that reflect Kuwait's civilized image.

This occasion is not only an annual celebration but also a strategic station to recall success and give and discuss means of developing the institutional and legislative system to continue empowering women as a full partner in development and the Kuwait Vision 2035, Al-Huwaila told KUNA in a press release.

This historic occasion gains its importance as it has granted full political rights to women, she noted. Since that day, on May 16, 2005, Kuwait's women have been granted the rights to vote and run for office, a milestone in the nation's democratic development.

This achievement was the culmination of the initiative by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the leadership support for this path continued under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, she noted.

The day represents a turning point in boosting Kuwait's democracy and equality of opportunities inside Kuwait's society and societal and developmental stability, she elaborated.

Women make up 58 percent of the total workforce in the country, which constitutes a key national indicator and developmental leadership.



PM Diwan photo

Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attends the opening session of the 1st European-Gulf Geopolitical and Investment Summit in Greece.

GCC states, European ties deep-rooted, historic: PM

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, took part Friday in the opening session of the first European-Gulf Geopolitical and Investment Summit held in Greece.

During the summit, His Highness the Prime Minister affirmed the depth of the historic ties linking the GCC states with their European partners, expressing hope that the gathering would yield positive outcomes that enhance Gulf-European cooperation and support the aspirations of peoples toward prosperity and development.

His Highness said Kuwait seeks to

strengthen cooperation with friendly European countries in energy, investment, infrastructure, and digital transformation.

He added that the Kuwaiti government is working on updating economic legislation to ensure a transparent and attractive investment environment, particularly as it moves forward with major strategic projects under the country's ambitious development plan.

His Highness also stressed Kuwait's commitment to supporting the stability of global energy markets, noting that the current stage requires greater international coordination on maritime navigation to reduce tensions and ensure the smooth flow of global trade through vital waterways.

Repairs to cost over KD 114 million

MEWRE refers tender to erect 5 transformer stations to SAB

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has referred the tender for the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of Doha Seawater Reverse Osmosis Desalination Plant, along with equipment to increase the alkalinity of the produced water (Phase Two), to the State Audit Bureau (SAB).

The tender, valued at KD114.28 million, is for review and pre-audit procedures, to be followed by contract approval, provided no issues requiring a response from the ministry are raised.

The ministry had earlier obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to award the contract to the lowest bidder that met the technical requirements and specifications.

Accordingly, the tender was referred to SAB to ensure the veracity of the procedures before proceeding with the contract signing.

This project aims to increase freshwater production to meet rising demand for water as a result of the population growth and the expansion of new residential and industrial cities. It is expected to increase the daily supply of potable water by 60 million imperial gallons without the need to mix with groundwater, as the plant will use reverse osmosis. It will also balance electricity and water production at the East Doha and West Doha power stations.

Furthermore, the Electricity Transmission Stations Sector at the ministry intends to issue a tender for the establishment of five transformer stations in Bayan-Block 15 (Mubarakiya Project), Mahboula, Mutlaa, Sabah Al-Sale-Block Five, and the vicinity of the CAPT building, in order to provide the electricity needed for expanding high and extra-high voltage networks.

These five stations are expected to be tendered as one project in the current fiscal year, as the ministry included them in the contracts for the benefit of the Transmission Networks Sector.

Other Voices

The dangers of jet skis ...

By Ahmad alsarraf

THERE is no difference between vehicles and engines used on public roads and jet skis used at sea. Both serve purposes of transportation and recreation, and both can result in the loss of human or animal life. In addition, both can cause environmental harm and pollution.

However, the laws governing road vehicles are much stricter and more comprehensive than those regulating jet skis. Unlike road transport, there are no unified international laws specifically governing jet skis. Their use is instead regulated under maritime navigation laws and the individual regulations of each country.

Most countries require jet ski users to comply with all or most of the following regulations:

- The operator and any passengers must wear life jackets
- Children are prohibited from riding them, whether with the operator or otherwise
- The minimum age for operating jet skis is 18, as they can be hazardous and potentially deadly.
- Jet skis must not be used outside daylight hours
- Operators must maintain a distance of several hundred meters from public beaches and designated swimming areas
- They must not approach ships or other watercraft
- They must not perform stunts or engage in dangerous racing
- Jet skis must be registered with a government authority and display a clearly visible identification number on both sides. Their licensing is



alsarraf

generally treated similarly to that of small boats.

■ Users must comply with Coast Guard regulations and guidelines.

■ Their use should be prohibited in areas where fish, turtles, dolphins, and other endangered species breed.

■ Clear regulations governing their use must be established

■ Any jet skis modified to increase engine noise or produce excessive and disturbing sound levels should be confiscated.

Although some of these regulations exist, enforcement remains weak. Several accidents have occurred, including one involving a former Speaker of Parliament. The risk of jet skis colliding with beachgoers is significant due to their high speed, the difficulty of controlling such powerful machines, and the absence of designated lanes, unlike on roads.

The relevant authorities, whether the Coast Guard or the Environment Public Authority (EPA), should establish a dedicated hotline for receiving citizens' complaints, in addition to existing applications, which many people find difficult to use when reporting violations related to misuse or marine pollution caused by oil spills.

The EPA Hotline No. 157 and the No. 9222157 are reportedly unresponsive, and I have tried calling them without success. This government agency (EPA) is often criticized for a lack of seriousness in carrying out its responsibilities. As a result, we have no option but to appeal to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior to help rectify this situation. Some individuals only respond to strict enforcement measures, such as fines, confiscation of equipment, and even detention of offenders.



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Harsh weather-resistant asphalt eyed: MPW

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The asphalt mixing monitoring team, which is part of the government's Center for Testing, Quality Control, and Research at the Ministry of Public Works, has tightened its oversight of asphalt plants through smart control rooms within the facilities, reports Al-Anba daily.

From the control room, surveillance cameras captured Kuwaiti engineers monitoring digital screens

in real time, carefully verifying polymer ratios and mixing times to ensure the production of high-quality asphalt resistant to harsh weather conditions.

According to informed sources, the monitoring team has imposed a strict inspection checklist on trucks transporting asphalt for the Abdali Road maintenance project. These measures include a complete ban on the use of diesel fuel for clean-

ing trucks, due to its negative chemical impact on asphalt adhesion.

Strict temperature controls are applied to each shipment before departure to ensure it reaches the paving site at the optimal temperature.

The team uses advanced technology to digitally document all stages of production and loading, linking them to field inspection reports.

Minister: Complete Kuwaitization of PAMA by June 1

By Jaber Al-Humoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, announced on Saturday details of the Authority's development plan, foremost among which is the complete Kuwaitization of the Authority's staff by June 1, 2026.

This plan relies on national expertise and aims to solidify institutional stability within this vital humanitarian and social institution in the country.

In a press statement, Al-Sumait said that the plan includes allocating weekly open days for the Acting Director General of the Authority, Alia Al-Saqr, and Acting Deputy Director General, Manar Al-Subaie, to directly address the concerns of minors, those under its care, and their families, review their proposals, and directly resolve administrative and service-related issues.

Women prosecutors win praise for notable work

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The Public Prosecution affirmed its pride in the remarkable achievements of Kuwaiti women in various fields of judicial work, praising the vital role that female public prosecutors play in supporting the justice system and upholding the rule of law.

In a statement issued on the occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, the Public Prosecution pointed out that since the first batch of female public prosecutors joined, Kuwaiti women have proven their professional competence and capability in conducting investigations, handling cases and prosecuting in courts, reflecting their ability to shoulder judicial responsibilities in a highly efficient manner.

It added that women in the Public Prosecution now occupy leadership positions, contribute to developing legal initiatives, and represent it in local and international forums. They are also active in legal training and awareness programs, which strengthened their professional and institutional presence within the judicial system.

It attributed the achievements of Kuwaiti women to the support they receive in various State institutions.

It indicated that the occasion is a manifestation of the solid position that Kuwaiti women have attained and their competence in fulfilling their national and judicial duties with utmost dedication and integrity.

It then reaffirmed its commitment to fully support qualified Kuwaiti women and empower them to efficiently play their role in serving justice and society, keeping pace with developments in the judicial system, and intensifying institutional reform and development efforts.

He indicated that the Authority will work to increase social, recreational, and educational activities for minors and those under its care, launch a program of benefits and discounts through special cards, and expand the summer employment program for minors to provide them with broader opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills.

He explained that, on the financial and investment front, the management of the minors' funds and investments has been finalized by directing the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs to entrust investment decisions to a specialized committee to ensure the management and development of these funds according to professional and conservative principles that take into account their nature and sensitivity. Al-Sumait emphasized that the development of the Authority aims to improve the efficiency of services provided to those under its care, protect their interests, and establish governance and transparency in the management of their funds. This reflects the important humanitarian and social nature of this institution, he pointed out.

News in Brief

KFF checks Hajj sites in Makkah

JEDDAH, May 16, (KUNA): A delegation of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), which is part of the Kuwaiti Hajj mission, inspected Kuwaiti Hajj sites in Makkah to ensure compliance with safety and fire prevention criteria to protect Kuwaiti pilgrims.

In a press statement, the team's chief Brigadier General Hassan Jasem remarked that the delegation is working in collaboration with inspectors of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs to ensure the safety of the Kuwaiti Hajj sites in Makkah.

He added that the firefighting teams have been working in two morning and evening shifts, since their arrival in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by means of conducting inspection tours of all Kuwaiti Hajj sites and verifying compliance with safety and fire prevention requirements.

Prisoner exchange: The State of Kuwait welcomed the agreement reached on a prisoner exchange in the sisterly Republic of Yemen.

In a statement on Friday, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs praised the sincere efforts exerted by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in hosting the negotiations, alongside the efforts of the Office of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's full support for all efforts aimed at alleviating the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people and advancing a

comprehensive political solution that achieves security and stability in Yemen and the wider region. (KUNA)

Al-Khaldi gets 5 years: The State Security Court, presided over by Judge Nasser Al-Badr, sentenced Salman Al-Khaldi to five years in prison with hard labor, followed by deportation, reports Al-Anba daily.

The defendant was tried on charges related to violating the State Security Crimes Law, including insulting the Amiri position through his social media accounts.

Actress acquitted: The State Security Court of Appeals upheld the acquittal of an actress identified only as "A.F." on charges of circulating false news in an audio clip on social media, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Meanwhile, the court overturned the acquittal of a defendant accused of joining ISIS and disseminating extremist ideology on social media. It sentenced the citizen to three years in prison for joining ISIS and financing fighters through money transfers outside Kuwait.

In addition, the same court sentenced a blogger identified as "M.M." to three years in prison for offending the powers and rights of His Highness the Amir on social media. The ruling came after the blogger was given a two-week grace period to appear from outside Kuwait.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Green Kuwait' slogan needs to be pursued, implemented

"A few years ago, I recall the Cabinet, or the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), announcing a project to plant one million date palms as a measure to help mitigate dust storms blowing into the country from abroad, which cause significant health, environmental, and economic damage." Kuwaiti journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Following this announcement, we were optimistic that the government had finally recognized the importance of greening desert areas, which are highly susceptible to dust storms that adversely affect public health and overall well-being."

"Unfortunately, however, such government promises have not been fully realized. The issue lies in the fact that the government makes announcements and issues decisions, but implementation often does not follow."

"Planting date palms in desert areas offers several benefits, including helping to protect populated regions from dust storms, as well as providing economic returns through the production and sale of dates, especially since dates are a popular fruit among both citizens and residents."

"Dates are a staple in Kuwaiti and Gulf households, particularly during Ramadan."

"If we were to count the number of date palms in streets, farms, and private homes, the total would likely exceed one million. However, during the harvest season, locally produced Kuwaiti dates are rarely seen in the market, and when they do appear, they are limited in quantity and quickly sold out."

"Imported dates often fail to meet proper health and hygiene standards and may contain dust, sand, or even worms."

"There was once a widespread misconception that agriculture in Kuwait was failing. However, thanks to the efforts of young Kuwaitis and the availability of resources, we now see farms producing a variety of fruitful and valuable crops. Livestock farms also contribute to the development of the country's animal wealth."

"Green Kuwait" is a slogan that should be actively pursued and implemented, rather than merely repeated. A greener Kuwait is a goal worth striving for. Is it really impossible?"

Also:

"The real estate market in Kuwait cannot be understood in isolation from the impact of public debt and global economic fluctuations, as the performance of this vital sector is closely tied to economic growth indicators and developments in international markets," legal researcher **Emad Hussein Al-Aqab** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Public debt, often associated with periods of economic slowdown, has a direct impact on various sectors, most notably the real estate sector. During such periods, economies typically experience weaker growth, declining demand, and reduced activity in global markets. These conditions are reflected in the real estate market through lower demand and increased pressure on property prices."

"This impact is not confined to a single market, but it extends to real estate markets worldwide, including the Kuwaiti market."

"Kuwait is among the countries that rely heavily on oil revenues, making its economy particularly vulnerable to global fluctuations, especially given the close link between oil prices and the performance of the international economy."

"When global demand for oil declines, public revenues decrease, affecting spending and economic growth rates, which in turn influence demand in the real estate market."

"The effects of public debt are not limited to demand alone but also extend to financial and monetary aspects. Economic instability may lead to a decline in foreign investment and reduced market liquidity, ultimately weakening real estate trading activity."

"In some cases, purchasing power may be affected by economic pressures, leading investors to adopt a more cautious approach."

"Despite these challenges, the Kuwaiti real estate market possesses underlying strengths that provide it with a degree of resilience. The market relies heavily on domestic demand, supported by relatively high income levels."

"In addition, Kuwait's political and economic stability enhances its investment appeal, making it a favorable environment for attracting investments under normal economic conditions."

"On the other hand, some experts believe that periods of economic slowdown associated with public debt may create promising invest-

ment opportunities. During such periods, property prices often decline, making them more attractive to investors and offering the potential for strong future returns once markets recover and economic activity resumes."

"Therefore, the impact of public debt on the Kuwaiti real estate market is temporary and tied to shifting economic cycles, rather than an indication of any structural weakness in the market itself."

"With the availability of fundamental resources and the economy's capacity for recovery, the real estate sector remains one of the most important investment channels capable of regaining its momentum."

"In conclusion, the importance of diversifying sources of income and strengthening non-oil sectors cannot be overstated, as this supports the stability of the national economy and reduces its exposure to global fluctuations. Such measures will have a positive impact on the sustainability and long-term growth of the real estate market."

□ □ □

"Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in disputes related to letters of credit due to their widespread use," Kuwaiti lawyer **Sarah Al-Jassem** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Letters of credit are considered among the most important instruments of commercial financing and the settlement of contractual obligations between parties."

"In this article, I will address this system from a simplified legal perspective, clarifying the nature of the relationships between the parties involved and highlighting the most significant issues that commonly arise in connection with it."

"Letters of credit are widely preferred in transactions between individuals and companies because they protect the interests and rights of all parties involved, particularly as they are executed through banks operating under the supervision of the Central Bank."

"A letter of credit constitutes a form of undertaking and binding commitment issued by a bank at the request of its client. Under this undertaking, the issuing bank agrees to pay a specific amount to a beneficiary designated by the client upon the submission of documents that comply with the agreed terms and conditions. These terms are set out in the letter of credit itself and include details such as the method of payment, the duration of the transaction process, the required number of document copies, and the validity period of the credit."

"The legal significance of a letter of credit lies in the fact that it creates a legal relationship independent from the underlying transaction from which it arises. It establishes a tripartite relationship among the issuing bank, the client, and the beneficiary. As a general rule, defenses arising from the original relationship between the bank's client and the beneficiary may not be invoked to prevent the bank from fulfilling its obligation, except in exceptional circumstances, such as proven fraud or a clear misuse of the letter of credit."

"However, despite all the guarantees associated with letters of credit, disputes may still arise and, in some cases, result in the non-disbursement of funds. Such disputes may include disagreements over whether the submitted documents conform to the terms and conditions of the credit, differing interpretations of the credit provisions, delays in the submission of documents, technical errors in document preparation, or refusal of payment due to procedural irregularities such as exchange rate fluctuations, fraud, or forgery."

"The judiciary has consistently upheld the strict application of the principle of documentary compliance among the client, the bank, and the beneficiary in order to enhance the stability and security of banking transactions. However, such strictness may at times give rise to commercial disputes, particularly where the breach is merely procedural and does not affect the core of the banking transaction itself."

"This highlights the importance of carefully reviewing and verifying documents to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the letter of credit and the applicable banking regulations. It also underscores the need to verify the credibility of the parties involved and to transact with reputable entities in order to reduce potential risks and avoid future disputes. Such matters require a thorough understanding of the applicable legal framework to ensure the protection of rights and the stability of commercial transactions, although no system can provide absolute protection against fraud."

— Compiled by **Simi K. Kutty**



Hassan Ali Karam



Sarah Al-Jassem

DM reviews progress of strategic projects

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah made an inspection visit recently to the Technical Affairs Sector (Support Services Department), where he reviewed several vital and strategic projects under the sector's supervision.

A ministry statement said that Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali reviewed the vital projects overseen by the sector, including design, implementation and construction as-

pects, commending the progress witnessed.

Upon his arrival, the defense minister was received by Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshaal Al-Sabah, Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs Brig. Gen. Khalifa Duaij Al-Sabah and senior army officers.



Sheikh Abdullah



Farwaniya Governorate photo Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Nouf Behbehani at his office.

Clean, safe environment vital for health of people

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met with acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Nouf Behbehani at his office last week.

The objectives of the meeting include solidifying coordination between Farwaniya Governorate and EPA, as well as tackling environmental issues of mutual interest.

They agreed on the importance of supporting environmental initiative, raising public awareness, finding ways to protect the environment, and intensifying joint efforts to ensure sustainable development and to better serve the residents of the governorate.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Behbehani expressed her gratitude to the Governor for the warm welcome and affirmed the commitment of EPA to strengthening cooperation with the governorate.

She also commended the governorate for fully supporting environmental and community initiatives and activities.

Police arrest grocer for selling illegal 'tumbak'

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Officers from the Capital Security Directorate detained four Asian expatriates and confiscated KD 9,826 found inside a grocery store that was found to be selling the banned form of tobacco called "tumbak," reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to a security source, during a foot patrol in Mirqab, officers noticed a large crowd of expatriate workers gathered around a grocery store. Upon approaching the location, a large number of the expatriates fled, while the store owner, his assistant, and two other expatriates were apprehended.

Investigations revealed that the gathering was linked to the grocery store's sale of the banned substance "tumbak" and other nicotine derivatives.

Security personnel contacted the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which dispatched an inspector who confirmed that the products being sold were prohibited and smuggled.

Meanwhile, the Third Circuit of the Court of Cassation upheld a five-year prison sentence with hard labor for blogger Abdullah Fayrouz on charges of forging documents and filing legal claims using documents that falsely attributed him to a Kuwaiti family, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

The documents lost their legal validity after rulings confirmed that Fayrouz had no connection to that Kuwaiti family, based on investigations conducted by the Nationality and State Security Investigations Department at the Ministry of Interior.

The First Circuit of the Criminal Court had previously sentenced Fayrouz to seven years in prison with hard labor and a fine of KD 525 for impersonation under the name "Abdullah Fayrouz" (his real name is Mohammed Hassan Al-Kilani), using invalid documents and forging an official document. He later appealed the ruling, and the Court of Appeals reduced the sentence to five years with hard labor, a decision that has now been upheld by the Court of Cassation.

Court acquits 9 in 'e-fraud,' forgery, money-wash case

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

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The Criminal Court acquitted nine defendants of charges related to electronic fraud, forgery, and money laundering. The court based its ruling on insufficient evidence and the absence of conclusive proof linking the defendants to the incident.

The Public Prosecution had charged them with misappropriating KD 36,000 from a citizen's bank account through electronic transactions using his bank card and conducting online banking operations.

According to the case file, the victim stated that he received calls from unknown individuals and, following their instructions, downloaded an application for investment purposes and trading platform profits. He later discovered that sums of money had been withdrawn from his bank account without his knowledge.

The court stated that the investigations did not include a clear tracking of the movement of the KD 36,000 from the moment it left the victim's account until it reached the beneficiaries. Furthermore, sufficient information was not provided regarding the company the victim claimed to have dealt with online, including the nature of its activities or its connection to the incident.

No casualties as firemen tackle two different fires

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Fire broke out at a central market in the West Abu Futaira Industrial area on Friday afternoon, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) explained in an official statement that firefighters from the Al-Bairaq and Al-Qurain fire stations rushed to the location and extinguished the fire. No casualties were reported. The necessary measures were taken to manage the incident and secure the site. Investigations have been launched to determine the cause of the fire.

Also, fire broke out in a warehouse on a farm in Sulabiya Agricultural area on Friday evening.

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) explained that firefighters from Istiqlal, Qairawan, Jahra Industrial, and Support centers rushed to the location and quickly extinguished the fire, no casualties were reported.

Investigations were launched to determine the cause of the fire.

No exploitation of gov't 'estate'

Minister tours camel pens

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: The Security Operations Department at the Ministry of Interior, in coordination with the Public Authority for Youth and Sports, carried out a field inspection campaign at camel-rearing pens, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In an official statement issued on Friday, the Ministry of Interior explained that the campaign, conducted on Thursday, resulted in the arrest of 17 individuals for violating residency and labor laws. The necessary legal procedures were taken, and the individuals were referred to the relevant authorities.

Four plots were found to be used for purposes other than those for which they were designated. They had been converted into

workshops, a factory, and warehouses for wedding supplies, in addition to being subdivided into accommodation for workers.

