



**talabat launches 'talabat grow' in Kuwait, empowering over 1,000 SME restaurants**  
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# 5 dead as blaze rips through Jleeb home

Fire horror prompts Kuwait safety warning

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA):** Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced Wednesday that firefighting teams brought a house fire under control in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, resulting in the death of five people.

In a press statement, the fire force said teams responded immediately to combat and contain the blaze before handing over the site to the competent authorities. The Kuwait Fire Force urged citizens and residents to adhere to fire safety and prevention measures to protect lives and property and avoid such incidents.

## Kuwait puts summer heat on pause for outdoor work

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced the issuance of Ministerial Resolution No. 3/2026 regulating work in open areas under adverse weather conditions. First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, who also serves as Chairman of PAM Board of Directors, issued the resolution in line with efforts to improve the work environment and ensure the safety of workers. PAM Director Rabab Al-Osaimi confirmed that the resolution is based on laws and regulations governing the labor market and reflects

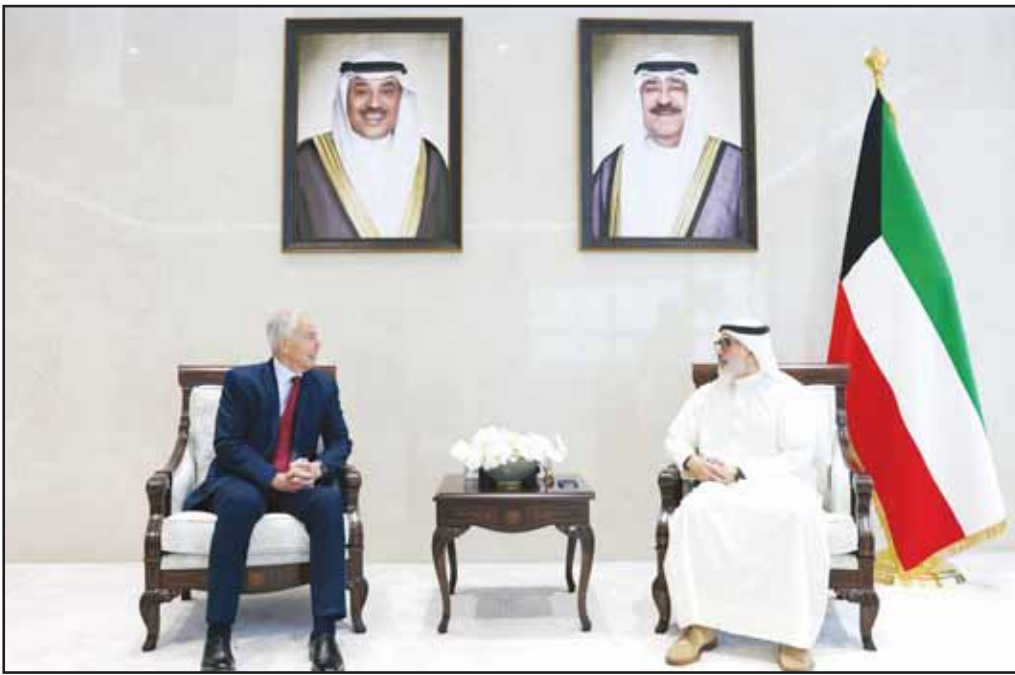
Continued on Page 5

Work resumes June 1

## Gov't offices shut for Eid

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA):** The Civil Service Commission announced Wednesday the suspension of work across all ministries, government entities, public authorities and institutions from Tuesday, May 26, until Sunday, May 31, on Arafat Day and Eid Al-Adha. In a press statement, the commission said the official holiday will run from Tuesday to Friday

(May 26-29), while Saturday and Sunday (May 30-31) will be designated as rest days, with official working hours resuming on Monday, June 1. Entities with a special working nature will determine their own holiday schedules in coordination with their respective authorities in accordance with public interest, it added.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo  
Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs receives former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

## Kuwait Foreign Minister holds talks with former UK PM Blair

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA):** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Wednesday former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, where they touched the latest regional and international developments and exchanged views on key topics of mutual interest.



Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah during a meeting with Georgian Ambassador to Kuwait Noshrevan Lomtadize. Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao and Mohammed Al-Farhan were present at the meeting.

Ambassador Lomtadize lauds Kuwaiti media's credibility

## Al-Jarallah, Georgian envoy strengthen media dialogue

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, met with Georgian Ambassador to Kuwait Noshrevan Lomtadize, at his office on Wednesday, reports Al-Seyassah daily. They discussed ways to enhance the role of the media in supporting bilateral relations and exchange-

ing media expertise between the two sides. This exchange aims to convey an accurate picture of shared issues and strengthen communication and understanding between the two friendly nations. Al-Jarallah underscored the importance of professional and responsible media in all platforms, as well as in solidifying relations between countries and peoples. He stressed that the me-

dia is an effective tool for raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and highlighting positive efforts that serve common interests. He commended the Georgian Embassy for supporting media cooperation and its commitment to maintain continuous communication with media

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### Day by Day

I RECALL a 2018 news report about Jacobs, a bull that died after producing 1.7 million doses of semen for cattle insemination. His genetic material was distributed to 60 countries, and he established a lineage of nearly 1,000 bulls and 400,000 dairy cows. His death represented a major financial loss to his owner, who had earned USD 17 million from him. Ironically, some people feel insulted when compared to such a bull. However, when you consider this animal's track record, the wealth it generated, and its overall success, perhaps then you might reconsider feeling slighted. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



### HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

## The people of Kfarkela to the United Nations: Our donkey was lost and returned to us

It is a true story that is mentioned in several Lebanese heritage books

The woman and her husband, fearing Israeli gunfire, were unable to follow their jenny

A year later, the woman was astonished when her jenny returned home

Her joy did not last long, as a few hours later, the Lebanese police arrived

They demanded the jenny to be returned to Israel, as she was impregnated by an Israeli donkey

An agreement was reached for the jenny to be returned to Israel to give birth

The jenny escaped from Israel without any security coordination with her foal

The foal was taken into custody, tied up, and loaded onto a military truck

The man in the inn placed his shoes under his head and fell asleep

Never pretend to be asleep in this life, because in the end, you will be the loser

If You forgive me, Your beloved will be pleased, Your servant saved, and Your enemy grieved

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Action Energy Co. appoints National Investments Company as market maker to boost share liquidity



Kuwait Finance House issues KD 200 million Sukuk



Sarah Bouhaji drives Bahrain's tourism growth

### Newswatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Kuwait strongly condemned the armed attack targeting the Islamic center in San Diego, California, which resulted in several innocent victims. In a statement Wednesday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Kuwait's categorical rejection of violence, terrorism and criminal acts in all their forms, regardless of motives or justifications. The ministry also extended Kuwait's sincere condolences and sympathy to the United States and to the families of the victims following the attack. (KUNA)

**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Interior Minister of Pakistan, Mohsin Naqvi, on Wednesday landed in Iran on a mission of revival of Iran-US talks, said media reports. According to Pakistani media ARY News, Naqvi has reached Iran with an "important message" to revive negotiations between the United States and Iran for a peace deal. (KUNA)

## 63 flights for 8,400 pilgrims

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA):** Kuwait's Public Authority of Civil Aviation announced Wednesday the launch of the operational plan for the current Hajj season, which includes operating 63 flights to transport around 8,400 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. The Authority's President, Sheikh Engineer Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, told KUNA that the first Hajj flights would depart on Wednesday, May 20, with outbound flights continuing over four consecutive days until May 23. He added that return flights for pilgrims from the holy sites to Kuwait would begin from May 30 through May 31 according to approved operational schedules coordinated with Kuwaiti Hajj campaigns, Saudi authorities, airlines and relevant government agencies to ensure smooth movement and travel procedures.

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## Parents liable

## Underage driving triggers 'warning'

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** Assistant Director of Traffic Awareness at the General Traffic Department, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Bu Hassan, says the department is committed to sending awareness messages to parents during the examination period, coinciding with high school exams.



Bu Hassan

This comes in response to the annual rise in traffic violations and accidents involving juveniles driving vehicles without a license. Lieutenant Colonel Bu Hassan explained that the message is directed

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## Jahra Hospital launches first pedia post-ICU recovery clinic

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

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** Jahra Hospital opened the first specialized pediatric post-intensive care recovery clinic in the country, with the theme, "Recovery Clinic: The Trip after Intensive Care for Children". This initiative aims to follow up children who survived critical illnesses after their discharge from the intensive care units, under the supervision of Head of Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Dr. Iman Al-Hashemi. It is in line with global trends in critical care medicine, which now views medical success from a more comprehensive perspective that extends beyond surviving the critical illness. It encompasses quality of life, sustainable recovery, and the restoration of physical, psychological and neurological functions. The clinic focuses on the early detection of post-intensive complica-



MoH photo  
Head of Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Dr. Iman Al-Hashemi.

tions, known as Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS), and improvement of long-term health outcomes for children through specialized follow up programs that support physical, neurological, psychological and behavioral recovery, while empowering families and activating their role in this field. It is considered a qualitative leap

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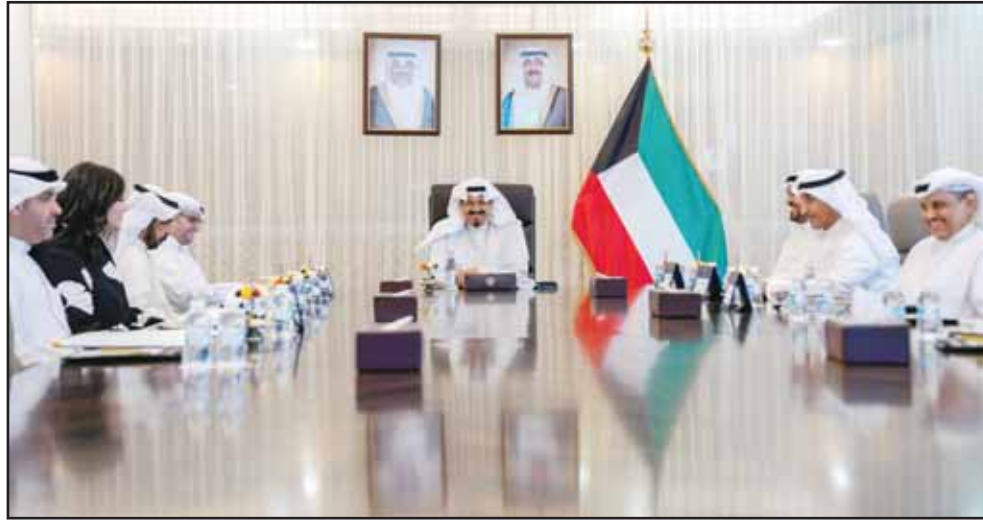
Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	03:22	Asr .....	15:20
Sunrise ..	04:53	Maghrib ..	18:36
Zohr .....	11:44	Isha .....	20:05

## Kuwait PM chairs public tenders follow-up meeting

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired Wednesday a meeting to follow up on executive procedures related to public tenders.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari, Acting Chief of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Sabah, Court of Cassation Deputy Director and Head of the Appeals Committee for Central Agency for Public Tenders decisions Counselor Dr. Jamal Al-Onaizi, and Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed.

Also in attendance were Chairman of the Central Agency for Public Tenders Esam Al-Marzouq, Kuwait Municipality Director General Eng. Manal Al-Asfour, and Deputy Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs Yousef Al-Azmi.



PM Diwan photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

## KPC calls off training programs & confabs

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) recently decided to suspend external training programs and conferences.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision, which was addressed to the chief executive officers (CEOs) of the subsidiaries and managing directors of KPC, stating that "due to the current situation in the region, it has been decided to suspend external training programs and conferences, effective May 14 until further notice."

It stated that the chief executive officer and managing director of the corporation retain the authority to approve participation in external conferences when the participation is as a speaker.

The decision clarifies that employee programs for training at international companies will continue, in addition to programs related to professional and specialized certifications relevant to operational work and projects.

The CEOs and managing directors are instructed to consider implementing training based on operational requirements and systems related to emergency and crisis management.



KUNA photo  
Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei.

## Chief of KNG, Chinese envoy discuss mutual interest items

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei. This came in a meeting between the two sides, said the National Guard in a press statement.



KUNA photo  
Head of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Emergency Management Center Brigadier Dr. Rashid Al-Marri receives the UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher.

## 'UN, global expertise vital for GCC to face crisis, risk'

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): Head of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Emergency Management Center Brigadier Dr. Rashid Al-Marri affirmed the center's commitment to expanding cooperation with international and United Nations organizations to benefit from expertise, enhance joint coordination, and strengthen Gulf response.

In a press statement, the center stated Dr. Al-Marri received on Wednesday at the center's headquarters a UN delegation headed by UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher, along with representatives of international organizations.

During the visit, the delegation was briefed on the center's roles and responsibilities in supporting joint GCC efforts in emergency and crisis management, including risk monitoring, early warning systems, data analysis, and coordination among member states.

The delegation also toured the Central Operations Room and reviewed the advanced technical systems and platforms used for monitoring regional risks and emergencies.

Both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation between international and regional organizations in emergency management and crisis response to support humanitarian and development efforts and improve countries' readiness to face various challenges.

Dr. Al-Marri stated that the center continues to develop its technical and operational systems according to international best practices, in line with its role in supporting the security and safety of GCC countries and enhancing their ability to deal efficiently and effectively with emergencies and crises.

Sources indicated that KNPC continues to intensify its efforts to improve operational performance and achieve the highest levels of operational and financial excellence, while aiming to enter into partnerships with the private sector in the refining industry.

Sources confirmed that KNPC is striving to implement renewable and alternative energy concepts, utilize environmentally friendly technologies, and lay down plans to maximize the use of solar energy in existing and new buildings. They also affirmed the installation of solar panels in several existing and new fuel stations.

They revealed that over the past years, KNPC succeeded in producing marine fuel oil with a maximum sulfur content of 0.5 percent through its Mina Abdullah refinery.

Sources stated that the vision of KNPC is based on maximizing the added value of the hydrocarbon resources of the country by producing high-quality fuel, which meets the needs of the local and global markets. Sources said the aim is to solidify the global position of the country in the oil refining industry by launching new projects aligned with the 2040 strategy of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and the 2050 energy transformation strategy to develop operational efficiency and sustainability.

Sources said these steps enabled KNPC to maximize resources through the optimal utilization of associated and non-associated gas from crude oil to meet local and global demand by producing high-quality petroleum products that comply with international environmental standards. Sources pointed out that this approach solidified the position of Kuwait as a major and reliable supplier of clean energy in global markets.

# Cabinet slams drone hits on Saudi, UAE from Iraq

Amendments to Municipal Law get go ahead

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet on Tuesday approved a four-article draft decree-law involving amendments to Law No. 33/2016 concerning Kuwait Municipality.

The consent was given during the Cabinet's weekly meeting, held under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Article 1 states that Articles (4, 6, 7, 13, 14, and 26) of Law No. 33/2016 have been revised.

Article (4) envisions that the Municipal Council shall consist of 12 members appointed by decree, provided that they, inter alia, must be Kuwaiti citizens by birth, at least 30 years of age on the day of appointment, hold a university degree in engineering, architecture, or any municipal specialization.

Article (6) stipulates that the Council's term is two years, starting from the date of its first meeting and that the Council must be convened within 15 days of the issuance of the appointment decree.

A decree may be issued to terminate the Council's term, reconstitute it, or replace any of its members before the expiration of the term, with the new members completing the term of their predecessors.

In addition, a decree may be issued to extend the Council's term by six months or until the new Council is named, whichever comes first.

The Cabinet submitted a draft decree-law amending certain provisions of Law No. (33) of 2016 concerning Kuwait Municipality to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

At the onset of the meeting, the Cabinet was apprised of the phone call received by His Highness the Amir from Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Sunday regarding good bilateral relations and the latest regional and international developments.

The Cabinet was briefed on the outcomes of His Highness the Amir's Representative, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's participation in the first EU-GCC Geopolitical and Investment Summit held in Greece.

In his speech during the event, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah underlined the deep historical relations between the GCC countries and European partners, pointing out Kuwait's commitment to working with friendly European countries to develop their partnership in energy, investment, infrastructure and digitalization.

The Cabinet was informed of the outcomes of



Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah

His Highness the Prime Minister's meetings with President of Cyprus Nikos Christodoulides and President of Finland Alexander Stubb on the sidelines of the summit.

The Cabinet was also notified of a letter addressed to His Highness the Amir from Italian President Giorgio Meloni, along with his meeting with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman on bilateral relations and several issues of mutual interest as well as efforts to maintain regional security and stability.

Also included were the meeting between His Highness the Prime Minister and President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde on bilateral relations between the State of Kuwait and the bank, and his meeting with former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The ministers were also kept posted on a letter sent by His Highness the Amir to the Italian prime minister regarding close historical relations between both friendly countries and their people and the ongoing regional situation.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet congratulated UAE President Mohammad bin Zayed on the fourth anniversary of his assumption of power, commending his country's sustained development accomplishments under his leadership.

The Cabinet, further, vehemently condemned and denounced heinous drone attacks launched from the Iraqi airspace on Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

It termed such attacks as part of a series of flagrant violations of international law and relevant UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, mainly Resolution No. 2817.

On the occasion of the approaching Eid Al-Adha, the Cabinet congratulated His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and all citizens and residents on this holy occasion.

## MoCI launches strategy to quell 'financial fraud'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in coordination with Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit, organized 57 specialized training workshops from April 19 to May 13 for the representatives of entities subject to the oversight of the ministry.

On its official social media page, the ministry disclosed that the workshops focused on mechanisms for submitting notifications related to suspicious transactions through the 'goAML' system, particularly in the real estate, gold, precious metals and gemstones sectors.

It explained that this is part of ongoing efforts to ensure compliance and raise the efficiency of implementing anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regulations.

In a related development, the ministry issued a circular urging individuals, regulatory bodies, and law enforcement agencies to report any suspected inaccuracies or discrepancies in data related to beneficial ownership through the electronic commercial registry portal -- ereq.moci.gov.kw.

The ministry pointed out that these steps are aimed at enhancing transparency and oversight, and developing the compliance system in line with international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

Another objective is to intensify national efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, enhance the transparency of legal entities and arrangements, and ensure the availability of accurate and up-to-date beneficial ownership information in accordance with the requirements and recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), particularly Recommendations 24 and 25.

## Mol arrests 4 people for drugs, liquor possession

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (Agencies): Kuwait's interior ministry (MoI) on Wednesday said that its security forces had arrested four people in separate incidents for the possession of narcotics and alcohol, citing an ongoing security crackdown against illicit drugs.

The latest arrests come two days after Kuwaiti security forces detained 11 people found to be in possession of drugs and narcotics, while the ministry has emphasized that there would be no letup in the fight against drug traffickers as part of efforts to protect the nation from this "scourge".

Meanwhile, the Operations and Patrols Department (Hawally Support Patrols) at the Hawally Governorate Security Command arrested three Asians for the possession of suspected narcotics, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During their routine patrol in the governorate, the officers got suspicious of a pedestrian who attempted to flee upon sensing police presence. He resisted arrest, but the officers overpowered him.

Preliminary investigations revealed that he is a Bangladeshi and he was in an abnormal condition at the time of arrest.

## Mutoh Keiko awarded Order of Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: On May 19, the Government of Japan awarded Ms. Mutoh Keiko, CEO of Food Supply Co. WLL and Owner of Kei Japanese Restaurant, the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, which was bestowed by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, during an official conferment ceremony held in Tokyo in recognition of her outstanding contributions to promoting Japanese cuisine, as well as Japanese food culture and food products in Kuwait.

Kei Japanese restaurant

Kei Japanese restaurant was established in the year 1980 by Ms. Mutoh's father as Kuwait's first Japanese restaurant.

In 2004, Ms. Mutoh Keiko took over the business and has run it with devotion, fulfilling her father's vision of introducing Japanese cuisine to the Kuwaiti people. She continues to honor his legacy by serving authentic Japanese taste. Today, she magnificently manages Kei operations in Kuwait and Bahrain.

Thanks to Ms. Mutoh's tireless efforts, Japanese cuisine has steadily gained popularity in Kuwait over the past decades. Where once there were only a handful of Japanese restaurants, today the country boasts more than one hundred establishments of varying sizes. Amid this growth, Kei Japanese Restaurant remains widely recognized as the pioneer of authentic Japanese dining in Kuwait.

Initiatives at various levels

Ms. Mutoh's efforts to promoting Japanese cuisine and food culture have greatly deepened the Kuwaiti people's understanding of Japan, while also fostering stronger



Mutoh Keiko

ties of friendship between the two countries.

She has also worked diligently to expand the demand for Japanese cuisine through various initiatives. For example, she launched a premium Japanese fruit kiosk as part of the Japanese government's campaign to promote food exports. In addition, she has conducted lectures on Japanese cuisine in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in Kuwait. Appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture as a Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. MUTOH continues to play an active role in spreading Japanese food and dietary culture.

Thus, in recognition of those distinguished achievements, Ms. Mutoh Keiko has been awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays.

## Kuwait to launch anti-drug campaign June 25: minister

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah announced on Wednesday the launch of the largest national anti-drug awareness campaign.

The month-long campaign, themed "A Nation Protects You," will kick off on June 25.

It will be held under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

In a statement to KUNA following an extensive meeting with various entities, Dr. Al-Huwailah said combating the drug scourge begins with awareness, is completed by treatment, and is resolved by national will.

The minister added that the campaign coincides with the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

It reflects the solidarity of state institutions and the private sector in combating this threat, she noted.

Dr. Al-Huwailah explained that the campaign aims to spread community awareness, enhance prevention efforts, and offer strictly confidential treatment for anyone seeking help.

She pointed out that the campaign features an unprecedented national partnership involving government agencies, the private sector, and civil society organizations.

## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



# The people of Kfarkela to the United Nations: Our donkey was lost and returned to us

THIS is a true story that took place in the village of Kfarkela in southern Lebanon. It is mentioned in several Lebanese heritage books and is also officially recorded in United Nations documents.

One day in 1962, before the Israeli separation fence was erected along the Lebanese border, a jenny belonging to a village woman wandered into occupied Palestine and disappeared. The woman and her husband, fearing Israeli gunfire, were unable to follow the jenny and decided to abandon it.

A year later, the woman was astonished when her jenny returned home, pulling a cart loaded with peaches and pears, followed by a group of cheering village children.

Nevertheless, the joy did not last long. A few hours later, the Lebanese police arrived, accompanied by the village headman, the mayor, and UNIFIL forces. They went to the woman's house, demanding that the jenny be handed over to UNIFIL so it could be returned to Israel, claiming it was pregnant with a foal by an Israeli donkey.