The Joint Committee for the Removal of Encroachments on State Property, accompanied by a representative of the Public Authority for Youth and Sports, disconnected electricity to all violating plots.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed that security and inspection campaigns will continue to monitor any violations or encroachments on state property and to pursue offenders of residency and labor laws.

Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tariq Al-Jalalma affirmed that there will be zero tolerance for any encroachments or violations of state property.

Dr. Al-Jalalma made the statement following a field inspection visit to several camel pens, as part of follow-up on the implementation of decisions issued by the Committee for the Removal of Encroachments on State Property.

Dr. Al-Jalalma stressed the need to implement the committee's mandate firmly to protect state property and address any encroachments or illegal exploitation of sites designated for camel enclosures.



Dr. Al-Jalalma

Woman nabbed in high-tech theft from multiple 'cabbies'

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Security services have arrested an unidentified woman who devised a sophisticated scam targeting taxi drivers by registering their information on an electronic payment application, thereby tricking them into unknowingly making purchases, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to security sources, the woman would hail taxis and, while seated in the back seat, register the driver's details, available on the dashboard behind the front seat, on a payment application that provides credit for purchases, to be settled later by the account holder.

To complete the process, she would claim she did not have cash for the fare and ask the driver to open the "My Identity" application, supposedly to transfer the fare to him. She would then complete the

authentication process without the driver realizing that an account had been created in his name on the application.

After the woman successfully created a purchase account in the driver's name on her personal phone, she would make purchases using the available credit and then transfer the cost to the victim at a later stage.

Investigations revealed that she would acquire various goods, resell the items, and profit from them, according to her confession to officers at the Salmiya Police Station. She admitted to committing at least 70 similar offenses.

The Salmiya police investigator ordered her detention at the station, while also compiling a list of similar cases registered at various police stations and summoning victims for identification.



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Digital platform aims to cut delays and paperwork

Kuwait Customs launches pre-clearance system for land imports

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): Kuwait General Administration of Customs announced Wednesday the launch of the pre-clearance system to accelerate the release of goods at land ports, as part of efforts to develop the customs system and improve logistical efficiency.

In a press release, Customs issued Customs Instruction No. 24 of 2026 regulating pre-clearance procedures for land imports under its digital transformation plan.

The new instructions aim to accelerate clearance, reduce paperwork, and enhance the flow of commercial shipments in line with modern best practices, thereby improving the business and trade environment, Customs stated.

Importers or their legal representatives can now start customs clearance procedures electronically through the automated system before the goods physically arrive by submitting the required data in advance, it

explained.

The instructions state that the customs declaration will be automatically canceled if the goods do not arrive within 30 days of registration to ensure accuracy and proper workflow.

Customs noted that this measure supports better governance, full digital transformation, shorter waiting times for trucks at land ports, and an improved experience for importers.

Al-Jalal reviews PAAET's plan to modernize academic programs

Low-demand specializations face admission halt

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal held a meeting with senior officials of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), in the presence of PAAET Director General Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the meeting, they discussed the project to restructure the academic and training programs offered at PAAET colleges and institutes, in line with labor market demands and the state's development plan.

They also addressed a review of current academic and training programs, a study of future priority specializations, and the expansion of specialized and modern programs that meet the needs of vital and developmental sectors, contributing to the preparation of qualified national cadres capable of keeping pace with modern economic and technological changes.

During the meeting, Dr. Al-Jalal emphasized the importance of developing specializations to align with economic transformations and the requirements of sustainable development.

He stressed the need to enhance the alignment between educational outcomes and labor market needs and to support programs related



Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, during his meeting with the leaders of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training regarding a comprehensive restructuring of specializations.

to the knowledge economy, digital transformation, and major development projects.

Meanwhile, Dr. Al-Fajjam provided a detailed explanation of the specializations that PAAET intends to discontinue admissions to, based on studies and indicators showing a decline in labor market demand for them in the coming period.

He affirmed that this step is part of a comprehensive development plan aimed at raising the efficiency of educational and training outputs and enhancing their alignment with the actual

needs of the country.

Dr. Al-Fajjam reviewed several new specializations and programs that PAAET intends to offer in the coming phase, based on modern and advanced fields that align with the requirements of the Kuwaiti labor market and the state's development plans.

He pointed out that these programs will rely on advanced applied training and modern technologies, keeping pace with global developments in technology, innovation, and digital transformation.

Kuwait denounces Israeli occupation minister's Al-Aqsa Mosque incursion

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Friday strongly condemned and denounced the storming by an Israeli occupation minister of Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in a flagrant breach of international law and international humanitarian law.

In a press release, the ministry said that the desecration of the holy

site also provokes the sentiments of hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world.

The ministry restated Kuwait's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, mainly an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 border, with East Jerusalem being its capital.

Continued from Page 1

HH Amir

letter to French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot during a meeting held as part of his official visit to the French capital, Paris.

The meeting discussed means of enhancing bilateral cooperation across various fields, in addition to reviewing the latest regional and international developments, the ministry added.

KNG debunks

General Dr. Jada'an Fadhel, Director of the Moral Guidance Directorate, stressed the importance of verifying information and urged the public not to share news or statements except through official and verified accounts.

Kuwait energy

for technician training, and applied advanced digital systems to monitor and analyze the performance of operational units, linking them to environmental and industrial data analysis models.

It contributed to the activation of smart digital systems for monitoring refueling operations, analyzing operational efficiency, and linking them to a central control platform at Kuwait International Airport.

At Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), the AVEVA digital platform for energy management and sustainability was activated, linking operational systems to smart tracking platforms.

Artificial intelligence tools are being used to predict malfunctions and improve energy efficiency and consumption.

In Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), advanced digital projects were implemented, including the automation of drilling data, integration of artificial lift data, and the real-time production monitoring system.

A petroleum research center was established to develop smart solutions for enhancing operational efficiency and production.

In line with the commitment of KOC to push towards digital transformation and operational excellence, several high-impact digital initiatives were implemented in 2025.

These initiatives significantly contributed to improving data quality and supporting decision-making. Work continued on the automation of drilling data and the integration of electric submersible pump (ESP) data. The production dashboard was enabled to provide analytical insights into production performance indicators. Projects were implemented to digitize geological demand data and transform historical data to enhance the accuracy of production analysis. Digital crude oil production data are managed through the Avocet system to simplify analysis and achieve long-term operational efficiency.

In Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC), digital analytics tools were introduced to assess reserves, monitor the performance of global assets and projects, and develop a strategic database to support investment decisions.

Meanwhile, Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) conducted specialized technical studies and implemented technology acquisition projects focused on industrial innovation, improving the quality of petrochemical products, and enhancing supply chain resilience.

Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) developed artificial intelligence solutions to improve pricing strategies, enhance customer experience, and analyze global market data in real time, which improved the efficiency of its operations in Europe and Asia.

Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) developed advanced electronic systems for vessel tracking, environmental performance analysis, and smart maintenance scheduling applications to improve the efficiency of offshore operations.

In addition, an official report issued by the Public Relations and Petroleum

Media Department at the Ministry of Oil confirmed the importance of the comprehensive application of the digital transformation and artificial intelligence systems for the oil and gas sectors in.

The report stated that rapid developments in digital technology are one of the pillars for reshaping operational processes and enhancing performance efficiency in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, with the aim of strengthening its position as a leading regional center in the energy sector.

Artificial intelligence contributed to the qualitative leap in the oil and gas sectors by enabling institutions to analyze huge amounts of complex data and transform them into insights that support decision-making.

It also plays a crucial role in raising operational efficiency by improving process performance, reducing waste and lowering costs through automation and minimizing downtime, in addition to enhancing safety by predicting risks before they occur and supporting decision-making using accurate analytical models.

Studies have shown that the majority of oil and gas companies are increasingly adopting these technologies, which improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance transparency, develop national talent and maintain sustainability.

Thai Embassy

Chaipatiyut made the statement at the event organized by the embassy recently, with the theme, "Thai Night Market -- Warmth in Our Home".

He stated that the event aims to solidify the bond among community members and provide a direct platform for listening to their experience, ideas and suggestions. He emphasized that the embassy is considered the 'second home' of all Thais residing in the country.

He also commended the Thai Club in Kuwait for its cooperation and efforts in ensuring the success of the event.

He disclosed that he arrived in Kuwait on March 18 by land via Saudi Arabia due to the temporary closure of airspace. He explained that he is still in the early stages of getting to know the Thai community despite having met several members in recent weeks, affirming his desire to connect with as many Thai citizens residing in Kuwait as possible.

He expressed his satisfaction over the safety of the Thai community, thanks to the protection and measures taken the Kuwaiti authorities.

He emphasized the importance of unity among community members during this period, urging them to work together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual support. He indicated that the current situation could still change and there might be unforeseen developments, calling on community members to continuously follow official instructions and safety guidelines issued by the embassy and the Kuwaiti government.

He revealed that the embassy continues to provide full support to Thai citizens, urging those who might be facing a problem or emergency to contact the embassy through its official channels - by telephone or social media platforms, in addition to the 24/7 Emergency Hotline for urgent and emergency cases.

He added that the embassy is always open to the community, adding that the embassy is committed to providing them support, care and a sense of belonging even if they are far from their homeland.

He praised the growing interest in Thai culture among Kuwaitis, affirming the popularity of Thai cuisine in Kuwait, along with the enthusiasm for Thai cultural events, arts and customs. He considers this a reflection of the deep-rooted friendly relations between the Kuwaitis and Thais, thereby, strengthening cultural exchange and human connection between the two countries.

He is also hoping for the organization of more cultural and social activities that bring together the Kuwaitis and Thais.



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Continued from Page 1

Have mercy

Consequently, when government decisions are issued that hinder this, they are condemning a successful project, one into which thousands, perhaps even millions, have been spent – a project that serves food security and contributes to the security of the nation.

Thus, the recent measures prohibiting the sale, investment or inheritance of these holdings do not serve food security, diversify national industries or reduce the outflow of capital abroad. On the contrary, they contribute to the degradation of the land, generating dust storms and harming the environment.

Some neighboring countries, particularly the United Arab Emirates (UAE), preserve these farms by allowing the conversion of up to 10 percent of such land into tourist sites. This helped reduce dependence on the State.

In Kuwait, this decision was implemented for a certain period, and then the government reversed it, perhaps due to envy, as there is no justification for preventing farmers from benefiting from a source of supplementary income that eases the burden of the State.

Furthermore, electricity and water tariffs for farmers have increased, and recently, the prices of agricultural supplies have risen. What does this signify? Is it not a death sentence for a vital sector?

These recent measures, and others taken regarding industrial and service plots, do not serve economic security. Rather, they affect social security and hinder the achievement of food and industrial self-sufficiency, thus, depriving the vital agricultural sector of its vitality.

It is true that some violations can be addressed to prevent the sector from collapsing, but to deprive a person of the fruits of his labor is very strange. Throughout the world, the disposal of personal property, even if it was a government grant, is not restricted, because it is part of personal freedom. How much more so when that property serves food security, which is the national security of the State?

Let the owners of these holdings invest in them wisely and comfortably. If some view them with resentment, then impose taxes on them or even force them to relinquish their holdings.

Drug ‘sting’

In other news, the Ministry of Interior announced on Friday that the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) foiled the activities of 15 individuals involved in nine separate cases. The suspects were found in possession of varying quantities of narcotics and intoxicants intended for trafficking and personal use, in addition to cash, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Interior explained that the seized items included 1,106 grams of hashish, 337 grams of methamphetamine (crystal meth), 255 grams of marijuana, 138 Lyrica capsules, 5 grams of heroin, 3 grams of Lyrica powder, four precision scales, and cash proceeds from drug trafficking.

All suspects were referred with the seized items to the competent authorities for necessary legal action.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to continuing intensive security operations to pursue drug traffickers and protect society from their dangers.

It stressed the importance of community cooperation with security agencies by promptly reporting any suspicious activities related to the trafficking, distribution, or use of drugs and intoxicants.

Kuwaiti women

Kuwaiti women have never been merely observers of the renaissance of the country, as they were present in every stage of its establishment, from the earliest beginnings until the foundations of the modern State were laid, leaving an indelible mark in various fields of work.

Over the past decades, Kuwaiti women have proven their ability to balance family responsibilities with their professional roles, presenting a model that reflects strength of character, belief in the value of work, and commitment to serve the community.

Today, Kuwaiti women are an inseparable part of the national landscape, with three female ministers in the government and dozens of women leaders in vital State institutions, particularly the judiciary, in addition to their active role in humanitarian, volunteer and charitable sectors.

Capital Governorate Council member Mishkel Al-Kulaib affirmed that Kuwaiti women have established themselves as essential partners in the development process and in community work. She praised the continuous support of the political leadership for empowering women and strengthening their presence in various sectors of the State, emphasizing the importance of promoting the culture of participation and social responsibility in order to achieve comprehensive development.

Hawally Governorate Council member Dr. Fay Bin Salamah stated that Kuwaiti women have proven their ability to achieve success and excel in specialized fields for more than two decades, specifically in technology, cybersecurity and scientific research. She stressed the need to expand the representation of women in decision-making positions and in the technology sector, in addition to updating legislation related to the digital economy and flexible work systems.

Hadeel Maarefi, another member of the Hawally Governorate Council, said Kuwaiti women became partners in development after reaching leadership positions in the political, legal and economic spheres. She underscored the importance of spreading the culture of equal opportunity and respect for merit, alongside developing legislation that keeps pace with the modern labor market.

Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Council member Eng. Ashwaq Al-Mudhaf asserted that Kuwaiti women were major partners in managing society even before obtaining their political rights. She emphasized that the selection criteria should remain based on competence and merit rather than classification, while stressing the importance of women keeping pace with digital transformation and artificial intelligence developments.

Kuwait University Professor Dr. Suad Al-Zaid pointed out that Kuwaiti women established a prominent presence in the education, economic, energy and government sectors. She added that aspirations remain high regarding increasing the representation of women in political decision-making positions, and enhancing opportunities for flexible and remote work.

Alia Ahmed Sheikhan Al-Farsi confirmed that Kuwaiti women proved their presence and competence more than 20 years after gaining their political rights, succeeding in becoming essential partners in development and decision-making in various sectors.

She indicated that the political leadership focuses on the empowerment of women, thanks for the support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as governmental efforts to activate the participation of women in State institutions. She added that Kuwaiti women today are capable, intelligent and influential in their fields, affirm-

ing their success in overcoming challenges and achieving balance and distinction in multiple fields.

Attorney Alaa Al-Saeedi reiterated that Kuwaiti women are vital partners in decision-making and development through their presence in ministerial, judicial, military, diplomatic and academic positions. She stressed the importance of continuing to develop the legislative and regulatory environment in order to fully support women and entrepreneurship.

Consultant Najat Al-Hashash, President and Founder of the Kuwaiti Happiness and Positivity Association, said that Kuwaiti women have made remarkable progress since obtaining their political rights, but they still deserve greater representation in decision-making positions. She called for updating labor and civil service laws to ensure equal opportunities and give women more access to leadership roles.

Social activist and General Manager of Livan View Company Amal Al-Livan indicated that Kuwaiti women are an integral part of shaping the development landscape rather than merely seeking opportunities within it. She praised the support of the political leadership, considering that the competence shown by women has proven stronger than challenges and societal perceptions.

Businesswoman and real estate consultant Basma Al-Sultan said Kuwaiti women have, over the past two decades, moved from demanding rights to exercising influence within the economy and decision-making. She cited the growing presence of women in the real estate, investment, energy, technology and cybersecurity sectors, stressing the importance of supporting women in the digital economy and future-oriented industries.

Writer and visual artist Thuraya Al-Baqami described May 16 as the ‘birthday of Kuwaiti women’. “Since obtaining full political rights, Kuwaiti women have proven their ability to assume leadership positions at all levels with high efficiency, in addition to contributing to the repeal of laws that infringed upon their rights, including honor-related laws and domestic violence legislation,” she elaborated, while expressing hope that efforts to amend the Personal Status Law will continue.

She indicated that Kuwaiti women worked quietly until they achieved international recognition through merit, citing as an example the international awards won by her daughters, Munira and Fatima. She stressed that Kuwaiti women did not achieve these accomplishments randomly or by coincidence, but through effort and creativity.

Former Secretary of the Transparency Association and economic expert Dr. Manal Al-Kandari affirmed that Kuwaiti women have transformed challenges into successes, carving out a path filled with giving and achievement.

She pointed out that Kuwaiti women have always been and continue to be essential partners in building and developing the nation through their effective contributions in various sectors. She stated that Kuwaiti women have proven that success is linked to willpower, hard work and self-confidence, while demonstrating honorable national and humanitarian positions under different circumstances.

She emphasized that Kuwaiti Women’s Day signifies appreciation for a long journey of struggle, sacrifice and achievement. She added that the strength of Kuwaiti women lies in their ability to balance their family roles with their national and social responsibilities, remaining a shining example and a source of pride for Kuwait.

Huda Al-Kuraibani, an expert in cybersecurity and information technology, considers Kuwaiti Women’s Day an opportunity to highlight the true role of women in different fields. She said women have proven their ability to create their own place, become partners in decision-making, and maintain a voice in national and societal issues.

She stated that empowering women is not limited to

providing opportunities, as it also requires belief in their capabilities, appreciation of their efforts, and the creation of a fair and supportive environment that leads to success and continuity.

She stressed that Kuwaiti women continue to fulfill their roles as mothers, leaders and innovators who contribute to building generations and shaping the future of the nation.

New media

He explained that the unit serves pediatric patients from across Kuwait and includes 24 beds equipped according to advanced medical standards. The design of the ward prioritizes a supportive psychological environment for children and is staffed by trained nurses experienced in pediatric care and in addressing both the medical and emotional needs of young patients.

The Ministry of Health affirmed its continued support for developing specialized healthcare services and providing advanced treatment environments that enhance the quality of care and achieve the highest standards of medical service.

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This photo provided by the Maine Department of Public Safety shows firefighters try to extinguish flames from a large fire at Robbins Lumber in Searsmont, Maine on May 15. (AP)

America

Maine lumber blast kills firefighter, injures 11: A massive fire and explosion at a lumber mill in Maine's midcoast region killed a firefighter and injured at least 11 other people Friday, authorities said.

The firefighter was found dead at the mill, state officials said. The firefighter was part of a huge emergency response to flames tearing through Robbins Lumber in a rural area when a silo exploded, authorities said.

The investigation into the cause may not immediately offer answers, Maine fire marshal Shawn Esler said.

MaineHealth Maine Medical Center in Portland, which has a Level 1 trauma designation, said it was treating 10 patients who were transferred from local hospitals. Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor was treating one patient who was in critical condition, a spokesperson said.

The mill is in Searsmont, a town of about 1,500 people about 95 miles (150 kilometers) from Portland. (AP)

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Wife of US Army sergeant released: The wife of a US Army sergeant has been released from federal immigration custody after spending a month in detention.

Sgt. Jose Serrano, an active duty soldier stationed in Texas who served three tours in Afghanistan, pre-

viously told The Associated Press that immigration agents arrested his wife, Deisy Rivera Ortega, during an April 14 appointment with immigration services to advance her application for permanent residency.

US Sen Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat and combat veteran, told the AP that she personally contacted Department of Homeland Security Secretary Mark- wayne Mullin on Wednesday to advocate for Rivera Ortega's release after learning of her situation from advocacy groups. Rivera Ortega returned home Thursday evening. (AP)

□ □ □

Plane broke apart midair, report finds: The small plane that crashed while carrying four pickleball players to a tournament near Austin last month had problems with freezing instruments before it broke apart midair, according to a preliminary federal investigation report released Friday.

The Cessna 421C took off from Amarillo on April 30 at 9:10 p.m. and crashed at about 11 p.m. in Wimberley, a city about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south- west of Austin. Pilot Justin Appling and passengers Hayden Dillard, Brooke Skypala, Stacy Hedrick and Seren Wilson died.

The National Transportation Safety Board report said that during the flight, the pilot reported problems with the plane's anti-icing system that protects on-board instruments. (AP)

Democratic Party's brand is awful right now: Schwerin

US Democrats test new red state strategy: Back independents over own nominees

NEW YORK, May 16, (AP) — US Democratic leaders, desperate to compete in red states where their party brand is toxic, are embracing something new this midterm season: not backing Democrats.

In states like Nebraska and Alaska, Democratic officials are, in some cases, looking past their own party's candidates while subtly encouraging - or even openly promoting - independent candidates they hope can outperform the Democratic label. The Democratic National Committee and some of its allies in Washington are quietly supporting the new strategy.

Meanwhile, some of the independent candidates are chatting in a group text about their approach as they plot a path that could shake up Congress, which is consumed by partisan gridlock.

Nebraska Democrats this week chose a nominee for US Senate, Cindy Burbank, who said a major campaign priority was to ensure a Democrat wouldn't be on the fall ballot to pull support from independent Dan Osborn. Shortly after polls closed, Burbank reiterated her plan to drop out in the coming weeks during a

private conversation with a party official, according to state Democratic chair Jane Kleeb.

Democratic leaders believe Osborn, who came within 7 percentage points of winning a Senate seat in 2024, has the best chance to defeat Republican Sen. Pete Ricketts.

Democrats' pivot toward independents is part of an intentional strategy in some places - and something closer to a wink and a nod in others - that covers a handful of high-profile Senate and House and even statehouse contests. Independent Senate candidates are also running in states like Idaho, South Dakota and Montana, where Democratic leadership has so far been unwilling to fully embrace the independents, although many view them as the Democrats' best chance to stop Republicans this fall.

"For some states, and Nebraska is one of them, where Democrats are 32% of the electorate, this is a long-term strategy for us," said Kleeb, who also serves as a vice chair to the Democratic National Committee.

Kleeb said her state party is backing independents in at least four state legislative seats in addition to the US



Dan Osborn, Independent candidate for US Senate, speaks during a news conference on May 15, 2024, at his home in Omaha, Neb. (AP)

Senate: "We have to build a coalition with independents in order to win elections so we can do good work for the people. Period."

Some of the Democratic Party's national political machine appears to be on board.

The Democrats' fundraising site,

ActBlue, serves some of the independent candidates, as do popular Democratic-allied website builders. At the same time, some of the party's campaign committees in Washington quietly provide logistical support in some cases, while avoiding public criticism of the independent candi-

dates even in some races where there is a Democratic nominee.

"The Democratic Party's brand is awful right now," said Democratic strategist Josh Schwerin. "The combination of the brand problem and the existential nature of the threat that our country is facing requires us to have a big tent and look for candidates who can win."

Some Democratic donors, strategists and party leaders from other states have privately pushed back, insisting Democrats should not look past their own nominees for short-term political gain. They want Democratic officials, in Washington and on the ground in red states, to work harder to make the Democratic brand more attractive - even if it takes several more years to be competitive.

"What's the independent going to do for the Democratic Party if they win?" asked Democratic strategist Mike Ceraso, who sees the shift toward independents as an attempt to disguise Democrats in some cases. "We're the party of truth and honesty and integrity, but we're playing these stupid political games?"

And there is no guarantee that the

independent candidates, if elected, would support all of the Democrats' policy priorities or even Democratic leadership in Congress.

In Idaho, independent Senate candidate Todd Achilles, an Army veteran and former Democratic state legislator, said he won't be caucusing with either party if elected. He explained his politics as "straight down the middle," and said he believes in individual liberties.

"Idahoans should be able to live how they want," he said. But the Democratic Party was a bad fit because it "has given up on little red states like Idaho."

On his list of problems with Democrats is that the party made a big mistake by initially running Joe Biden again for president in 2024. But he also said "the shine is coming off" Trump, whom Idaho voters backed by 36 points in 2024.

Achilles said he and other military veterans running for Senate as independents chat in the text chain and are "very much on the same page." He says the group wants to see "guardrails," including term and age limits and campaign finance reform.

UK gov't faces weeks of uncertainty over Prime Minister Starmer's future

LONDON, May 16, (AP) — Britain's government faces a prolonged period of uncertainty after a week of maneuvering within the governing Labour Party failed to oust Prime Minister Keir Starmer but started the clock on a leadership contest that could last well into the summer.

Although Starmer vowed to fight on after a bruising week in which one Cabinet member resigned, dozens of lawmakers called for the prime minister to quit and his new policy proposals were largely ignored, some observers believe it's only a matter of time before he steps aside.

The message of the past week "is that Labour seems to have made up its mind that Keir Starmer is going to have to go," said Tim Bale, a professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London. "And he's going to have to go reasonably quickly, and he's going to have to be replaced by someone who can, unlike him, connect with the public."

Weeks of speculation about Starmer's future broke into open rebellion Thursday when Health Secretary Wes Streeting resigned in preparation for a possible lead-



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, (left), former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner and Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham meet with school children at a primary school in Ashton-under-Lyne, north-west England, on April 13. (AP)

ership bid and the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, declared his intention to return to Parliament. Former Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner announced she had cleared up a tax issue that forced her to resign from the Cabinet last year, thus freeing her up as well.

Starmer is under growing pressure to step down after Labour

performed dismally in local and regional elections last week, hemorrhaging votes to both the anti-immigrant Reform UK party on the right and the Green Party on the left. The electoral drubbing cemented doubts among many party members about Starmer's judgment, vision and leadership less than two years after he led Labour to a landslide victory.

Pentagon halts deployments to Poland and Germany to cut troop numbers in Europe

WASHINGTON, May 16, (AP) — The Pentagon is drawing down thousands of troops in Europe by canceling deployments to Poland and Germany as opposed to yanking forces already stationed there, US officials say, as President Donald Trump has tussled with allies over the Iran war and called for changes.

Several US officials confirmed that 4,000 troops from the Army's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division were no longer en route to Poland this week. The Trump administration had previously said it was cutting US forces only in Germany, and the decision spurred questions and criticism in both Warsaw and Washington.

Two officials told The Associated Press the Poland deployment was canceled after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth signed a memo directing the Joint Chiefs of Staff to move a brigade combat team out of Europe. One of them said the choice of which unit was left to military leaders.

Besides the Army combat team based in Fort Hood, Texas, the memo also led to the cancellation of an upcoming deployment to Germany of a battalion trained in firing long-range rockets and missiles, according to the two officials, who like the others spoke on condition



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth testifies at a House Appropriations subcommittee budget hearing for the Department of Defense on May 12, in Washington, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine listens. (AP)

of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations.

Three US officials said the canceled deployments were part of an effort to comply with a presidential order issued at the beginning of May to reduce the number of troops in Europe by about 5,000. The reasoning does not appear to have been well communicated because others based in Europe said they did not know if

the halted deployment to Poland was part of the previously announced reduction in troops.

Trump and the Pentagon have said in recent weeks that they were drawing down at least 5,000 troops in Germany after Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the US was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership and criticized what he called a lack of strategy in the war.

New biometric checks active for non-EU travelers, says Greece

ATHENS, Greece, May 16, (AP) — Greece says a new biometric screening system at airports for non-European Union citizens is fully operational, rejecting reports of a formal summer exemption for British travelers. But busy airports will be allowed to shut off scanners when needed this summer, officials say.

"We have not received any further update or clarification as to whether, for example, specific nationalities are temporarily exempt from the relevant procedure," the Foreign Ministry said in response to a question from The Associated Press.

The EU Entry-Exit System, or EES, began operating at Greek airports and other entry points on April 10 as part of a Europe-wide rollout, replacing passport stamps with biometric data collected through photographs and digital fingerprints.

Greek officials visiting the UK had earlier suggested the requirement would be waived this summer for travelers from Britain, an important market for Greece's tourism industry.

Current travel guidance from the UK Foreign Office states: "Greek

authorities have indicated that they will not collect biometric data (fingerprints and photos) for UK travelers as part of EES. Follow the advice of authorities on the ground."

But European and Greek authorities later clarified that suspension of the system is permitted only during periods of high passenger traffic at specific entry points and does not apply to any country or nationality.

In practice, however, many travelers are still likely to pass through airports without the new biometric checks, as EU rules allow temporary suspensions during the early stages of implementation.

Last week, Greek police described the digital entry system as being in "full operation," but said they would take "all necessary measures to ensure the smooth flow of visitors ... making full use of provisions in (European) Union legislation."

Private tour operators fear additional airport checks could discourage travel from the UK - especially late bookings - to the EU and widen the disparity with European Union citizens, who can move within the bloc without passport checks.

Kyiv mourns as death toll from Russian missile attack in Ukrainian capital rises to 24

KYIV, Ukraine, May 16, (AP) — The death toll from a Russian missile attack that flattened a Kyiv apartment building rose Friday to 24, including three teenagers, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said as he led the mourning for one of the deadliest attacks on the capital in the 4-year-old war.

The cruise missile hit the nine-story corner apartment block Thursday during what the Ukrainian air force said was Russia's biggest barrage on the country of the full-scale invasion. Emergency workers finished digging through the rubble searching for victims after more than a day, Zelenskyy said on X.

Crowds of grieving people - many of them children - streamed toward a makeshift memorial beneath a tree near the destroyed building.

Teenagers clutching bouquets arrived in groups and broke into tears as they approached the growing mound of flowers and stuffed toys beside photographs of the dead. A portrait of a girl in a school uniform, posed against a bright yellow backdrop, was among the photos.



Apartment interiors are seen in a damaged residential house following Russian missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on May 14. (AP)

Zelenskyy and other top government officials visited the site to pay tribute to the dead, as did Kyiv-based foreign diplomats.

Russia has hammered Ukraine with large-scale aerial attacks in the days since a May 9-11 ceasefire that

US President Donald Trump said he asked Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin to observe. Fighting continued over those 72 hours, although reportedly on a lesser scale.

This week's attacks ran counter to

recent suggestions from Trump and Putin that the war is close to ending.

The assault mostly targeted the Ukrainian capital, where 48 people were wounded, including two children, Zelenskyy said.

He said Moscow had launched more than 1,560 drones against Ukrainian population centers since Wednesday, adding that about 180 sites across the country were damaged, including more than 50 residential buildings.

Previously, the biggest Russian drone attack was on March 23-24 when Moscow's forces fired nearly 1,000 drones and missiles at Ukraine. Thursday's death toll in Kyiv approached one from July 2024 that killed 32 civilians and injured another 85.

Ukraine has also built up significant long-range capabilities, and Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday that its air defenses downed 355 Ukrainian drones overnight in one of the largest barrages of the war. Several airports suspended flights overnight because of the attacks.

Two leaders to discuss bilateral relations

Russia's President Putin to visit Chinese leader Xi days after Trump's trip to Beijing

MOSCOW, May 16, (AP) - Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on a two-day trip to Beijing next week, the Kremlin said Saturday.

The announcement comes less than 24 hours after US President Donald Trump finished his own state visit to China, where he also met Xi to discuss trade and the US and Israel's war in Iran.

In a statement, the Kremlin said that Putin's trip, planned for May 19-20, had been scheduled to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the 2001 Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship.

It said that the two leaders would discuss bilateral relations as well as "key international and regional issues" and economic cooperation.

Relations between China and Russia have deepened in recent years, particularly since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 left Moscow shunned on the global stage and heavily reliant on Beijing for trade due to Western sanctions.

When Putin visited China in September 2025, Xi welcomed his counterpart as an "old friend." Putin also addressed Xi as "dear friend."

The Russian leader is also scheduled to visit China for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in the city of Shenzhen in November.

Meanwhile, Trump said Friday that he has not made a decision on whether to move forward with a major arms package for Taiwan after hearing concerns about it from Xi.

Trump's comments on Taiwan - a self-ruled island that China claims as its own territory - came as he flew back to Washington after wrapping up critical talks in which both leaders said important progress was made in stabilizing US-China relations even as deep differences persist between the world's two biggest powers on Iran and Taiwan.

"I'll be making decisions," Trump said. "But, you know, I think the last thing we need right now is a war that's 9,500 miles away."

Trump's Republican administration in December authorized a record-setting \$11 billion weapons package for Taipei, but it has yet to move forward. Lawmakers also approved a \$14 billion arms sale to Taiwan in January, but the sale cannot advance until Trump formally sends it to Congress. China opposes such sales and has suggested that Washington's relationship with the self-governing island is the key factor in U.S.-China relations.

Trump said Xi also reiterated China's strong opposition to Taiwan's independence. "I heard him out," Trump said. "I didn't make a comment."



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks at the awarding ceremony for the Order 'For Valiant Labor' to employees of the Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology, part of the Roscosmos state space corporation, in Moscow on May 13. (AP)

Trump's consultation with Xi about arms sales to Taiwan may violate the so-called Six Assurances, a set of non-binding U.S. policy principles formulated in 1982 under President Ronald Reagan that have helped guide the US relationship with Taipei, according to analysts.

The second of the Six Assurances states that the US "did not agree to consult with the People's Republic of China on arms sales to Taiwan."

Trump said the issue of the 1982 assurances came up in the talks with Xi.

Trump also said he raised a potential three-way nuclear deal that would in-

volve the U.S., Russia and China. He wants each of the three countries to sign a pact that would cap the number of nuclear warheads in their arsenals. China has previously been cool to entering such a pact.

Beijing's arsenal, according to Pentagon estimates, exceeds 600 warheads and is far from parity with the U.S. and Russia, which are each estimated to have more than 5,000 warheads. But Trump suggested Xi was receptive to the idea.

"I got a very positive response," Trump said. "This is the beginning."

The last nuclear arms pact, known as the New START treaty, between Russia and the United States expired in February, removing any caps on the two largest atomic arsenals for the first time in more than a half-century. As the treaty was set to expire, Trump rejected a call by Russia to extend the two-country deal for another year and called for "a new, improved and modernized" deal that includes China.

The Pentagon estimates China will have more than 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030.

Xi welcomed Trump at his official residence, Zhongnanhai, on Friday for their final engagement of the summit before the US leader's return to Washington. The leaders took a short walk

through the grounds that feature ancient trees and Chinese roses, and they strolled through a covered passageway with green columns and archways painted with birds and traditional Chinese mountain scenes.

Over tea and lunch, Trump and Xi - with top aides and translators in tow - huddled for nearly three hours of talks before the US leader completed his three-day visit to China.

Trump appeared impressed by the bucolic grounds, remarking that the roses were the most beautiful he had ever seen. Xi promised to send him some rose seeds.

"It's been really a great couple of days," Trump told reporters.

Xi, for his part, called it a "milestone" visit. "We have established a new bilateral relationship, or rather a constructive, strategic, stable relationship," he said.

But the optimistic outlook collides with some difficult truths about the thorniest issues between the two superpowers.

Beijing has shown little public interest in US treaties to get more involved in solving the conflict in Iran, even though Trump said in an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity that Xi had in their conversations offered to help.

Maldives divers search for bodies of 4 Italians in underwater cave

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, May 16, (AP) - Divers in the Maldives searched Saturday for the bodies of four Italian divers believed to be deep inside an underwater cave, after rough weather repeatedly hampered the effort the previous day.

Maldive Presidential Spokesman Mohammed Hussain Shareef said that the searchers have prepared a plan based on their progress exploring the cave on Friday.

Italy's Foreign Ministry said earlier that the dive group are believed to have died while exploring a cave at a depth of about 50 meters (160 feet) in Vaavu Atoll on Thursday. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said everything possible would be done to bring the victims home.

His ministry said it was coordinating with Divers Alert Network, a specialist diving organization, to support recovery operations and the repatriation of the bodies. The cause of the deaths remains under investigation.

The victims have been identified as Monica Montefalco, an associate ecology professor at the



This photograph shared by the Maldives President's Media Division, shows divers preparing to search for the four missing Italian divers near Alimathaa Island, Vaavu Atoll, Maldives on May 16. (AP)

University of Genoa; her daughter Georgia Sommacal; marine biologist Federico Gualtieri; researcher Muriel Oddenino; and diving instructor Gianluca Benedetti, according to the

Maldivian government.

Benedetti's body was recovered on Thursday.

Montefalco and Oddenino were in the Maldives on an official scientific mission to monitor marine environments and study the effects of climate change on tropical biodiversity, the University of Genoa said in a statement Friday.

It added, however, that the scuba diving activity during which the deadly accident occurred was not part of the planned research and was "undertaken privately."

It added that two other victims - student Sommacal and recent graduate Gualtieri - were not involved in the scientific mission.

Cave diving is a highly technical and dangerous activity that requires specialized training, equipment and strict safety protocols. Risks increase sharply in environments where divers cannot head straight up and at depth, particularly when conditions are poor. Experts say it's easy to become disoriented or lost inside caves, particularly as sediment clouds can sharply reduce visibility.



Rescuers work at a train crash site near an airport rail link station in Bangkok, Thailand on May 16. (AP)

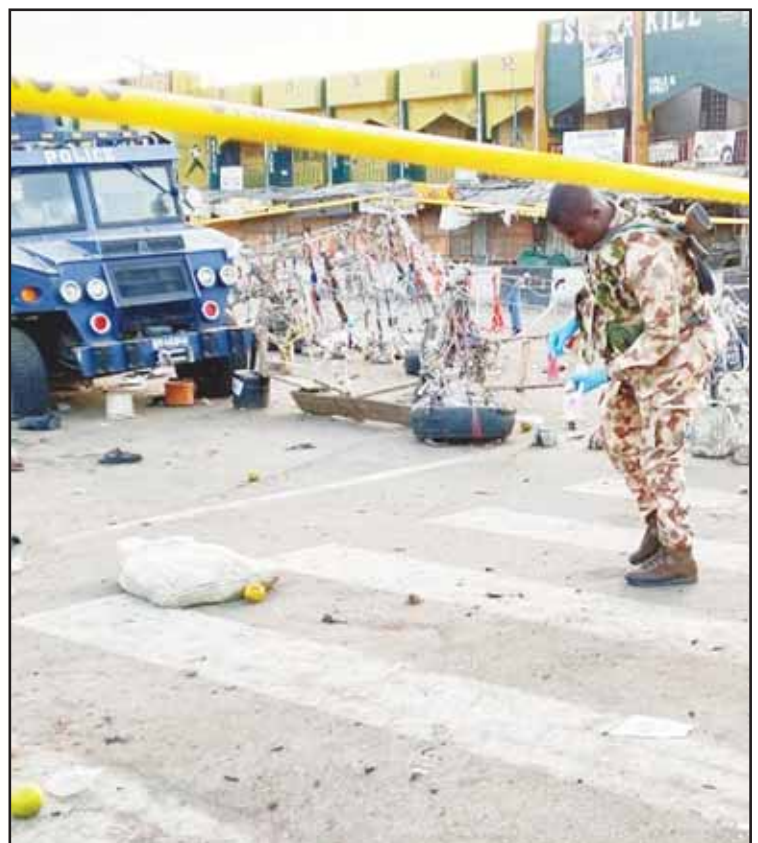
Cargo train hits public bus at Bangkok rail crossing, killing 8

A train crashed into a public bus on Saturday in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, killing at least eight people.

Thai news reported that the crash happened in late afternoon near an airport rail link station in the central area. The city's emergency services Erawan Medical Center said at least eight were killed and more than 20 people were injured.

Videos of the moment of the crash shared on social

media showed a line of vehicles had stopped at a railway crossing when a cargo train struck an orange bus at the front. The impact also dragged several nearby vehicles along the tracks before the bus was engulfed in flames. Several motorcycles and their riders were also seen being thrown onto the road after the collision. Later videos showed a group of rescuers going inside the charred bus after the flames were controlled. (AP)



A soldier inspects the wreckage of Monday's explosion at a market in Maiduguri, Nigeria, on March 7. (AP)

Political dynasty heiress and former trade minister advance to Peru presidential runoff

LIMA, Peru, May 16, (AP) - Keiko Fujimori, the conservative daughter of a disgraced former president, and Roberto Sánchez, a nationalist congressman and former minister, will vie for the presidency of Peru in an electoral runoff, according to the final vote count released Friday.

Fujimori and Sánchez will face off June 7 to become Peru's ninth president in just 10 years. Both beat 33 other candidates with promises to put an end to surging crime, the top priority for Peruvians whose country's mining-driven economy has proved resilient to political instability.

With 100% of the ballots counted from the April 12 election, Fujimori of Fuerza Popular led the field with 17.18% of the vote. Sánchez, of Juntos por el Perú, finished second with 12.03%.

The election was mired with logistical issues that left thousands of people in the country and abroad unable to cast ballots on Sunday. That prompted authorities to allow more than 52,000 residents of Lima to vote on Monday. The extension, announced after vote



Peruvian presidential candidate Roberto Sanchez of Together for Peru party, arrives to meet with supporters in the Huaycan community in Lima, Peru on May 9. (AP)

counting had begun Sunday evening, also covered Peruvians registered to vote in Orlando, Florida, and Paterson, New Jersey.

The election took place amid a

surge in violent crime and corruption that has fueled widespread discontent among voters, who largely view candidates as dishonest and unprepared for the presidency.

Students missing following attack by armed groups

'IS group leader killed in joint US-Nigerian mission'

WASHINGTON, May 16, (AP) - US and Nigerian forces killed a leader of the Islamic State group in Nigeria in a mission carried out Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump said.

Trump announced the joint operation in Africa's most populous country in a late-night social media post that offered few details. He said Abu Bakr al-Mainuki was second in command of the Islamic State group globally and "thought he could hide in Africa, but little did he know we had sources who kept us informed on what he was doing."

Al-Mainuki was viewed as the key figure in IS organizing and finance, and had been plotting attacks against the United States and its interests, according to an official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to share sensitive information.

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu confirmed the operation and said Al-Mainuki was killed alongside "several of his lieutenants, during a strike on his compound in the Lake Chad Basin."

Born in Nigeria's Borno province in 1982, al-Mainuki took the helm of the IS branch in West Africa after the group's previous leader in the region, Mamman Nur, was killed in 2018, according to the Counter Extremism Project, which tracks militant groups.

Al-Mainuki was based in the Sahel area, the monitoring group said, adding that it is believed that he fought in Libya when IS was active in the North African nation more than a decade ago. He was sanctioned by the US in 2023.

Trump, in his social media announcement, said Al-Mainuki was "second in command globally," hiding in Africa, a claim that analysts say is off the mark.

They say Al-Mainuki was the deputy to Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the leader of the Islamic State West African Province who was reported to have died in 2021. He is regarded as one of the central proponents of the formation of ISWAP after its split with Boko Haram in 2016.

"If confirmed, the killing of Al-Mainuki is a huge because this is the first time a security agency has killed

someone this high in the ranking of ISWAP," Malik Samuel, a senior researcher at Good Governance Africa who specializes in insurgent groups in Nigeria, said.

"The potential to cause chaos within the group is also there because the operation must have been carried out in the heart of ISWAP's fortified base, which is very difficult to access."

Trump in December directed U.S. forces to launch strikes against the Islamic State group in Nigeria, though he released little detail then about the impact.

The Nigerian military said the operation was a result of its "recently formed US-Nigeria partnership and intelligence sharing efforts." Samalia Uba, the military spokesperson, said in a statement that the operation has also "disrupted a violent terrorist network that endangered Nigeria and the broader West African region."