The dispute escalated, and tensions rose. The villagers joined in, chanting, "The jenny is ours! It was lost, and now it has returned home!"

After hours of negotiations with the Israeli occupation forces, mediated by international parties, an agreement was reached for the jenny to be returned to Israel to give birth, on the condition that the United Nations would return it to the woman after the foal was born.

In the presence of UN forces, an agreement was signed allowing the jenny's return, on the condition that her foal remain in Israel.

Three months later, the jenny escaped from Israel, again without any security coordination, and returned to Kfarkela, pulling the same cart behind her, this time with her young foal running alongside her.

A few hours later, the police, the mayor, the village headman, and a UN force arrived at the village woman's house. They demanded the implementation of the signed agreement and the handover of the foal to UN forces. To everyone's surprise, the foal refused to leave its mother, insisted on staying in Lebanon, and resisted surrendering itself to the Lebanese police.

In light of the situation and the villagers' anger, additional police forces were called in and the area was cordoned off. The foal was then taken into custody, tied up, and loaded onto a military truck, before being transported to an observation post in Naqoura in southern Lebanon.

That is how the foal was returned, a prisoner, heartbroken, tearful, and separated from its mother,

- It is a true story that is mentioned in several Lebanese heritage books
- The woman and her husband, fearing Israeli gunfire, were unable to follow their jenny
- A year later, the woman was astonished when her jenny returned home
- Her joy did not last long, as a few hours later, the Lebanese police arrived
- They demanded the jenny to be returned to Israel, as she was impregnated by an Israeli donkey
- An agreement was reached for the jenny to be returned to Israel to give birth
- The jenny escaped from Israel without any security coordination with her foal
- The foal was taken into custody, tied up, and loaded onto a military truck
- The man in the inn placed his shoes under his head and fell asleep
- Never pretend to be asleep in this life, because in the end, you will be the loser
- If you forgive me, Your beloved will be pleased, Your servant saved, and Your enemy grieved

to Israel.

A Palestinian writer added the following to the story - "My aunt's jenny" story reflects the stubbornness of the Israeli negotiator, who refused to part with a foal whose father was an Israeli donkey and whose mother was a Lebanese jenny. How, then, will this Israeli negotiator concede to the Pal-

estinian negotiator Jerusalem, the West Bank, the skies of Palestine, and Al-Aqsa Mosque, which he claims as the Temple Mount? How will this Israeli negotiator, who would not give up a foal, relinquish 60 percent of the West Bank, where tens of thousands of homes have been built, housing hundreds of thousands of settlers?

There is a comment from the original narrator of the story, which is one of the most beautiful things I have read, "My aunt's jenny" story reflects the bitter reality that the Arab nation is going through.

#### A trick caused a man to lose his shoes

A man entered an inn to rest for a while. He placed his shoes under his head and fell asleep. A short while later, two men entered the inn and sat in a corner. The first said, "Let's place the stolen gold behind the box and come back later to collect it."

The second man objected, saying, "The sleeping man might be awake and only pretending to be asleep. If we leave, he may get up and steal the gold."

They decided to pull the shoes from under his head. If he was truly asleep, he would not notice; if he was awake, they would find out.

The man overheard their conversation and pretended to be fast asleep. The two men removed his shoes from under his head, and he, hoping for the gold, did not react. After confirming he was asleep, they placed the gold behind the box.

After they left, the man got up to retrieve the gold but found nothing. He realized it had all been a trick to steal his shoes.

He then remembered an important lesson - "Never pretend to be asleep in this life, because in the end, you will be the one who loses."

#### The Bedouin's supplication at the grave of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

A Bedouin man stood at the grave of the Prophet (PBUH) and prayed to God, saying, "O God, this one in the grave is Your beloved, and I am Your servant, and Satan is Your enemy. If You forgive me, Your beloved will be pleased, Your servant will be saved, and Your enemy will be grieved. If You do not forgive me, Your beloved will be grieved, Your servant will perish, and Your enemy will be pleased. You are too generous to grieve Your beloved, destroy Your servant, and please Your enemy.

O God, when a beloved leader among the Arabs died, they would bring their slaves to his grave and set them free. Here I am, supplicating You at the grave of the Master of mankind, asking You to set me free from Hell."

Every day, life places us at the threshold of a new struggle. Whoever is able to control their reaction will find peace and bring peace to others.



It is said: "He who does not find his place among the great will gather the weak and pretend to be their leader."



It is also said, "He who falls because of his own actions will not be lifted by excuses."



There is another beautiful saying - "Befriend the straightforward person, even if they have flaws. It is enough that they do not betray or deceive you."



And there is another beautiful - "The wise person is his own opponent, while the ignorant person is an opponent of others. The wise have no time to waste in dispute."



Municipality photo

An abandoned vehicle is seized by the Municipality teams.

## Municipality impounds 99 abandoned vehicles

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Department stated that field cleaning teams are intensifying inspection campaigns in all governorates to identify and remove violations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaigns focus on road encroachments and obstacles that hinder sanitation operations, with the aim of strengthening the monitoring efforts of the relevant authorities in enforcing municipal regulations.

Faisal Al-Otaibi, Director of the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department at Capital Municipality, explained that the increased field presence is intended to identify violators and take the necessary legal action against them. His unit has already impounded 99 abandoned and scrap vehicles, issued 87 citations for road occupancy and public hygiene violations, and served 1,419 warnings and official compliance notices.

Al-Otaibi affirmed that these inspection campaigns will continue, emphasizing that there will be no tolerance for violations of public hygiene and road occupancy regulations.

## Negative phenomena seen in illegal chalets

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Security Directorates Affairs Sector, in coordination with the Committee for Negative Phenomena, the General Department of Criminal Investigations, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and Kuwait Municipality, conducted a security campaign in the Sabah Al-Ahmad Marine City area, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaign targeted several unlicensed chalets as part of ongoing efforts to enhance security and safety in various areas.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Interior explained that the campaign uncovered several violations, including disturbance of public peace, housing of bachelors, and other negative phenomena. The necessary legal measures were taken against violators in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

The ministry affirmed its commitment to continuing such campaigns in cooperation with relevant authorities to curb illegal gatherings and maintain public order.

It urged all individuals to comply with regulations and instructions to enhance security and stability.

# Expat duo jailed; fire kills officers

'Crypto' mining is crime: court

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Ahmed Al-Sadi with Ibrahim Al-Farsi as member, sentenced two expatriates - a foreman and a cleaner - to three-year imprisonment with hard labor, and also set bail at KD 200 for suspension of sentence execution.**

The defendants were convicted of causing the deaths of security officers Saud Al-Khamsan, Mohammad Al-Hajri, and Khaled Al-Sharaf in a fire that broke out at the Central Prison.

It was proven that the defendants operated electrical equipment in an area containing flammable materials without adhering to safety regulations or taking necessary precautions, which led to the outbreak and spread of the fire within the facility.

The incident resulted in the deaths of the three officers while on duty, in addition to material damages.

**Crypto mining is crime:** The Court of Appeals issued its first final and unappealable ruling in cryptocurrency mining cases, affirming that trading and mining cryptocurrencies without obtaining a license from the competent authorities constitutes a criminal offense under the law.

The court indicated that the penalty for such crimes may reach up to two years'

imprisonment with hard labor.

However, taking into account the defendants' clean criminal records, the court imposed fines of KD 1,000 on each defendant and ordered the confiscation of the seized mining equipment, computers, and receivers.

The court also acquitted the defendants of the charge of harming national security, and acquitted one defendant of all charges brought against him.

**Many jailed for bribery:** The Criminal Court issued prison sentences for several defendants in a bribery case involving employees at the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS), reports Al-Anba daily.

The court sentenced four defendants - two former members of UCCS, an Egyptian resident and an Indian resident - to 10 years in prison. Eleven other defendants, including company employees, received four-year prison sentences, while four defendants were acquitted.

The defendants were arrested by detectives in a carefully-planned sting operation based on security investigations indicating that they had received bribes totaling approximately KD 12,000 in exchange for facilitating and promoting goods through cooperative societies on behalf of certain companies.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants, who included public employees and company representatives, with harming their employers' interests, dereliction of duty, and collusion in processing transactions and contracts in violation of regulations. The charges also included abuse of office, negligence in oversight and supervision, and involvement in illicit financial gains and damage to public funds, including bribery and money laundering.

## 15 years jail in drugs case repealed

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Court of Cassation overturned a 15-year prison sentence for a defendant in a drug trafficking case following arguments presented by his lawyer, Fadhel Al-Basman, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The defendant received two cargo bags at Kuwait International Airport on instructions and was charged with drug trafficking.

During his defense, Lawyer Al-Basman argued that there were deficiencies and contradictions in the prosecution's evidence.

He asserted that the procedures were invalid and that the evidence was insufficient to prove the drug trafficking charges.

Lawyer Al-Basman highlighted the absence of criminal intent and stated that his client was unaware of the contents of the seized shipments.

## 'Steer clear of parking for elderly'

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: A joint coordination meeting was held between the Traffic and Operations Sector, represented by the Technical Office, the Traffic Violations Investigation Department, and the Traffic Engineering Department, the General Directorate of Investigations and the Ministry of Social Affairs, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a statement posted on the General Traffic Department's Instagram account, participants emphasized

the importance of intensifying monitoring campaigns and enforcing legal measures against violators.

They discussed ways to address encroachments on parking spaces designated for the elderly and to enhance their protection. They also stressed the continuation of joint coordination and the development of practical solutions to improve compliance, protect the rights of the elderly, and ensure access to designated services.

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## Transactions rise 56% year-on-year amid expanded inspection campaigns

# Kuwait intensifies market control to protect consumers, stabilize prices

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's commercial control and consumer protection sector intensified field inspection campaigns and strengthened regulatory efficiency as authorities sought protecting consumers, stabilizing markets and enforcing commercial regulations amid regional economic challenges nationwide.

Statistics issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed inspection teams conducted intensive campaigns across all governorates between February 28 and April 30, recording 2,063 violations involving prices, advertisements, commercial fraud and Arabic labeling.

Violations included failing to display prices, ignoring exchange and refund regulations, fixing food commodity prices, issuing non-compliant invoices and neglecting Arabic language requirements, reflecting broader regulatory coverage and stronger field monitoring implemented throughout Kuwait recently.

Judicial seizure officers carried out 1,243 regulatory procedures during the reporting period, including issuing 1,111 reports, directing 105 notices and implementing closure decisions against violating establishments, underscoring the ministry's determination enforcing laws and strengthening discipline.

Capital Governorate recorded the highest inspection activity with 371 procedures, followed by Hawally, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Jah-

ra, Farwaniya and Ahmadi, reflecting comprehensive inspection campaigns distributed across commercial areas under regulatory plans targeting frequently violating commercial activities.

The Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department's 2025 report revealed total regulatory transactions increased 56 percent compared with 2024, reaching 58,863 transactions and reflecting expanding field operations conducted by inspection, monitoring and emergency teams nationwide.

The report showed regulatory reports increased 71 percent during 2025, exceeding 10,000 reports, while licensing violations rose 118 percent and commercial establishment closure decisions doubled compared with 2024, indicating stricter implementation and handling against violators.

Traditional complaints declined 33 percent while complaints submitted through the electronic portal and Sahel application increased 74 percent, reflecting growing consumer awareness, stronger reliance on digital reporting channels and improved ministry mechanisms receiving processing reports.

The intensified campaigns coincide with sensitive regional developments since February 28 and possible repercussions affecting supply chains, commodity prices and market movement, highlighting the ministry's role preventing monopolization attempts, price



MoCI photo

Commercial control campaigns intensify across Kuwait.

increases and exploitation of conditions.

Acting Undersecretary for Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry Marwa Al-Jaidan told KUNA Tuesday the increase in commercial control transactions reflected the ministry's advanced regulatory strategy integrating inspection departments, emergency teams and modern monitoring tools accelerating violation detection and strengthening enforcement procedures.

Al-Jaidan said regulatory efforts extended beyond consumer protection toward combating illegal practices, including money laundering and terrorism financing, through monitoring suspicious commercial activities and strengthening transparency and compliance measures across various economic sectors throughout Kuwait.

She said inspection statistics reflected the ministry's pivotal role protecting the national economy, strengthening fair commercial practices and developing regulatory systems while raising awareness among business owners in ways enhancing confidence throughout Kuwait's market environment.

Al-Jaidan added inspection campaigns strengthened economic security, protected strategic reserves of essential commodities and ensured price stability and product availability, directly supporting consumer confidence within local markets and reinforcing broader commercial stability nationwide during developments.

She stressed rising regulatory indicators confirmed the ministry was developing a more efficient oversight system based upon intensive field operations, digital transformation and coordination among relevant authorities, strengthening consumer protection and supporting practices across Kuwait.

Al-Jaidan said inspection campaigns continued across commercial sectors ensuring market compliance with regulations and re-

quirements while authorities pursued legal measures against violators, supporting consumer protection objectives and maintaining organized commercial activity nationwide throughout current circumstances.

Regarding regional developments since February 28, Al-Jaidan affirmed the ministry mobilized regulatory and logistical capabilities ensuring market stability and securing consumer needs through a comprehensive emergency strategy including measures supporting supply continuity and protecting reserves.

She said emergency measures included freezing food commodity prices at levels prevailing before February 28 while inspection teams operated continuously monitoring artificial price increases and exploiting circumstances, with violations punishable through decisions and prosecution referrals.

Al-Jaidan added the ministry banned exporting food commodities abroad while emergency committees monitored strategic stock levels held by private companies and cooperative societies, ensuring supply chains remained resilient and commodity flows continued throughout markets developments.

Inspection tours covered vital sectors ranging from food and meat markets toward gold markets and construction materials stores, while ministry officials conducted visits examining industrial areas and ports, including Shuaiba, ensuring operational readiness under emergencies.

# Al-Omar inaugurates radio archive digitization project

Initiative aims to preserve Kuwait's audio heritage

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar inaugurated the radio archive development project in the presence of Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Ulrich Frank and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Informa-

tion Nasser Muhaisen.

The project is being implemented by Abdulaziz Abdulmohsen Al-Rashed Sons Company in cooperation with the Austrian company NOA, which specializes in multimedia archiving and digitization, with the aim of preserving and digitizing radio content using the latest technological systems.

In his opening remarks, Minister Al-Omar said the radio archive development project comes within the Ministry of Information's ongoing efforts to preserve Kuwait's national media heritage in line with the latest technical standards by modern technologies for archiving and digitizing radio content, ensuring its sustainability and accessibility as an integral part of Kuwait's national and cultural memory.

The project reflects the distinguished relations between Kuwait and Austria and highlights shared keenness to strengthen cooperation in media, cultural and technological fields in line with modern media developments, he added.

Al-Omar noted that the ministry continues implementing development plans aimed at upgrading its technical infrastructure and enhancing capabilities in production, broadcasting and digital archiving in line with the state's direction toward a more modern and efficient media system.

For his part, Ambassador Frank said the project reflects the level of cooperation between Kuwait and Austria in cultural and technological fields, expressing pleasure at participating in the inauguration of a project that represents an important step in preserving Kuwait's media heritage.

He pointed out that Kuwait's radio archive contains thousands of recordings and audio materials documenting various stages of the country's history and culture.

## Kuwaiti and Portuguese FMs hold talks on regional issues

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah discussed regional developments

and efforts exerted in this regard, as well as bilateral relations with Portuguese counterpart Paulo Rangel, read a ministry statement on Wednesday.

### Embassy of Mexico

## Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait offers Eid Al-Adha 2026 greetings

On behalf of the Government and people of Mexico, I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the esteemed Government, and the friendly people of Kuwait on the joyous occasion of Eid-al-Adha.

Eid Al-Adha represents the noble values of sacrifice, compassion, solidarity and generosity - values that continue to inspire understanding and harmony among peoples and nations. This sacred occasion also offers an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of peace, mutual respect and international cooperation.

We highly value the longstanding and friendly relations between Mexico and Kuwait, which are founded on mutual respect, constructive dialogue and shared aspirations for prosperity and development. Over the years, both countries have continued to strengthen cooperation in various fields, including



Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller, Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait

diplomacy, trade, culture, education and multilateral engagement, reflecting the depth of the ties that unite our nations.

On this joyous occasion, we convey our heartfelt wishes that Kuwait and its people continue to enjoy peace, stability, prosperity and harmony under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. May this blessed Eid bring happiness, good health and renewed hope to all.

Eid Mubarak!  
Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller  
Ambassador



Acting Minister of Information Omar Al-Omar inaugurates the radio archive project.



Acting Minister of Information Omar Al-Omar tours inside the project facilities.



Ministry of Information photos

### Al-Habashi calls for stronger coordination

## Jahra Governor meets civic volunteers

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi had a meeting with the Pride and Giving Volunteer Team, during which he was briefed on the work of the team, its most important volunteer and community works, and its initiatives in the service of the community.

Al-Habashi praised the efforts and initiatives of the team, stressing that Jahra Governorate fully supports national and community projects aimed at strengthening cooperation and promoting the value of giving to depict

the honorable image of Kuwaiti citizens in serving their country and community.

He issued a directive to solidify coordination between the team and the committees at Jahra Governorate Council in exploring avenues for joint efforts and to support volunteering activities.

Also present at the meeting were Advisor to the Governor of Jahra Fahad Abdullah Al-Miyah and Jahra Governorate Council member Ashraf Abdulkarim Al-Amir.



Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi with the Pride and Giving Volunteer Team during a meeting at the governorate office.

## Kuwait's new envoy to Australia holds high-level diplomatic talks

KUALA LUMPUR, May 20, (KUNA): The Ambassador of Kuwait to Australia, Malik Al-Wazzan on Tuesday discussed issues of common interest with the Deputy Secretary of International Security, Legal and Consular Group, Dr Fiona Webster.

According to a statement by the Embassy of Kuwait in Australia, these talks came after Al-Wazzan presented a copy of his credentials to the Chief of Protocol at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Jonathan Muir.



Kuwait Ambassador to Australia discuss issues of common interests with Australian official.

## Technical panel OKs key dev't requests

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Munira Al-Amir, held a meeting on Tuesday, during which it approved the following:

Request of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to allocate a new site near its current location in Murghab,  
Request to subdivide the prop-

erty shown as Plots One and Two in the existing survey plan in Mahboula (Block Nine),

Request to add an adjacent state-owned land, Plot 11 in the eastern part of Block Eight,

Request of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) to establish an entrance, exit and internal network for the Khuwaisat freshwater production project along Subiya Road,

Request of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) to set aside the 50-meter-wide tree affore-

tation area on the northern, eastern and western borders of South Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City,

Request of the Ministry of Social Affairs to set aside a portion of the agricultural lot no. 26 in Abdally (Block Six) for the establishment of a mosque and parking spaces,

Request of Kuwait Credit Bank to revise the decision of the temporary committee regarding the management of the entire multi-storey parking structure in Zahra suburb (government-used area).

Projects target rising summer demand

## MEWRE expands electricity network

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Electricity Transmission Networks Sector at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy included the supply and installation of 31 main transformer in its current fiscal year plan.

This step aims to provide the electricity needed for the expansion of high and extra-high voltage networks resulting from increased demand in various areas throughout the country, which are experiencing annual population growth, in addition to the expansion of new residential cities. The installation of these stations will ensure continuous and reliable power supply.

The plan of the ministry includes awarding contracts

for the transformer stations, as well as the associated contracts, such as the installation and extension of underground cables for transmitting electricity from power generation plants to the substations.

Meanwhile, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) opened the bidding envelopes for the operation and maintenance of electricity transmission networks. Six bids were received and will be referred to the ministry for review and the preparation of a technical recommendation within 30 days of the award decision, in accordance with the terms and regulations.

The tender is part of the ongoing efforts of the ministry to modernize the energy network in order to meet the high demand, especially during summer.

## Mol, Ahmadi Municipality carry out joint campaign

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Security Operations Department recently collaborated with Ahmadi Municipality to carry out a field campaign in Mina Abdullah, aimed at identifying legal infractions and monitoring violations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Interior explained that the operation resulted in the apprehension of

several offenders.

Authorities also identified a number of food truck operators who failed to comply with established regulatory standards and mandatory requirements.

Formal legal procedures have been initiated against those involved, and their cases have been referred to the competent authorities for further action.

Continued from Page 1

## Al-Jarallah, Georgian

institutions, as such as move enhance coordination and understanding on various issues between the two sides.

On the other hand, Ambassador Lomtadze expressed his gratitude to Al-Jarallah for the warm welcome, praising the influential role of Kuwaiti media and its credibility and presence. He affirmed his embassy's commitment to support media cooperation and strengthen partnership with the Kuwaiti media, which serves bilateral relations and reflects the positive image between the two countries and their peoples.

Also present at the meeting were Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao and colleague Mohammed Al-Farhan.

## Underage driving

at parents, urging them to closely supervise their children, avoid facilitating their access to vehicles or handing over car keys, and not to permit them to drive without a license. The aim is to ensure their safety and protect their future, as well as to prevent traffic accidents and legal consequences.

Driving without a license is a traffic violation carrying a settlement fee of up to KD 75. If the case is referred to court, the fine may range from KD 150 to KD 300, with penalties that can include up to three months' imprisonment, in addition to vehicle impoundment for up to two months.

Juveniles caught driving without a license are referred to the Juvenile Prosecution for legal action.

Lieutenant Colonel Bu Hassan emphasized that parental leniency in allowing children to drive, even for short distances or simple errands, can have serious consequences for their safety and future.

He noted that legal responsibility does not rest solely with the driver,

but extends to the vehicle owner, whether a parent or any other person who permits an unlicensed individual to drive.

Lieutenant Colonel Bu Hassan went on to explain that the vehicle owner is also subject to fines and legal proceedings, with settlement fines potentially reaching up to KD 50. If the case is referred to court, the fine may range from KD 100 to KD 200, with penalties that can include imprisonment for up to two months.

Lieutenant Colonel Bu Hassan urged parents to closely supervise their children during the examination period and wished all students success.

## Kuwait puts

the commitment to develop the labor legislation system to achieve the highest standards of protection and care for the workers.

She pointed out that the resolution prohibits work in open areas from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm during summer -- from June 1 to Aug 31 each year, while granting PAM the authority to amend the timing or duration of the restriction according to climatic and environmental changes.

The resolution includes additional cases, in which working in open areas is prohibited when weather or environmental conditions pose a risk to the health and safety of workers. These circumstances include heavy dust storms and rains, exceptionally high humidity or temperatures, natural disasters, epidemics and emergencies.

It exempts certain technically or operationally necessary work that cannot be postponed, provided that approval is obtained from the Labor Inspection Department and occupational safety and health requirements are fully adhered to. This kind of work includes emergency maintenance, public services, and work related to vital facilities.

Al-Osaimi stated that the resolu-

tion obligates employers to provide cold drinking water, first aid supplies, and shaded areas for the workers to rest, in addition to organizing appropriate rest periods that suit the nature of the work and climatic conditions, without violating the legal working hours.

She affirmed that PAM will not hesitate to take legal action against violators, urging employers to fully comply with the resolution to ensure worker safety and promote safe working environment standards.

## Jahra Hospital

in pediatric intensive care services in the country based on an advanced medical vision, which is more than just the concept of survival to reach comprehensive recovery, restoration of function, and improvement of the quality of life for children with the participation of their families.

## 63 flights

Sheikh Humoud said the authority had completed all operational and security preparations for the Hajj season in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, General Administration of Customs, Kuwaiti Hajj campaigns, airlines and ground service providers to ensure the success of the pilgrim transport plan from Kuwait International Airport to the holy lands.

He urged pilgrims to comply with announced instructions and guidelines, particularly arriving at the airport three hours before departure time, carrying only one bag onboard the aircraft and adhering to all airline regulations.

Sheikh Humoud wished pilgrims a safe and smooth spiritual journey and prayed for their safe return home after completing their rituals, asking Almighty God to grant them an accepted Hajj and reward their efforts.

## Kuwait Ambassador Sheikh Jaber Duaij presents credentials to Singapore Prez

KUALA LUMPUR, May 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Singapore, Sheikh Jaber Duaij Khalifa Al-Sabah, presented his credentials to Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, during an official ceremony held at the presidential palace, Istana.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Singapore said Sheikh Jaber conveyed the greetings and congratulations of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with their wishes for continued progress, prosperity, and stability for Singapore.

The ambassador highlighted the strong bilateral ties between Kuwait and Singapore, noting that this year marks the 41st anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

He stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation across various sectors in a manner that serves the mutual interests of both friendly nations and peoples.

Sheikh Jaber also expressed his aspiration to expand cooperation in the economic, trade, investment, educa-



MoFA photo

Kuwait's Ambassador to Singapore, Sheikh Jaber Duaij Khalifa Al-Sabah, presents his credentials to the President of the Republic of Singapore, Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

tion, and technology sectors, reflecting the depth of bilateral relations and the commitment of both countries' leaderships to advancing partnership and coordination.

## PAHW records surge in online housing services

Over 41,000 transactions processed in April

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

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) revealed that the total number of housing services provided to citizens in April 2026 reached 41,404 through the various online platforms, telephones and service centers.

The PAHW continues to implement housing, infrastructure and public building projects in several residential cities.

In its monthly report, the PAHW stated that online services accounted for the largest share, with 22,523 services provided through the 'Sahel' application and its official website, followed by telephone and chatbot services with 16,613, while 1,742 services were provided through the main building and 526 services were provided at the external centers.

On the public building projects, it indicated that 277 public buildings are currently under construction in various cities -- 170 in Mutlaa, 74 in the Affordable Housing Project, 17 in Sabah Al-Ahmad, 13 in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, two in Saad Al-Abdullah and one in Jaber Al-Ahmad.

About the road and infrastructure projects, the PAHW

confirmed that work continues in several residential cities. The South Saad Al-Abdullah City project, which consists of 23,551 plots, witnessed progress in most of its contracts, with the actual completion rate for the main roads contract reaching 62.51 percent.

The first infrastructure contract, covering 8,677 plots, recorded an actual completion rate of 12.78 percent, while the second infrastructure contract, covering 7,649 plots, reached 12.54 percent, and the third infrastructure contract, covering 7,225 plots, reached 12.21 percent.

In the affordable housing project, the first contract, covering 1,568 homes, recorded an actual completion rate of 39.01 percent, the second contract, covering 1,777 homes, reached 46.30 percent, the third contract, covering 1,162 homes, reached 44.52 percent, the fourth contract, covering 1,700 homes, reached 7.85 percent, the fifth contract, covering 1,608 houses, reached 7.90 percent, and the sixth contract, covering 1,985 houses, reached 9.43 percent.

In the South Sabah Al-Ahmad City project, the actual completion rate for the main roads contract reached 80.13 percent, the first infrastructure contract, covering 7,623 plots, reached 51.22 percent, the second contract, covering 6,189 plots, reached 51.85 percent, and the third contract, covering 6,568 plots, reached 42.33 percent.

## Temporary list of debts of the debtor / Kuwait Rocks Company K.S.C. (closed)

Based on the decision of the Bankruptcy Judge No. 60/2025, issued on Sunday, January 4, 2026, at the headquarters of the Bankruptcy Administration, with the membership of Counselor Amer Hadi Al-Mutairat - Bankruptcy Judge, registered under automated number 254121540 - Appointing Dr. Faleh Rashid Al-Azmi as the bankruptcy trustee pursuant to the request in the attached decision to initiate bankruptcy proceedings in their enforceable form on January 4, 2025, and setting October 31, 2015, as the provisional date for the suspension of payments, and to publish the decision in the Official Gazette, notify the parties concerned, and appoint Dr. Faleh Rashid Saad Al-Azmi as the bankruptcy trustee. Based on the bankruptcy judgment issued on March 2, 2026, in Case No. 4/2026, registered under case number 260213050, and published in the Official Gazette, Issue No. 1789, on Sunday, May 3, 2026.

filed by Mr. Qais Mohammad Nasf Al-Nasf in his capacity as liquidator of Kuwait Rocks Company K.S.C. (in liquidation). Against: Kuwait Rocks Company K.S.C. (closed)

After obtaining the bankruptcy judge's approval on May 10, 2026, authorizing the publication of the provisional list of debts, which included a statement of amounts, some of which were based on book balances and the audited financial statements for the year ending December 31, December 2025, submitted by the company's liquidator and the petitioner for bankruptcy, and some based on court rulings and claims from certain parties, in addition to labor claims and claims from third parties.

No.	Creditor's Name	Debt Instrument / Claim	Claim Amount (KD)
1	Commercial Bank of Kuwait	Appellate Judgment No. 469/2019 Commercial/4	987,034.505
2	AMN Bulk Carriers Inc. (London)	Pursuant to a foreign arbitral award dated 10/6/2008, certified for enforcement by the Court of First Instance	3,822,529.294
3	Public Authority for Industry	Lease contract amount pursuant to a demand letter	592,438.355
4	Al-Enmaa Real Estate Company	Appeal Judgment No. 7146/2025 Commercial General 37	6,500.000
5	Smart Auto Car Rental Company	Statement of account for car rental claim	1,905.000
6	Al-Rashid International Shipping Company	Statement of account for outstanding invoices	37,188.500
7	BDO Al-Nisf & Partners	Statement of account - outstanding liquidation fees	5,000.000
8	Boubyan Auditing Firm	Audit Fees for the 2025 Financial Statements	500.000
9	2 Soft Systems Company	Accounting System Maintenance Fees	635.000
10	Mobile Telecommunications Company (Zain)	Outstanding Invoices for the Company's Mobile Phone Lines	130.432
11	Quality Net General Trading and Contracting Company	Claim for Internet Subscription Line	232.500
12	Ministry of Transport	Claim for landline telephone service	367.500
13	Mohammed Khalil Al-Foudari	Claim / Diesel supplier for equipment operation	3,955.000
14	Abdul-Ati Ahmed Abdul-Ati Ismail	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	4,401.781
15	Khalid Dabib Amash Al-Shimari	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	2,773.312
16	Abdulrahman Ahmed Abdulrahman	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,159.190
17	Embabi Amin Abdulhalim	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,508.350
18	Ali Suleiman Ali Abu Al-Nour	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	4,218.660
19	Mohammed Mohammed Taha	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,199.040
20	Al-Nemr Mohammed Abdulnaim Salim	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,238.050
21	Badr Mohammed Fahad Al-Rashed	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	19,180.920
22	Ahmed Abdulazim Khalaf Hassanein	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,581.570
23	Mohammed Helmi Al-Sayed	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,062.900
24	Amal Saeed Samir Al-Alati	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	622.410
25	Refat Abdulrahim Ali	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,246.850
26	Abdulghani Ahmed Hussein Helal	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	6,547.360
27	Sayel Fathi Mahmoud Jabr	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	9,502.250
28	Zahir Ahmed Abdel-Manan	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,042.580
29	Salah Zaki Mahmoud Ismail	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,773.380
30	Mahmoud Ramadan Hassan Gadallah	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,936.190
31	Mohamed Mubarak Mahmoud Dakhilallah	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,664.650
32	Gautam Thapa	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,622.720
33	Min Bahadur Thapa	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	1,342.930
34	Hassan Ibrahim Amin Ahmed	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	21,906.000
35	Abdulrazeq Gad Al-Rab Hassan Ali	Labor dues (salaries - leave - end-of-service benefits)	12,830.000
Total			5,558,777.179

The total number of creditors, as reported to us, is 35 (companies and individuals), with claims totaling KD 5,558,777.179 (five million, five hundred fifty-eight thousand, seven hundred seventy-seven Kuwaiti dinars and 179 fils).

Note: Pursuant to Article (111) of Law No. 71 of 2020 enacting the Bankruptcy Law "The debtor and every creditor, even if their name does not appear on the list of debts, may file an objection with the Bankruptcy Administration regarding the debts listed therein within ten (10) days from the date of the list's publication, and the Bankruptcy Court shall have jurisdiction to rule on such objection Bankruptcy Trustee / Dr. Faleh Rashid Al-Azmi

Address of the Bankruptcy Trustee: Kuwait - Al-Qibla - Block (12) - Ali Al-Salem Street - Lot (10) - Al-Anjari Complex - Floor (4) - Office (3)  
Phone: 51530012 - 99081109 - 66424410 - Email: Mgc\_consulting@yahoo.com

Trustee Dr. Faleh Rashid Al-Azmi



## JOINT OPERATIONS

SAUDI ARABIAN CHEVRON INC. (SAC) KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY (K.S.C.)



Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company) announces the under-mentioned Public Tenders for procurement of materials. Kuwaiti and Saudi Merchants, registered with either Company wishing to participate in any of the under-mentioned Tenders should submit their bids electronically through "SMART BY GEP" <https://smart.gep.com>.

For first-time registration please contact [TLQX@Chevron.com](mailto:TLQX@Chevron.com) - [BHSJ@Chevron.com](mailto:BHSJ@Chevron.com) for support and guidance.

A non-refundable fee mentioned against each tender. Tender fees must be deposited and bidder must attach proof of payment copy as follows:

STATE OF KUWAIT	KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT ACCOUNT NUMBER: 1001132057 IN KUWAITI DINAR	GULF BANK - KUWAIT IBAN: KW25GULB0000000000000090550035 IN KUWAITI DINAR
	RIYADH BANK IBAN: SA2620000003100019949901 IN SAUDI RIYAL

The start date for the following Tenders will be on THURSDAY, 21 MAY 2026 and closing date will be on TUESDAY, 30 JUN 2026 @ 09:00 A.M.

S. NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS CLOSING DATE	FEES (KD)	CLOSING DATE
1	BPT#283-26	Blanket Purchase Tender for Pumping Units Spare Parts - Lufkin	100	30 / 6 / 2026
2	054686	30IN SAWL Line Pipe ( 1 Item ) API 5L X60 PSL2 - Mina Alzour	5	30 / 6 / 2026

# Municipal panel rejects home inspection clause

Panel cites constitutional protections

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** The Legal and Financial Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Fahad Al-Abduljader, discussed nine items on the agenda for its meeting on Wednesday.

The committee withheld the item related to the regulations for awnings and public gardens adjacent to private residences, as well as shelved the letter of Al-Ghanim Law Group regarding the complaint of a citizen about the land in Al-Masayel, because the case has been referred to the concerned court.

On the letter of council members Waleed Al-Dagher and others about Article 44 of Kuwait Municipality Law

No. 33/2016, the committee recommended against adopting the recommendation of the Legal Department at the Kuwait Municipality on obligating property owners to allow the Municipality inspectors to enter rented residential units to complete inspections as a condition for issuing description certificates.



Al-Abduljader

The committee clarified that this clause violates the legal and constitutional regulations governing the sanctity of residences. It affirmed its commitment to the aforementioned article and articles 78-79 of the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law to protect the interests of citizens from abuse, exploitation and obstruction.

Moreover, the committee referred to the executive body the proposal of member Fahad Al-Abduljader to establish an electronic platform for Municipality violations and delays in finalizing the bidding process for event tent sites.

About the question of Al-Dagher on the use of state-owned land for commercial purposes (parking services), the committee recommended intensifying inspection campaigns to strictly implement the law to combat the phenomenon of paid parking services.

In response to the question of member Dr. Hassan Kamal regarding electronic advertisements, the committee recommended specifying clear and practical regulations on lighting intensity for licensing electronic advertising screens and defining an applicable mechanism to monitor the intensity and volume of electronic advertisements. It also suggested providing links for licensing advertisements by government entities if necessary.

The committee rejected the appeal filed by the English Education Group against the decision of the council to remove schools from private residential areas, while it retained on its agenda the item concerning the standardization of administrative certificate fees for employees in all government entities.

On the other hand, the Reform and Development Committee, chaired by Abdul Latif Al-Duai also held its meeting on the same day.

The committee shelved the question of member Shari-fa Al-Shalfan regarding the approved road and bridge design manual and the role of the executive branch in traffic planning and studies.

## Crown Prince, PM extend greetings

### Amir congratulates Cameroon on Nat'l Day

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Wednesday to President Paul Biya on the occasion of Cameroon's National Day. His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations and wished President Biya good health and well-being, and further progress and prosperity for the friendly Republic of Cameroon and its people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of con-

gratulations Wednesday to President Paul Biya on the occasion of Cameroon's National Day. His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere congratulations and wished President Biya good health and well-being, and further progress and prosperity for the friendly Republic of Cameroon and its people.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Wednesday to President Paul Biya on the occasion of Cameroon's National Day.

### Sheikh Athbi Nasser affirms strong Kuwait-Türkiye relations

### Farwaniya Governor attends Atatürk, Youth Day celebrations

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah attended the Atatürk anniversary and Youth and Sports Day celebrations held in Samsun Metropolitan Province in the Republic of Türkiye, at the invitation of Samsun Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Halit Doğan.

Representatives from the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Ankara Chargé d'Affaires Counselor Sultan Al-Arada and Hassan Al-Ajmi accompanied Sheikh Athbi Nasser at the events.

Sheikh Athbi Nasser emphasized that this participation reflects the strong bilateral relations and cooperation between the Farwaniya Governorate and Samsun. He praised the deep historical ties that bind the State of Kuwait and the friendly Republic of Türkiye.

He congratulated Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Turkish people on this national occasion, wishing the Republic of Türkiye continuous progress and prosperity.

He expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Governor of Samsun Metropolitan Province Orhan Tavlı and Doğan for their warm welcome and hospitality. He affirmed the importance of continuing official visits to further strengthen cooperation between the two sides.

The Turkish side expressed appreciation to Sheikh Athbi Nasser for participating in the celebrations, while reaffirming their commitment to solidify cooperation and bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah exchanges greetings with Turkish officials during a visit to Samsun, on the sidelines of Atatürk Commemoration and Youth and Sports Day celebrations, highlighting Kuwait-Türkiye friendship and cooperation.

#### Announcement

Commencement of Restructuring Proceedings by the Bankruptcy Judge and Call for Creditors to Submit Claims

Pursuant to Article (105) of the Bankruptcy Law, the Restructuring Trustee, Mr. Sabah Mubarak Al-Jalawi, hereby announces the decision issued by the Bankruptcy Judge in Case No. 6 / 2025 (Restructuring), in which the Judge ruled:

"To accept the petition and commence restructuring proceedings for Laborjoisie International for Women's Tailoring Company (represented by / Woroud Saud Abdulaziz Abu Al-Banat), and to appoint a restructuring trustee."

Accordingly, the Restructuring Trustee calls upon all creditors of the company to submit their claims along with all supporting documents within thirty (30) days from the date of this announcement.

#### Submission Details:

Claims and supporting documents must be delivered to the Treasurer at the following address:  
Address: Kuwaiti Association of Accountants and Auditors - Maidan Hawally - Block 11 - Abdullah Al-Faraj Street  
Phone Number: 99744026  
Email: sabah.aljalawi@kwaaa.org



**Book for One-night**  
(Inclusive of breakfast)

Queen Cabana (2 persons).  
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons).

**BHD 76.230**  
**BHD 170.247**

**Book for Two nights and get 20% discount**  
(Inclusive of breakfast)  
(Non-refundable/Non-Cancellable)

Queen Cabana (2 persons) per night.  
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.

**BHD 61.000 net**  
**BHD 136.198 net**

**Book for Three nights and get 30% discount**  
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## Move aims to standardize hiring

### MoE restructures interview panels

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has issued a decree for restructuring the interview committees for applicants to educational supervisory and subject-matter technical guidance positions, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This step is part of the Ministry of Education's commitment to enhancing governance, transparency, and competency-based selection for educational leadership roles.

By revising these selection mechanisms, the ministry aims to improve evaluation efficiency and standardize procedures across all relevant processes.

Public School Al-Tabtabaei Committee Restructuring:

1. Head of General Subjects Division and Head of Subject Department:  
It will be chaired by an Educational Affairs Supervisor, with membership including a Guidance Supervisor, a Technical Advisor, and a school/kindergarten principal (member/rapporteur).

2. Assistant Principal:  
It will be chaired by the Director of the Educational Affairs Department, with membership including two Educational Affairs Supervisors and a school/kindergarten principal (member/rapporteur).

3. School Principal:  
It will be chaired by the Director General of the educational zone, with membership including the Director of the Educational Affairs Department, an

Educational Affairs Supervisor, and a school/kindergarten principal (member/rapporteur).

Technical Supervision Committee Formations:

1. Subject-Specific Technical Supervisor:  
It will be chaired by the Director of the Subject-Specific Technical Supervision Department, with membership including two supervision supervisors and a subject-specific technical supervisor (member/rapporteur).

2. Supervisor of Supervision:  
It will be chaired by the Director General of Supervision, Research, and Curricula, with membership including two technical supervision directors and a supervision supervisor (member/rapporteur).

Special Education School Committees:  
1. Head of General Subjects Division and Subject-Specific Department:

It will be chaired by an Educational Affairs Supervisor, with membership including a Supervision Supervisor, a Technical Supervisor, and a school/kindergarten principal (member/rapporteur).

2. Assistant Principal and Principal:  
It will be chaired by the Director General of the General Administration for Religious and Special Education, with membership including the Director of the Special Education Schools Department, an Educational Affairs Supervisor, and a principal (member/rapporteur).

The ministry affirmed that these changes support its ongoing efforts to modernize the administrative system and ensure high-quality educational performance through more efficient selection processes.

## Technical failures in WAMD system

### CBK instructs KNet to impose fines of KD1 to KD 20 on banks

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** The Central Bank of Kuwait has instructed the automated banking services company "KNet" to implement a penalty system for banks that experience technical failures in processing customer payments through the WAMD payment system, launched in 2024, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to informed sources, a fine ranging from KD 1 to KD 20 will be imposed on the service-providing bank for each payment transaction that fails due to technical system issues, depending on the duration of the outage, which ranges from one minute to more than 30 minutes.

As per KNet's penalty regulations for technical failures in the WAMD system, a bank will be fined KD 1 for each transaction failure lasting between one and four minutes, KD 5 for failures between five and 15 minutes, KD 10 for failures between 15 and 30 minutes, and KD 20 for delays exceeding 30 minutes.

It is worth noting that, according to the Central Bank of Kuwait's data, WAMD instant payment transfers executed in the first quarter of 2026 amounted to around KD 2.646 billion, distributed across 40.382 million transactions. This reflects a 5.1 percent growth in March, equivalent to 43.7 million transactions on a monthly basis. As a result, the value of transfers through the service during the first three months of this year rose to KD 897 million across 13.701 million transactions, compared to KD 853.3 million car-

ried out through 13.133 million transactions in February.

The sources explained that implementing a penalty regulation for technical failures in WAMD instant payment system represents a continuation of the Central Bank's approach in adopting the latest technologies and developing payment services and systems in Kuwait. This is driven by its belief in the importance of enhancing the efficiency and flexibility of financial transactions to meet public needs, in line with Kuwait's vision for a more advanced digital future.

They affirmed that the Central Bank is keen to strengthen the infrastructure for using WAMD to conduct direct inter-account transfers through bank applications using only a phone number, operating around the clock without interruption, even in the event of limited technical glitches.

The sources went on to explain that with the remarkable growth of WAMD to the extent that it has been described as the fastest-growing service after attracting 30 percent of banking users within the first three months of its launch in June 2024, the regulatory support mechanisms for WAMD have diversified. The latest example is the ability to return funds received in error within up to seven days of the transaction date via the bank's application transfer screen, allowing the customer to recover the amount or return it directly to the sender easily.

## China and Russia agree to extend friendship treaty

## Xi, Putin hail high-level ties and growing energy trade as leaders meet in Beijing

BEIJING, May 20, (AP): Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed their high-level strategic ties and growing energy trade as they met in Beijing Wednesday only days after a visit by U.S. President Donald Trump to China.

Putin and Xi oversaw the signing of more than 40 cooperation agreements in areas such as trade, technology and media exchanges. They stressed their growing trade ties, particularly in oil and natural gas, and declared themselves aligned on international relations.

The countries' ties have reached "the highest level in history," Xi said after the signing ceremony, speaking to members of the delegations and journalists. The two sides also agreed to extend a friendship treaty first signed in 2001.

Putin told those in the room that "the driving force behind economic cooperation is Russian-Chinese collaboration in the energy sector."

"Amid the crisis in the Middle East, Russia continues to maintain its role as a reliable supplier of resources, while China remains a responsible consumer of these resources," Putin added.

Xi stressed the need for a "complete cessation of hostilities" in the Middle East, according to Chinese state media.