Nigeria has been battling multiple armed groups, including at least two affiliated with IS, as it has grappled with a multifaceted security crisis. IS affiliates in Africa have emerged as some of the

continent's most active militant groups following the collapse of the IS caliphate in Syria and Iraq in 2017.

Also:

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria: An unspecified number of students are missing after suspected jihadi militants attacked a secondary school in Nigeria's northeastern Borno state on Friday, police told The Associated Press.

Several students cannot be accounted for after the attack, **Nahum Daso**, Borno police spokesperson said, adding that it is unclear if students were abducted and they can only confirm details of many students who "fled for safety during the pandemonium."

The attack happened early morning in **Askira-Uba**, which borders the Sambisa Forest - a stronghold for armed groups - and was carried out by militants from Muslim militant group Boko Haram and its splinter group Islamic State West Africa Province, according to the police spokesperson.

Africa

Cote d'Ivoire to open embassy in Kenya: President Alassane Ouattara has decided to open an embassy in Kenya as Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya move to strengthen bilateral cooperation, according to a statement issued by the Ivorian presidency.

The decision was announced during a meeting between Ouattara and Kenyan President William Ruto on the sidelines of the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital. The summit brought together more than 30 African leaders and French President Emmanuel Macron.

During the talks, Ouattara and Ruto discussed bilateral relations as well as challenges related to financing Africa's development, including domestic resource mobilization, sustainable financing mechanisms and the industrialization of the continent. (Xinhua)

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S.African prez urges respect for rule of law: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa urged both citizens and foreign nationals to respect the rule of law as the government intensifies efforts to address illegal migration.

In his weekly newsletter, Ramaphosa condemned recent violent protests and criminal acts targeting foreign nationals in parts of the country, saying such actions do not reflect the views of South Africans or

the government policy. "These are the acts of opportunists who are exploiting the legitimate grievances, particularly those of the poor, under the false guise of 'community activism,'" he said.

The president said some individuals were unlawfully taking on duties reserved for state authorities, including checking identification documents and searching private property, and warned that "such lawlessness will not be tolerated, regardless of who the perpetrators or victims are."

From late April, anti-illegal migration marches have taken place in several South African cities, including Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban, with some groups demanding that undocumented migrants leave the country. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Somalia calls for peaceful protests: The Somali government called for peaceful protests over forced evictions and land-related issues affecting residents. The protests, organized by a council of opposition leaders including former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, aim to support internally displaced persons and residents recently evicted from their homes in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

"Peaceful demonstration is a legitimate democratic right, and the government has no objection to citizens expressing their views in a lawful, peaceful, and orderly manner," the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism said in a statement.

To help ensure that the protests remain peaceful while maintaining safety and normal operations in the capital, the government designated Engineer Yarisow Stadium as the official venue for the demonstrations. (Xinhua)



Ouattara

Kuwait oil price rise to \$124.03 pb

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil price rose by USD 1.87 to reach USD 124.03 per barrel (pb) in Friday's trading, compared to USD 122.16 pb on Thursday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Saturday.

In global markets, Brent crude increased by USD 3.54 to settle at USD 109.26 pb, while West Texas Intermediate rose by USD 4.25 to USD 105.42 pb.

Business

Over 100 youths trained as InvestGB rolls out 4th internship edition

'InvestGB' launches the fourth edition of the IGB Internship Program to empower Kuwaiti youth & develop national talent

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting Kuwaiti youth and empowering national talent, Gulf Capital Investment Company KSCC "InvestGB", the investment arm of Gulf Bank, announced the launch of the fourth edition of its IGB Internship Program, reinforcing its position as one of the most active private sector companies in supporting and developing youth in Kuwait.

The program provides Kuwaiti youth with hands-on training, professional development, and employment opportunities, with several participants successfully transitioning into full-time positions at InvestGB. Since the launch of the program's first edition in 2023, more than 100 interns have participated, including high school and university students, as well as bachelor's and master's degree holders.

The program has welcomed students from more than 20 local and international universities, including Kuwait University, Gulf University for Science and Technology, American University of Kuwait, Babson College, Bentley University, Columbia University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cornell University, University of California, Los Angeles, and King's College London.

The program has provided interns with hands-on experience and opportunities to develop the personal and professional skills required to meet the demands of an evolving job market. With 10% of participants joining the company following the completion of the program, the initiative has proven effective as an important platform for identifying and attracting talent, further strengthening InvestGB's position as one of the leading private sector companies supporting education and sustainable youth development in Kuwait.



InvestGB launches 4th internship program for Kuwaiti youth.

Regarding the internship program, Ms. Sara Ayman AlMuzaini, Senior Vice President - Human Resources at InvestGB: "Investing in young minds today, is an investment in Kuwait's future, and we are proud to provide opportunities that empower the next generation and connect them with meaningful and rewarding career paths."

She added: "At InvestGB, we are not simply building a workplace; we are creating a fully integrated professional community rooted in continuous growth and shared purpose, which directly contributes to our excellence as a leading investment company."

AlMuzaini reaffirmed InvestGB's commitment to supporting and developing the community through a variety of initiatives focused on youth empowerment and enhancing the workplace through different training and development programs. These initiatives provide students and graduates with practical opportunities to acquire the skills needed in today's labor market, reflecting

InvestGB continues to strengthen its position as a leading investment company in Kuwait through a team of distinguished investment professionals committed to delivering well-structured investment strategies and an elevated client experience.

The numbers behind InvestGB's team tell a story worth noting. Of its 46 investment professionals, 61% are Kuwaiti nationals, while women represent 47% of the total workforce, reflecting InvestGB's commitment to developing national talent and fostering a diverse, high-performing work environment. At the leadership level, Kuwaitis hold 80% of executive positions, reinforcing InvestGB's commitment to empowering local talent and shaping the future of Kuwait's financial sector.



the company's belief that investing in human capital is fundamental to achieving sustainable growth.

It is also worth noting that last year, InvestGB celebrated all participants in its internship program on Global Intern Day during an event held at the company's headquarters in Al Hamra Business Tower. The event included networking and engagement sessions with leaders from InvestGB and Gulf Bank, reflecting the company's ongoing commitment to empowering Kuwaiti youth and developing national talent.

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Other Voices

Oil prices are stable despite closure of Strait of Hormuz

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

Despite the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the oil market is not showing signs of panic. There have been no significant movements in crude oil or refined product prices. Prices have not surged to expected levels of \$120 per barrel or higher for Brent crude.

For Gulf crude, prices have reached above \$115 per barrel, but without substantial physical market movements.

Saudi Aramco has redirected its crude shipments through the Red Sea via the Yanbu terminal. Meanwhile, only a small volume of around 1.5 million barrels continues to be exported through the Gulf by the United Arab Emirates.

Despite concerns that over 20 million barrels of crude could be affected by restricted movement, global oil markets have remained relatively calm.

How can we explain such calmness in the oil market? Could it be due to some good oil reserves in the tanks globally to match such a shortage? Or could it be because oil-consuming countries are managing their reserves through reduced consumption, rationing, or adjusting fuel distribution schedules at service stations?

These coordinated efforts may continue until normal shipping routes through the Gulf are fully restored. It is also possible that consuming countries are working together to manage reserves in a disciplined way, helping prevent panic buying and market instability.

Such factors may have helped avoid a surge in prices that could otherwise have pushed oil above \$150 per barrel, triggering global inflationary pressures, panic buying, and long queues at fuel stations worldwide.

Until the Gulf is fully reopened, consuming countries may be managing their reserves through coordinated efforts and cooperation among major importers. Such measures, along with market discipline, may have helped prevent panic buying that could otherwise have pushed oil prices beyond \$150 a barrel, potentially triggering high inflation, widespread shortages, and long queues at fuel stations as people rush to refuel their vehicles.

Now that we are of the global oil figures in terms of supply, demand, oil in storage tanks, and reserves, if global oil supply is truly in balance, then why are we not experiencing acute shortages or panic buying at petrol stations?

Even with supply routes from the Gulf almost completely disrupted, particularly affecting Asia, there has been no visible panic buying. Oil prices are still around Brent-equivalent levels of \$109 per barrel, well below earlier speculative forecasts of \$150 per barrel.

Could this be due to the huge strategic reserves held by Arab Gulf producers and consuming countries, which may be sufficient to sustain supply for an extended period of around three months despite disruptions? The absence of panic suggests the global system may be more resilient than expected.

This raises a question - Are consuming countries drawing down their commercial and strategic reserves?

Countries can exchange oil volumes among themselves to some extent, but the absence of all Gulf oil-producing countries at once is a remarkable situation. No one expected such an outcome without market panic or a sharp spike in oil prices, which have nonetheless remained at relatively acceptable levels despite the absence of more than 20 million barrels of Gulf supply.

It is unclear how long the Gulf will remain closed or how long Gulf oil will stay off the market. What is certain, however, is that strategic stocks will gradually decline. Without a near-term reopening of the Arabian Gulf, the world could face acute shortages, and panic may emerge at petrol stations as consumers compete for limited supplies.

Certainly, the current situation cannot continue for long. The most viable solution is to reopen the Arabian Gulf as quickly as possible.

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Company secures KIB, CBK financing for new rigs

Action Energy Company secures KD 40.9 million in credit facilities to support contracted rig expansion

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Action Energy Company K.S.C.P. (Bursa Kuwait: ALFTAQA), Kuwait's leading local partner for integrated upstream services and owner and operator of one of the youngest rig fleets in the region, announced that it has secured a new credit facility and renewed and expanded an existing facility, from two local banks with a combined value of KWD 40.9 million, to support its growth and rig fleet expansion.

The facilities support the financing and deployment of new rigs linked to contract awards previously announced with Kuwait Oil Company. They further reinforce Action Energy Company's financing structure and strengthen its ability to execute its contracted fleet expansion plan through 2026 and beyond, while maintaining a disciplined approach to capital allocation.

Details of the Credit Facilities

New Credit Facility: KWD 7.3 million secured to finance two new 750 HP rigs from Kuwait International Bank (KIB).



الشركة العمالية للطاقة (ش.م.ك.م.)
Action Energy Company (K.S.C.P.)

Facility Renewal and Expansion: KWD 33.6 million were secured from Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) to finance four new 1,500 HP rigs and one 1,000 HP rig, in addition to the renewal of the existing facilities.

The company had announced its financial and operational performance for the first quarter last week, reporting net profit of KWD 2.2 million, up 150.0%. Revenue also grew by 69.2% year-on-year, driven primarily by the expansion of its rig fleet from 13 rigs in Q1 2025 to 20 rigs in Q1 2026, including the full-quarter contribution of the ten new rigs deployed during 2025.



AEC rig

Kuwaiti women key to national progress, says Wadha Al-Khatib

KUWAIT CITY, May 16, (KUNA): Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait National Petroleum Company and acting CEO of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIIC) Wadha Al-Khatib said Kuwaiti women have played a pivotal and influential role throughout the country's history.

In a statement to KUNA on the occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, Al-Khatib said the role of women in Kuwaiti society extends back decades, recalling the period before oil discovery in the 1930s, when women carried the responsibility of managing family affairs and securing livelihoods while men were away on pearl diving voyages, then one of the country's main economic activities.

She said today's Kuwaiti women represent a continuation of generations known for dedication and



Wadha Al-Khatib

responsibility, pointing to key national moments in which women demonstrated sacrifice and patriotism, particularly during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait when they participated alongside fellow citizens in the resistance movement defending the country's freedom and independence.

Regarding the oil sector, she noted that Kuwaiti women's leadership and professional presence in the industry is the result of years of hard work, skill development, and experience, enabling them since the 1980s to prove their competence and contribute effectively alongside men to advancing the sector and strengthening Kuwait's standing among leading oil-producing countries.

She added that the state's support for equal opportunities and its reliance on merit-based standards without discrimination helped produce thousands of qualified Kuwaiti women who assumed professional and leadership positions once dominated by men, including in oil refineries, production units, gas plants, and petrochemical facilities.

Al-Khatib highlighted that Kuwaiti women working in the oil sector have also achieved a pioneering regional presence, being among the first women in the Gulf region to work in oil fields.

She expressed hope that Kuwaiti women across the oil sector and other fields will continue pursuing excellence, professional development, and technical advancement in support of national development goals.

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Kuwait urges deeper GCC economic cooperation amid tensions

GCC finance ministers discuss regional economic challenges

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Minister of Finance and National Economy in the Kingdom of Bahrain Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa presided over the 125th meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was held through videoconference, with the GCC finance ministers and GCC Secretary General Jassem Mohammad Al-Budaiwi in attendance.

Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqoub Al-Sayed Yousef Al-Rifai headed the Kuwaiti delegation. Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Services Saad Aqla Al-Alati and other Ministry of Finance officials were also present at the meeting.

In his opening remarks, Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa warmly welcomed the participating ministers, while underscoring the importance of continuing efforts to strengthen Gulf economic cooperation and integration in light of the current regional and international developments, in order to maintain economic stability and achieve the sustainable development goals of the GCC member states.

Meanwhile, Al-Rifai affirmed that rapid regional developments, particularly the brutal Iranian aggression, and their direct and indirect economic effects on the GCC countries necessitate Gulf economic integration and continuous joint efforts to protect the economic and developmental gains of the GCC countries. He pointed out that this move is crucial due to the disruption of supply chains in the region, rise in shipping and insurance costs, impact on trade through vital waterways due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, volatility of energy markets, and the challenges they impose on growth rates and economic stability.

He added that the coordinated efforts of GCC countries, especially in ensuring the continuity of supply chains, activating logistical alternatives, and enhancing integration in managing ports and trade routes, mitigated the repercussions of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and maintained the smooth flow of trade and essential services.

He emphasized the importance of building on this experience to address obstacles in various fields, specifically the need to complete the requirements for the Customs Union and the Gulf Common Market to keep pace with regional and international changes.

The GCC finance ministers also talked about the measures taken under the current situation in the region, latest developments in the Gulf economic unity program, a number of economic and financial issues of common interest, and following up the implementation of the decisions taken in the 124th meeting of the committee.

They agreed on several important topics and decisions aimed at strengthening financial and economic cooperation among GCC countries, such as the outcomes of the meetings of the Committee of Central Bank Governors, Customs Union Authority, Committee of Heads and Directors of Tax Departments, Gulf Common Market Committee, and many others related to the Gulf economic unity.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the GCC finance ministers affirmed their commitment to solidify economic cooperation and to push it towards more integrated and sustainable levels to better serve the GCC citizens and fortify the economic position of GCC countries regionally and internationally.

Abu Dhabi targets 50% PPP delivery by 2029

ADPIC drives Abu Dhabi's infrastructure future with sustainability and global partnerships

By Marlon Aquino Malinao
Managing Editor, Arab Times

ABU DHABI, May 16: Abu Dhabi Projects and Infrastructure Centre (ADPIC) reaffirmed its commitment to shaping the emirate's long-term urban future through sustainable infrastructure, strategic global partnerships, and private sector collaboration during the second edition of the Abu Dhabi Infrastructure Summit 2026.

Speaking before an international media panel, H.E. Maysarah Mahmoud Eid, Director General of ADPIC, highlighted the rapid growth of the summit and Abu Dhabi's expanding role as a global hub for infrastructure innovation and sustainable urban development.

"It is our honor to have everyone here in Abu Dhabi," Eid said. "The Abu Dhabi Infrastructure Summit 2026 is the second edition following the successful launch in 2025, and this year we hosted around 17,000 attendees, almost four times the size of last year."

The summit brought together government officials, developers, consultants, contractors, investors, and policymakers from around the world.

"This is not a normal summit," Eid stressed. "It is a platform where experts, leaders, businesses, developers, contractors, consultants, policymakers and government officials come together to identify opportunities for developing Abu Dhabi's infrastructure."

He emphasized the emirate's strong belief in collaboration between government and the private sector.

"We believe in partnerships," Eid said. "To deliver a long-term development vision, we need to work hand in hand with the private sector."

ADPIC, a centralized government entity reporting to the Executive Council, currently oversees more than AED 200 billion worth of capital projects across Abu Dhabi.

"Our portfolio exceeds AED 200 billion with hundreds of capital projects," he noted.

Responding to a question from Arab Times on Abu Dhabi's transformation into a global capital for innovation and sustainable urban



H.E. Maysarah Mahmoud Eid, Director General of Abu Dhabi Projects and Infrastructure Centre (ADPIC).

development, Eid explained that ADPIC plays a central role in implementing the emirate's long-term urban strategy.

"ADPIC is responsible for the infrastructure backbone," he said. "We follow the Abu Dhabi Urban Plan 2040, which is based on expected population growth, urban expansion, and future development requirements."

Sustainability, according to Eid, remains one of the agency's core priorities.

"We have approved regulations in the emirate to ensure sustainability remains a priority in our design, development and construction processes," he said.

Eid also revealed that ADPIC is investing heavily in modular construction technologies and environmentally friendly building materi-

als.

"We currently have projects where modular construction accounts for 50 percent to nearly 100 percent of the development," he said. "We are also investing in initiatives such as green concrete and collaborating with different companies to encourage its use."

He added that Chinese firms are playing an increasingly important role in Abu Dhabi's infrastructure expansion.

"We have Chinese partners working with us and establishing factories in Abu Dhabi," Eid said. "Companies such as China Harbor and China State are already collaborating with us on government projects."

According to Eid, the strengthening relationship with Chinese companies accelerated following recent high-level engagements between the UAE and China.

"Things are moving in the right direction when it comes to collaboration with Chinese companies," he said.

The summit also showcased Abu Dhabi's increasing focus on public-private partnerships (PPP), with ADPIC and the Abu Dhabi Investment Office recently launching AED 55 billion worth of partnership opportunities covering 24 infrastructure projects.

"These projects include tunnels, bridges, education infrastructure and other major developments," Eid said.

He disclosed that the government aims for 50 percent of publicly funded projects to be delivered under PPP models by 2029.

"Our goal is to significantly increase private sector participation in government-funded developments," he stated.

Eid further emphasized that ADPIC's projects span multiple sectors including transportation, hospitality, education, national housing, and community livability.

"The aim is for every district in Abu Dhabi to become a top-tier livable destination," he said. "We want residents to enjoy seamless connectivity and a high quality of life."

With Abu Dhabi continuing its aggressive infrastructure expansion, ADPIC says the emirate remains committed to balancing rapid growth with sustainability, innovation, and international collaboration.

Revenues rise 8.6%

Kuwait Insurance Regulatory Unit reports KD 5.6 mln profit

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Head of the Insurance Regulatory Unit Mohammad Suleiman Al-Otaibi confirmed that the unit achieved outstanding financial performance in the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

Al-Otaibi revealed that revenues reached around KD8.9 million for the period from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 -- a growth rate of 8.6 percent compared to the previous fiscal year.

He said the net profit for the fiscal year reached about KD5.6 million, allowing the unit to continue recording its best financial performance levels since its establishment in February 2020, affirming its ability to improve its performance year after year.

Moreover, acting Deputy Head of the unit Abdullah Zayed Al-Fahad stated that the total revenues of the unit has reached around KD41 million since its establishment, while the share for the State treasury exceeded KD25 million.

He pointed out that the unit accomplished this even if it continues to adapt to the constraints of its founding law, particularly the lack of funds, operating capital and cash reserves, unlike other autonomous government entities. He disclosed that the unit has been using its own revenues to finance its operations and activities since its inception, without burdening the State treasury.

He attributed such outstanding financial performance to the close monitoring and efforts of the staff of the unit, as well as the commitment of companies covered by the law to pay their dues on time.

He indicated that this achievement is the result of full compliance with Insurance Regulation Law No. 125/2019 and its executive regulations and amendments, taking legal action against non-compliant companies, adopting a prudent and realistic financial policy, and fully committing to the rationalization of expenditures in line with the general policy of the State.

Maintaining strong ratings, stable outlook

Kuwait Insurance Company achieves KD 2.2 mln as gross profit for period ending March 31, 2026



Sami Sharif and Ali Morad Behbehani

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Kuwait Insurance Company announced its first-quarter results for the current year, reporting a total profit of KWD 2.2 million (USD 7.18 million) for the current period, after strengthening its financial reserves to meet any future insurance obligations, reaffirming its commitment to this well-established approach since its foundation. Included within the total profit is investment sale income amounting to KWD 1.01 million (USD 3.3 million), which was transferred to retained earnings. Net profit achieved for the current period amounted to KWD 1.2 million (USD 3.9 million), with earnings per share reaching 4.96 fils (USD 0.16). It should be noted that the earnings per share were adjusted following the increase in the company's capital from KWD 19 million to KWD 25 million.

Total written premiums for the current period reached KWD 17.6 million (USD 57.4 million), compared to KWD 16 million (USD 52.2 million) for the same period last year, representing an increase of KWD 1.6 million (USD 5.2 million), equivalent to 9.9%.

Insurance revenues also reached KWD 14.1 million (USD 46 million). Meanwhile, total investment profits

amounted to KWD 2.05 million (USD 6.7 million).

The company's CEO, Sami Sharif, stated that the company adopts a prudent and balanced approach in managing its business operations, highlighting the company's success in achieving high retained earnings amounting to KWD 91 million (USD 297 million), reflecting the strength, stability, and resilience of its financial position.

Mr. Sami Sharif added that, alongside achieving growth in premiums, the company continues to maintain

its distinguished credit ratings from the international rating agencies AM Best and Moody's at A- and A3 respectively, with a stable outlook. This reflects the company's leading position and strong standing in the insurance services sector at both the local and regional levels.