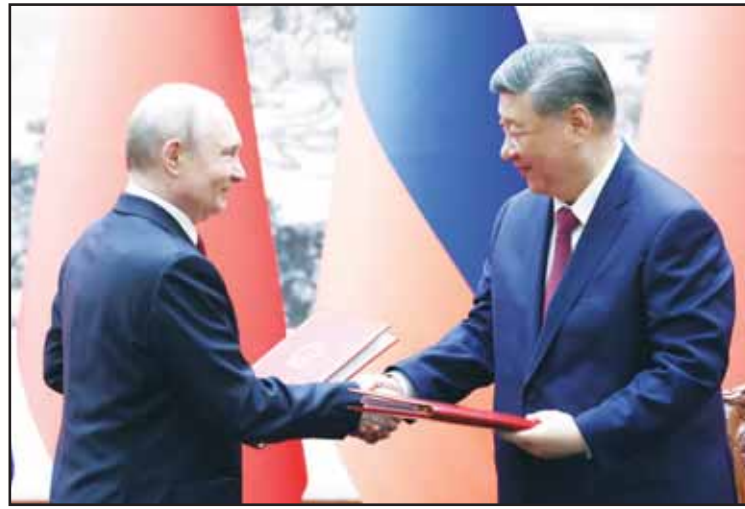
"An early end to the conflict will help reduce disruptions to energy supply stability, the smooth flow of industrial and supply chains, and international trade order," Xi said.

China became Russia's top trading partner after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Beijing has said it is neutral in the conflict while maintaining trade ties with the Kremlin despite economic and financial sanctions by the US and Europe.

China is also the top customer for Russian oil and gas supplies, and Moscow expects the war in Iran to increase the demand. There was no visible progress, however, on the prospective Power of Siberia 2 natural gas pipeline that Russia has pushed to boost exports to China.

A Russian presidential aide said earlier that Russia's oil exports to China grew by 35% in the first quarter of 2026 and that Russia is one of the biggest exporters of natural gas to China.

Bilateral trade between the two countries reached around \$228 bil-



Russian President Vladimir Putin, (left), and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands during a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on May 20. (AP)

lion in 2025, according to Xinhua news agency.

Xi said trade in areas like energy served as "stabilizing pillars" of the relationship and pledged to accelerate cooperation in other areas, like artificial intelligence, the digital economy and technological innovation.

The trip comes just days after

Trump's own visit to Beijing - in a sequence that is meant to cement Beijing's image as an influential superpower, experts say.

"The message is clearly one that China maintains friendship and strategic partnership with whichever power it likes, and the USA is just one of them," said Steve Tsang, di-

rector of the SOAS China Institute at the University of London.

Putin also described China and Russia's cooperation in foreign policy as "one of the key stabilizing factors on the international stage."

"In the current tense situation on the international stage, our close cooperation is particularly in demand," he said.

Xi also repeated criticisms of "unilateralism and hegemonism," in what appeared to be a veiled reference to U.S. actions. He said "the world faces the danger of reverting to the law of the jungle."

In February 2022, just weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China and Russia announced a "no limits" partnership during a trip by Putin to Beijing.

Beijing says it is neutral in the conflict, though in practice it supports Moscow through frequent state visits, growing trade and joint military drills. China has also ignored demands from the West to stop providing high-tech components for Russia's weapons industries.

Putin invited Xi to visit Russia in 2027 and said he would take part in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in November in south-

ern China.

Both Putin and Xi continued to praise their close personal ties.

"My dear friend," Putin said as he greeted Xi. "We are truly delighted to see you. We keep in constant touch, both personally and through our aides in the government."

Xi also addressed Putin as "my longtime friend" at the start of their talks and said it was important to build upon "the foundation of mutual trust" between the countries. The two leaders have praised each other profusely in the past, with Xi at one point describing Putin as his "best and most intimate friend."

Putin and Xi both need to use their close ties in order to prop up their images at home, said Willy Lam, a senior China fellow at the James-Town Foundation.

Putin "needs to tell his countrymen and the world that Russia has China's support in terms of buying its oil and gas and other tangible and intangible financial support," Lam said.

Meanwhile, for Xi, having both Trump and Putin visit in such close succession is a major source of credit with the country's top Communist leadership.

## US Senate advances bill aimed at ending Iran war as Cassidy, after primary loss, flips to support

WASHINGTON, May 20, (AP): The Senate advanced legislation Tuesday that seeks to force President Donald Trump to withdraw from the Iran war, as a growing number of Republicans defied the president's direction on a conflict that has spanned well over two months.

Since Trump ordered the attack on Iran at the end of February, Democrats have forced repeated votes on war powers resolutions that would require him either to gain congressional approval or withdraw U.S. troops. Republicans had been able to muster the votes to reject those proposals, but Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy - fresh off a primary election loss in which Trump endorsed his opponent - switched sides.

The 50-47 vote tally showed that a small but growing number of Republicans are willing to challenge Trump on the Iran war, even though the effort may not advance much further. Three Republicans were absent Tuesday and their votes would be enough to defeat the measure, if they maintain their stance on the war.

Still, the vote showed how Republicans are increasingly uneasy with a conflict that shows no signs of ending, is stuck in a fragile ceasefire and is causing rising gas prices in the U.S.

"Republicans are starting to crack, and momentum is building



Supporter Hector Saddy holds a sign reading 'LOUISIANA FIRST' as Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., speaks to supporters during an election night watch party on May 16, in Baton Rouge, La. (AP)

to check him," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement after the vote. "We are not letting up."

Republican Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska had all previously voted for similar war powers resolutions and did so again Tuesday. Cassidy supported the legislation for the first time, while Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was again the only Democrat to vote against it.

After his primary election loss last week, Cassidy returned to Washington defiant. He said he was proud of his work to uphold the Constitution and would carefully consider how he would vote on several priorities of the Trump administration going forward.

Trump's grip on the Senate Republican Conference is potentially slipping after Cassidy's primary loss, as well as the president's decision Tuesday to endorse Republican Sen. John Cornyn's primary oppo-

nent.

"While I support the administration's efforts to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, the White House and Pentagon have left Congress in the dark on Operation Epic Fury," Cassidy said on social media.

"Until the administration provides clarity, no congressional authorization or extension can be justified."

Across the Capitol, the House is expected to vote on a similar war powers resolution Wednesday, and Democrats are bullish about their chances of passing it. Another war powers resolution barely failed in the House last week, the vote ending in a tie.

Even if Congress eventually passes legislation to compel Trump to withdraw from the conflict, it's not clear that he would comply. To circumvent requirements of the War Powers Resolution of 1973, the White House has claimed that it has technically ceased "hostilities" with Iran because there is a ceasefire.

Trump this week said he ordered preparations for an attack on Iran on Tuesday, only to call it off to give allies in the Gulf more time to work out an agreement with Iran.

"Peace negotiations are stuck and so day after day after day grocery prices climb, gas prices climb," Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut said in a floor speech.



People take shelter in an underground car park during an air raid alert in Vilnius, Lithuania on May 20. (AP)

## Residents of Lithuania's capital told to shelter as drone alarm underlines NATO's eastern jitters

VILNIUS, Lithuania, May 20, (AP): Residents of Vilnius were told to take shelter and Lithuania's president and prime minister were taken to safe locations Wednesday because of an alarm over drone activity near the border with Belarus, underlining jitters on NATO's eastern flank over incursions related to Russia's war with Ukraine.

An emergency announcement from the military told people in the Vilnius region to "immediately head to a shelter or a safe place."

The alert, which lasted for about an hour, also led to the closure of the airspace over Vilnius Airport. President Gitanas Nausėda and Prime Minister Inga Ruginienė were taken to shelters, and there was also an evacuation order at Lithuania's par-

liament, the Seimas, the BNS news agency reported.

It was the first major alert that sent residents and political leaders in a European Union and NATO capital rushing to shelters since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"Based on the parameters we saw, it's most likely either a combat drone or a drone designed to deceive systems and lure targets," Vilmantas Vitkauskas, head of Lithuania's National Crisis Management Center, said in a news briefing. "The electronic countermeasures here can't tell us whether an explosive device detonated or not. It's very, very difficult."

Based on the altitude and speed, it was probably a drone, he said, "though we can't say at this stage

exactly what kind of drone it was or where it was launched from."

Lithuania borders Russia-allied Belarus to the east and Russia's Kaliningrad exclave to the west. Wednesday's alert came after the military said it detected drone activity in Belarus, but no drones were sighted over Lithuania.

Belarus reported the potential drone to Lithuania, according to Brig. Gen. Nerijus Stankevičius, commander of the Lithuanian Army's Land Forces.

Officials "received a report from the Belarusian armed forces regarding drones potentially moving toward Lithuanian territory. Our neighbors in Latvia received similar information," Stankevičius told reporters.

On Wednesday, NATO Secretary-

General Mark Rutte commended the alliance's reaction to several drone incidents in recent days, saying that they had been met with "a calm, decisive and proportionate response."

"This is exactly what we planned and prepared for," he said, blaming Russia's war on Ukraine for the problem.

In recent months, Ukrainian drones aimed at Russia have crossed or come down in NATO territory on numerous occasions. Western officials have blamed what they say is likely Russian electronic jamming of the drones. Russia, meanwhile, has renewed threats that it would retaliate if Ukrainian drones are launched from Baltic countries or if those countries are complicit in their use against Russia.

## Slovenia set for a right-wing govt and comeback for former PM Jansa

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia, May 20, (AP): Right-wing politician Janez Jansa is set to become Slovenia's prime minister again after his candidacy was submitted to Parliament on Tuesday, paving the way for the formation of a new government almost two months after a parliamentary election.

Jansa, who has served three previous terms as prime minister, was formally nominated by lawmakers from his Slovenian Democratic Party. He is expected to lead a coalition government that will also include other right-leaning groups and will be backed by an anti-establishment newcomer party.

The date for the new government's formal approval in Parliament was not immediately set. Slovenia's public broadcaster RTV Slovenia reported that Jansa has the backing of 48 lawmakers in the 90-member assembly.

If confirmed, the election of Jansa will mark a turn to the right for the Eu-



Former prime minister of Slovenia Janez Jansa addresses the media at his election headquarters in Ljubljana, Slovenia on March 22. (AP)

ropean Union country that was previously run by a liberal government.

The veteran politician, Jansa, 67, is an admirer of US President Donald Trump and was a close ally of former populist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who was

defeated in a landslide election last month.

Jansa most recently served as prime minister from 2020 to 2022, when he lost an election to the liberal Freedom Movement of outgoing Prime Minister Robert Golob.

## America

'San Diego shooters met online': Two teenagers who shot and killed three people in an attack on a California mosque were radicalized online where they first met and shared white supremacist views, according to authorities and writings they authored.

The pair "didn't discriminate on who they hated," Mark Remily, the lead FBI agent in San Diego, said Tuesday.

The writings, obtained by The Associated Press, include hateful rhetoric toward Jewish people, Muslims and Islam, Black people, women, and both the political left and right. Both express beliefs that white people are being eliminated, and one writes about mental health struggles and being rejected by women. (AP)

More than 17K under evacuation orders: More than 17,000 people were under evacuation orders in Southern California on Tuesday as a wildfire threatened suburban homes.

The wind-driven Sandy Fire was reported Monday in the hills above Simi Valley, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northwest of Los Angeles.

By Tuesday morning, it had consumed more than two square miles (five square kilometers) of dry brush and destroyed at least one home, according to the Ventura County Fire Department.

The flames were initially pushed by gusts that topped 30 mph (48 kph), but firefighters were aided



Zahra Sharifi, (left), and Anna Osman embrace during a vigil, the day after a shooting, outside of the Islamic Center of San Diego on May 19, in San Diego. (AP)

by calmer winds overnight, said department spokesperson Andrew Dowd. (AP)

Minnesota county charges ICE officer: A Minnesota county prosecutor on Monday announced charges against an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer in the nonfatal shooting of a Venezuelan man during the Trump administration's crackdown in the state.

The officer, Christian Castro, is charged with four counts of second-degree assault and one count of falsely reporting a crime in the Jan. 14 shooting of Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis, Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said at a news conference. A warrant was issued for his arrest. (AP)

## Kuwaiti oil price down to \$123.62 pb

KUWAIT CITY, May 20, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by USD 1.01 to reach 123.62 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 124.63 pb the previous day, according to the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday.

In global markets, Brent crude dropped 82 cents to reach USD 111.28 pb, and US West Texas Intermediate decreased 89 cents to reach USD 107.77 pb.

# Business

## Action Energy Co. appoints National Investments Company as market maker to boost share liquidity



KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Action Energy Company K.S.C.P. (Boursa Kuwait: ALFTAQA), Kuwait's leading local partner for integrated upstream services, owner and operator of one of the youngest rig fleets in the region, today announced the signing of a market maker agreement with National Investments Company (NIC).

This step builds on the strong investor reception to Action Energy Company's

(AEC) initial public offering, and aims to enhance trading liquidity for shareholders.

Under the agreement, NIC will enter paired buy and sell orders on AEC's shares during trading sessions, within a defined price spread and minimum order size, and at no less than a specified percentage of total monthly trading value. These arrangements are expected to enhance liquidity and support continuous supply and demand for the

"ALFTAQA" share.

NIC acted as Sole Listing Advisor, Sole Subscription Agent, Joint Global Coordinator, and Joint Bookrunner for AEC's IPO and its listing on the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait in December 2025. The offering attracted strong demand from local and international investors, with subscriptions exceeding the offered value by 5.0 times, with an initial coverage value of KWD 276 million.



AEC rig

### Prioritizing on innovation, safety

## Kuwait Oil Company focuses on efficiency & sustainability

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) remains committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards of operational excellence, according to an official document obtained by the newspaper.

This is part of the strategy of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries to develop production quality, improve operational facilities, respect the environment, ensure safety and security, and promote a healthy work environment. It will be accomplished through the optimal utilization of hydrocarbon resources, efficient inventory management, and continuous strategic cost efficiencies related to the production and export of oil and gas products in line with the 2040 strategy.

The aim is to ensure sustainable operations that maximize the profitability of the oil sector and contribute to the prosperity of the State of Kuwait.

The document affirmed the commitment of KOC to the following:

- Continuous innovation, improving operational efficiency and maximizing system effectiveness.
- Building and strengthening relationships with stakeholders to support growth and enhance operational efficiency.
- Respecting the environment, ensuring safety and security, and promoting a healthy work environment in all work sites.
- Adhering to the highest standards of ethics, respect and integrity.
- Protecting assets, information and intellectual properties.

It has been revealed that the vice

presidents of KOC held intensive meetings with the Commercial and Project Engineering Department, Gas and Environment Department, and Administrative and Financial Affairs Department to express gratitude to the national staff for their contributions in overcoming the challenges the country faced, encourage all groups to strengthen communication with other departments and continue providing support, and review the performance in the final quarter of the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

Executive Vice President for Commercial and Project Engineering Musaed Al-Rasheed, chaired the performance review meeting of the department for the fourth and final quarter of the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

The meeting, held at the headquarters of the company, was attended by all group managers, team leaders, and senior staff. The planning team organized and managed the agenda.

Executive Vice President for Gas and Environment Amina Rajab chaired a meeting for the same purpose.

The meeting included a presentation summarizing the status of the Quality Management System audit.

Rajab emphasized the importance of completing all pending procedures and ensuring full readiness for upcoming external audits.

Executive Vice President for Administrative and Financial Affairs Waleed Al-Rabeean chaired a similar meeting that included a review of the performance indicators of the department for the final quarter of the current fiscal year, discussion of achievements and priorities, problems and challenges, strategies for overcoming them and finding plausible solutions to realize the objectives of the company.

### EBITDA beats targets

## Duqm Refinery achieves \$7 bln revenue in 2025

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
KUWAIT CITY, May 20: The Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery achieved positive results by the end of 2025.

The newspaper obtained a copy of an official report, stating that revenues reached \$7 billion last year, while capital expenditures reached \$352 million. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) for the past year reached \$276 million, exceeding the approved targets and reflecting the strength of the operational performance of the refinery.

The same report confirmed that the transformation plan achieved savings of \$270 million, a step that underscores tangible progress in enhancing operational efficiency and supporting long-term value creation.

The refinery realized a remarkable 13 percent improvement in costs compared to the controllable operating budget, showing the efficient implementation and financial discipline in its various operations.

The report indicated that operational performance remained stable and reliable throughout the year, achieving 100 percent reliability in the supply and distribution chain, along with maintaining an operating rate of 99 percent.

These results prove the strength of the operational systems and institutional capabilities that support the daily operations of the refinery in an efficient and stable manner.

The refinery reached a milestone in 2025 with the completion of its 633rd shipment, indicating rapid growth in its export operations and its increasing role in global energy supply chains.

Since its first shipment in May 2023, the refinery has exported more than 19 million tons of refined products to various markets worldwide.

It has been able to efficiently man-

age and operate a diverse range of vessel sizes, from small vessels to large LR2 tankers.

It shipped 304,388 metric tons of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and completed loadings of 50,000 tons of petroleum coke in less than 120 hours per shipment.

In addition to enhancing its logistical capabilities through the implementation of nighttime berthing and crude oil offloading operations at the Ras Markaz storage terminal, the refinery maintained an outstanding operational safety record.

This achievement reflects the strength of the logistical capabilities of the refinery and its commitment to supply energy products to global markets according to the highest safety standards.

Regarding health, safety, security and the environment, the report confirmed that the refinery prioritized achieving 100 percent performance in health, safety, security and environmental indicators as a corporate objective for 2025.

This is supported by solid results in process safety, embodying the deeply rooted safety culture within the organization and the collective commitment to making safety a fundamental element in all its operations.

The report highlighted that for 2025, the sustainability indicator milestone was the release of shareholders' guarantees, underscoring the maturity of its operations and its financial strength, signaling a successful move into steady commercial functioning.

The refinery is optimizing value by taking advantage of its advanced operational flexibility to refine raw material selection, improve operational efficiency, and increase the value derived from crude oil processing.

It also conducted the first Solomon benchmarking study, which enabled it to evaluate its operational performance compared to its global peers and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

### A flexible savings solution designed for SMEs

## NBK launches the 'Daily Call' account

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: As part of its ongoing efforts to support entrepreneurs and business founders, and in reaffirmation of its commitment to delivering innovative banking solutions that enhance the financial flexibility of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced the launch of its new "Daily Call" Account. This advanced savings solution has been specifically designed to empower SMEs to manage their funds with greater ease and flexibility, while generating attractive returns.

This innovative product gives business owners the opportunity to grow their savings without compromising liquidity, offering a smarter approach to managing cash flows.

SMEs can now open the "Daily Call" Account with no minimum balance requirement, earn daily interest credited directly to the account, and enjoy full, unrestricted access to their funds at any time.

The account also enables savings in multiple currencies, including the Kuwaiti Dinar, US Dollar, British Pound Sterling, and Euro, in addition to a complimentary debit card that offers business owners greater ease in managing their daily transactions without complexity.

To mark the launch, NBK is offering a cash reward of up to KD 1,500 to holders of the "Daily



**Faisal Al-Fulaij:**

- The new account offers business owners the flexibility they need, while rewarding disciplined and efficient financial management



Call" Account, provided they maintain the required average balance each month during the first 90 days from the date of the

initial deposit. The reward value will be determined based on the lowest balance maintained during this period and will be credited

## With Eid Al-Adha approaching: Weyay Aura Card offers greater rewards for Weyay clients & Avenues shoppers

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Weyay Bank continues to strengthen its strategic partnership with Alshaya Group through the Weyay Aura Card, offering customers added value by earning more Aura points within Alshaya's rewards program. This comes alongside Weyay's interactive presence at The Avenues Mall, running until May 24, where the bank is spotlighting the card's key benefits during the peak Eid shopping season.

This collaboration reflects Weyay's commitment to delivering innovative, lifestyle-driven banking experiences by seamlessly combining digital solutions with rewarding everyday spending. As shoppers prepare for Eid Al-Adha, the Weyay Aura Card enables customers to maximize the value of their purchases while enjoying a more rewarding retail journey.

During its activation at The Avenues, Weyay is also highlighting this month's Aura campaign, which allows Weyay Aura Cardholders to boost their rewards by spending 200 KD and receiving 10,000 bonus



Weyay Bank continues to strengthen its strategic partnership with Alshaya Group through the Weyay Aura Card.

Aura points credited directly to their accounts, further reinforcing the value of everyday spending.

The Weyay Aura Card introduces a competitive rewards structure designed to help customers get the most out of their spending. Cardholders can earn:

- Up to 30 Aura points for every

KWD 1 spent at participating Aura partner stores

- 10 Aura points per KWD 1 spent at non-participating stores within The Avenues
- 2 Aura points per KWD 1 spent locally and internationally

In addition to its strong rewards offering, the card delivers a fully

digital and seamless user experience. Customers can instantly issue the card through the Weyay app within minutes and start using it immediately for both online and in-store purchases. The card can also be added to digital wallets such as Apple Pay, enabling fast and secure payments anytime, anywhere. Furthermore, the card comes with no issuance fees for the first year, making it a flexible and accessible option for digitally savvy customers.

The integration between the Weyay and Aura apps further enhances convenience, with rewards points automatically credited to customers' Aura accounts after every transaction, eliminating the need for manual input and ensuring a frictionless experience.

In parallel, Weyay's presence at the mall offers an engaging and inclusive experience for visitors of all ages. Customers can also benefit from exclusive offers and vouchers across leading brands at The Avenues, enhancing the overall shopping experience.

## ABK introduces series of exclusive offers & discounts in collaboration with partners across multiple sectors

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues its commitment to rewarding customers through a series of new offers that provide exclusive discounts in collaboration with partners across various sectors when using any of its credit, prepaid, or debit cards.

The newly launched offers include a wide range of partners spanning entertainment, restaurants, hotels, retail stores, hospitals, and more, catering to customers' lifestyles by providing discounts ranging from 10% to 25%. These offers come as part of the Bank's ongoing commitment to rewarding customers and delivering flexible solutions that suit their lifestyles and meet their growing financial needs, while continuing to focus on innovation in service delivery across its branch network throughout Kuwait.

On this occasion, **Johair Marafi**, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said that launching this



Johair Marafi, General Manager - Retail Banking

diverse package of offers and discounts reflects the Bank's continuous commitment to being closest to its customers and consistently providing added value that positively impacts them.

She added, "We continuously work on establishing diverse partnerships to provide valuable offers



both in-store and online. These offers are carefully designed to include exclusive discounts, cashback benefits, and instant rewards when using our wide range of cards."

Marafi further noted, "The launch of these offers is based on the principle of inclusivity. At ABK, we believe that every customer has unique needs that require tailored solutions to support their personal aspirations, including travel, shopping, and savings benefits that address the finest details of everyday life."

She stressed ABK's commitment to rewarding customers for their trust as part of its role as a responsible and

leading banking institution in the local market, following extensive studies of the needs of all customer segments to ensure they are met in the best possible way throughout the year.

Marafi also highlighted the importance of promotional campaigns and offers in strengthening the Bank's presence among different segments of Kuwaiti society and attracting customers to its continuously growing family. She revealed that the Bank remains committed to developing its services to ensure banking transactions keep pace with the rapidly evolving needs of customers, thereby enhancing their satisfaction and trust while reinforcing the Bank's leading position in the local market.

In closing, Marafi invited everyone to follow ABK's website, social media pages, and mobile application, as well as visit its branches to stay updated on the promotional campaigns, offers, and new products launched throughout the year.

Advancing Kuwait's SME agenda by helping local restaurants build stronger, more resilient businesses

# talabat launches talabat grow in Kuwait

## Empowering over 1,000 SME restaurants in partnership with the National Fund



Abdullah Al-Mansour and Eng. Basma Al-Jasem signing the MoU



Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, and Eng. Basma Al-Jasem, Acting Director General at the National Fund, in a group photo with the talabat and National Fund teams.

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: talabat, the leading everyday app in Middle East & North Africa (MENA), in partnership with the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development, has launched "talabat grow" in Kuwait, one of its most ambitious mentorship and capability-building initiatives, designed to support the sustainable growth of SME restaurants. Building on 22 years of local market experience and close engagement with Kuwait's F&B sector, the program responds to a clear need for practical guidance beyond funding, helping restaurant owners strengthen key areas such as restaurant management, menu development, kitchen efficiency, and the fundamentals required to build more resilient and scalable businesses.

The initiative was officially announced in Kuwait during a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signing ceremony held at Four Seasons Hotel, in the presence of Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, and Eng. Basma Al-Jasem, Acting Director General at the National Fund, in addition to several participating restaurant owners.

Designed as a structured six-month growth program, talabat grow aims to support high-potential, locally owned SME restaurants in Kuwait by strengthening their operational and commercial capabilities and accelerating sustainable growth across the food and hospitality sector. The program begins with a six-week intensive bootcamp, followed by tailored support phases, and targets restaurant businesses facing challenges in their growth and operations. The participant selection mechanism was jointly developed by talabat and the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development to help identify

restaurants that can benefit most from the program's mentorship and capability-building support.

Through the initiative, talabat aims to onboard more than 1,000 restaurants in Kuwait, offering reduced commission rates, commercial support, and dedicated one-to-one guidance from talabat's Partner Success teams, alongside practical training in operational excellence, performance optimization, data-driven decision-making, and the effective use of digital tools through various channels, including webinars delivered by talabat and its partners.

"At talabat, we believe that sharing knowledge, experience, and practical guidance is essential to building stronger busi-

nesses and a more resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait. "We are proud to launch talabat grow in Kuwait as a new step in our commitment to supporting restaurant owners and contributing to the sustainable growth of Kuwait's local business sector. As the country's food and beverage sector continues to grow, we are leveraging our expertise, platform capabilities, and partner network to help ambitious entrepreneurs strengthen their operations, unlock new opportunities, and succeed in a rapidly evolving market."

On her part, Eng. Basma Al-Jasem said: "Supporting small and medium enterprises remains a key pillar of Kuwait's economic development. Our partnership with talabat reflects the importance of effective public-private collaboration in equipping emerging restaurant businesses with the tools and opportunities they need to grow sustainably and contribute meaningfully to the local economy."

The initiative reflects talabat's broader commitment to empowering entrepreneurs and supporting Kuwait's long-term economic development in line with Kuwait Vision 2035. Through a practical model of public-private collaboration, talabatgrow aims to strengthen local business capabilities, help restaurant owners overcome operational challenges, and equip them with the tools and knowledge needed to grow sustainably. In doing so, talabat reinforces its role as a long-term partner to Kuwait's SME ecosystem, supporting businesses with capability-led guidance that can create lasting impact beyond the program itself.



A snapshot from the press conference announcing the MoU

### Rising 400 metres above the city

## Al Habtoor Tower: Dubai's boldest residential project

DUBAI, May 20: In a city that has made a global reputation out of engineering ambition, Al Habtoor Tower is preparing to take its place as the largest residential building ever constructed. At roughly 400 metres tall, with 91 floors and 1,740 homes, Al Habtoor Group's flagship development is more than another entry in Dubai's catalogue of record-breakers. It is, by several measures, a project that is reshaping how cities build upward.

The headline numbers are striking on their own. The tower spans some 370,000 square metres of built-up area, roughly three times the size of a typical luxury high-rise, and offers more than 174,000 square feet of amenities, including 65 private sky pools, observation decks on the 92nd and 93rd floors, and a triple-level "sky crown" of hospitality and leisure spaces near the summit. Pools positioned above 340 metres will offer some of the highest residential vantage points anywhere in the world.

But the more interesting story is how the building is being delivered.

Rather than demolishing the existing foundations on the site, the project team built over and through them, preserving three basement levels and key structural systems intact. The technique, known as top-down construction, has been used elsewhere, notably at One Nine Elms in London and Crown Sydney, but never at this scale. At roughly four million square feet, Al Habtoor Tower is now considered the largest top-down construction ever executed, a decision that shaved an estimated 15 to 18 months off the schedule and avoided the cost and disruption of demolition.

That efficiency is reflected in pace. The tower has been rising at a rate of 464 square metres per day, nearly twice the pace of leading supertall benchmarks worldwide. Where towers such as Shanghai Tower and Lotte World Tower in Seoul required six to eight years to complete, Al Habtoor Tower's delivery timeline is markedly compressed.

Underneath, the engineering is equally am-

bitious. The tower sits on a foundation system of approximately 96 mega-barrettes reaching depths of nearly 90metres; roughly double the depth of Burj Khalifa's foundation. Predicted settlement was between 22 and 42 millimetres; actual measured settlement has come in at around 6 millimetres, a level of precision rare for a structure of this size.

The exterior is no less considered. A 127,300-square-metre façade incorporates 120,000 square metres of glass curtain wall, dual-tone glazing, more than 1,500 balconies, and Mashrabiya-inspired screening at the podium, a nod to regional architectural tradition wrapped around a thoroughly modern envelope.

The project has already collected multiple International Property Awards, including Best Leisure Development – Dubai, Best Residential High-Rise Architecture for both Dubai and Arabia, and Best International Residential High-Rise Architecture.

For Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor, Founding Chairman of Al Habtoor Group, the tower is as much a statement about Dubai as it is about the company. "The UAE, and Dubai in particular, continue to set benchmarks across every sector, from infrastructure to real estate. This project is a direct reflection of that environment," he said. "We operate in a market that offers stability, security, and opportunity, and that is why we continue to invest and expand here with full confidence in the future."

He added: "Al Habtoor Tower sets a new standard for what can be achieved when engineering ambition is matched by operational discipline."

If Burj Khalifa came to symbolise what was possible at height, Al Habtoor Tower may come to symbolise something quieter but no less consequential, what is possible when scale, speed, and precision are pursued together. In a global industry under increasing pressure to build more, faster, and with less waste, the methods pioneered here are likely to travel well beyond Dubai.



Al Habtoor Tower

## Pathak: Markets react. Assets endure: Positioning real estate in volatile cycle

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Geopolitical events often dominate market sentiment, but their long-term impact on asset performance is frequently overstated. Markets do not stop in the face of uncertainty. They adjust, recalibrate, and reprise risk. The current tensions in the Middle East are no exception. This is what Mr. Sandeep Pathak, Chief Executive Officer – Margulf Management Inc., the international real estate arm of Kuwait Financial Centre, said during one of a series of webinars launched by Markaz to shed light on key market developments, emerging risks, and evolving investment opportunities across the region. While volatility has affected energy markets and global trade routes, the underlying fundamentals of real estate, particularly in the United States, have remained largely intact.

Recent market activity reinforces this view. In the six weeks following the escalation in geopolitical tensions, more than 1,000 commercial real estate transactions were completed in the U.S., with a total value exceeding USD 43 billion. Lending markets also remained active, with more than USD 22 billion in new CMBS issuance, while spreads continued to tighten for high-quality assets, even as they widened selectively for higher-risk exposures. Market sentiment has shown similar resilience, with industry participants reporting no meaningful disruption to underlying business activity.

This distinction between headline risk and market reality remains critical. While geopolitical shocks may influence pricing in the short term, they rarely alter the structural drivers underpinning real estate demand.

**Energy volatility as a transmission channel**  
Energy markets remain central to the current cycle, acting as a key transmission channel into inflation and capital markets. Recent data shows inflation ticking upward in early 2026, driven primarily by higher energy prices, while core inflation has remained relatively stable.

At the same time, interest rate expectations remain broadly unchanged. The U.S. Federal Reserve has maintained its benchmark rate in the 3.50% to 3.75% range, with only modest rate cuts anticipated over the next two years.

For investors, this signals a familiar environment: one where inflationary pressures persist, financing conditions remain selective, and asset pricing continues to adjust gradually rather than abruptly.

**Real estate: stability beneath the surface**  
Against this backdrop, real estate continues to demonstrate its role as a stabilizing allocation within diversified portfolios. Its resilience is rooted in three structural characteristics. First, real estate provides a natural hedge against inflation. Rental income and property values have historically



Mr. Sandeep Pathak, Chief Executive Officer – Margulf Management Inc.

moved in line with inflation, supported by lease structures that allow for periodic rent adjustments.

Second, the asset class offers stable, income-generating characteristics. Long-term leases with creditworthy tenants provide predictable cash flows, while diversified tenant bases help mitigate vacancy risk across cycles.

Third, real estate continues to deliver strong risk-adjusted returns relative to other asset classes, with limited correlation with both equities and fixed income. These attributes become particularly relevant in periods where inflation, rather than recession, defines the macro environment.

**Sector dynamics: where opportunity is concentrating**

While the broader asset class remains resilient, performance is increasingly differentiated across sectors. Industrial real estate continues to benefit from structural tailwinds, including onshoring and sustained investment in manufacturing and logistics infrastructure. Significant public and private capital allocation, including large-scale investments in semiconductor production, is reinforcing demand for industrial space.

Multifamily housing presents a different but equally compelling dynamic. With mortgage rates rising to approximately 6.6% and the cost of homeownership reaching multi-decade highs, renting has become comparatively more attractive. This affordability gap is supporting occupancy and demand across rental markets.

Demographic trends are also shaping long-term opportunity. An ageing U.S. population is driving increased demand for senior housing and healthcare-related real estate, sectors that are already demonstrating strengthening fundamentals and improving income growth

profiles. Together, these trends point to a market that is not only resilient but increasingly selective in where value is created.

**Supply, capital, and the next cycle**  
Looking ahead, two structural shifts are likely to define the next phase of the real estate cycle. The first is a decline in new supply. Forward indicators, including permit activity and construction pipelines, suggest a broad-based slowdown in new development across major asset classes. This is expected to support rental growth and occupancy levels over the medium term as demand continues to absorb existing inventory.

The second is capital positioning. Institutional investors are currently under-allocated to real estate relative to target levels, largely due to the impact of higher interest rates and valuation adjustments in recent years. As capital markets stabilize, reallocation towards real estate is expected, potentially driving increased transaction activity and pricing support. These dynamics suggest that the current environment is less about contraction and more about transition.

**Discipline as a differentiator**  
Periods of geopolitical uncertainty tend to test investor behavior more than market fundamentals. The pattern is consistent: initial volatility, followed by stabilization, and eventual recovery. What differentiates outcomes is not the external environment, but the discipline of portfolio construction. Highly leveraged or speculative positions are typically the most exposed to short-term shocks, while fundamentally strong, income-generating assets demonstrate greater resilience.

For long-term investors, the implications are clear. Diversification across geographies and asset classes remains essential. Income stability should be prioritized alongside capital appreciation. And perhaps most importantly, investment decisions should be guided by fundamentals rather than short-term sentiment.

**Looking beyond the immediate**  
The current geopolitical landscape presents a complex mix of risks and opportunities. Yet it also reinforces a consistent principle: markets are adaptive systems. They absorb shocks, reprise risk, and continue to evolve. Real estate's role within this framework is not incidental. It provides a combination of income stability, inflation protection, and structural demand drivers that remain relevant across cycles.

As investors navigate this environment, the objective is not to predict geopolitical outcomes, but to build portfolios that remain resilient regardless of them. In doing so, periods of uncertainty can be reframed not as disruptions, but as moments of repositioning that create the foundation for long-term value.

Largest and first-of-its-kind local issuance

# Kuwait Finance House issues KD 200 million Sukuk

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced the successful issuance of KD 200 million Additional Tier 1 (AT1) Mudaraba Sukuk, marking the first and largest Kuwaiti Dinar-denominated issuance in the domestic banking sector.

The Sukuk were priced at 200 bps above the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) discount rate, equivalent to an annual expected profit rate of 5.50%. Investor demand exceeded the target issuance size by more than KD 275 million. The issuance was fully subscribed by domestic investors, primarily private banking and wealth management clients, and financial institutions.

**Chief Treasury Officer** – Kuwait at KFH, Ahmad Eissa Al-Sumait, said that the successful completion of the Sukuk offering, which achieved full subscription in record time and attracted unprecedented demand despite ongoing regional developments, geopolitical tensions, and their implications for economic conditions and investor appetite regionally and globally, reflects investors' strong confidence in KFH and underscores its credibility across financial institutions and capital markets.

He added that the issuance highlights KFH's prestigious market position, strong creditworthiness, operational efficiency, robust brand, and outstanding financial performance across key indicators.

Al-Sumait explained that the issuance aims to strengthen KFH's capital base, diversify funding sources, and enhance its ability to support development projects in Kuwait, particularly in infrastructure, energy, and other vital sectors, in line with the Bank's growth and expansion strategy.

He noted that KFH Capital and Kamco Invest acted as Joint Lead Managers for the issuance, commending their significant role in the successful execution of the transaction. He also expressed appreciation to investors for their confidence, as well as to all partners and stakeholders for their contributions to completing the issuance within a record timeframe and achieving an oversubscription level above the initial target.

Al-Sumait emphasized that the Sukuk market holds strategic importance for KFH as one of the prominent financing instruments in global markets.



Ahmad Al-Sumait



Abdullah Al-Haddad

- **Al-Sumait:** Demand exceeded target issuance size and proved confidence in KFH's financial strength and creditworthiness
- **Al-Haddad:** The issuance marks a new addition to KFH Capital's track record in the Sukuk market

He noted that investor appetite for Sukuk continues to grow due to their role in supporting corporate expansion plans and facilitating entry into new sectors. He further highlighted that Islamic finance instruments continue to strengthen their presence in global capital markets, as reflected in increasing international investor interest in Sukuk issuances.

**KFH Capital Chief Executive Officer** -Abdullah Sulaiman Al-Haddad. Meanwhile, KFH Capital Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Sulaiman Al-Haddad said that the company successfully led the arrangement of the

Sukuk issuance, which was oversubscribed, marking the first domestic issuance of its kind denominated in Kuwaiti Dinars.

He added that KFH Capital, the investment arm of KFH Group, acted as Global Coordinator and Joint Lead Manager for the transaction, noting that the issuance witnessed strong demand from local investors. This reflects the growing recognition of Sukuk as a reliable and attractive financing instrument supporting the growth and expansion strategies of corporates, governments, and major development projects, while also demonstrating the high level of confidence in KFH and the strength of its financial position.

Al-Haddad explained that the Sukuk are perpetual in nature and callable after six years from the issuance date. He added that the transaction builds on KFH's successful track record, noting that KFH Capital recently arranged several issuances on behalf of the Bank, including a USD 850 million Mudaraba Sukuk issuance in November 2025 aimed at strengthening KFH's capital base.

He noted that KFH Capital was keen to secure balanced, diversified, and comprehensive coverage for the issuance in a manner that reinforces long-term relationships with investors and maximizes participation levels.

Al-Haddad added that the issuance represents a valuable addition to KFH Capital's track record in the Sukuk market and extends several successful transactions arranged by the company, supporting the continued growth and wider adoption of Sukuk instruments. He noted that this reflects the confidence issuers place in KFH Capital's expertise, capabilities, and institutional strengths, while further reinforcing KFH Group's leading role in arranging and managing major Sukuk issuances.

He also commended the high level of coordination and cooperation among all parties involved in arranging and covering the issuance within a record timeframe and with a high degree of professionalism and commitment. He expressed hope that this successful transaction would encourage further corporate Sukuk issuances in Kuwait, enabling companies to benefit from this financing instrument while supporting national economic activity.

West Asia growth hit hard

## United Nations warns of slower global growth

UNITED NATIONS, May 20, (AP): Responding to Middle East crises and rising oil prices, the United Nations on Tuesday lowered its forecast for global economic growth and raised the prospects for inflation this year.

U.N. economists said global GDP growth is now forecast at 2.5% for 2026, down from 2.7% in January, and they said it could fall to only 2.1% "in a more adverse scenario."

That would be one of the weakest growth rates this century, outside of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global financial crisis of 2008, Shantanu Mukherjee, director of economic analysis in the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said at a news conference.

On a somewhat positive note, he said, "we are not close" to a recession, but life can get harder for billions of people, and some countries may see their economies contract.

Global inflation is projected to rise to 3.9% this year, 0.8% higher than forecast in January, before the U.S. and Israel launched airstrikes on Iran. Iran responded by blocking the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for shipments of oil, natural gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products.

"Increased energy prices are a potent factor, as are the prices of refinery products that are crucial to industrial production and commercial transport," Mukherjee said.

But he stressed that not all countries will experience the same rate of inflation.

In richer developed countries, inflation is projected to rise from 2.6% in 2025 to 2.9% in 2026. In developing countries, inflation is forecast to accelerate from 4.2% to 5.2% as higher costs for energy, transportation and imported goods erode real incomes.

The impact of the Iran war has been highly uneven, with the most severe economic damage concentrated in West Asia, a region com-

prised of 21 Arab countries, including those in the Persian Gulf, according to the World Economic Situation and Prospects report for mid-2026.

Economic growth in the region is projected to plunge from 3.6% in 2025 to 1.4% in 2026, "driven not only by the energy shock but also by direct infrastructure damage and severe disruptions to oil production, trade and tourism."

In Africa, average growth is projected to drop only slightly, from 4.2% last year to 3.9% this year, according to the report. And in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is forecast to slow from 2.5% to 2.3% in 2026.

In the United States, the economy is expected to remain "comparatively resilient" with 2% growth forecast this year, broadly similar to 2025, it said.

By contrast, Europe "is more exposed, with heavy reliance on imported energy straining households and businesses," the economists said. Economic growth in the European Union is expected to slow from 1.5% in 2025 to 1.1% in 2026, while growth in the United Kingdom is forecast to drop further, from 1.4% last year to 0.7% this year.

In Asia, the U.N. said China's diversified energy mix, sizable strategic reserves and government actions are providing a buffer, so its economic growth is only expected to slow from 5% in 2025 to 4.6% this year.

India is forecast to remain one of the fastest growing major economies, with its economy expanding by 6.4% this year, although that is lower than its 7.5% growth in 2025.

"The question for China, similar to the case of India and other countries, is just how long with this conflict and the impact of the conflict last, because all these different buffers are clearly limited," senior U.N. economist Ingo Pitterle told reporters.

Focus on culture, events strengthen tourism appeal

## Sarah Bouhaji drives Bahrain's tourism growth



King Hamad bin Isa honors Sarah Bouhaji during the celebration of National Day and the anniversary of his accession to the throne.



Bouhaji during her recognition as one of the most creative personalities in the business sector.

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Sarah Bouhaji emerged as one of the most prominent leaders in the Kingdom of Bahrain in recent years, having established a strong presence in the tourism and exhibitions sector.

Bouhaji serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, where she leads efforts to implement an ambitious national strategy aimed at increasing the contribution of tourism sector to the national economy and improving the position of Bahrain as a regional destination for leisure, business and conference tourism.

Her vision, which is based on development, sustainability and openness to global markets, made her a major figure in the economic and tourism landscape in the Gulf.

Since assuming her post, Bouhaji has developed the tourism promotion tools of Bahrain, focusing on attracting major international events, strengthening the presence of the Kingdom at global exhibitions and markets, and launching innovative marketing initiatives that highlight the cultural, historical and recreational offerings of Bahrain.

Observers believe that Bouhaji has, within a short period, established herself as a leader with a modern vision for managing the tourism sector, especially in light of the global challenges

the tourism industry faced in recent years and the need for innovative solutions and flexible policies to revitalize the sector.

She also focused on supporting the exhibitions and conferences sector, using the modern facilities offered by the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, which has become a leading platform for hosting major economic, commercial and cultural events in the region, thus, strengthening Bahrain's position as a regional hub for the exhibitions industry. She puts importance on expanding international partnerships in the tourism sector.

She has led a series of meetings with international companies and institutions to attract new investments and events to Bahrain, in addition to strengthening cooperation in the hospitality, aviation and maritime tourism sectors.

As part of its tourism diversification plans, the authority, under her leadership, focused on developing cultural and heritage tourism by promoting Bahraini historical sites, as well as supporting artistic, entertainment and sporting events that attract visitors from around the world.

Bouhaji has adopted a vision based on sustainability and digital transformation, supporting smart solutions in tourism services and enhancing the visitor experience, encouraging tourism projects that adhere to modern environmental standards, aligning with sustainable development goals and Bahrain's Economic Vi-

sion 2030.

Empowering Bahraini youths is a priority in her plans. She consistently emphasizes the importance of investing in and developing national talent to work in the tourism sector through training programs and partnerships with educational and specialized institutions.

She believes that human capital is the foundation of any successful economic sector. She showcased the capabilities of Bahraini women in leadership and decision-making positions.

Her name is now associated with projects and initiatives aimed at strengthening the tourism and economic competitiveness of Bahrain, at a time the Gulf tourism sector is witnessing increasing competition to attract visitors and investments.

Observers believe that her experience is a model for young Gulf leaders who combine modern management with openness to global experiences, while preserving the cultural and national identity, thereby, intensifying the presence of Bahrain on the regional and international tourism map.

As new plans and projects continue to be implemented, she also continues to work hard on consolidating the status of Bahrain as a sophisticated tourist destination that combines culture, entertainment and business, based on a vision that relies on innovation, international partnerships, and investment in human capital and technology.

Two flights a week, now open for booking

## Jazeera Airways resumes direct flights to Aleppo

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Jazeera Airways today announced the resumption of direct flights to Aleppo, Syria, following the gradual restoration of its direct operations from T5 at Kuwait International Airport. The airline will operate two weekly flightsto Aleppo starting 25th June.