The Extraordinary General Assembly of the company also approved the distribution of bonus shares to shareholders, aiming to increase the capital of Kuwait Insurance Company from KWD 19 million to KWD 25 million

in support of the company's expansion plans, including the addition of a reinsurance license and enhancing its growth capabilities in the upcoming phase.

On another note, Mr. Sami Sharif added that the company has made progress in its digital transformation project, as it continues to develop its operational system into a fully integrated digital ecosystem that will encompass all internal and external operations in the near future.

"We still look forward to accomplishing much more in the coming period, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to achieving our goals, including the Board of Directors, shareholders, and employees," he added.

In conclusion, Mr. Sami Sharif expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Insurance Regulatory Unit for its active role in enhancing the insurance business environment and reinforcing the principles of transparency and discipline within the market, commending its continuous efforts in supporting the sector's stability and improving its efficiency in a manner that contributes to achieving sustainable growth for the industry.

War worsens Lebanon's economic crisis with job losses, price gouging and slow business

CHIYAH, May 16, (AP): Ayman al-Zain watched on a recent afternoon as a bulldozer cleared the rubble of what used to be his sports clothing store, which was one of dozens of buildings destroyed in Israeli strikes against the Hezbollah militant group.

With a nominal truce in place that has reduced but not halted the fighting, Al-Zain tried to assess whether to rebuild the shop in Beirut's southern suburbs that he once hoped to pass down to his kids. But it's unlikely he will be able to do so anytime soon, and not only because of the fear of more airstrikes.

"Everything is expensive," he told The Associated Press. "If I want to open a new store and get mannequins, hangers and some accessories, the prices are very different than before."

The U.S.-Israeli war with Iran, and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have sent economic shock waves across the Mideast. In Lebanon, those woes have been compounded by the country's existing economic problems and by largely unregulated markets that are vulnerable to price gouging.

"This continues to be a major economic shock, one of honestly an existential nature," said Economy Minister Amer Bisat, who is part of the Lebanese Cabinet that came into office over a year ago on a reformist agenda.

Since 2019, the tiny Mediterranean country has been in the throes of an economic crisis that pulverized the value of its local currency and its bank-



Customers buy vegetables at a local market in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut, May 6, 2026. (AP)

ing system.

That's when Lebanese banks collapsed, which evaporated depositors' savings and plunged about half of the population of 6.5 million into poverty, after decades of rampant corruption, waste and mismanagement. The country suffered some \$70 billion in losses in its financial sector, further compounded by about \$11 billion in the 2024 war between Israel and Hezbollah, according to the World Bank. The Lebanese pound has since lost over 90% of its value against the U.S. dollar.

The cash-strapped state electricity company provides only a few hours of power a day, and most Lebanese rely on diesel generators to make up the difference. That makes the economy particularly vulnerable to fuel price increases.

Lebanon was already "grappling with multiple rounds of crises," said Mohamad Faour,

professor of finance at the American University of Beirut. "So this round of war only made an already fragile situation more fragile."

With this new war, 1.2 million Lebanese have been displaced, largely from southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs. Many are sheltering in schools with no work or draining whatever money they have renting out apartments or hotel rooms.

In an interview with the AP from his office, Bisat estimated that the country faces an economic loss of around 7% of its gross domestic product due to the war because "companies are closing, people are losing their jobs, tourists are not showing up."

Evidence of inflation abounds.

In the usually bustling produce market in Sabra, south of Beirut, vendor Ahmad al-Farra looked dejected as an elderly woman shopping for



Displaced people who fled Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon sit outside shelter tents in Beirut, April 24, 2026. (AP)

watermelon, tomatoes and potatoes walked away without buying anything after checking the price tags.

Prices have spiked since the U.S. and Israel launched a war against Iran on Feb. 28, followed quickly by a resurgence of war between Israel and Hezbollah.

"We're keeping our prices low so we can sell, and even then we're not selling," al-Farra said as the sound of an Israeli drone whizzed overhead.

Even consumers who can afford to spend are anxious and cutting back on nonessential purchases, leaving many businesses empty.

Riad Aboulteif, who runs several restaurants and bars in the capital, said his revenue has dropped by some 90% since the war began, as Lebanon's shrinking middle class cuts costs.

People are saving more money for their survival and not making plans to celebrate

for years have paid multiple utility bills to cover privately supplied electricity and water in the absence of government services. Neighborhood generator owners charge a monthly fee, and some landlords have their own generators and charge the cost to tenants.

Frustrated business owners have said that generator bills have doubled at times, forcing them to shorten their hours of operation or even close on some days to cut costs.

"If we didn't take these measures, we cannot continue," Aboulteif said.

Bisat said his ministry has conducted over 4,000 inspections of private generators, gas stations and shops across the country since the start of the war in March and lodged dozens of complaints to the courts. But the issue will not be quickly resolved.

In the meantime, the government has little ability to crack down on the handful of companies that import and distribute fuel and other goods.

With no end to the war in sight, the economic situation shows no sign of easing.

A tenuous ceasefire is in place between the U.S. and Iran, but talks between Washington and Tehran are gridlocked. A nominal truce between Israel and Hezbollah has reduced but not stopped the fighting in Lebanon.

For now, Lebanese families and business owners are confronting the challenges day by day and hoping for the best.

"Only God knows how we've been trying to manage ourselves," al-Farra said.

Powell steps down, marked by inflation fight and Fed independence

WASHINGTON, May 16, (AP) — When Jerome Powell was sworn in as chair of the Federal Reserve eight years ago, economists worried that inflation and interest rates were too low and that too few Americans had jobs.

Now, as Powell steps down from the post after eight tumultuous years, the U.S. economy is transformed: Inflation soared after the pandemic and has remained above the Fed's 2% target for more than five years, angering voters and making rents, cars, and groceries harder to afford. The Fed's key short-term rate rose to a two-decade high in 2023, even as unemployment fell to a half-century low.

Along the way, Powell shrugged off relentless personal attacks from President Donald Trump that began just months after his appointment. But in January, he pushed back against an unprecedented legal investigation by the Justice Department, becoming one of the few top officials in Washington to stand up to the Trump White House.

Powell, who was named chair pro tempore on Friday until his successor Kevin Warsh is sworn in, said he will continue serving on the governing board until he is confident the Fed's independence is truly restored. His success at protecting the central bank from day-to-day politics will be a key part of his legacy.

"It is not an unblemished record, but in an extremely challenging context, he's performed exceedingly well," said David Wilcox, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and director of research at Bloomberg Economics. "And my overall assessment is that the country has been lucky indeed to have him as chair."

Unlike many of his predecessors, Powell, 73, is not a trained economist, but a lawyer who also worked in finance before joining the Fed's board of governors in 2012. Unassuming in public and private, Powell often introduces himself as "Jay" and would display his guitar-playing skills, honed as a student busking through Europe, at the Fed's holiday parties.

An inescapable part of Powell's legacy will be the post-pandemic inflation surge, when consumer prices rose by a four-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022.

Overall prices are now 27% higher than just before the pandemic six years ago, a staggering change for a country that had experienced little inflation for generations. Prices rose just 10% in the six years before the pandemic. Groceries are 30% more expensive than six years ago, after they rose just 3.6% in the six years preceding COVID.

Powell and other Fed officials - and indeed most economists - initially said the inflationary surge was "transitory," a result of supply chain snarls brought about by the pandemic, as COVID shut down factories and slowed ports around the world.

Their immediate priority was supporting the economy in a crisis. In two moves in March 2020, they slashed their benchmark interest rate by 1.5 percentage points to near zero. The Fed also bought large amounts of Treasury debt and government-backed mortgage securities to reduce longer-term interest rates and took other steps to pour money into the financial system to

keep credit markets functioning during pandemic chaos.

In April 2020, Powell said that the Fed would "continue to use these powers forcefully, proactively, and aggressively until we are confident that we are solidly on the road to recovery."

Even as inflation zoomed past the Fed's 2% target in 2021, the central bank kept its key interest rate near zero until March 2022, when inflation hit 6.9%, according to the Fed's preferred measure.

The Fed's delay in raising rates was largely informed by a traditional economic view that inflation, stemming from a supply shock, would be temporary and if a central bank cranked up borrowing costs to fight it, the higher rates would just harm the economy and lift unemployment even as the supply crunch faded.

Meanwhile, the Trump and Biden administrations pumped about \$5 trillion in government spending into the economy, in the form of multiple stimulus checks, support for small businesses, and other aid. The flow of dollars fueled a spending spike just as supply chains were unable to deliver on the demand.

By keeping its key rate near zero for so long, Powell's critics charge, the Fed contributed to that excess spending and worsened inflation.

"Even though there was all the evidence there in the data that aggregate demand was going through the roof, they still said it was a transitory supply shock," said Mickey Levy, a former top economist at Bank of America and a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. "The Fed contributed to that inflation and completely misread the tea leaves."

As inflation began to spread into items such as apartment rents and surveys showed Americans increasingly worried it would last, Powell pivoted and oversaw the sharpest increase in interest rates since the early 1980s to combat the price spike.

Still, many leading economists, including former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, worried that defeating inflation would require a recession and a sharp increase in unemployment. Instead, inflation dropped to 2.3% by September 2024, according to the Fed's preferred measure, nearly reaching its 2% target.

By reducing inflation without a sharp economic downturn, Powell largely achieved an elusive "soft landing." Inflation then moved higher after Trump imposed sweeping tariffs last April.

Fighting inflation was a sharp shift for a Fed chair that began his term more focused on the Fed's mandate to pursue maximum employment. Before the pandemic, Powell often lauded the benefits of a strong job market for disadvantaged workers, winning plaudits from many progressive economists.

Yet some economists argue the Fed's focus on employment contributed to its delayed response to post-COVID inflation. In an August 2021 speech, Powell said the then-elevated unemployment rate of 5.4% was a reason to avoid hiking rates too early.

Still, many analysts defend Powell's support for the maximum employment mandate. Julia Coronado, president of MacroPolicy Perspectives and a former Fed economist, said Powell was right to keep rates low before the pandemic, even as unemployment steadily declined, because there were no signs inflation was worsening.

"If you can actually push a little harder for a little longer with no consequences for inflation, then you should damn well do it," she said. "He was absolutely right about that. He's still right about that."

For his part, Powell said in late April that "overweighting the employment market" had nothing to do with the inflation spike.

"It was a global shock that happened essentially very, very similarly all over the world," he said.

Last July, in an image that will likely prove the most enduring of his time as Fed chair, Powell and Trump stood before cameras in hard hats at the site of the Fed's extensive \$2.5 billion building renovation, which Trump had criticized as excessive.

Trump claimed the project would cost even more -- \$3.1 billion - and showed Powell a paper listing the costs. Powell took out his reading glasses and corrected the president, on camera, by noting that he had included a third building that had already been renovated.

It was emblematic of Powell's willingness to push back against Trump's unprecedented attacks. Economists have long supported an independent Fed because it allows the central bank to take difficult steps - such as sharply raising interest rates to combat inflation - that politicians often oppose because they can be painful.

Powell benefited from strong relationship-building with Congress. Research by University of Maryland economist Thomas Drechsel has found that Powell met with senators more than twice as often as his two predecessors, with the meetings evenly split between both parties.

During one visit, Powell even endeared himself to North Carolina Republican Sen. Thom Tillis' dog, a move that paid huge dividends. Tillis essentially blocked Senate approval of Kevin Warsh, Trump's pick to replace Powell, until the investigation of the building project was dropped. The Justice Department eventually gave up on its probe.

Even those who fault Powell on some policy decisions credit him for defending the Fed.

"The big plus is the way he has protected central bank independence," said Don Kohn, a former vice chair of the Fed. "That is the most important thing for the future of the Federal Reserve and for protecting the public interest in having an independent central bank."

Powell hasn't said when he may leave the Fed, though he could remain on the governing board until January 2028.

"You want people to ... set interest rates to benefit the general public," Powell said at his last news conference, "and focus only on that and ignore political considerations. This isn't bipartisan, this is nonpartisan."

US inflation could hit 4.2% in May

Trump faces inflation pressure after China trip

WASHINGTON, May 16, (AP) — President Donald Trump returned from the spectacle of a Chinese state visit to a less than welcoming U.S. economy - with the military band and garden tour in Beijing giving way to pressure over how to fix America's escalating inflation rate.

Consumer inflation in the United States increased to 3.8% annually in April, higher than what he inherited as the Iran war and the Republican president's own tariffs have pushed up prices. Inflation is now outpacing wage gains and effectively making workers poorer. The Cleveland Federal Reserve estimates that annual inflation could reach 4.2% in May as the war has kept oil and gasoline prices high.

Trump's time with Chinese leader Xi Jinping appears unlikely to help the U.S. economy much, despite Trump's claims of coming trade deals. The trip occurred as many people are voting in primaries leading into the November general election while having to absorb the rising costs of gasoline, groceries, utility bills, jewelry, women's clothing, airplane tickets and delivery services. Democrats see the moment as a political opportunity.

"He's returning to a dumpster fire," said Lindsay Owens, executive director of Groundwork Collaborative, a liberal think tank focused on economic issues. "The president will not have the faith and confidence of the American people - the economy is their top issue and the president is saying, 'You're on your own.'"

The president's trip to Beijing and his recent comments that indicated a tone-deafness to voters' concerns about rising prices have suggested his focus is not on the American public and have undermined Republicans who had intended to campaign on last year's tax cuts as helping families.

Trump described the trip as a victory, saying on social media that Xi "congratulated me on so many tremendous successes," as the U.S. president has praised their relationship.

Trump told reporters that Boeing would be selling 200 aircraft - and maybe even 750 "if they do a good job" - to the Chinese. He said American farmers would be "very happy" because China would be "buying billions of dollars of soybeans."

"We had an amazing time," Trump said as he flew home on Air Force One, and told Fox News' Bret Baier in an interview that gasoline prices were just some "short-term pain" and would "drop like a rock" once the war ends.

Trump departed from the White House for China by saying the negotiations over the Iran war depended on stopping Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. "I don't think about Americans' financial situation. I don't think about anybody. I think about one thing: We cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon," Trump said.

That remark prompted blowback because it suggested to some that Trump cared more about challenging Iran than fighting inflation at home. Trump defended his words, telling Fox News: "That's a perfect statement. I'd make it again."

The White House has since stressed that Trump is focused on inflation.



People shop at a grocery store in Schaumburg, Ill., Thursday, May 14, 2026. (AP)

Asked later about the president's words, Vice President JD Vance said there had been a "misrepresentation" of the remarks. White House spokesman Kush Desai said the "administration remains laser-focused on delivering growth and affordability on the homefront" while indicating actions would be taken on grocery prices.

But as Trump appeared alongside Xi, new reports back home showed inflation rising for businesses and interest rates climbing on U.S. government debt.

His comments that Boeing would sell 200 jets to China caused the company's stock price to fall because investors had expected a larger number. There was little concrete information offered about any trade agreements reached during the summit, including Chinese purchases of U.S. exports such as liquefied natural gas and beef.

"Foreign policy wins can matter politically, but only if voters feel stability and affordability in their daily lives," said Brittany Martinez, a former Republican congressional aide who is the executive director of Principles First, a center-right advocacy group focused on democracy issues.

"Midterms are almost always a referendum on cost of living and public frustration, and Republicans are not immune from the same inflation and affordability pressures that hurt Democrats in recent cycles," she added.

Democratic lawmakers are seizing on Trump's comments before his trip as proof of his indifference to lowering costs. There is potential staying power of his remarks as Americans head into Memorial Day weekend facing rising prices for the hamburgers and hot dogs to be grilled.

"What Americans do not see is any sympathy, any support, or any plan from Trump and congressional Republicans to lower costs - in fact, they see the opposite," Senate Democratic leader

Chuck Schumer of New York said Thursday.

Vance faulted the Biden administration for the inflation problem even though the inflation rate is now higher than it was when Trump returned to the White House in January 2025 with a specific mandate to fix it.

"The inflation number last month was not great," Vance said Wednesday, but he then stressed, "We're not seeing anything like what we saw under the Biden administration."

Inflation peaked at 9.1% in June 2022 under Biden, a Democrat. By the time Trump took the oath of office, it was a far more modest 3%.

The data tells a different story as higher inflation is spreading into the cost of servicing the national debt.

Over the past week, the interest rate charged on 10-year U.S. government debt jumped from 4.36% to 4.6%, an increase that implies higher costs for auto loans and mortgages.

"My fear is that the layers of supply shocks that are affecting the U.S. economy will only further feed into inflationary pressures," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at EY-Parthenon.

Daco noted that last year's tariff increases were now translating into higher clothing prices. With the Supreme Court ruling against Trump's ability to impose tariffs by declaring an economic emergency, his administration is preparing a new set of import taxes for this summer.

Daco stressed that there have been a series of supply shocks. First, tariffs cut into the supply of imports. In addition, Trump's immigration crackdown cut into the supply of foreign-born workers. Now, the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz has cut off the vital waterway used to ship 20% of global oil supplies.

"We're seeing an erosion of growth," Daco said.

China may buy up to 750 jets

Trump says Boeing, GE to benefit from China deal

BEIJING, May 16, (AP) — Aircraft manufacturer Boeing will make its first major sale to China in nearly a decade with an order for 200 planes, President Donald Trump told reporters Friday as he flew back from his summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump said China reserved the right to buy as many as 750 Boeing aircraft as part of a deal reached during the summit. The White House did not specify the types of planes or provide any other details.

Neither the Chinese government nor Boeing issued statements confirming the purchase agreement. A Boeing spokesperson on Friday referred questions to the White House. The deal, if finalized, would mark a significant breakthrough in a market that was once central to the U.S. aerospace company's long-term growth.

Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg was among a large group of American CEOs who joined Trump during the president's trip to Beijing, seeking to sell products and services to China.

Trump said the potential aircraft deal also would benefit General Electric, which he said would supply 400 to 450 engines to China. GE Aerospace Chairman and CEO H. Lawrence Culp also joined the president on his trip. The company did not immediately comment on the agreement.

While there were some hopes that the summit would result in concrete announcements of deals, the trip ended with a lot of uncertainty about what the two sides agreed on, said Bonnie Glaser, managing director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund.

"I think we really have to wait until we hear numbers from Boeing or from the Chinese," Glaser told a media briefing Friday, saying there had been little concrete information about any trade agreements from the summit, including on Chinese purchases of U.S. exports such as soybeans, liquefied natural gas and beef. "All that we have is really what the president has told the world that China has agreed to."

Last month, Ortberg expressed confidence that any broad U.S.-China trade agreement to emerge when Trump and Xi met would be a "meaningful opportunity" for Boeing.

"President Trump has been very focused on supporting us in international campaigns, and he's been very successful in doing that," Ortberg told investors.

Since Trump's return to the White House for his second term, his administration has made Boeing a focus of its plans to revive U.S. manufacturing. A visit to the Middle East a year ago culminated in major aircraft agreements, including a Qatar Airways order for up to 210 Boeing jets in what the plane-maker described at the time as its largest-ever widebody aircraft order. Saudi Arabia also placed commercial jetliner orders during the trip.

Other major Boeing agreements have followed meetings between Trump and foreign leaders. In August, Korean Air formalized a roughly \$50 billion deal to buy more than 100 Boeing aircraft, spare engines and long-term maintenance services during South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's visit to Washington. The following month, a day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with Trump in Washington, Turkish Airlines said it planned to add 225 Boeing aircraft to its fleet.

In another win for Boeing, the biennial Dubai Air Show opened in November with hometown airline Emirates ordering 65 of Boeing's upcoming 777-9 aircraft. Days later, FlyDubai, the lower-cost sister carrier of Emirates, announced it had ordered 75 additional Boeing 737 MAX aircraft.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, roughly a third of the narrowbody airliners Boeing delivered went to China. But the company's business there plummeted as U.S.-China relations soured.

China also was the first country to ground the 737 Max in 2019 after two of the then-new models crashed less than five months apart in Indonesia and Ethiopia, killing 346 people. Chinese airlines did not resume Max flights until January 2023, much later than carriers in many other countries.

Ortberg took over as Boeing's CEO in 2024, a calamitous year for the company. In January of that year, a panel known as a door plug blew off a 737 Max shortly after takeoff from Portland, Oregon. Boeing faced mounting financial pressure as it came under intensifying scrutiny over alleged production and quality failures.

Months later, the U.S. Justice Department revived a criminal case against Boeing tied to the two fatal Max crashes, although prosecutors later reached an agreement with Boeing to dismiss the case, committing the company to an additional \$1.1 billion in fines, compensation for victims' families and internal safety and quality improvements.

Then an eight-week strike stretching through the fall by machinists who assemble the 737 Max in Washington state disrupted production and added to the company's financial strain.

Modi pushes austerity as fuel prices increase

India raises fuel prices as global energy crisis adds pressure on economy

NEW DELHI, May 16, (AP) — India raised fuel prices by 3 rupees (\$0.03) per liter Friday as the government moved to offset losses due to higher global oil prices.

In New Delhi, gasoline prices rose to 97.77 rupees (\$1.17) a liter, while diesel climbed to 90.67 rupees (\$1.09) a liter.

India imports about 90% of its oil and has been hit hard by rising energy prices and supply disruptions linked to the Iran war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. It had until now avoided raising retail fuel prices despite sharp increases in energy costs, making it one of the last major economies to pass higher crude prices on to consumers.

The price increases came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged Indians to adopt voluntary austerity measures.

Modi on Sunday called on people to work from home where possible, limit foreign travel and reduce purchases of gold. He described fuel conservation and saving foreign exchange as an act of "patriotism," and encouraged greater use of public transportation, carpooling and lower fertil-

izer consumption.

Opposition leaders said Modi's appeal came only after a key round of state elections had concluded, noting that fuel prices were kept unchanged during the campaign.

Manoj Kumar, a 48-year-old taxi driver in New Delhi, said the rise in fuel prices was adding to the strain on working-class people.

"For common people like us, even one rupee has great value. People work so hard from morning till evening just to make ends meet. The government is not seeing this," he said.

Earlier this week, India also raised import duties on gold and silver to 15% in an effort to curb demand for imports that drain foreign exchange reserves. The Indian rupee has fallen to record lows in recent weeks as higher oil prices increased pressure on imports and foreign exchange reserves.

Meanwhile, India's capital has become the first state to roll out austerity measures.

Authorities in New Delhi on Thursday announced fuel-saving measures,

including mandatory work-from-home days for some government employees. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the 90-day campaign aims to reduce official fuel use and encourage people in the capital to rely more on public transportation instead of private vehicles.

Under the plan, employees whose work can be done remotely will work from home two days a week, while private companies are being encouraged to adopt similar measures voluntarily.

India has also accelerated ethanol blending in gasoline as part of its push to cut crude oil imports.

Most fuel stations across the country now sell gasoline blended with 20% ethanol, and the government has proposed expanding the use of fuels containing 85% - or even 100% - ethanol in compatible vehicles.

Energy experts said blending biofuel can help shield from global energy shocks but can lead to further stressing already depleting groundwater resources, encroach on land meant for food crops and impact older vehicles' engines.

Hollywood and haute couture collide

Cannes braces for 'White Lotus' effect

CANNES, France, May 16, (AP): Though many actors are appearing at the Cannes Film Festival this week, the best role in town might be a little further down the Croisette.

Season 4 of "The White Lotus" will be set around the Cannes Film Festival, bringing one of the most acclaimed TV series into the heart of cinema's French Riviera playground. The Hôtel Martinez, one of the iconic luxury hotels that line the beach in Cannes, will be a central location in Mike White's HBO series, fictionally renamed the White Lotus Cannes.

Shooting has begun along the Riviera. But four days into the Cannes Film Festival, "The White Lotus" production has yet to materialize in town. The festival runs to May 23, so there's still plenty of time. But the prospect of it turning into a live backdrop for "The White Lotus" may be unlikely.

As tantalizing as the prospect of cast members - including Steve Coogan, Heather Graham, Kumail Nanjiani and Rosie Perez - mixing into red carpet premieres during the festival may be, Cannes is vigilant about keeping attention focused on its film selections.

Representatives for HBO and festival organizers declined to comment.

The Cannes Film Festival has often been an irresistible setting for movies and series. A trip to Cannes made for some of the best moments in the French series "Call My Agent!" Some movies have been shot guerrilla-style around the festival, like the 1996 cameo-rich mockumentary "Cannes Man."

But most have relied on a mix of exterior footage shot from the event with staged interior scenes apart from the festival. "Mr. Bean's Holiday," the 2007 comedy that culminates with Mr. Bean stumbling into Cannes, is, surprisingly, among the most seamless recreations.

Some of this season's "White Lotus" cast members are appearing in Cannes on their own, for other projects they're a part of. Vincent Casel walked the red carpet Thursday night for the premiere of Asghar Farhadi's "Parallels." Laura Dern, who joined the cast after the



Hotel Martinez during preparations for the 79th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Monday, May 11, 2026. (AP)

departure of Helena Bonham Carter, is attending later in the festival for the documentary "Dernsie," about her father, Bruce Dern.

After location scouting, producers settled on the Martinez and another hotel south of Cannes in Saint-Tropez: the Airelles Château de la Messardière. It will be renamed the White Lotus du Cap. In real life, the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, in Antibes, can function like a swanky satellite to Cannes during the festival, and hosts the annual amfAR gala.

Last month, "The White Lotus" producer David Bernad said the setting for Season 4 came out of a trip he and White took to the Cannes Film Festival in 2021.

"We went to dinner and we had a really specific experience with a waiter and a maître d', and it was the stereotype. It was a very funny moment," Bernad said at the Canneseries Festival. "And I think that it suddenly unlocked what the show is and the dynamics of the show."

Their festival experience convinced them to bring "The White Lotus" to Cannes.

"The energy around it was so intoxicating and this season will have elements of that," said Bernad. "It's really about the people's stories, them navigating Cannes, and the ups and downs of the festival. It's the beating heart of everything in this season."

Meanwhile, the Martinez awaits its close-up. But the Hyatt-owned hotel, which first opened in 1929, is already at the heart of the festival. Like several of the other hotels on the Croisette, the Martinez hosts waves of stars for the festival. Glamour shots on its spiral staircase are an indelible feature of Cannes. Hordes of onlookers camp outside its doors hoping for a glimpse of a celebrity or an autograph.

"We are the biggest player in town in terms of the number of rooms," says Michel Cottray, general manager of the Martinez. "The film festival started in 1946, but we have ever since

been fully engaged and in complete partnership with the festival."

On nights during the festival, the Martinez's lobby swells with attendees in formal wear heading to the evening premieres. Often, that includes casts and filmmakers who pile into the official festival motorcade that ferries them down the Croisette to the Palais des Festivals.

Right now, keeping that nightly ritual humming, and catering to its A-list guests, is the main concern of the Martinez. "The White Lotus" will come later.

"We are gearing up to the shooting," Cottray says. "I think it will be in a couple months' time and then it will be a big experience for all of us. But we are ready for that."

Some floors of the hotel will be completely sold out and inaccessible to the public during the shooting. Filming will take place throughout the Hyatt-owned hotel. "It will be things happening a bit everywhere," said Cottray.



John Travolta holds his honorary Palme d'Or during the 79th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Friday, May 15, 2026. (AP)

Cannes surprises Travolta with honorary Palme d'Or

CANNES, France, May 16, (AP): John Travolta was surprised with an honorary Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival premiere of his directorial debut Friday.

Thierry Frémaux, the festival's artistic director, brought out the award for Travolta just before the screening of his "Propeller One-Way Night Coach." A visibly moved Travolta clutched his chest while Frémaux presented the trophy.

"You said this would be a special night, but I didn't know it would mean this," Travolta said to Frémaux. "This is beyond the Oscar!" ex-

claimed Travolta.

Clad in a white beret, Travolta walked the Cannes red carpet with his 26-year-old daughter Ella Bleu Travolta. The actor wrote, directed and co-produced "Propeller One-Way Night Coach," based on his own 1997 children's novel.

Cannes has sometimes previously surprised guests with an honorary Palme d'Or. It unexpectedly gave one to Tom Cruise in 2022. At this year's festival, the "Lord of the Rings" filmmaker Peter Jackson was given one in the opening ceremony. Barbara Streisand is to receive one later during the festival.

Variety

NEW YORK: Claudine Longet, the French singer and actor who was at the center of a highly publicized manslaughter trial after she was charged with the fatal shooting of her boyfriend, Olympic skier Vladimir "Spider" Sabich, has died at age 84.

Longet's nephew, Bryan Longet, announced her death in a social media post on Thursday. "You have been a true inspiration in my life and you will always be," he wrote. "Another star in the sky. Thank you for everything, my aunt."

Reached by phone by The Associated Press, he confirmed Longet had died but did not reveal the cause of her death. Longet was a native Parisian who had been acting since childhood. She appeared in numerous TV shows, recorded such hit albums as "Claudine" and was widely known for the bossa nova-style ballad "Nothing to Lose," a highlight of the 1968 movie "The Party" that starred Longet and Peter Sellers. (AP)

INDIANAPOLIS: Academy Award winning actor Brendan Fraser has been selected as the honorary starter for next week's Indianapolis 500, race organizers announced Friday.

Fraser was born in Indianapolis but was raised in Europe and Canada. He's returning to his hometown to appear atop the flag stand above Indianapolis Motor Speedway's iconic yard of bricks for the start of the "Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

The May 24 race already has sold its entire allotment of approximately 275,000 reserved seats.

Fraser's newest role is playing General Dwight D. Eisenhower in the upcoming film "Pressure," which follows the general and then future president and Captain James Stagg in the 72 hours leading up to the D-Day invasion in France. (AP)



Brendan Fraser poses for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film "Rental Family" during the London film festival in London, Oct. 16, 2025. (AP)

Exhibit



Left: The entrance of the Paul McCartney and WINGS exhibit at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, on Thursday, May 14, 2026. Right: A picture of handwritten lyrics inside the Paul McCartney and WINGS exhibit at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on Thursday, May 14, 2026, in Cleveland, Ohio. (AP)

McCartney wings it into Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

The largest collection of Paul McCartney's personal artifacts ever publicly displayed is part of a new exhibit at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame centering on his life after The Beatles.

"Paul McCartney and Wings," which opened Friday in Cleveland, explores the musician's reinvention after leaving the iconic British rock band through displays of instruments, handwritten songwriting notes and photographs taken by his wife, Linda McCartney, who was keyboardist and harmony vocalist for Wings during its decade-long run from 1971 to 1981, when the band produced hits including "Band on the Run," "Silly Love Songs" and "Live and Let Die."

After the breakup of The Beatles, Paul McCartney was no longer just the musician who had been known around the world since his teenage years, but a husband and father of a young family. What he built with Wings reflected that new stage of life, said Andy Leach, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame's senior director of museum and archival collections.

Leach said the band's embrace of domestic life - bringing children on tour, having a married couple perform together and

writing songs inspired by his wife, who was also a member of the group - was "remarkable and unusual" for the era, when rock music remained overwhelmingly male-dominated and family life was rarely incorporated so visibly into a band's public identity.

"What's interesting about Wings is that they were formed around the idea of reinvention, renewal, risk-taking, experimentation, but collaboration," Leach said. "And family was at the center of it, too."

Leach traveled to London to work with McCartney and his team to prepare and transport guitars along with clothing worn during performances to Cleveland.

The vast majority of the artifacts are from McCartney's personal collection.

Leach said Wings helped pioneer the large-scale production that came to define 1970s arena rock, using increasingly elaborate lighting and stage design on tours such as Wings Over the World and Wings Over America.

Leach said it was amazing to see and handle guitars that "I've heard on record my whole life."

Visitors will also be able to step into a recreation of the farmhouse that McCartney still owns in Scotland, where Paul and Linda retreated after The Beatles' breakup in 1970 and set up a recording

studio.

In the home, photos of Paul and Linda McCartney and their children line the walls. Linda's camera sits inside a case on the makeshift kitchen table.

The photographs taken by Linda, an acclaimed artist in her own right and the first female photographer to have a photo featured on the cover of Rolling Stone, in 1968, showcase her role "at the center of the family, and in some ways, at the center of the band," Leach said.

Linda McCartney was married for three decades to Paul, who taught her to play the keyboard after The Beatles' breakup. She died

in 1998 of breast cancer.

Another of Leach's favorite artifacts is the handwritten scores by famed Beatles producer George Martin for the songs "Uncle Albert" and the James Bond theme "Live and Let Die," which became one of Wings' most enduring songs.

Other items were lent by longtime Wings roadie John Hamill, former band members and the widow of Denny Laine, the co-founder of Wings and The Moody Blues, who played guitar, bass and keyboards and contributed both lead and backing vocals.

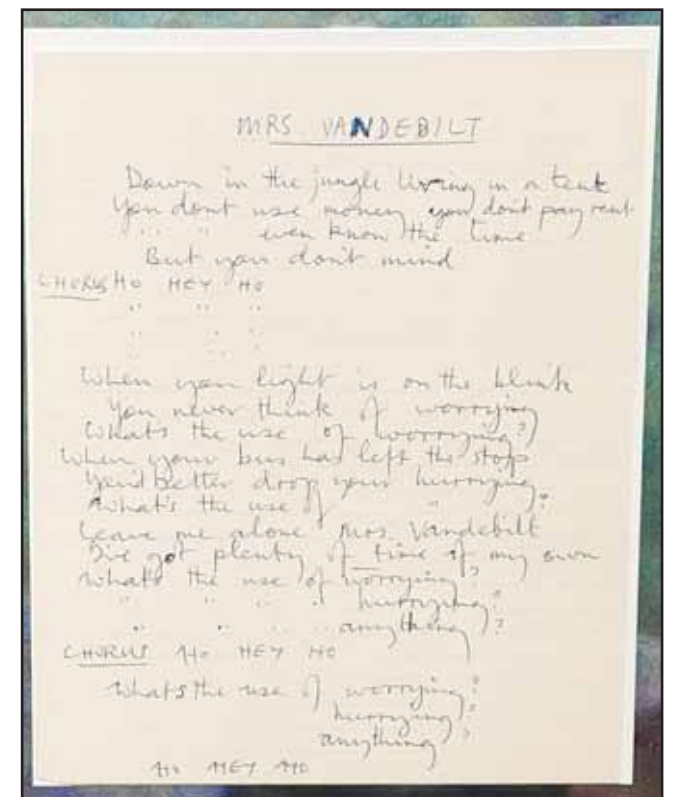
The Hall of Fame said the exhibit will be open for at least a year with the hope of keeping it open through the summer of 2027.

Leach said the exhibit is "perfect timing" because of what he described as "a nice kind of renaissance or at least a new appreciation for them among fans and a new understanding about how remarkable and important" Wings' musicians were.

He pointed to the release of the Amazon Prime documentary Man on the Run, a new box set and the 2025 book Wings: The Story of a Band on the Run, co-written by Paul McCartney and historian Ted Widmer. (AP)



Left: A collection of photos inside the Paul McCartney and WINGS exhibit at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on Thursday, May 14, 2026, in Cleveland, Ohio. Right: A recreation of the kitchen inside Paul and Linda McCartney's Scotland home at the Paul McCartney and WINGS exhibit at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on May 14. (AP)



Culture & Lifestyle

'Incredibly profitable'

Balikbayan boxes carry love from Filipino Americans back home

PHOENIX, May 16, (AP): Beginning in the 1970s, just about every Filipino household in America was either hauling balikbayan boxes in person or mailing them to relatives back in the Philippines.

These care packages that held goodies from the U.S. were seen as an expression of support during hard economic times - as well as one of pure love.

"Balik" and "bayan," Tagalog for "return" and "homeland," respectively, was what President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. called the tourism initiatives he established in 1973. After declaring martial law a year earlier, he wanted to compel Filipino immigrants to come back and visit and further "legitimize his new dictatorial regime," says Adrian De Leon, an assistant professor of history at New York University and author of "Balikbayan: A Revenant History of the Filipino Homeland."

The balikbayan program proved "incredibly profitable" for the government as middle-class Filipino Americans came and spent capital.

"The dollar stretches way more," De Leon says. "Bulk buying becomes a way through which overseas Filipinos are incentivized to maintain an economic connection to their homeland so that the government can take cuts from it and use it for like everything."

The practice of shipping balikbayan boxes grew from there. Initially, canned meat like Spam was a staple of these boxes. Over time, small luxuries like skin-care products, clothes and candy became sought after, too. Then American entertainment like music cassettes and movies on Betamax were tossed in.

"What might have been letters being sent back

home, now with the balikbayan box, you're sending back American pop culture," De Leon says. "Filipinos are doing the work of American soft power for Filipinos at home."

Sending balikbayan boxes has thrived as its own industry. There are a handful of shipping companies in the U.S. that market door-to-door delivery to the Philippines. Filipino immigrants visiting the country get quicker entry at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport through a designated "balikbayan lane."

Jamming as many gifts as possible into a balikbayan box remains culturally ingrained in the Filipino diaspora. Filipino American comedian Rex Navarrete has typically made it a stand-up bit, advising: "One thing you should never pack in a balikbayan box is air."



Sergio Alcubilla stands with a balikbayan box he sealed in Honolulu, on Monday, May 11, 2026. (AP)

Music

Moroney leads nominations

ACM awards set for star-studded night with Shania Twain



In this file photo, Reba McEntire appears on stage at the 54th annual Academy of Country Music Awards in Las Vegas on April 7, 2019. (AP)

NEW YORK, May 16, (AP): The 2026 Academy of Country Music Awards return for their 61st annual show Sunday night.

There's a lot that's noteworthy: Women lead the nominations for a second year in a row. Shania Twain will host for the first time, taking over for Reba McEntire. The awards ceremony will also take place May 17 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, leaving the Ford Center at The Star in Frisco, Texas, just north of Dallas, after three years.

And the ACM festivities actually began ahead of Sunday's event.

Before the show, a few trophies were handed out. Jessie Jo Dillon was named songwriter of the year, becoming the first artist to win three times in a row. Stephen Wilson Jr. was awarded visual media of the year for "Cuckoo." And Avery Anna and Tucker Wetmore were presented with new female and new male artist of the year, respectively.

Here's what you need to know before the main ACMs attraction begins.

The 2026 ACM Awards will stream on Prime Video and the



In this file photo, Shania Twain performs during the Calgary Stampede in Calgary, Alberta, Canada on July 5, 2025. (AP)

Amazon Music channel on Twitch, as well as the Amazon Music app, on May 17 at 8 p.m. EDT.

Women dominate the 2026 ACM Award nominations. First up: Megan Moroney, who leads with nine nods.

She's followed by Miranda Lambert, the most-decorated artist in ACM Awards history, with

eight, as well as Ella Langley and Lainey Wilson with seven each.

Then there's Chris Stapleton with six, Zach Top with five and Cody Johnson with four.

In addition to Moroney, those competing for entertainer of the year are Wilson, Stapleton, Johnson, Luke Combs, Jelly Roll and Morgan Wallen.

In the album of the year category, Wallen's "I'm the Problem" faces off against Top's "Ain't in It for My Health," Riley Green's "Don't Mind If I Do," Parker McCollum's "Parker McCollum" and first-time nominee Carter Faith's "Cherry Valley."

Performers will include Lambert, Langley, Top, Wilson, Johnson, Green, Faith, Anna, Wetmore, McCollum, Kacey Musgraves, Little Big Town, Blake Shelton, Dan + Shay, Jordan Davis, Kane Brown, The Red Clay Strays, Thomas Rhett and Lee Ann Womack.

McCollum and Womack will perform "Killin' Me" from his 2025 self-titled album. All the nominees in the album of the year category will perform, except for Wallen.

Ashley McBryde, Keith Urban, Lauren Alaina, Michael Bublé, Shaboozey, The War and Treaty, and TJ Osborne are among this year's presenters.

There will also be a few non-musician presenters: Super Bowl champion Andrew Whitworth, NASCAR Hall of Famer Carl Edwards, NASCAR driver and podcaster Corey LaJoie and former NFL quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick.

An undeniably global pop track

Shakira & Burna Boy unveil 'Dai Dai' for World Cup 2026

NEW YORK, May 16, (AP): As the song demands: "Let's go!"

The Colombian superstar Shakira and Afrobeats icon Burna Boy have teamed up for "Dai Dai," the official song for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

It's a mesh of their musical landscapes: Afrobeats and Latin rhythms, an undeniably global, multilingual pop track. In one verse, they name a number of the world's most famous soccer players and countries competing in this year's World Cup: "Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Colombia," Shakira cheers. "Mexico, Japan, Korea, Netherlands."

After the first chorus, Shakira and Burna Boy take turns tackling their own verses, singing back and forth, before joining in a duet.

The song arrived shortly after it was announced that Shakira, Madonna and K-pop group BTS will co-headline the FIFA tournament's first-ever final-half-time show on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, just outside New York City. The lineup was curated by Coldplay's Chris Martin.

The show will support the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund, which is raising \$100 million to help children access education and soccer.

Shakira first teased "Dai Dai" last week, sharing a minute-long teaser clip of her dancing in the center of the field of Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. She included a snippet of the opening verse: "Here in this place/You belong," she sang in English, a male voice harmonizing with her now identifiable as Burna Boy. "What broke you once/Made you strong."

She is no stranger to World Cup anthems. Her song "Waka Waka (This Time For Africa)" was the official song of the 2010 World Cup held in South Africa and is widely regarded as one of the best.



Shakira speaks on a panel on the 2026 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament halftime show during the Global Citizen NOW summit, Thursday, May 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)

It's also not uncommon for sponsors of the FIFA World Cup to release their own singles for the tournament. In March, Coca-Cola shared its own official anthem for the World Cup, a reimagining of Van Halen's "Jump" that features Colombian singer J Balvin, drummer Travis Barker, pop/R&B singer Amber Mark and guitarist Steve Vai.

It is similarly multilingual: Balvin wrote a new verse in Spanish for the anthem, bringing in Brazilian funk and hip-hop to the classic rock staple. "'Jump' is not a fútbol song," he told The Associated Press about the original track, using the Spanish word for soccer. "So that's why I had to put the Latin love and passion for fútbol (in the lyrics)."

The World Cup is co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico and runs through June and July.



This image released by Sony Music Latin shows art for "Dai Dai," the official 2026 FIFA World Cup anthem by Shakira and Burna Boy. (AP)

Books

They are American versions of Sisyphus

The everlasting allure of comic books (Bam! Pow! Krakoom!)

BARCELONA, Spain, May 16, (AP): Pick one up. Be seduced by its glossy cover. Gaze upon the impossibly muscular body clad in a skin-tight suit. Our hero or heroine will surely be soaring, shouting, blasting a villain into next week.

They are ridiculous. They are additively great. Comic books, of the superhero variety, are 100% American.

Compare the thin comic book to Europe's graphic novels, and they come off looking flimsy, infantile. Compare the American comic to Japanese Manga and they appear innocent in their fixation with heroism; they hark back to a departed American age.

Once a nickel, a dime, a quarter, now the price of a latte, they are objects of American consumer capitalism. The comic is literature in junk-food version. Candy for the eyes, candy for the mind.