Aleppo will be the second destination served by Jazeera in Syria after Damascus. Jazeera operates two daily flights to Damascus. A part of its phased network recovery, the launch of the Aleppo services marks another important milestone in Jazeera's efforts to rebuild regional connectivity and restore direct travel links for passengers across its network.

Tamim Madani, Charge d'affairs, Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Kuwait said:

"The resumption of direct flights between Kuwait and Aleppo marks an important step in strengthening connectivity between our two brotherly nations and supporting the movement of families, businesses, and communities. We welcome Jazeera Airways' continued commitment to Syria and appreciate its efforts in restoring direct air links



Jazeera Airways

to Aleppo, a city of deep historical, cultural, and economic significance. These flights will help bring people closer and contribute to renewed engagement and exchange between Syria, Kuwait, and the wider region."

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways,

said: "Resuming direct flights to Aleppo is an important step in reconnecting communities, restoring vital travel links, and supporting the gradual return of regional connectivity. Syria remains an important market for us, and we are pleased to connect to our second

destination in the country after Damascus. Byconnecting to Aleppo, we now offerpassengers in Kuwait and across the region two direct, convenient, and reliable connections to Syria.

As we continue rebuilding our network from Kuwait, our focus remains on bringing people closer to family, opportunity, and home."

**Aleppo - a City of Heritage, Culture, and Flavor**

Aleppo, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, offers visitors a rich blend of history, culture, and heritage. Known for its historic markets, traditional architecture, and renowned cuisine, the city continues to hold a special cultural significance across the region. From its vibrant souqs to its famous culinary traditions such as Kibbeh Halabiyeh and Halawet El Jibn, Aleppo remains one of Syria's most iconic destinations.

Jazeera currently connects to 34 cities direct from Kuwait. For the upcoming summer season, the airline will expand to over 60 cities with 2 million seats on offer. To book flights, travelers can visit: [jazeeraairways.com](http://jazeeraairways.com), visit the Jazeera app or call 177.

## EU approves US tariff deal

BRUSSELS, May 20, (AP): The European Union approved Wednesday a tariff deal with the United States to cap tariffs on most EU exports at 15%, avoiding a direct clash with President Donald Trump ahead of his July 4 deadline.

Fierce debates raged among the 27-nation bloc's lawmakers and leaders, jeopardizing the hard-won bargain governing the massive exchange of goods and services across the Atlantic Ocean between two of the world's largest economies, now weathering dangerous fallout from the war in Iran.

In the European Parliament, legislators threatened to block the trade agreement that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had struck last July with United States President Donald Trump at his Turnberry golf course in Scotland, following months of bargaining in the wake of his administration's global fusillade of tariffs.

The handshake between von der Leyen and Trump initiated months more of negotiations over details between Washington and Brussels, just as criticism within Europe of the deal spiked after Trump threatened to take control of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark. He has backed away from the threat, at least for now.

"A deal is a deal, and the EU honours its commitments," said the EU executive in a social media post welcoming the agreement.

European lawmakers had successfully insisted on adding protections to the deal in case the U.S. backtracks or wavers on details, said Bernard Lange, the head of the parliamentary trade committee.

"If there is something going wrong, of course, we are self-confident to act on that," he said.

The rough outlines of a deal are clear: a 15% tariff cap on most European imports, while tariffs on US industrial goods would be reduced to zero. While the deal burdened consumers and businesses with a tariff increase from the previous average of 4.8%, it also gave businesses certainty so they could plan ahead, a factor credited with helping Europe avoid a recession last year.

With the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz driving up prices as the war in the Middle East rages on, interest rates and inflation from Latvia to Louisiana, proponents of the EU-U.S. deal argue that settling trade between them is crucial in a time of global economic fragility.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Brussels said in a statement that it was "relieved" to see the EU reach a consensus on the deal. "The trilogue agreement is a sign that the EU is honouring its commitments under the deal," it said, allowing Washington and Brussels to "move beyond tariffs" to tackle thorny issues like critical supply chains.



This image released by Disney shows director Jon Favreau, left, and Pedro Pascal on the set of Lucasfilm's 'Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu.' (AP)

## 'Mandalorian and Grogu' miss galactic lift-off

Star Wars ... dimmer than a distant sun

It's been nearly seven years since there was a new "Star Wars" movie released in theaters and there are lots of ways to do it. "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu," a disjointed off-ramp that lacks the scale and ambition of its sisters, fails the task. As the Mandalorians might say, this is not the way. Creator and director Jon Favreau has seen his Disney+ series about a minor "Star Wars" character turned into a huge summer cinematic tent-pole and it buckles under the pressure, turning the Mandalorian into a trigger-happy John Wick and failing to do anything meaningful with one of Hollywood's cutest critics, affectionately called Baby Yoda.

Sigourney Weaver, as a New Republic colonel, early on admonishes the Mandalorian after a bloody mission: "Messy. Very messy." The same could be said for this overlong and overviolent chapter, which relies on too many computer effects and exposes the limits of puppetry. In IMAX, it's positively clumsy. Perhaps the main problem with "The Mandalorian and Grogu" is that the jeopardies are small. The fate of the Resistance isn't on the line. Planets or whole star systems aren't being risked. The Jedi aren't on defense or in ascendancy. It's just a story about a bounty hunter's mission on the Outer Rim. Franchise fans will still delight in familiar things - X-wings, AT-AT Walkers, Stormtroopers, the diminutive mechanics called Anzellans and Jabba the Hutt - well, not him but his relatives. There's a nice nod to the

Death Star trash compactor scene from "A New Hope" and we watch Grogu pick up a cane in a swamp, triggering warm memories of Yoda. But there's not enough lightsabering and there are way too many cattle prods. Pedro Pascal returns as the Mandalorian, shorn of any mention of his past, religion or home planet. He basically moves from one battle to the next, a ruthless killing machine dispatching enemies with a blaster and endless martial arts techniques. He's like an unfunny Iron Man. When he is silenced in the second half, Grogu gets centered and the movie changes tone, getting more quiet and poignant. Maybe they should have ditched the dude and just focused on the child.

This pairing has always been intriguing. Pascal, in his helmet and metal armor, spouts stilted dialogue - "Looks like we're going to have to do this the hard way" - striding around like a humanoid robot. His small, green apprentice, on the other hand, loves snacks and employs melt-your-heart coos. Wrinkling up his tiny nose, with his expressive eyes and long ears, he's the most human character in the Star Wars universe that isn't human at all. The plot is basic action movie fare: A dangerous job for a dangerous man. The Mandalorian agrees to find and capture a shadowy Imperial commander, but to do so, he has to make a detour to rescue Jabba the Hutt's son. Yes, that old sluglike crime boss who froze Han

Solo in carbonite. Well, he had a son, who has serious daddy issues and is sort of emo, voiced by Jeremy Allen White. He even has abs. Did you have Jeremy Allen White as a hot Hutt on your 2026 bingo card? What we get are chase scenes through a teeming urban landscape and dogfights in space, a fight-to-the-death gladiator match in a sci-fi Coliseum ("Kill! Kill! Kill!" screams the crowd helpfully), a boatload of horrific creatures - including a truly massive dragon-snakey thing and another that looks lifted from "Stranger Things" - and Martin Scorsese voicing a monkey-like, multiarmed food vendor. (That last one was easy to predict, right?) The "Star Wars" franchise once led the culture with its imagery, swag-

ger and style. But this movie is a step back, formulaic and aping "Top Gun," "Blade Runner," "Transformers" and "Men in Black." Even Ludwig Göransson's score is off, marred by cheap-sounding '80s synthetic chirps along with what sounded like Yiddish folk ditties. The runtime saps energy and when it's all done, the scrolling credits for all those special effects goes on a full five minutes. You used to leave a new "Star Wars" movie on a cloud. Here, that galaxy is far, far away. "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu," a Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "sci-fi violence and action." Running time: 132 minutes. Two stars out of four. (AP)

## Cannes standout 'Paper Tiger' reveals new side to Miles Teller

CANNES, May 20, (AP) - James Gray has been to the Cannes Film Festival enough times to not entirely trust the response his films get here, for better or worse. "You smile and say thank you and then you fly home and your wife says take out the garbage," says Gray. Nevertheless, Gray's "Paper Tiger" has been one of the standouts of this year's Cannes. And at the center of the warm reception for "Paper Tiger" - which premiered Saturday and is one of only two films by American filmmakers competing for the Palme d'Or - is Miles Teller.



Miles Teller poses for photographers at the photo call for the film 'Paper Tiger' during the 79th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Sunday, May 17, 2026. (AP)

The 39-year-old actor stars in the film as Irwin Pearl, an earnest family man in 1980s New York, living contentedly with his wife (Scarlett Johansson) and two sons. After Irwin's well-connected, former police officer brother (Adam Driver) gets them involved in a scheme related to cleaning up the Gowanus Canal, Russian mafia threats put their working-class life under siege. Gray initially conceived of the film as a kind of sequel to 2022's "Armageddon Time," with Anne Hathaway and Jeremy Strong. But when circumstances changed, he reworked the script, made it more operatic and focused on the brother relationship. "I did not want to play into a schlemiel quality in that character. I wanted him to have some strength and fortitude in order to portray the vulnerability," Gray says of Teller's character. "It's a great performance, I'm just going to say it." The day after "Paper Tiger" debuted in Cannes, Teller and Gray met in a hotel down the Croisette to talk about the ideas and inspirations behind the movie, which Neon will release theatrically later this year. This conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity. Gray: It's weird because I'm going to start it here. In 2004, I went to Harvard to give a talk. And one of the students came up to me and was like, "Can I talk to you?" That was Damien Chazelle. When he made "Whiplash," he had still maintained contact with me. He had talked about this young actor he was working with that he loved named Miles Teller. So he was on my radar. Later, I saw the miniseries of "The Offer." And that is not an easy thing to do, to convey warmth

and tenderness in Albert Ruddy in the making of "The Godfather." I remember telling my wife: This guy is really something and he has a tremendous reservoir. Teller: It's interesting how I met James. We were renting a place in Santa Barbara because we had just lost our house in the fires. Everything was in such disarray. My life was very chaotic. My wife and I were just trying to figure out what tomorrow looked like. And I got a call saying James wanted to meet for this movie. Just lending my brain back to a conversation about film and this material was really satisfying because it was the last thing I was thinking about at the time. I said I'm in. I always had a lot of empathy for Irwin in this and for the Pearl family and what happened to them. But I honestly think a lot of that came from having lost my home and really looking for those feelings, of everyone being together as a family in this place that felt safe until it didn't. Gray: Such a better answer than mine. Teller: Well, I had more trauma at the time. Gray: I always saw the physical pollution in the canal as, dare I use this word, a metaphor for the moral and ethical vanquishing of the market. When you have no ability to monetize integrity, good behavior becomes a meaningless factor in a transactional world. There's real unrest and unhappiness, and I think a lot of it comes

from: I'm trying to be a good person and the system is not rewarding me for that at all. My reaction is: It's always been that way. Most of the time, your goodness will mean nothing in an increasingly transactional environment. I don't want to get too political, but look at the person running our country. It's all transactional. It's: What can you do for me? So where does that lead us? If to be a moral person doesn't mean anything, that is an empty, empty position. That gets spread among us and we feel soulless. Teller: I've had a newborn in a film before but I have not played a character that's been a father and raised kids. It was something I was kind of struggling with. Everybody I know who's a parent has told me: You really don't know what that feeling of love is. For me, my father and my grandfather informed this the most. These were men that were very strong, worked hard but were also very sensitive. They were the man of the house but my dad would cry at birthday cards. I just remember James telling me: "We don't want sentimentality." Gray: Jesus, did I say that? Any time one of you guys conveys one of my directions, I'm humiliated. But I think there's a big difference between sentimentality and emotion. Sentimentality is based on a kind of synthetic idea of emotion. Teller: See? He's surprised he gave that note but you can see how he feels about it.

## Lights, camera, algorithm

### AI rewrites Cannes conversation

CANNES, May 20, (AP) - The Cannes Film Festival can function like a global water cooler for movies, with prevailing issues and anxieties tending to come to the surface at the event. This year, the topic du jour is artificial intelligence. The 79th Cannes may go down as the time the world's grandest film festival for the first time wrestled with the onset of AI - its arrival has been felt like a tsunami on the French Riviera. Its potential to remake the movie industry, for good or bad, has been an ongoing debate since the festival opened. And in many quarters, the tone is softening. "The buzz in Cannes and the buzz in the industry, it does feel like it's definitely a turning point," said Scott Mann, co-chief executive of Flawless, a company that specializes in assistive AI programs for post-production. On screen and off, AI is much more present. For the first time, Cannes has partnered with Meta in a new multi-year deal. The company has set up camp at the Majestic Hotel. And its AI tools were used to help produce a festival entry: Steven Soderbergh's "John Lennon: The Last Interview." The documentary is about a lengthy and insightful interview Lennon and Yoko Ono gave on the day Lennon was shot and killed in 1980. To add imagery to match Lennon's conversation, Soderbergh used Meta's AI programs to create surreal graphics. The choice brought scorn from most critics in Cannes, but Soderbergh, a highly skilled innovator who has shot movies on iPhones, believes its time for such experimentation. "We haven't seen yet someone with a certain amount of creative credibility go full-metal AI on something, and see how people react. I think it's necessary," Soderbergh said in an interview. "How do you know where the line is until somebody crosses it? I don't think what I'm doing crosses it. Some people may disagree. I don't know where my line is yet. I'm waiting to see." Filmmakers, actors and others also

at Cannes have been drawing their own lines, or at least making pronouncements about AI. On opening day, Demi Moore, a juror, said fighting AI "is a battle we will lose." The next day, honorary Palme d'Or recipient Peter Jackson, said: "I don't dislike it at all. To me, it's just a special effect. It's no different from other special effects." Filmmaker James Gray, whose starchy family drama "Paper Tiger" was one of the standouts over the weekend, said he's not worried. "In some cases, it can be a very helpful tool," said Gray in an interview. "I don't think in our lifetime, or even our children's lifetimes, it will come close to mirroring the only true infinite we know, which is the soul." "The answer I think is that most young people should be studying the humanities," added Gray. "People should be reading Tolstoy in their spare time to understand the human soul." Cannes is unfolding in the wake of some significant new developments for AI in Hollywood. Earlier this month, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science announced new guidelines, ruling that only performances "demonstrably performed by humans with their consent" will be considered for acting nominations. At the same time, the Oscar group also said AI tools "neither help nor harm the chance of a nomination." The Screen Actors Guild-Amer-

ican Federation of Television and Radio Artists recently reached a tentative agreement with studios detailing and clarifying AI guardrails for things like the use of digital replicas and synthetic performers. Some advancements have sent shudders through Hollywood. The unveiling of Tilly Norwood, an entirely AI-created so-called "actress," sparked outrage through the industry. Earlier this year, the first look at a posthumous AI resurrection of Val Kilmer, for a film made with his family's consent, spawned another round of debate. But while more extreme uses of generative AI continue to prompt worry, other iterations continue to make inroads. "It is going to be a part of our business," Kent Sanderson, Bleeker Street chief executive, said in a panel discussion. "It is going to lower production costs, and yes, you probably will be able to make something that looks like a Marvel movie in your basement in a couple of years." While Cannes has stringent rules for what can and can't be worn on its red carpet, it's issuing no decrees banning AI from film selections - for now. The day before the festival began, Cannes' artistic director Thierry Frémaux wryly responded to a question about AI, noting that he had also heard James Cameron had used special effects for "Avatar."



A person takes a photo outside the Palais des Festivals during preparations for the 79th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Monday, May 11, 2026. (AP)

## Music



Leon Thomas performs 'Mutt' during the BET Awards in Los Angeles on June 9, 2025. (AP)

Grammy winner celebrated for boundary-pushing artistry

## Leon Thomas earns ASCAP Vanguard Award for influencing future of R&B

LOS ANGELES, May 20, (AP): From Broadway stages to Grammy winner, Leon Thomas is adding another milestone to his rising career.

The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers announced Tuesday that the three-time Grammy-winning singer, songwriter and producer will receive the ASCAP Vanguard Award, which recognizes members whose work is helping shape the future of music.

Thomas will be honored June 25 at ASCAP's private, invitation-only celebration of top hip-hop, R&B and gospel songwriters in Los Angeles. Previous recipients of the Vanguard Award include Victoria Monét, Migos and Janelle Monáe.

"Leon Thomas is one of R&B's most creative forces today and is reshaping its sound with his boundary-breaking artistry," Nicole George-Middleton, ASCAP executive vice president and head of creative membership, said in a statement. "His passion, creativity and undeniable talent have established him as a defining voice of this generation."

Thomas first emerged as a child performer on Broadway in "The Lion King" before becoming widely known for his role on Nickelodeon's

"Victorious." After the show's end, he built a successful career behind the scenes as a songwriter and producer for artists such as Ariana Grande, Drake, Chris Brown and Kehlani.

In 2024, Thomas earned ASCAP's R&B/Hip-Hop and Rap Song of the Year award for co-writing SZA's "Snooze," which won a Grammy in 2022.

Thomas later stepped further into the spotlight with his sophomore album "Mutt," released in 2024. The project featured the breakout title track, which climbed to No. 1 on Billboard's Radio Songs chart and earned double-platinum certification. The album also included the single "Yes It Is," which recently achieved gold certification from the Recording Industry Association of America.

"Mutt" helped solidify Thomas as one of contemporary R&B's rising stars, earning Grammy wins for best R&B album and best traditional R&B performance for "Vibes Don't Lie."

Thomas recently released his EP "PHOLKS" and is touring select markets with Bruno Mars on "The Romantic Tour."

## Books

### Multilayered historical romance

## Mandarin novel makes history with International Booker win

LONDON, May 20, (AP): Taiwanese author Yáng Shuāng-zǐ and translator Lin King won the International Booker Prize on Tuesday for "Taiwan Travelogue," a historical romance set in Japan-occupied Taiwan in the 1930s.

It is the first novel written in Mandarin Chinese to win the prestigious prize for fiction translated into English.

British novelist Natasha Brown, who chaired the judging panel, called it a "captivating, wryly sophisticated" book that plays with themes of language and power and offers the reader surprises along the way.

The novel purports to be a travel memoir by a Japanese novelist on a culinary tour of Taiwan and charts the - fictional - writer's complex relationship with her local interpreter.

Brown said the book explores class and colonialism, asking: "Can love overcome a power imbalance?" She said it "pulls off an incredible double act: It succeeds both as a romance and as an incisive postcolonial novel."

Yáng, who writes fiction, essays, manga and video game scripts, has said she "wanted to untangle the complex circumstances" of Taiwan's time as a Japanese colony.

"Research for the novel's central themes of travel and food changed my life in two obvious ways: my savings went down; my weight went up," she told the Booker Prizes website.

Published in its original language in 2020, "Taiwan Travelogue" is the first of Yáng's books to be translated into English. In the U.S., it won the National Book Award's translation category in 2024.

The judges praised the way Taiwanese-American translator King's translation adds another layer to a book that plays with ideas of communication across languages.

The book beat five other finalists to the prize, which recognizes translated fiction from around the world published in the U.K. or Ireland. The 50,000 pounds (\$67,000) in prize money is split by author and translator.

The International Booker was set up to boost the profile of fiction in other languages - which accounts for only a small share of books published in Britain - and to salute the underappreciated work of literary translators.

It is run alongside the Booker Prize for English-language fiction, which will be handed out in the fall, and the Children's Booker Prize, which will be awarded for the first time next year.



Yáng Shuāng-zǐ and Lin King © David Parry for Booker Prize Foundation.

## Arts &amp; Culture

### Students and families explore artifacts, traditions and history

## Museum visitors rediscover Myanmar's heritage through ancient treasures

YANGON, May 20, (Xinhua): The eve of International Museum Day, the National Museum of Myanmar in Yangon came alive with visitors exploring Myanmar's cultural heritage and the value of preserving history for future generations.

Inside the five-story museum, students, families, teachers and foreign visitors moved through galleries filled with royal thrones, ancient stone inscriptions, traditional clothing, paintings and archaeological treasures that trace Myanmar's history from ancient kingdoms to the modern era.

For many young visitors, the experience offered something increasingly rare in the digital age: the chance to encounter history firsthand rather than through screens.

Khine Thazin Soe, who visited the museum with friends during the school holidays, said seeing ancient objects in person made history feel more real.

"I had only seen these things in videos before," she said. "Now I can see them with my own eyes, including the kings' clothes and utensils used in ancient times."

She said museums help bridge the gap between generations by preserving knowledge of earlier eras.

"Every era is different, so museums are very helpful for understanding what happened in the past," she told Xinhua.

Among the exhibits that drew her attention were ancient stone inscriptions displayed alongside translations that help visitors understand their historical significance, she said.

"We can learn about history, culture and how people lived in ancient times," she added.

The museum also attracted educators who see museums as important learning spaces beyond the classroom.

Ma Khin Pyae Sone, a 26-year-old freelance teacher in Yangon, brought her students to encourage their interest in history and cultural heritage.

"They only know about the present era, so I wanted them to learn about ancient times too," she said.

She added that students become more engaged when they can directly experience the objects they study in textbooks.

One of her students, 17-year-old Eaint Nadi Tun, said the visit deepened her interest in history. "I saw paintings, looms and thrones, and I learned a lot about history," she said.

She also noted the importance of protecting histori-

cal artifacts, saying restrictions on touching exhibits and photography are necessary to preserve cultural heritage.

"I think it is important for young people to know about their ancient heritage," she added.

Foreign visitors were also among those exploring the museum ahead of International Museum Day.

Natalia, a 47-year-old visitor from Russia, praised the museum's spacious galleries and diverse collections.



People visit the National Museum of Myanmar in Yangon, Myanmar, May 17, 2026. (Xinhua)

## 'Modern obesity treatments now offer more effective and safer options for patients'

# Novo Nordisk highlights weight loss and mobility benefits of Wegovy at ECO2026

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

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Novo Nordisk presented its latest clinical results regarding Wegovy (semaglutide), along with medical insights into the future of obesity treatment and challenges, at the 33rd European Congress on Obesity held in Istanbul, Turkey.

The company revealed new results showing that higher doses of Wegovy contributed to weight loss of up to 28 percent in some patients who responded early to treatment, with improvement in overall health and mobility.

The STEP UP study on more than 1,400 obese individuals showed that users of the 7.2 milligrams dose achieved an average weight loss of 21 percent, compared to 17.5 percent with the standard dose and only 2.4 percent in the placebo group.