Yet what truly makes them American objects is what plays out in their 32 pages month after month, decade upon decade.

When the Fantastic Four took their fateful space journey in 1961 and "cosmic rays" transformed the quartet into unwilling superheroes, comics entered a weird realm where the all-powerful were also the unwilling, decidedly modern victims of science and circumstance.

Spider-Man, the Hulk, Wolverine (the list goes on) were given supernatural abilities that made them outcasts, obliging them to be flawed messiahs.



In this file photo, Vincent Zurzolo, co-partner of Metropolis Collectibles, holds three examples of the company's vast collection of comic books in their offices in New York. (AP)

They were, by some quirk of the American character, bound to Peter Parker's moral imperative: "With great power comes great responsibility." They are versions of an American Sisyphus, bound to saving us over and over again.

What could be more American - that might, when lashed to a sense of justice, eventually, makes right? So honorable, so naive.

To this day, though the tone is darker, Marvel and DC, the two mammoths of comics, continue to reimagine the American character.

Once side attractions in a world of leading white men, Gwen Stacy, Jean Grey and Susan Storm have in recent years emerged as leaders to reinvigorate the Spider-Man, X-Men and Fantastic Four sagas. Absolute Wonder Woman has broken ground with beautiful art. Miles Morales is Spidey for a new generation.

Yet the central fissures remain.

Bruce Wayne can't connect with anyone other than his butler; he is the lonely individual in an atomized America. Steve Rogers bears the burden of representing the "Greatest Generation" from World War II. He is a Captain America forever out of place, even in his own land.

And could there be a more iconic tech magnate toying with humanity's fate than Superman's nemesis Lex Luthor and his delusions of grandeur? If only our world had a bespectacled Clark Kent keeping an eye on things. Just in case.

Health

Health workers race to intensify screening, contact tracing to contain disease

Congoese report constant burials as deaths in new Ebola outbreak reach 80

BUNIA, Congo, May 16. (AP): At least 80 deaths have been reported in Congo's new Ebola disease outbreak in the eastern Ituri province, authorities said, as health workers raced Saturday to intensify screening and contact tracing to contain the disease. Officials first announced the outbreak on Friday, with 65 deaths and 246 suspected cases.

Meanwhile, Associated Press journalists in Ituri's capital, Bunia, interviewed locals who recounted their fears and constant burials.

"Every day, people are dying ... and this has been going on for about a week. In a single day, we bury two, three, or even more people," said Jean Marc Asimwe, a resident of Bunia. "At this point, we don't really know what kind of disease it is," said Asimwe.

Congoese Health Minister Samuel-Roger Kamba said late Friday that there have been eight laboratory-confirmed cases, among them four deaths.

Test results confirmed the Bundibugyo virus, a variant of the disease that has been less prominent in Congo's past outbreaks. This is Congo's 17th outbreak since Ebola first emerged in the country in 1976.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted through bodily fluids such as vomit, blood, or semen. The disease it causes is rare, but severe and often fatal.

The suspected index case in the latest outbreak is a nurse who died at a hospital in Bunia, Kamba said. He said the case dates back three weeks to April 24.

He did not say whether samples from the nurse were tested, but said the person presented symptoms suggestive of Ebola.

Uganda confirmed Friday an Ebola case that authorities said was "imported" from Congo. The person died at the Kibuli Muslim Hospital in Uganda's capital, Kampala, on May 14.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention had said it is



Health workers wearing protective suits tend to an Ebola victim kept in an isolation tent in Beni, Congo, July 13, 2019. (AP)

concerned about the risk of further spread due to the proximity of affected areas to Uganda and South Sudan.

The body of the patient who died in Kampala was later taken back to Congo and no other local case has been confirmed, Uganda's Health Ministry said.

On Saturday, people were being screened at the entrance of the Kibuli Muslim Hospital.

Ismail Kigongo, who resides in Kampala, said the new outbreak reminded him of his father, whom he lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I really get scared because I remember burying my father without looking at his body," he said.

Kenya, Uganda's neighbor, said Saturday that there is only a "moderate risk of importation" of the Ebola virus due to regional travel. Kenya's government said it has formed an Ebola preparedness team and has strengthened surveillance at all points of entry.

Congo has experience managing Ebola outbreaks but often faces logistical challenges in delivering expertise and supplies to affected regions.

As Africa's second-largest country by land area, Congo's provinces are far from one another and mostly battling conflict. Ituri, for instance, is around 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the nation's capital, Kinshasa, and is ravaged by violence from Islamic State-backed militants.

The disease has so far been confirmed in three health zones in Ituri province, including the capital city, Bunia, and the areas of Rwampara and Mongwalu, where the outbreak is concentrated.

Only 13 blood samples have been tested at the National Institute of Biomedical Research; 8 tested positive for the Bundibugyo strain. The remaining five could not be analyzed due to insufficient sample volume, the health minister said.

In Bunia, Ituri's main city, businesses and regular activities in public places appeared normal on Friday.

Resident Adeline Awekonimungu said she hopes the outbreak is quickly contained. "My recommendation is that the government take this matter seriously and that it takes charge of the hospitals so that this matter can be brought under control," she said.

Climate

Scientists find climate change cuts oxygen in rivers worldwide

WASHINGTON, May 16. (AP): Global warming is causing rivers to slowly lose oxygen, threatening fish and other lives in the waterways, a new study shows.

Researchers in China used satellites and artificial intelligence to track and analyze oxygen levels in more than 21,000 rivers across the globe since 1985. They found oxygen levels have dropped an average of 2.1% since 1985, according to a study published Friday in *Science Advances*. That doesn't seem like much but it adds up and if it continues or accelerates, rivers in the Eastern United States, India and across the tropics could lose enough oxygen by the end of the century to suffocate some fish and create dead zones, the study said.

Basic chemistry and physics dictate that warmer water holds less oxygen, scientists said. Warmer water, which happens with human-caused climate change, releases more oxygen into the atmosphere.

If the oxygen loss rate continues at the current pace, the world's rivers on average will lose an additional 4% of their oxygen by the end of the century, and in some cases close to 5%, the study found. That's when oxygen loss - called deoxygenation - becomes problematic for fish and people who rely on rivers, according to the study's lead author Qi Guan, an environmental scientist at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Nanjing.

Scientists worry that oxygen levels in rivers could fall so low that dead zones appear, as they have in the Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay and Lake Erie. Those are areas where fish struggle to breathe and die.

"Deoxygenation is a very slow process. If we have a long period, the negative impact will attack the river ecosystems," Guan said. "The low level of oxygen can cause a series of ecological crises such as biodiversity decline, water quality degradation and maybe some fish will die."

University of Arizona geoscientist Karl Flessa, who wasn't part of the study, said in an email that losing oxygen in rivers means "a future of more stinky dead zones (hypoxia), especially during heat waves."

Some rivers are in such bad shape that "a small change can tip them into the danger zone," Flessa said. "if your favorite fishing hole gets too warm, oxygen levels will go down and there won't be any fish to catch."



Tourists take a boat ride early morning in the Ganges river in Varanasi, India on March 16, 2026. (AP)

Space

NASA's Psyche spacecraft buzzing Mars on its way to rare metal asteroid

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., May 16. (Agencies): A NASA spacecraft chasing a rare metal asteroid swings past Mars this week for a gravity boost, snapping thousands of pictures as practice for the main encounter in 2029.

Named Psyche like the asteroid it's after, the robotic explorer will slingshot past the red planet at 12,333 mph (19,848 kph) on Friday.

It will be an especially close flyby, with Psyche passing within 2,800 miles (4,500 kilometers) of Mars, equivalent to the distance between the US east and west coasts. Then it will barrel toward the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter that is home to its enticing target.

All of the spacecraft's science instruments will be on for the Mars pass. NASA's two Mars rovers along with a small fleet of US and European orbiters will make surface and atmospheric observations at the same time for comparison.

Psyche's cameras already are photographing Mars, appearing as a crescent on approach and a nearly full sphere once it's in the rearview mirror. The different views will serve double duty, allowing operators to fine-tune their instruments while providing "just plain beautiful photos," Arizona State University's Jim Bell, the imaging team leader, said in a statement.

While the asteroid belt is swarming with millions of objects, most are made of rock or ice. Only a small percentage are thought to be metal-rich like Psyche, a potato-shaped asteroid roughly 173 miles long and 144 miles wide (278 kilometers by 232 kilometers).

Scientists suspect the asteroid may be the exposed nickel and iron core of a fledgling planet that was stripped down by cosmic collisions. Studying such an object up close can yield information about the dawn of our solar system 4.6 billion years ago, and why and how Earth spawned life.

Launched in 2023, the spacecraft is midway through its six-year roundabout journey to Psyche in the outer fringes of the asteroid belt,



This image provided by the NASA/JPL-Caltech/ASU from the Psyche mission spacecraft shows Mars on May 13. (AP)

three times farther from the sun than Earth. It should arrive in 2029, slipping into orbit around the asteroid for two years of study. The van-sized spacecraft runs on solar electric propulsion, using xenon gas thrusters.

Also:

BEIJING: Using lunar samples collected by the Chang'e-6 mission, Chinese scientists have discovered a significant shift in the types of asteroids bombarding the Earth-moon system between 4.3 billion and 2.8 billion years ago, transitioning from the dominance of non-carbonaceous ones to the arrival of carbonaceous ones.

The results of the study, carried out by researchers from the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences (IGGCAS), were recently published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Planets*.

For scientists, the moon records the history of asteroid impacts in the solar system over the past 4 billion years. The research team isolated 40 impact clasts containing tiny metal particles from the lunar far-side soil, which act as "time capsules" preserving a record of ancient collisions.

Based on the mineral composition associated with these metals, the team categorized them into two distinct groups. Those preserved in basaltic debris represent asteroid fragments accumulated over the last 2.8 billion years following basaltic eruptions, while those originating from older lunar highland anorthosites splashed from other regions record impact events dating back as far as 4.3 billion years.

The analysis revealed a stark contrast in impactor types over the ages. The 13 ancient clasts showed metal particles corresponding primarily to ordinary chondrites and iron meteorites from the inner solar system, with carbonaceous asteroid metals accounting for less than 8 percent.

However, in the 27 younger clasts, the proportion of metals from carbonaceous asteroids rose to approximately 26 percent. This indicates that the contribution of carbonaceous asteroids increased significantly between 4.3 billion and 2.8 billion years ago.

This finding has major implications for human understanding of how water arrived in the inner solar system.

The Conversation

Is baby talk bad? Why 'parentese' actually helps babies learn language

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



By Karen Stollznow

University of Colorado Boulder; Griffith University

Many parents have heard the warning: Don't use baby talk with babies and toddlers. Instead, caregivers are often encouraged to speak properly and use adultlike language, out of concern that simplified speech could confuse children or delay language development.

But my research, which I highlighted in my new book, "Beyond Words," suggests the opposite is true. The sing-song voice many adults instinctively use with infants, sometimes called "baby talk" but more accurately known as "parentese" or infant-directed speech, actually helps children learn language.

Far from confusing babies, exaggerating phrases like "Loook at the doggie!" capture their attention, help them detect patterns in speech and strengthen social bonding.

And the funny mistakes children make along the way, such as saying "goed," instead of "went," or "mouses" instead of "mice," are not signs that children are learning language incorrectly. They are evidence that children are actively working out the rules of language for themselves.

When many people think of baby talk, they imagine nonsense phrases like "goo goo ga ga" or made-up words like "num nums." But that's not what linguists and developmental psychologists mean by parentese.

Parentese uses real words and grammatically correct sentences, but with exaggerated intonation, a higher pitch, stretched-out vowels and a slower rhythm. Think of the way a caregiver might naturally say: "Hi, baaaaby! Are you huunngry?"

There is little evidence that occasional playful nonsense words harm children's language development. But studies suggest that parentese in particular helps babies pay attention to speech, recognize patterns and engage socially.

Adults across cultures tend to speak this way to infants instinctively. Even people who swear they never use baby talk often slip into it around babies.

Researchers have found that infants actually prefer listening to parentese over regular adult speech. The exaggerated sounds and slower pacing make language easier to process. Babies are better able to pick out individual sounds, notice word boundaries and recognize patterns. In other words, parentese helps tune babies into language.

It also strengthens emotional connection. Language learning does not happen in isolation. Babies learn through warm, responsive interaction with caregivers during feeding, play, bath time and everyday routines.

Interestingly, humans are not the only ones who re-

spond to this style of communication. Studies have even shown that cats react more positively when people use a baby-talk voice with them.

Children do not learn language simply by copying adults word for word. They actively test hypotheses about how language works. That is why toddlers make predictable and surprisingly logical mistakes.

One common example is over generalization. A child learns that people form the past tense of many verbs by adding "-ed," so they produce forms like "goed," "eated" or "comed."

These are not random errors. In fact, they show that the child has understood a grammatical rule and is trying to apply it consistently. The problem is simply that English is full of irregular exceptions. The same thing happens with plurals. Children may say "foots" instead of "feet" or "mouses" instead of "mice." Again, the logic behind these errors is sound.

Linguists sometimes say that children are little scientists, constantly testing patterns and revising their understanding as they receive more input from the world around them.

Young children also make predictable mistakes with meaning.

A toddler might learn the word "dog" and then use it for every four-legged animal they encounter. Linguists call this overextension. On the flip side, some children use words too narrowly. A child may use "dog" only for the family pet and not recognize that other dogs belong in the same category. Linguists call this tendency under extension.

These mistakes reveal how children organize and categorize the world around them. They are gradually mapping words onto objects, people and experiences.

Pronouns are another tricky area. Small children often confuse "me" and "you" because these words constantly shift depending on who is speaking. If a parent says, "I'll pick you up," the child hears themselves called "you." But when they try to repeat the sentence, they may not yet understand that the labels switch from speaker to speaker.

This is why toddlers sometimes say things that sound unintentionally cute or confusing. But beneath the confusion is a sophisticated learning process.

Children's speech errors are so recognizable that they often appear in popular culture. Sesame Street's character Cookie Monster famously says things like "Me want cookie," while Elmo often refers to himself in the third person: "Elmo wants this." These speech patterns mirror real stages of child language development. Young children commonly confuse pronouns or refer to themselves by name before mastering forms like "I," "me" and "mine."

Despite occasional complaints from adults, there is no evidence that hearing this kind of speech harms children's language development. If anything, it reflects the natural experimentation children go through. (AP)

Pakistan reaches 21 without loss at stumps

Das century rescues Bangladesh on opening day of 2nd test

SYLHET, Bangladesh, May 16, (AP): Wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das hit a sublime century as Bangladesh recovered from early trouble on the opening day of the second and final cricket test against Pakistan on Saturday.

He hammered 126 runs off 159 balls with 16 fours and two sixes to help Bangladesh post 278 all out in its first innings before Pakistan reached 21 without loss at stumps, trailing by 257.

No other Bangladesh batter reached 30 runs, exposing its batting vulnerability against a disciplined Pakistan pace attack.

Khuram Shahzad, who replaced Shaheen Shah Afridi in the squad, led the charge with 4-81 while Mohammad Abbas claimed 3-45.

Hasan Ali, who was stretched off after falling awkwardly in his first over, returned later and finished with 2-49, including the wicket

of Das.

Abbas struck in the second ball of the innings, dismissing Mahmudul Hasan for a duck after Pakistan won the toss and chose to bowl first.

Tanzid Hasan scored 26 on his test debut. He struck Abbas for a cover-driven boundary before attacking Shahzad, who was one of Pakistan's three changes from the first test, which Bangladesh won by 104 runs in Dhaka.

In the eighth over, Tanzid offered a return catch to pacer Hasan, who fell awkwardly and was immediately taken off the field. Tanzid was out after he top-edged a short delivery to give Abbas a return catch, ending his 44-run partnership with Mominul.

Mominul, who made half-centuries in both innings of the first test, was

bowled by Shahzad for 22 to leave Bangladesh 63-3.

Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, fresh from his 101 and 87, and Mushfiqur Rahim were defiant but Abbas broke through with the dismissal of Shanto for 29.

Shahzad dealt a double blow, sending back Mushfiqur (23) and Mehidy Hasan as Bangladesh was reduced to 116-6.

Das, who shared 60 runs with Taijul for the seventh wicket, raised his 50 off 93 balls before racing to his sixth test ton off 135 balls overall with a sublime backfoot punch for a boundary through cover.

Pakistan batters Azan Awaiz (13 not out) and Abdullah Fazal (8 not out) safely negotiated six overs.

Leading Pakistan batter Babar Azam was back in the squad after missing the first test because of a left knee injury.

Castle drops 32, Spurs crush T-wolves to reach West finals



Detroit Pistons' Auser Thompson, left, and Cleveland Cavaliers' Max Strus, center, reach for the ball over Caris LeVert, right, in the first half of Game 6 of a second-round NBA basketball playoffs series in Cleveland. (AP)

Pistons force Game 7

MINNEAPOLIS, May 16, (AP): The San Antonio Spurs were well on their way to the Western Conference finals in the fourth quarter when Minnesota Timberwolves star Anthony Edwards went down to their bench to briefly offer his congratulations.

The young Spurs left no doubt they're already a serious NBA title contender.

Stephon Castle had 32 points and 11 rebounds to highlight another dominant performance from the backcourt, and Victor Wembanyama and the Spurs romped past the Timberwolves 139-109 to finish in the second-round series in six games.

De'Aaron Fox added 21 points and nine assists and rookie Dylan Harper had 15 points off the bench for the Spurs, who set their franchise postseason record for 3-pointers made by going 18 for 38. They will face defending champion Oklahoma City in Game 1 on Monday night. The Thunder swept their first two series.

Wembanyama, who bounced back from his stunning Game 4 ejection with 27 points, 17 rebounds, five assists and three blocks in the Game 5 blowout, was well-guarded by the Wolves in Game 6 and had a quiet 19 points in 27 minutes. But he still served as a constant defensive deterrent in the paint, and he dutifully joined the Spurs in transition whenever they had the opportunity to run - which was often.

The size, smarts and shooting touch of the Spurs guards were too



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama, middle, shoots over Minnesota Timberwolves guards Ayo Dosunmu (13), top, and Anthony Edwards (5), bottom, during the first half of Game 6 of a NBA basketball second-round playoff series in Minneapolis. (AP)

much for the Wolves, who predictably had their hands full with the 7-foot-4 Wembanyama.

Castle made his first five 3-pointers and finished 11 for 16 from the floor. Fox was 3 for 3 from deep, and Julian Champagne made four 3s among his 18 points for the Spurs, who outscored the Wolves by a whopping 97 points in the series and never once trailed by double digits. The Spurs breezed by Portland Trail in five games in the first round.

Anthony Edwards had 24 points on 9-for-26 shooting for the Wolves, who got another spark from reserves Terrence Shannon (21 points) and Naz Reid (18 points) but were again flustered by the Spurs and their relentless switch-heavy defense. Julius Randle had just three points on 1-for-8 shooting.

"It just felt like we kind of ran out of bullets as this series went on,"

coach Chris Finch said.

This no-show in the elimination game might've felt familiar to Wolves fans, who've otherwise enjoyed an unprecedented run of success in the playoffs over the last three years.

Minnesota trailed by 33 points at halftime in a 30-point loss at Oklahoma City in the Game 5 ouster in the Western Conference finals last year and were down by 29 points at the break to Dallas in losing the Western Conference finals in 2024 in a 21-point loss in Game 5.

Pistons 115, Cavaliers 94

In Cleveland, Cade Cunningham scored 21 points and the top-seeded Detroit Pistons dominated the second half, beating the Cleveland Cavaliers 115-94 to force a Game 7 in their Eastern Conference second-round series.

The decisive game is Sunday in Detroit.

The Pistons' 21-point victory tied a 66-year-old NBA playoff record for the largest Game 6 road win by a team trailing 3-2 in a series. The St. Louis Hawks beat the Minneapolis Lakers 117-96 in the 1960 West Division finals.

Jalen Duren had 15 points and 11 rebounds while Daniss Jenkins also scored 15 for the Pistons, who have won four games this postseason when facing elimination.

They were down 3-1 to Orlando before winning the last three to advance out of the first round.

Cunningham made five 3-pointers as the Pistons went 16 of 36 from beyond the arc, tied for their most this preseason. Duncan Robinson, who missed Wednesday's Game 5 with a lower back injury, had four 3-pointers and scored 14 points off the bench.

Paul Reed also had 17 points as Detroit's reserves outscored Cleveland's 48-19.

James Harden scored 23 points for Cleveland, which suffered its first home loss of the postseason. Donovan Mitchell and Evan Mobley scored 18 apiece.

Detroit asserted its will on the offensive boards and took advantage of Cleveland turnovers. The Pistons converted 13 offensive rebounds into 20 points. The Cavaliers had 20 turnovers, which resulted in 28 Detroit points.

The Pistons were up 54-41 at halftime and started the second half with a 12-2 run. The Cavaliers rallied to get within 74-68 before the Pistons put it away with a 13-2 spurt.

Mobley missed a dunk and Marcus Sasser drove the length of the floor for a layup at the buzzer to give Detroit a 84-70 lead at the end of the third quarter.

President lauds successful event

Al-Ajmi praises leadership as camel racing season resumes in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Rabeeh Faraj Al-Ajmi, Secretary-General of the Kuwaiti Camel Racing Club, extended his congratulations to the political and sports leadership on the return of sporting activity and the continued competition among camel owners. He noted that the club's races are entering a new phase of development, marked by strong preparation and full participation across all rounds, with closely matched performances and intense rivalry in all categories. He wished success to all participants.