The results indicated that most of the weight loss was from fat, while muscle mass was preserved and motor function improved, in addition to improvements in health indicators related to cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.

Regarding the oral form of the treatment, data from the OASIS 4 study showed that Wegovy achieved significant weight loss of up to 21.6 percent among early responders, along with a marked improvement in mobility and physical activity.

Chief Medical Officer at Novo Nordisk Tina Felsbol confirmed to the newspaper that obesity and diabetes treatments underwent a radical evolution in recent years. She said the company presented 56 research abstracts at the conference, covering the latest data on semaglutide and Wegovy treatments, as well as promising future medications.

She added that modern treatments now offer more effective and safer options for patients, indicating that semaglutide is one of the most studied treatments globally, with proven effectiveness in weight loss, reducing the risk of heart and liver diseases, and improving diabetes control.

She disclosed that one of the biggest current challenges is convincing pa-



Novo Nordisk's booth at the conference.

tients that obesity is a chronic disease requiring long-term management, not just a problem related to appearance or lifestyle. She emphasized that effective treatment requires a combination of dietary changes and physical activity, along with appropriate medication when needed.

She pointed out that the availability of multiple treatment options -- injections or pills -- has given doctors greater ability to design treatment plans tailored to each patient's needs, which improved treatment outcomes and increased patient confidence in modern therapies.

On the other hand, General Manager of the company for the Gulf Venkat Kalyan stated that the Gulf countries are witnessing an expansion in the adoption of modern treatments for obesity and diabetes. He said Wegovy, which has been available in Kuwait for about two years, achieves weight loss of up

to 21 percent.

He affirmed that the company is cooperating with Gulf health authorities to provide treatment innovations, including future oral versions of Wegovy, in addition to developing new types of insulin that may be administered weekly to diabetic patients.

He stressed that Gulf governments are increasingly supportive of medical innovation and accelerating the adoption of modern medications.

He commended the existing collaboration with regulatory bodies in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman to expand patient access to the latest treatments.

He pointed out that the success of obesity treatment depends not only on medication, but also on comprehensive medical and family support, along with patient adherence to treatment plans and continuous follow-up.

He asserted that combining medication, diet and physical activity is vital for achieving sustainable long-term results.

Moreover, Arya Sharma, Associate Medical Director of the Regional Obesity Strategy at Alberta Health Services, stressed the need to change the traditional view of obesity, emphasizing that it is a chronic disease, not simply excess weight.

He explained that the Body Mass Index (BMI) alone is insufficient to assess a patient's condition. "Modern diagnosis is based on the physical, psychological and functional complications associated with obesity, such as diabetes, heart disease, depression and mobility difficulties," he asserted.

He pointed out that the current challenges include lack of specialized medical training in obesity, reliance of many patients on fad diets or information found online instead of professional medical evaluation, and the high cost of some modern treatments.

He added that managing obesity should be similar to managing other chronic diseases through early diagnosis, medication if necessary, and long-term follow up to maintain health outcomes.

## MoH highlights advances in complex reconstructive surgery and international medical cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi affirmed on Tuesday the ministry's continued commitment to supporting and empowering national talent, as well as developing training and specialized programs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He stressed that this includes attracting international medical expertise and expanding scientific cooperation to strengthen the healthcare system and improve the quality of services provided to patients.

The Ministry of Health issued this statement following Minister Dr. Al-Awadhi's meeting with a delegation from the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Department at the Al-Babtain Center for Burns and Plastic Surgery.

Professor Arnold Gleizal, Head of the Head and Skull Reconstruction Department at Lyon University Hospital in France, presented the results of joint scientific and clinical collaboration in complex cranial reconstruction surgeries and congenital deformities.

Minister Dr. Al-Awadhi commended the scientific and clinical role of the

Al-Babtain Center and its significant efforts in organizing scientific programs, attracting international expertise, and performing complex specialized surgeries, in addition to its ongoing research and academic activities.

He emphasized the ministry's full support for initiatives that strengthen Kuwait's position as a leading regional center for specialized and advanced surgical care.

For their part, the visiting delegation expressed appreciation for the Ministry of Health's support for development and training initiatives, and praised the national expertise working in the field of reconstructive and cosmetic surgery and its ability to keep pace with the latest global surgical techniques and practices.

The delegation briefed the minister on the outcomes of seven specialized workshops recently organized by the center, which focused on treating skull and facial deformities and complex congenital defects, with the participation of national staff and trainees from the Kuwait Medical Specializations Program (KIMS) in cosmetic surgery.

## Indonesian university discovers new heat-resistant bacteria

JAKARTA, May 20, (Xinhua): A research team from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Indonesia (UI) has discovered a new species of heat-resistant bacteria named *Thermus javaensis* in the Cisolok geyser area of Sukabumi, West Java, according to a report published by UI on Tuesday.

Yellow-pigmented and rod-shaped, the bacteria discovered from leaf litter possess a unique structure known as rotund bodies, can survive in temperatures close to the boiling point of water, and are the first species from the genus *Thermus* discovered in Indonesia's geothermal region.

"The discovery of *Thermus javaensis* shows that Indonesia's geothermal ecosystem is a biodiversity hotspot with enormous microbial diversity that has not yet been fully scientifically explored," lead researcher Prof. Wellyzar Sjamsuridzal said on Tuesday.

Exploration of microorganisms in the Cisolok geyser area began in 2012, while samples for this species were collected in 2015.

Beyond its importance for microbiology, *Thermus javaensis* is considered to have potential for the development of heat-resistant enzymes and bioactive compounds that could be used in industry, healthcare and biotechnology.



Aid workers set up an Ebola treatment center in Rwampara, Congo on May 19. (AP)

'We know that the scale of the epidemic is much larger'

## Risk of Ebola spread high regionally but low globally: WHO

BUNIA, Congo, May 20, (AP): The World Health Organization said on Wednesday the risk of spread of the Ebola virus in Congo and Uganda is high at national and regional levels, but low at the global level.

The risk assessment came as the leader of the WHO team in Congo said the outbreak, which has led to over 130 suspected deaths, could last at least another two months as aid efforts intensified to stem the spread.

WHO has declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, requiring a coordinated response. On Tuesday, it expressed concern over the "scale and speed" of the outbreak.

Worried residents in eastern Congo have reported rising prices for face masks and disinfectants following the outbreak of the rare type of Ebola, known as the Bundibugyo virus. It spread undetected for weeks following the first known death, while authorities tested for another, more common Ebola virus, which came up negative,

health experts and aid workers said. There are no approved medicines or vaccines for the Bundibugyo virus.

So far, 51 cases have been confirmed in Congo's northern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu, as well as two in Uganda, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Wednesday. Beyond that, there are 139 suspected deaths and almost 600 suspected cases, he said.

"We know that the scale of the epidemic is much larger," he said. "We expect those numbers to keep increasing."

Congo was expecting shipments from the United States and Britain of an experimental vaccine for different types of Ebola, developed by researchers at Oxford, Jean-Jacques Muyembe, a virologist at the National Institute of Biomedical Research, told reporters on Tuesday.

"We will administer the vaccine and see who develops the disease," he said.

In Bunia, the site of the first known death, schools and churches remained open on Wednes-

day, and some residents were wearing masks in the street. Residents said that masks have become harder to find and that some disinfectants previously sold for 2,500 Congolese francs (about \$1) now cost up to 10,000 francs (\$4.4).

"It's truly sad and painful because we've already been through a security crisis, and now Ebola is here too," said Justin Ndasi, a resident of Bunia. "We have to protect ourselves to avoid this epidemic."

Trish Newport, emergency program manager at aid group Doctors Without Borders, posted on social media that her team in Bunia identified suspected cases over the weekend at the Salama hospital, which has no isolation ward. They unsuccessfully tried to place them at another health facility in Bunia.

"The team called around to other health facilities to see if they had isolations," she said. "Every health facility they called said, 'We're full of suspect cases. We don't have any space.' This gives you a vision of how crazy it is right now."



Argentine scientists collect traps placed at different points across Ushuaia, Argentina on May 19, as part of an investigation for the source of the hantavirus outbreak on the MV Hondius cruise ship. (AP)

## Argentines hunt for source of hantavirus outbreak trap rats in southernmost city

USHUAIA, Argentina, May 20, (AP): Argentine investigators searching for the source of a deadly hantavirus outbreak on a cruise last month were trapping rodents in the forests surrounding the southernmost city of Ushuaia on Tuesday, with the aim of detecting the possible presence of the rat-borne virus in an area previously thought unaffected.

The scientists, wearing bright blue gloves and surgical masks, checked the 150 box traps they had set out the previous night, dropping dead rats into black plastic bags that they hoisted into pickup trucks bound for a makeshift lab where they said they'd draw blood samples.

Tuesday's rat-trapping marks the start of fieldwork within Argentina's wider investigation into the origin

of the contagion that struck the MV Hondius, killing three people, sickening several others and setting off a global scramble to trace passengers and their close contacts.

Argentine investigators trudging through mud to retrieve the dead rats declined to speak to journalists about their work. The state-backed Malbrán Institute, Argentina's leading research center for infectious diseases, said the team would repeat the routine for the next three days before returning with the samples to the institute's main Buenos Aires laboratory to test for hantavirus. Testing could take up to one month, but officials were tight-lipped about further details.

"They were able to capture what was expected," said Martín Alfaro,

the spokesperson for the local health ministry of Tierra del Fuego.

The effort comes almost two weeks after the Argentine Health Ministry first announced it would send the team from the Malbrán Institute to Ushuaia. The popular tourism destination where the cruise departed - famed for its location at the "end of the world" - serves as the main gateway to the Antarctic.

The hantavirus has never been recorded in Ushuaia or the wider archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. But provincial officials further north in Patagonia where the hantavirus is endemic insist that the first known victims of the outbreak - a Dutch couple passionate about birds - didn't visit during the window in which it is believed they got infected.

## A mop, a broom and a calmer mind. Why some find mental health benefits in everyday tasks

NEW YORK, May 20, (AP): It's spring cleaning season, and for some people that can mean drudgery or anxiety.

But experts from Zen monks to psychologists say there are mental health benefits to be found in such manual chores as sweeping, mopping and clearing away clutter. These tasks can encourage mindfulness or permit the mind to wander, all while producing a concrete sense of achievement in accomplishing the basic tasks of daily life.

As one famous Zen saying goes: "Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water."

Zen apprentices, or "unsui" monks, spend much of their time cleaning and tidying.

"We sweep dust to remove worldly desires. We scrub dirt to free ourselves of attachments," Shoukei Matsumoto, a Buddhist monk living in Kyoto, Japan, wrote in his book "A Monk's Guide to a Clean House and Mind." "The time we spend carefully cleaning out every nook and cranny of the temple grounds is extremely fulfilling."

Holly Schiff, a clinical psychologist based in Greenwich, Connecticut, confirms that the process of cleaning can be calming and almost meditative.

"I definitely think there is a link between mental health and the act of cleaning," she said.

"Repetitive, physical activities like cleaning can be regulating for the nervous system because they're predictable, structured and give a clear sense of completion," she says. That gives people a feeling of control and grounding.

Plus, you can immediately see the result of what you've done, "which can be satisfying in a way that many cognitive or emotional tasks aren't," she says.



Monks polish the wooden corridor of the walkway that connects between temple buildings at Soji-ji in Yokohama, Japan on July 5, 2016. (AP)

For those who dread cleaning and find it daunting, it can help to focus on the process rather than on a to-do list.

Some tips for a more mindful approach to cleaning:

"For people who tend to see cleaning as drudgery, I think the shift is less about forcing yourself to enjoy it and more about changing how you engage with it," says Schiff.

Don't try to rush through it. Pay attention to the physical movement or its rhythm, or to things like the temperature of the water.

"If you slow it down and focus on the sensory aspects of it, it can start to function more like a mindfulness exercise," Schiff says.

For some, cleaning can provide an opportunity to free your mind.

"By gently tending to your habitat, you allow your mind to naturally settle into a peaceful, unforced clarity," says Matsumoto.

Matsumoto says cleaning is a way of caring for yourself and the world.

"In our practice, we don't see cleaning as a chore to control the

environment. Instead, we view it as 'Habitat Care,'" he explains. "Just as our bodies maintain a dynamic equilibrium to stay healthy, cleaning is an extension of that biological process into the space we inhabit."

When we clean, we are not just fixing a room; we are tending to our expanded self. It is a way of caring for the relationship between us and the world."

Rather than needing a perfect result, says Matsumoto, try to embrace incompleteness without being anxious.

"Peace is found not in the final 'tidy state,'" he says, "but in the humble, ongoing act of emptying the space and our minds."

There's no such thing as perfection.

"In nature, everything is constantly changing - leaves fall the moment you finish sweeping," he says.

Sometimes, the feeling of being overwhelmed isn't about the task itself, but what it represents. That could be time pressure, self-judgment or other anxieties, for instance, says Schiff.

# Bangladesh crushes Pakistan for series sweep

Taijul takes six wickets in series-clinching win

**SYLHET, Bangladesh, May 20, (AP): Taijul Islam finished with six wickets as Bangladesh dismissed Pakistan for 358 on Wednesday for a 78-run win in the second cricket test and a 2-0 sweep of the series.**

The left-arm spinner took two of the three wickets to fall on Day 5 and returned 6-120 from 34.2 overs, clinching the series after helping reduce the tourists to 316-7 on Day 4.

Pakistan added 42 runs on the fifth morning before los-

ing three wickets without addition to the total in 13 deliveries as Bangladesh rushed to victory.

"Our bowlers did a great job in hot conditions, on a flat wicket," Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said. "In the batting sometimes (in the past) we lost too many wickets, but nowadays we have brilliant partnerships. Our tailenders also contribute a lot. Those are the things we wanted to improve and I hope we continue."

Bangladesh won the first test by 104 runs.

The victory marked Bangladesh's second successive series sweep against Pakistan, having previously com-

pleted a 2-0 victory in 2024.

The end of Mohammad Rizwan's defiant, 166-ball innings signaled the end of Pakistan's hopes of chasing down an improbable victory target of 437.

Rizwan (94) struck Nahid Rana (2-71) for consecutive boundaries in the third over of the day to make Pakistan's intention clear. Sajid Khan also scored freely to maintain pressure on the bowlers from the home team.

But Taijul's breakthrough, dismissing Sajid for 28, ended a 54-run partnership, marked his 18th five-wicket haul in test matches and hastened the result.

In the next over, Rizwan cut a Shoriful Islam delivery straight to gully. Taijul wrapped up the Pakistan innings in the subsequent over by removing Khuram Shahzad for a duck.

"When you make 360 runs in the fourth innings of the game you kind expect to be on the right side of it, but I think in the three innings we had quite a lot to reflect on," Pakistan captain Shan Masood said. "There were things we didn't do well enough in the first three innings and that's why the effort on the fourth and fifth days didn't really materialize into a win."

'Proud of club spell'

## Bouchar bids farewell ahead of Al Qadsia's summer departure



Al-Qadsia defender Soufiane Bouchar in action during a match.

**KUWAIT CITY, May 20:** Soufiane Bouchar has confirmed he will leave Al Qadsia at the end of the current Zain Premier League campaign in late May.

Reports suggest the Algerian defender is close to a return to his homeland, with a move to a domestic club in Algeria expected.

Bouchar joined Al-Qadsia last summer from Al Arabi and went on to help the "Yellows" lift the Super

Cup title during his stint.

In a farewell message shared on social media, the defender expressed pride in his experience with the club and the achievements made during his time in Kuwait.

He thanked the club's management, teammates, and supporters for their backing throughout the season, bringing his spell with Al-Qadsia to a close.

## UAE President hosts Al Ain following 15th league crown

**DUBAI, May 20:** UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan welcomed the delegation of Al Ain FC, including the players, coaching staff, and club officials, following the team's triumph in the 2025-2026 ADNOC Pro League season - securing the club's 15th league title. Representatives of Al Ain's teams that claimed multiple championships during the season also attended the reception.

Sheikh Mohamed congratulated the players, technical staff, management, board members, and supporters on the achievement, wishing continued success for sports clubs across the UAE in upcoming competitions.

During the meeting, he encouraged the players to maintain their high standards and continue building on their accomplishments, stressing that the development of an integrated sports system remains a key part of the UAE's long-term development vision. He highlighted the importance of preparing generations of athletes capable of contributing to the nation's future and elevating the UAE's presence on the global sporting stage.

Members of the Al Ain delegation expressed their appreciation

## Sheikh Mohammed urges excellence in UAE sport



UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan receives Al Ain FC players and officials at ceremony celebrating their league triumph.

for the continuous support and attention Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed provides to the sports and youth sectors, noting that it has played a significant role in the ad-

vancement of Emirati sports.

The reception was attended by Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh

Saif bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Surour bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, and Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

Sooryavanshi blasts 10 sixes in explosive 38-ball innings

## Rajasthan stays in contention for final playoff spot

**JAIPUR, India, May 20, (AP):** Rajasthan Royals teenage star Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's hit an entertaining knock of 93 runs with 10 sixes against Lucknow Super Giants to keep his team in contention for the final Indian Premier League playoff spot.

The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi also smashed seven fours in his boundary-loaded 38-ball innings as Rajasthan cruised to 225-3 in 19.1 overs for seven-wicket win.

Mitchell Marsh (96) had earlier missed out on a hundred but the Australian opener's century first-wicket stand with his countryman Josh Inglis (60) had carried Lucknow to 220-5 after Rajasthan's stand-in captain Yashasvi Jaiswal won the toss and elected to field.

Rajasthan overtook Punjab Kings at No. 4 on the points table behind three teams that have already qualified for the playoffs: Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"I always knew I could hit anytime and didn't want to rush at all," Sooryavanshi said. "I don't read papers and all, I just think this is the start and if I have a long career, then a lot of things will be said. I just want to focus on my game."

Rajasthan could seal the final playoff spot if they beat Mumbai Indians in their last league game.

"Everyone put the hard yards and worked really well," Jaiswal said after leading his side to victory in the absence of injured regular captain Riyan Parag. "The way Vaibhav batted, (he) absolutely killed the game... we knew it was going to be a big score on this pitch." Unlike his aggressive style of batting from the onset, Sooryavanshi took his time before charging against the pace. He scored only five runs off the first 10 balls he faced, but the youngster showed extravagant power-hitting to score 88 off the next 28 balls.

Fast bowler Akash Singh (1-54) conceded four boundaries against Jaiswal (43) in his 23-run first over as Sooryavanshi took the back seat and let the stand-in captain score bulk of the runs in the power play.

Singh dismissed Jaiswal in his second over, but then Sooryavanshi upped the ante by smashing two sixes and three fours in Singh's ninth over of the innings.

Sooryavanshi raised the tally of his sixes to 53 this season and needs seven more big hits to

break Chris Gayle's 14-year-old IPL record of 59 sixes. Sooryavanshi could have run out of the 90s when Mohsin Khan couldn't hit the stumps at the non-striker's end from close range before the fast bowler had the youngster caught at long-on in the 14th over.

Dhruv Jurel made sure Rajasthan scored at a rapid pace and remained unbeaten on 53 off 38 balls, achieving the target with five balls to spare.

Earlier, Marsh and Inglis racked up 83-0 in the power play as Rajasthan with the likes of Jofra Archer in their ranks went wicketless for the fourth successive game in the first six overs.

Wrist-spinner Yash Raj Punja stifled Lucknow in the middle overs with 2-35 as he broke the 109-run opening stand in the ninth over when he cleanly bowled Inglis and then also removed dangerous Nicholas Pooran for 16.

Marsh, who raised his half-century off 25 balls, scored a further 43 off the next 32 balls before Archer's last over saw Lucknow losing three wickets for only five runs. Marsh and captain Rishabh Pant (35) got run-out before Archer hit the base of Ayush Badoni's stumps of the final ball.



Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur, India. (AP)

## Sabalenka perfecting game on clay

## Gauff adopts mindset before Roland Garros title defense

**PARIS, May 20, (AP):** Coco Gauff has a new approach for her second time around attempting to defend a Grand Slam title.

The American's strategy heading into the French Open - the clay-court major that starts Sunday and which she won a year ago - goes something like this: Don't think about it as defending something.

"I realize that the 'defending' means nothing in a way," Gauff said. "I don't really look at it as defending anymore."

Gauff's first Grand Slam title defense at the U.S. Open two years ago ended in the fourth round with 19 double faults.

"At the U.S. Open I was like, 'I need to defend, defend.' When you're playing a tournament that you didn't win, what is it called?" Gauff said recently in Rome. "That's why I just say now it's just another tournament: 'I won it last year. I'll try again to do it this year.' I'm not going to be able to defend every year. I'm not Rafa."

Rafa, of course, would be Rafael Nadal, the record 14-time French Open champion.

Gauff's first Roland Garros title came with a victory over top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in the final a year ago.

Just like last year, Gauff was the runner-up at the Italian Open - a major clay-court warm-up for Roland Garros.

"There's a lot of positives I can take from this tournament and a lot I can learn from," Gauff said after losing the final in Rome to Elina Svitolina. "This week I experienced all the ups and downs of a tournament... I've been down, had the lead, lost the lead, I've been in the final, been down match point. I think I've experienced every scenario that can pre-



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns the ball to United States' Caty McNally during their match at the Italian Open tennis tournament, in Rome. (AP)

pare me for Roland Garros. "Hopefully I can actually learn from each scenario and do better."

Another big lesson that Gauff will take from Rome is a positive vibe on her serve after years of struggles.

In two of her wins at the Foro Italico, she committed only one double fault. She then had seven in the final, though. "I think it's a real improvement," Gauff said after getting 78% of her first serves in against Sorana Cirstea in the semifinals. "It's the first time in my career I feel like I'm really stable with that shot."

"It's been an up-and-down process. I obviously don't want to jinx anything, but I think we found the recipe to making it more consistent. Now it's focusing on how to make it more of a weapon, how to serve smarter."

Gauff also discussed what she's doing better technically on her serve. "I'm tossing a bit more consistent.

My weight is a little bit better. Also just the trust, the confidence in it is a lot better," she said. "Because my confidence in it is better, then I'm actually consistently tossing the ball in the right spot, having my technique be the same on each serve regardless where my target



Gauff

is. That's the biggest difference." While Sabalenka remains unbeatable at times on hard courts - see her "Sunshine Double" this year with titles in Indian Wells, California and Miami - she is still perfecting her game on clay. She was upset by American Hailey Baptiste in the Madrid Open quarterfinals and then the No. 1 player was

## Fans turn out for rare soccer visit

## North Korea's Naegohyang beats Suwon to reach final

**SUWON, South Korea, May 20, (AP):** Drenched in rain, hundreds of South Koreans cheered the North Korean visitors during a rare soccer match between the divided countries Wednesday as Pyongyang-based Naegohyang Women's FC defeated host Suwon 2-1 against the backdrop of political tensions.

The win locked Naegohyang into another match in South Korea, a final Saturday against Tokyo Verdy Belezza, which defeated Melbourne City 3-1 in the other semifinal of the Asian Football Confederation Women's Champions League.

"I trusted our team's strength. If all of us stay united firmly as one, neither the semifinals nor the final would be a problem for us," said Naegohyang goal-scorer Choi Kum Ok.

While athletes from North and South Korea have previously competed on combined teams and marched together in Olympic ceremonies during periods of warmer ties, such exchanges have largely disappeared in recent years as relations between the rivals deteriorated over North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Naegohyang has drawn intense media attention since its 39 players and staff arrived in South Korea on Sunday on a flight from China.

North Korea last sent athletes to the South in December 2018 for a table tennis event, part of a brief period of diplomatic engagement that included the participation of North Korean athletes and a high-level delegation at that year's Winter Olympics in the South.



North Korea's Naegohyang Women's FC Ri Kuk Hyang runs with the ball during the AFC Women's Champions League semifinal match against South Korea's Suwon FC in Suwon, South Korea. (AP)

The brief period of inter-Korean detente collapsed after U.S.-led negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program broke down in 2019 amid disputes over international sanctions.

Since then, North Korea has conducted a flurry of weapons tests aimed at expanding its nuclear arsenal and rejected South Korean and U.S. efforts to revive diplomacy.

## SPORTS

# Knicks storm back from 22 down to seize Game 1

Brunson delivers clutch masterclass against Cavs

**NEW YORK, May 20, (AP):** Jalen Brunson sparked one of the NBA's greatest post-season comebacks, a rally from a 22-point deficit in the fourth quarter, and finished with 38 points as New York beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 115-104 in overtime in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals.

After a record-setting run through the first two rounds, the Knicks were going nowhere for 40 minutes against the Cavs, trailing 93-71 with 7:52 to play. But Brunson relentlessly attacked James Harden to spark an 18-1 run that made it a ballgame, and he tied it at 101-all on a basket with 19 seconds remaining in regulation.

Before that, Brunson said the message for the Knicks was just to finish strong so they would have momentum for Game 2, even if they lost the opener. "Just keep fighting," he said. "Keep chipping away. We're not go-

ing to get it back in one possession."

The Knicks then opened overtime with a 9-0 run as a delirious crowd in Madison Square Garden danced and screamed in the aisles. The Knicks moved within three wins of their first NBA Finals appearance since 1999.

Mikal Bridges added 18 points and three Knicks scored 13, including OG Anunoby, who came on late after struggling most of the way in his return after missing two games with a strained right hamstring.

Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points for the Cavaliers, who seemed well on their way to a third straight road win before their late collapse. The Knicks outscored them 44-11 after their 93-71 lead.

"We played great basketball tonight for three quarters. Unfortunately, the fourth quarter - they dominated us in the fourth quarter," Cavs coach Kenny Atkinson said.

The Knicks won their eighth straight game and will host Game 2 on Thursday.

The Knicks had outscored Atlanta and Philadelphia by a combined 194 points, the largest margin ever through a team's first 10 postseason

games. But after not playing since May 10, when they finished their second-round sweep of the 76ers, the Knicks misfired most of the night, looking like the rust hurt more than the rest helped.

They were 4 for 23 on 3-pointers through three quarters and then had a horrible start to the fourth. But a year after coughing up a 14-point lead in the final minutes of regulation and losing to Indiana in OT in Game 1 of the conference finals on their home court, the Knicks found their offense just in time.

"But it was our defense that has always been special in these playoffs and that has carried us in this playoffs, that showed up in the fourth quarter and in overtime," Karl-Anthony Towns said. "It allowed us to be sitting here with a win against a really great team."

The only bigger fourth-quarter playoff comeback in the last 30 years was when the Clippers rallied from 24 down to beat Memphis in Game 1 in 2012.

"That can't happen. But it did," Mitchell said. "We play in two days. We can't sit here and let it kill our momentum, kill what we've been doing. It's not a good loss."



New York Knicks center Karl-Anthony Towns (32) shoots against Cleveland Cavaliers forward Dean Wade (32) during the second half of Game 1 in the Eastern Conference finals NBA basketball playoffs series in New York. (AP)

Saints lose shot at promotion to Premier League; Middlesbrough reinstated

## Southampton expelled from playoffs for spying

**LONDON, May 20, (AP):** Southampton was expelled from the Championship playoffs after admitting to repeatedly spying on opponents.

The English Football League reinstated Middlesbrough to play in the Wembley final - the richest game in soccer - against Hull City on Saturday. The winner gets promoted to the Premier League.

Southampton was charged earlier this month for the unauthorized filming of Middlesbrough's practice sessions ahead of their semifinal. It went on to win the two-legged tie to go within one game of promotion to the top flight.

The league said the southcoast club had subsequently admitted further breaches this season concerning games against Oxford United and Ipswich. It was also deducted four points for next season.

"Southampton has a right to appeal the commission's decision in accordance with EFL regulations and the parties are working to try and resolve any appeal. Subject to the outcome, it could result in a further change to Saturday's fixture," the league said.

The league said Southampton admitted breaches requiring clubs to act with the "utmost good faith and prohibiting the observation of another club's training session within



In this file photo, Southampton's coach Tony Elliott reacts during the FA Cup semifinal soccer match between Manchester City and Southampton in Manchester, England. (AP)

72 hours of a scheduled match."

It said the final was still due to go ahead as planned, despite disruption caused by Middlesbrough's late reinstatement.

The playoff final is labeled the world's richest one-off soccer match because a wind-fall of at least \$270 million in future earnings is on offer for the winning team.

Promotion to the top flight of English soccer - the world's wealthiest and most-watched league - brings with it access to its

multibillion dollar global broadcast deals as well as sold out stadiums for games against the biggest teams in the world like Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal.

Southampton was relegated from the Premier League after finishing bottom of the standings last season and was aiming to make an immediate return.

The stunning decision to expel it from the final comes after Leeds was previously punished for spying.

In 2019, the EFL fined Leeds \$259,000 for spying on one of Derby's training sessions ahead of a game.

Marcelo Bielsa, who was manager of Leeds at the time, accepted responsibility for having a club employee spy on Derby's practice. In a detailed, hour-long news conference, Bielsa later admitted to having watched at least one of each of his opponents' training sessions.

In handing out that fine, the EFL said Leeds' conduct "fell significantly short of the standards expected by the EFL and must not be repeated."

The Southampton incident has echoes of Canada's Olympic women's soccer team which was penalized for flying drones over New Zealand's closed practice sessions ahead of the teams' match at the Paris Games in 2024.

## Speculation about his future intensifies

## Guardiola set for crunch talks with Man City chairman

**MANCHESTER, England, May 20, (AP):** Pep Guardiola addressed the fevered speculation about his future at Manchester City by saying he will talk to club chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak in the upcoming days before announcing whether he'll see out the remaining year of his contract.

Several outlets in the British media, including national broadcaster the BBC, have reported that Guardiola will be leaving at the end of this season and that Enzo Maresca - the former Chelsea manager who was previously assistant to Guardiola at City - is the leading contender to take over.

Speaking after a draw at Bournemouth that ended City's chances of winning the Premier League, Guardiola didn't deny the widespread reports indicating his imminent departure after 10 trophy-laden years at the club.

"I talk with my chairman first," Guardiola said. "And after that, when I talk with my chairman, we decide (whether) to have one more year, we talk everything, we will decide."

Asked whether those conversations will take place after the final match of the season at home to Aston Villa, Guardiola said: "No, we talk in these next days."

There was no immediate response from Maresca's representatives when contacted by The Associated Press.

Guardiola, who has won 17 major trophies at City since arriving in English soccer in 2016, has repeatedly been asked in recent weeks whether he would be staying at City beyond this season.

On Monday, he rolled his eyes when another question was posed about his future and answered: "I've said so many

times, I have one more year."

After the Bournemouth game, he said he had wanted to "focus on putting the team in the highest point" before announcing his future plans.

"I'm the happiest man on the planet to be in this club," he said. "This club is extraordinary. The season is over for us so we want to arrive in the last game with our fans."

In overseeing the most successful period in City's history in his decade in charge, Guardiola has spent longer at the club than he did at Barcelona (2008-12) and Bayern Munich (2013-16).

His biggest achievement at City has been winning the Premier League-Champions League-FA Cup treble in the 2022-23 season, emulating the feat of Manchester United in 1999.

Guardiola's City team has won the Premier League six times and became the only team in the nearly 140-year history of English soccer to win four top-flight league titles in a row

(2021-24), the first team to earn 100 points in a top-flight season (2017-18), and the first team to win the domestic treble of the league, FA Cup and League Cup in the same season (2018-19).

This season, City has won both the League Cup and FA Cup but will finish second behind Arsenal in the Premier League. That was assured after the 1-1 draw at Bournemouth, which left City four points adrift of Arsenal.

Guardiola has also changed the face of English soccer in general, bringing a possession-based approach that started with playing the ball out from the goalkeeper or defense that ended up being mimicked across the country, from kids' teams at grassroots level to rival teams in the Premier League.

Asked Monday if he thought a stand at City's Etihad Stadium should be named after him, Guardiola said: "The important thing in our lives is when you look back, you can say, 'Wow.' You can look with a big smile and (say) that was good."



Manchester City's head coach Pep Guardiola applauds supporters after the English Premier League soccer match between AFC Bournemouth and Manchester City in Bournemouth, England. (AP)

## Yakin makes surprise picks with attacking options

## Amdouni returns, Switzerland unveils World Cup squad led by Granit Xhaka

**BERN, Switzerland, May 20, (AP):** Switzerland forward Zeki Amdouni was picked in the World Cup squad with less than one hour of playing time all season after a serious knee injury.

Amdouni's appearance at Arsenal on Monday as a late substitute for Burnley was just his third game off the bench this month since recovering from an ACL rupture last July.

A solid record of 11 goals in 27 national-team games helped Amdouni earn a place in Switzerland coach Murat Yakin's 26-man squad that should be favored in a group with co-host Canada, 2022 host Qatar and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 26 names were revealed over two days in a social media campaign, with fans invited to find them hidden in a series of photographs of Swiss residents at their workplaces.

Granit Xhaka will lead the team as captain at what is the 33-year-old former Arsenal and Bayer Leverkusen midfielder's fourth straight World Cup to extend his national record of 144 games.

Yakin made surprise picks with attacking options Christian Fassnacht and Cedric Itten, who each played just a handful of minutes for Switzerland since 2023.

Fassnacht, the 18-goal top scorer in the national league this season, and his Young Boys teammate, goalkeeper Marvin Keller, are the only players selected from clubs in Switzerland. Swiss champion Thun is not represented.

Inter Milan defender Manuel Akanji just won a Serie A title and Johan Manzambi will play for Freiburg in the Europa League final Wednesday against Aston Villa.

Manzambi made an instant impact against World Cup co-hosts in the United States last June. The 20-year-old prospect debuted in a 4-2 win over Mexico then scored in a 4-0 rout of the U.S.

### Switzerland

**Goalkeepers:** Gregor Kobel (Borussia Dortmund), Yvon Mvogo (Lorient), Marvin Keller (Young Boys)

**Defenders:** Manuel Akanji (Inter Milan), Nico Elvedi (Borussia Mönchengladbach), Ricardo Rodriguez (Real Betis), Silvan Widmer (Mainz), Miro Muheim (Hamburger SV), Aurèle Amenda (Eintracht Frankfurt), Eray Cömert (Valencia), Luca Jaquez (Stuttgart)

**Midfielders:** Granit Xhaka (Sunderland), Johan Manzambi (Freiburg), Remo Freuler (Bologna), Denis Zakaria (Monaco), Ardon Jashari (AC Milan), Djibril Sow (Sevilla), Christian Fassnacht (Young Boys), Michel Aebischer (Pisa), Fabian Rieder (Augsburg), Rubén Vargas (Sevilla)

**Forwards:** Breel Embolo (Rennes), Noah Okafor (Leeds), Dan Ndoye (Nottingham Forest), Zeki Amdouni (Burnley), Cedric Itten (Fortuna Dusseldorf)

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A file photo of Kuwait Club and Al Arabi players fighting for the ball.

# Sports

Title race heats up

## Kuwait Club seeks response

By Hassan Mosa  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 20: Kuwait Club aims to bounce back from its Crown Prince Cup final defeat and continue its push in the Kuwait Premier League when it visits Al Fahaheel at 8:20 pm today.

In the other match, Al Arabi faces Al Tadhamon at 7:15 pm at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in two postponed Round 15 fixtures.

"Al-Abyad" sits top of the table with 36 points and will look to strengthen its title charge with eight rounds remaining in the season.

Kuwait also aims to maintain its strong record against Al Fahaheel after a 5-0 win in the first meeting, while putting its cup disappointment behind it in pursuit of a fifth consecutive league title and a 21st overall championship.

Al Fahaheel, sixth with 18 points, hopes to take advantage of Kuwait Club's situation and secure a vital win to move further away from the danger zone and avoid relegation playoffs.

In the second fixture, Al-Arabi, fourth with 23 points, remains in the title race and enters the match with confidence after winning the Crown Prince Cup, following its 3-0 victory over Kuwait Club in the final.

Al Tadhamon, ninth with 11 points, looks for a surprise result to keep its survival hopes alive and avoid slipping deeper into the relegation battle.

Eulálio retains lead

## Narváez storms to Ecuadorian record Giro stage win

CHIAVARI, Italy, May 20, (AP): Jhonatan Narváez became the most successful Ecuadorian stage winner at the Giro d'Italia when he triumphed on Wednesday, while Afonso Eulálio remained in the overall lead.

His victory on stage 11 was Narváez's third win at this year's race and fifth overall in the Giro, surpassing Richard Carapaz.

Narváez edged out Enric Mas at the end of the 195-kilometer (121-mile) route from Porcari to Chiavari that featured three categorized climbs. Diego Ulissi was third, leading the remnants of the breakaway across the line, 11 seconds behind.

Narváez and Mas hadn't got in the initial breakaway but man-



Ecuador's Manuel Jhonatan Narvaez celebrates winning the 11th stage of the Giro d'Italia cycling race, from Porcari to Chiavari, Italy. (AP)

aged to make it across before the climbs. They then attacked on the final ascent, which was steep but uncatagorised, and worked well together on the descent before opening up the sprint 200 meters from the line.

The peloton rolled across the line more than three minutes behind Narváez, with Eulálio preserving his 27-second advantage over Jonas Vingegaard.

Thymen Arensman is third overall, 1:57 behind Eulálio.

Thursday's 12th stage is a 175-kilometer (109-mile) route from Imperia to Novi Ligure that is mainly flat along the coast before heading inland and over two lower-category climbs.

# Arsenal wins first Premier League title in 22 years

City draws with Bournemouth



Arsenal supporters gather at the Arsenal stadium after Arsenal's soccer team won the Premier League title in London. (AP)

## LONDON, May 20, (AP): Arsenal's decades-long wait is over.

Mikel Arteta's team was crowned Premier League champion for the first time since 2004 after Manchester City drew 1-1 with Bournemouth.

"I told you all... it's done," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice posted on social media with a photo of he and his teammates celebrating.

The result put an end to what might be Pep Guardiola's final title challenge with City after the decorated manager didn't dismiss reports he was set to leave the club at the end of the season.

City needed to win at Bournemouth to take it down to the final game of the campaign on Sunday. But the draw left Arsenal with an unassailable four-point lead at the top, ending its 22-year wait for the title.

Arsenal fans celebrated wildly outside its Emirates Stadium, setting off flares and partying in the street. There were celebrations at the club's training ground, too, where the players had gathered to watch the match.

City threatened another twist in an engrossing title race when Erling Haaland scored in stoppage time to equalize after Junior Kroupi's first-half strike, but it was too late to find a winner.

Arteta's players can now stand alongside club icons Thierry Henry,

Dennis Bergkamp and Ian Wright, who previously reached the summit of English soccer. And Arsenal's current class could yet break new ground by winning the Champions League for the first time in its history later this month.

Thoughts of the May 30 final against defending champion Paris Saint-Germain can be put on the backburner for now.

Now is a time for celebration and relief for Arteta after finishing runner-up in the league three years in a row.

In back-to-back seasons in 2023 and '24, he watched as Guardiola's City chased down Arsenal's lead to be crowned champion. And another chance was missed last year by finishing second to Liverpool.

Once again Arsenal has led the way for most of this campaign and despite seeing its points advantage ebb away during a gripping run-in, it has finally managed to get over the line.

Arsenal's last champion was the so-called "Invincibles" team of 2004, which went an entire campaign without losing in the league.

Since then it has seen Chelsea, Manchester United, City, Leicester and Liverpool all take the title. This is the first time since 2017 that a team other than City or Liverpool has not been crowned champion. It is Arsenal's 14th title and Arteta will hope it is the beginning of a new era of dominance.



Manchester City's Bernardo Silva, centre, makes an attempt to score during the English Premier League soccer match between AFC Bournemouth and Manchester City in Bournemouth, England. (AP)

He has finally got the better of Guardiola, who he was formerly assistant to at City.

The Spaniard took over at Arsenal in December 2019 - his first role as a manager. After winning the FA Cup in that first season, it has been a frustrating wait for more honors. Even still, he is the second-youngest coach after José Mourinho to win the Premier League at the age of 44.

While his team has not maintained the attractive playing style of former manager Arsene Wenger, it has powered its way to the title with the best defense in the league and earned

a reputation as a specialist for set-piece goals.

Time will tell if Arteta adopts a more expansive style in the future, more in-keeping with Guardiola's City.

How City will look going forward is a bigger question, with Enzo Maresca widely considered the front-runner to replace Guardiola.

The future of City's greatest manager overshadowed the buildup to the game after 10 years at the club.

"I should talk with my chairman first," Guardiola said. "After that, when I talk with my chairman... we

will decide. We will talk in the next days."

He was aiming to win the title for the seventh time in England and a second domestic treble after winning the League Cup and FA Cup this term. But Kroupi's curling shot in the 39th minute left City with a mountain to climb.

Bournemouth wasted further chances to extend its lead, and Haaland ensured a tense finish for Arsenal fans when he leveled in the fifth minute of added time.

Ultimately it wasn't enough and Guardiola has gone two years with-

out winning a league title for the first time in his coaching career.

The fight for survival will go down to the final day of the season after Chelsea beat Tottenham 2-1.

Spurs are two points ahead of West Ham, which is in the final relegation spot.

West Ham needs to beat Leeds on Sunday to have any chance of leapfrogging Tottenham and climbing out of the drop zone.

Tottenham hosts Everton and a draw would likely be enough because of superior goal difference. A win would guarantee safety.

## Title pressure mounts on Al Nassr as Al Hilal waits for final-day slip

RIYADH, May 20: As the 2025-2026 Saudi Roshn League season reaches its dramatic finale today, Al Nassr FC stand on the brink of glory — or heartbreak. The league leader is desperate to avoid losing two major titles within a single week, while Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo faces the possibility of ending another season in Saudi Arabia without a domestic trophy amid relentless pressure from rivals Al Hilal.

Al-Nassr needs victory when it hosts Damac FC in the decisive 34th and final round to secure their first league crown since 2019. Meanwhile, second-placed Al-Hilal, sitting two points behind, travels to face Al Fayha FC hoping for a slip from the leader. Elsewhere, Al Ittihad Club takes on Al Qadsiah FC.

The pressure is equally intense at the bottom of the table. Damac is still fighting for survival, holding only a two-point cushion above Al Riyadh SC, who occupies the final relegation place ahead of their clash with already relegated Al Okhdood Club.

At Al-Awwal Park in Riyadh, where Al-Nassr are playing their third straight home game, memories of the painful 1-0 defeat to Gamba Osaka in the AFC Champions League Two final still linger.

Ronaldo once looked set to capture his first major trophies since arriving in Saudi Arabia in early 2023, but now the veteran forward risks finishing the campaign



Cristiano Ronaldo vies for the ball with an opponent during a league game.

empty-handed just weeks before what is expected to be his final FIFA World Cup appearance in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

## Best of the Rest

**Hearts express concerns:** Hearts expressed concerns Wednesday that a "troubling precedent" was set when their Scottish title decider against Celtic last weekend was ended before the match had officially finished following a pitch invasion.

The Edinburgh club said it had written a letter to Scotland's soccer authorities regarding what it describes as "the circumstances surrounding the premature ending of the match."

Callum Osmand's goal in the eighth and last minute of stoppage time sealed a title-clinching 3-1 win for Celtic on Saturday and sparked wild celebrations among its fans, with hundreds running onto the pitch and getting close to Hearts' dejected players.

The game appeared to be brought to an end before playing the full amount of stoppage time. The Scottish Professional Football League has since clarified that it has been informed by the referee that "the match had ended and had not been abandoned." (AP)

**Congo cancels 3-day training camp:** Congo's soccer team has canceled a three-day World Cup preparation training camp and a planned farewell to fans in the capital Kinshasa because of an outbreak of Ebola in the east of the country.

Preparations will take place elsewhere after an outbreak of a rare type of Ebola known as Bundibugyo, which is thought to have killed more than 130 people and caused nearly 600 suspected cases.

The World Health Organization has declared it a public health emergency of international concern.

Congo is scheduled to play World Cup-warmup games against Denmark in Liege, Belgium on June 3 and Chile in southern Spain on June 9. Both matches are going ahead as planned, team spokesman Jerry Kalemo told The Associated Press on Wednesday. (AP)

**Australia federation set to cut staff:** Australia's soccer federation is preparing to cut staff following news of an expected second consecutive record financial loss, its chief executive Martin Kugeler says.

The news comes just days ahead of Saturday's A-League Men's grand final between Auckland FC and Sydney FC in New Zealand - the first to be held outside Australia - and less than a month before the Socceroos begin play at the World Cup in North America.

Kugeler, who said the reductions in staff won't impact the men's or women's national teams, has confirmed Football Australia will undergo a "significant reset and restructure" to allow it to work within its financial means. The move is in response to a loss that would exceed last year's record 8.5 million Australian dollar (\$6 million) deficit.

The exact figure and details will be released at the annual general meeting on May 28.

Local media reported there'd be up to a 20% reduction in staff at Football Australia, which employs just under 200 people. That would mean about 40 staff could be affected. (AP)