He added that the 23rd race meeting of the Kuwaiti Camel Racing Club for the current season was held at the late Sheikh

Fahad Al-Ahmad track in Juwehel, Kabd, featuring highly competitive races. Camels from the Hail, Thanaya Abkar and Qadaan, stud, and Jathaa Abkar and Qadaan categories competed over distances of six kilometers, while selected Jathaa races covered five kilometers, including events for the club's 23rd cup.

Club President Hussein Manea Al-Dawas expressed his satisfaction with the successful organization of the event and the revival of traditional heritage sports. He prayed for the safety and prosperity of Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, and thanked all participating camel owners, wishing them continued success.



Rabeeh Faraj Al-Ajmi, Secretary-General of the Kuwaiti Camel Racing Club, stands in a group photo with officials.

'I will be happy to see him back'

Arbeloa backs Mourinho as Madrid return rumors grow

BARCELONA, Spain, May 16, (AP): Real Madrid's Alvaro Arbeloa gave his blessing to former boss José Mourinho on Saturday amid intense speculation that the Portuguese coach is set to replace him and start a second stint at the European powerhouse.

Speaking like a coach who knows his days are numbered, Arbeloa told reporters in Madrid on Saturday that "if he (Mourinho) is the one who is here next season, I will be happy to see him back home."

Arbeloa played for Madrid when Mourinho was in charge from 2010-2013, a tumultuous time in which Madrid won Spanish league and Copa del Rey titles but was overshadowed by Pep Guardiola's great Barcelona side. Mourinho's abrasive attitude to opponents like Guardiola as well as some of his own players turned off many in Spain. He also had his faithful backers, like Arbeloa and some hardcore fans.

The Madrid sports papers are rife with rumors that Mourinho is the leading candidate to replace Arbeloa, who was always seen as an interim coach after he was promoted from the club's reserve team midseason to fill in for the fired Xabi Alonso.

Second-place Madrid has two more Spanish league games to play this campaign, which it will finish without a major title. It visits Sevilla on Sunday and concludes the season at home against Athletic Bilbao on May 23.



In this file photo, Benfica's head coach José Mourinho arrives for a Champions League opening phase soccer match between SL Benfica and Real Madrid in Lisbon, Portugal. (AP)

The 15-time European Cup winners have been embarrassed in recent weeks by series of unseemly events. There was a fight between players, and a loss at Barcelona that allowed its fierce rival to clinch the league title. Kylian Mbappé was also jeered by fans, while the star striker called out Arbeloa publicly for not playing him more.

Club president Florentino Pérez added to the sense of a club in crisis by giving a press conference to announce he would call early elections, which he is expected to win, while blasting the media for what he considered a campaign to force him to quit.

Pérez is expected to make a coaching change soon, and it is understandable that he believes Mourinho's strong personality is what the squad needs.

Marsh century crushes CSK as Lucknow storms to victory

LUCKNOW, India, May 16, (AP): Mitchell Marsh deflated Chennai Super Kings with a blazing knock of 90 off 38 balls as the playoff chasers were blown away by Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League on Friday.

Nicholas Pooran finished off Chennai with four consecutive sixes against Anshul Kamboj for Lucknow to cruise to 188-3 and a win by seven wickets with more than three overs to spare.

Chennai put up 187-5 in what appeared to be an over-par total.

Kartik Sharma hit 71 off 42 balls and impact player Shivam Dube enjoyed a 16-ball unbeaten 32.

Chennai missed a chance to move into the top four playoff positions and slipped to sixth in the table. Lucknow was already out of the playoffs reckoning but entertained its home crowd with a fourth win from 12 games.

"Getting a win definitely feels good," Lucknow captain Rishabh Pant said. "The things we talk about, of having a lot to play for, regardless of how the season ends, we take a lot of pride (in playing

like this)."

Marsh teed off in the power-play when he smashed Kamboj for four consecutive sixes and a boundary in a 28-run over. The fast bowler eventually finished with expensive figures of 0-63 off 2.4 overs.

Marsh's blitz featured seven sixes and nine boundaries. Backed up by Josh Inglis (36), they put Lucknow within reach of victory with their quickfire 135-run opening stand.

"We have stuck together as a team and it's nice to get a reward



Mitchell Marsh

tonight," Marsh said. "Feels like he (Inglis) takes the pressure off me. We have grown up together playing for Western Australia, we know each other well, and it was a good partnership tonight."

Both perished off successive deliveries in the 12th over. Inglis sliced Mukesh Choudhary to

deep point and Choudhary deflected Pooran's hard drive back onto the non-striker's stumps that caught Marsh out of his crease.

But the pair had done the hard work that Pooran capped in style to wrap up the win.

Earlier, Lucknow fast bowler Akash Singh impressed in his first opportunity of the season with 3-26 in his four unchanged overs with the new ball.

Singh dismissed Chennai captain Rituraj Gaikwad, Sanju Samson and Urvil Patel to have

the visitors at 52-3 in the eighth over.

Kartik hit five sixes and six fours and Dube smacked two fours and two sixes off the final four balls of the innings.

"We were looking at 160-170 and got 180. Nothing much better we could have done from a batting point of view," Gaikwad said. "They (Lucknow) batted well and played some extraordinary shots ... sometimes the opposition plays (better) cricket than you and you have to accept it."

'Our primary goal is to reach the round of 32'

Veteran star Son Heung-min to lead South Korea's World Cup campaign

SEOUL, South Korea, May 16, (AP): Veteran star Son Heung-min will lead South Korea's World Cup campaign as coach Hong Myung-bo named his 26-man squad on Saturday.

The tournament, hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada, will be the fourth World Cup for Son, who left Tottenham last summer after 10 years in the Premier League to join Los Angeles FC in Major League Soccer.

It is also South Korea's 11th successive appearance, a streak that stretches back to 1986.

Lee Kang-in of Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich defender Kim Min-jae also made the list for the 48-team tournament.

Coach Hong called up influential midfielder Hwang In-beom although the Feyenoord star is struggling with an ankle injury.

"Our primary goal is to reach the round of 32," Hong said in Seoul.

"We do not know what will happen after that. We could go even further than we could have imagined. Our World Cup goal is not the round of 32; our primary goal is the round of 32."

Korea reached the last 16 in 2022, defeating Portugal in the final group game, and then lost to five-time champion Brazil.

Hong was the captain of the team that made the semifinals of the 2002 World Cup and was also in charge at the 2014 tournament when the Taeguk Warriors collected just one point in Brazil.

Korea will play all three Group A games in Mexico, starting June 11 against the Czech Republic before taking on Mexico a week later and then playing South Africa on June 24.

Results have been poor leading into the tournament with a 4-0 loss to Ivory Coast in March followed by a 1-0 defeat against Austria.

Korea heads to Salt Lake City on Monday to begin preparations and face Trinidad and Tobago and El Salvador in its final warmup games.

South Korea squad:
Goalkeepers: Jo Hyeon-woo, Kim Seung-gyu, Song Bum-keun.

Defenders: Kim Min-jae, Cho Yu-min, Lee Han-beom, Kim Tae-hyeon, Park Jin-seob, Lee Gi-hyuk, Lee Tae-seok, Seol Young-woo, Jens Castrop, Kim Moon-hwan.

Midfielders: Yang Hyun-jun, Paik Seung-ho, Hwang In-beom, Kim Jin-gyu, Bae Jun-ho, Eom Ji-sung, Hwang Hee-chan, Lee Dong-gyeong, Lee Jae-sung, Lee Kang-in.

Forwards: Oh Hyeon-gyu, Son Heung-min, Cho Gue-sung



South Korea's national soccer team head coach Hong Myung-bo, fourth from left, poses with team coaches for the media after a news conference announcing South Korea's squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Seoul, South Korea. (AP)

Man City wins FA Cup after audacious Semenyo goal



Manchester City players pose with the winner's trophy after the English FA Cup final soccer match between Chelsea and Manchester City in London. (AP)

Chelsea ends the season trophyless; Villa secures Champions League place

LONDON, May 16, (AP): In its 155-year history the FA Cup final can rarely have been won by a more audacious goal.

Manchester City beat Chelsea 1-0 at Wembley Stadium on Saturday thanks to a moment of magic from Antoine Semenyo.

The forward brought to life a final that had produced little in the way of chances or excitement with a spectacular back-heeled goal in the second half.

Running onto a cross from Erling Haaland in the 72nd minute, Semenyo flicked his heel at the ball and directed it low into the far corner past diving Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez.

Victory kept City in the hunt for a domestic trophy treble, having already won the English League Cup. Pep Guardiola's team is also second in the Premier League, two points behind Arsenal with two rounds to go.

This was Guardiola's 17th major trophy in 10 years at City and his 35th in his career overall.

City has won the Cup eight times and moved level with Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham as equal third on the all-time winners' list.

Defeat means Chelsea will end

the season trophyless - a year after being crowned Club World Cup champion - in what has been a crisis-ridden campaign.

Meanwhile, Ollie Watkins scored two goals and had another disallowed as Aston Villa set itself up nicely for next week's Europa League final with a 4-2 win at home against Liverpool.

The win also guaranteed Villa a place in next year's Champions League.

The win just five days before Villa faces Freiburg in the Europa League decider means Unai Em-

ery's side ensured a top-five finish in the Premier League.

"It's a great performance and a great way to end the season at Villa Park," captain John McGinn told broadcaster Sky Sports. "We've just made this club a Champions League club again, and it allows us to be excited and enjoy the game on Wednesday."

Liverpool was three points behind in fifth and still sweating whether it will make it into next year's Champions League.

Liverpool had the better of the opening exchanges with Cody

Gakpo seeing a goal ruled out for offside and Emiliano Martinez pushing away a swerving long-range effort from Dominik Szoboszlai.

However, Villa found its composure as the half went on and took the lead three minutes before halftime. Morgan Rogers placed a perfect right-foot shot beyond the reach of Giorgi Mamardashvili after a well-worked corner kick.

Virgil van Dijk's header eight minutes into the second half brought Liverpool level but Villa started to dominate as the game opened up. Watkins had a goal chalked off for offside but made up for it just a few minutes later when he took advantage of a slip by Szoboszlai that set Villa free on the counterattack.

He added a third in the 73rd when he side-footed home from point-blank range after Mamardashvili made two excellent stops.

It was Watkins' sixth goal in his last seven league games and he was a constant threat to a Liverpool rearguard that looked shaky every time Villa stormed forward.

"We've conceded far too many goals, but we also haven't scored enough goals," said Liverpool coach Arne Slot, who admitted his team lacked backbone after going behind in the second half.

"(After) the 2-1 we crumbled,



Manchester City's Marc Guehi, center, tries to block a shot from Chelsea's Joao Pedro, left, during the English FA Cup final soccer match between Chelsea and Manchester City in London. (AP)

FIFA finally seals World Cup broadcast deal in China at just \$60m

GENEVA, May 16, (AP): FIFA finally sealed a World Cup broadcast rights deal for China on Friday, just 27 days before the opening game and at a much lower reported price than the soccer body wanted.

The overall agreement with China Media Group covered the next four World Cups - two each of the men's and women's - through 2031, FIFA said in a statement. It includes the 48-team, 104-game men's tournament in North America starting on June 11 that China did not qualify for.

Chinese state-affiliated media reported the 2026 World Cup rights were valued at \$60 million.

FIFA originally sought \$300 million, Chinese media reported in recent weeks as the deadline to strike a deal drew closer.

A rights deal for India has not been confirmed.

"It's a real pleasure that we have found an agreement with CMG," FIFA secretary general Matthias Grafström said in the soccer body's statement. He was in China this week, also for meetings with officials from the Chinese soccer federation.

FIFA's leverage in China was less because of the time difference of up to 15 hours from Beijing to the 16 host cities spread across the United States,

Canada and Mexico.

Chinese companies have already made a big investment in the 2026 World Cup which is set to earn FIFA more than \$11 billion.

Technology firm Lenovo is one of FIFA's eight top-tier sponsor partners, and second-tier deals were signed by dairy firm Mengniu and electronics manufacturer Hisense.

Chinese conglomerate Wanda signed a long-term deal with FIFA in 2016 which was terminated two years ago.

The value of the TV rights were not disclosed for the 2030 World Cup, which once might have been hosted by China and which Wanda said was part of its strategy with FIFA. The country's ambitions to host international soccer competitions stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2030 men's tournament will be mostly hosted in Spain, Portugal and Morocco, with single games currently scheduled to be played in Argentina, Paraguay and the original 1930 World Cup host Uruguay.

The 2027 Women's World Cup will be played in Brazil and the 2031 World Cup mainly in the United States, along with Mexico, Costa Rica and Jamaica.

Heartbreak for Hearts

Celtic crowned league champion

GLASGOW, Scotland, May 16, (AP): It's now a hat trick of last-day heartbreaks across six decades for arguably the unluckiest club in European soccer.

Heart of Midlothian was denied a first Scottish league title since 1960 on Saturday after losing a showdown game 3-1 at Celtic, which had to win and got the go-ahead goal in the 87th minute.

Add 2026 to 1986 and 1965 on the list of cruel ways fans of the unheralded Edinburgh club have seen title dreams dashed in the final minutes of the season.

Daizen Maeda, who is going to the World Cup with Japan, scored the crucial goal at Celtic Park that ultimately ensured the Glasgow giant would be crowned champion for the fifth year in a row and 14th time in 15 seasons. The goal was confirmed by video review to annul a raised offside flag.

Celtic extended its lead with an empty-net goal in the eighth and last minute of stoppage time when Hearts goalkeeper Alexander Scholow went to the other end in search of a title-winning equalizer.

Callum Osmand putting the ball into the unguarded goal sparked wild celebrations from Celtic's fans, and hundreds invaded the field. Hearts captain Lawrence Shankland was reportedly punched by a Celtic fan as he tried to leave the field.

Shankland's header in the 43rd gave Hearts a lead in a game it needed only to draw. Celtic leveled in first-half stoppage time when Arne Engels slotted a penalty awarded for handball. The buildup to one of the most eagerly anticipated games in Scottish soccer history was dominated by the hugely controversial penalty that gave Celtic a key win on Wednesday.

It changed the balance of the title race and gave Celtic an easier path to its record

56th Scottish league title.

Deep into stoppage time in the second-to-last round, Celtic was tied at Motherwell 2-2. Then a penalty was awarded on video review for what the officials eventually judged was handball by Motherwell's Sam Nicholson.

Video evidence was inconclusive, to say the least, and furiously debated since late Wednesday when Celtic forward Kelечи Iheanacho scored from the spot in the 99th minute.

Soccer great Gary Lineker later called it possibly the worst VAR call he ever saw, and Hearts coach Derek McInnes said it was "actually quite disgusting."

Had Celtic not won at Motherwell, the gap to Hearts would be three points. Celtic would then have needed to win by three clear goals on Saturday to edge the tiebreaker on goal difference. Instead, Celtic needed just a win by any score.

Celtic and its city rival Rangers have won every Scottish league title since Alex Ferguson's Aberdeen was champion in 1985. That four-decade run started with severe trauma for Hearts fans.

In 1986, just as in this season, a surprising Hearts led the standings for months and needed just a draw on the last day.

In both cruel climaxes, Hearts held that draw in its hands beyond the 80th minute. Forty years ago, Hearts conceded two late goals to Dundee substitute Albert Kidd, and Celtic won the title on goal difference by winning its game 5-0.

Older fans recall another Hearts-breaker in 1965. Hosting second-placed Kilmarnock, Hearts knew a 2-0 loss was the result that could deny the title on the now-defunct tiebreaker of goal average. The result? 2-0 to Kilmarnock.



Celtic coach Shaun Maloney with the Scottish Premier League Trophy following his side's title deciding match against Heart of Midlothian at Celtic Park, in Glasgow, Scotland. (AP)

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Bayern's players celebrate with the trophy of the Bundesliga title at the end of the soccer match between Bayern and FC Cologne in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Sports

Kazma strengthens grip on 2nd as Qadsia moves into third in Zain Premier League

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Kazma strengthened its position in second place in the Zain Premier League after securing a 2-0 victory over Al-Shabab in their Round 15 encounter at Al-Shabab Stadium.

The win lifted Kazma's tally to 27 points, putting it ahead of Al-Arabi, who remains on 23 points with a postponed match against Al-Tadamon scheduled for next Thursday.

Kazma also cut the gap separating it from league leaders and defending champion Kuwait Club to nine points, although "The Whites" still have a postponed fixture against Al-Fahaheel to play next week.

Al-Shabab, meanwhile, stayed on 15 points and face increasing pressure in the battle to avoid the relegation stage if poor results continue.

In another key match, Al-Qadsia came from behind to defeat Al-Salmiya 2-1, moving into third place with 25 points. Al-Salmiya remained on 23 points and slipped to fifth in the standings.

Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul used the match to give several young



Al-Qadsia and Al-Salmiya players fighting for the ball during the Zain Premier League match.

players the opportunity to shine, and their performances provided optimism among Al-Qadsia supporters about the club's future.

Elsewhere, Al-Nasr continued its positive run with a 2-0 win over Al-Jahra, moving level with Al-Shabab on 15 points in seventh place.

Al-Jahra remained bottom of the standings with seven points and is now facing a difficult fight to escape

danger.

The Kuwait Football Association has also approved changes to the league calendar, with only three rounds set to be played before the end of May.

Round 16 will be held on May 23, 24 and 25, followed by Round 17 on May 28, 29 and 31, while Round 18 will be postponed until the beginning of next season.

Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi finalize Crown Prince Cup final preparations

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi will complete their training sessions today ahead of the Crown Prince Cup final, set to take place tomorrow at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

The Kuwait Football Association has postponed Kuwait Club's and Al-Arabi's league fixtures against Al-Fahaheel and Al-Tadamon, respectively, in Round 15 of the Zain Premier League. Both matches have been rescheduled for next Thursday.

Kuwait Club returned to training earlier this week after a one-day rest following their Asian Challenge League triumph, where they defeated Cambodia's Svay Rieng 4-3 in the final.

Head coach Nebojsa Jovicic has opted to reduce the training intensity for players who featured in the continental final, aiming to prevent fatigue and muscle injuries, with full focus on retaining the Crown Prince Cup title.

On the other side, Al-Arabi boosted its preparations with a 2-0



Al-Arabi and Al-Fahaheel players battling for the ball during the friendly match.

friendly win over Al-Fahaheel at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, thanks to goals from Ali Khalaf and Hussein Al-Aryan.

Coach Nasser Al-Shatti used the match to give opportunities to several young players, as part of his plans to integrate them into the first team in the future, while also relying mainly on local players amid the absence of several foreign professionals.

Al-Arabi is expected to enter a closed training camp after today's evening session to enhance focus and minimize pressure as they chase a long-awaited title.

Meanwhile, the official pre-match press conference for the final will be held today at 12 noon at the Kuwait Football Association headquarters, featuring one coach and one player from each team.

Golden day for Kuwait at Gulf Games in Doha



The winning shooting team with Duaij Al-Otaibi.



Yaqoub Al-Youha on the podium with other winners.



Kuwaiti athletes display the national flag as they celebrate on the podium.

KUNA photos

Athletes sparkle with 10-medal haul

DOHA, May 16, (KUNA): Kuwait continued its impressive run at the 4th Gulf Games in Doha, collecting three gold, five silver and two bronze medals on the fourth day of competition. The Games will continue until May 22 with the participation of around 1,400 athletes from GCC countries.

In shooting, Kuwait claimed gold in the men's skeet team event through Saud Al-Kandari, Mohammad Al-Daihani and Abdulaziz Al-Saad, finishing ahead of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Speaking to KUNA, Kuwait Shooting Federation President Duaij Al-Otaibi congratulated the country's leadership, the Public Authority for Sports (PAS), and all those who contributed to the team's successful participation.

Al-Otaibi praised the shooters for their achievement, expressing



Mohammad Awwad

pride in the team's continued excellence at both regional and international levels.

The GCC Games feature around 1,400 athletes representing the six Gulf nations across a variety of

sports competitions.

Mohammad Awwad added a silver medal in the individual skeet competition, while the women's skeet duo of Afrah Mohammad and Fatima Al-Zaabi secured bronze.

Kuwait also celebrated success in fencing as the women's epee team, consisting of Fawzia Al-Rifai, Fatima Qassem and Yasmin Al-Shawaf, captured gold after defeating the UAE in the final. The men's foil team of Ali Al-Nassar, Abdulwahab Mohammad and Yaqoub Al-Shatti earned bronze.

In equestrian events, Ali Al-Kharafi won silver in the individual 145cm competition behind UAE rider Abdullah Al-Mehairi, while Qatar's Bassem Mohammed finished third. Hussein Al-Kharafi narrowly missed the podium in fourth place.

Vice President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation (KEF) Shaker Al-Kazemi praised the strong performances delivered by Kuwait's national equestrian team during the ongoing Gulf Games in



The equestrian team.

Doha.

Speaking in a press statement on Friday, Al-Kazemi congratulated Kuwaiti equestrian fans following the achievement of international rider and Gulf and Asian champion Ali Al-Kharafi, who secured the silver medal in the individual 145cm event.

Al-Kazemi highlighted the depth of talent within Kuwaiti equestrian sport, noting that the country boasts a number of distinguished riders across various categories.

Athletics brought further success for Kuwait, with Yaqoub Al-Youha taking gold in the men's 110m hurdles. Abdullah Al-Azmi

secured silver in the men's long jump, Abdulrahman Al-Azmi finished second in the javelin throw, and Al-Gazi Farhan claimed silver in the women's heptathlon.

The Gulf Games feature competitions across several sports, including volleyball, athletics, taekwondo, karate, shooting, fencing and handball.