



Amir congratulates Jordan on the Independence Day Page 2



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Ministry of Islamic Affairs photo

Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah during a visit to the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission in Al-Naseem, Makkah, reviewing preparations for pilgrims.

First Deputy PM checks Hajj mission readiness in Makkah

MAKKAH, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah visited the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission headquarters at the Four Points Hotel in Al-Naseem, Makkah, on Monday to inspect operations and preparations for serving Kuwaiti pilgrims.

In a press statement, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stated that the visit was carried out on the directives of the country's political leadership to ensure the smooth functioning of the mission and the quality of services provided to Kuwaiti pilgrims.

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Amir thanks Bahraini King, Sultan of Oman for Eid calls

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received a congratulatory phone call from King of Bahrain Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa, on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha.

During the call, King Hamad wished both countries, along with Arab and Muslim nations further goodness and blessings, His Highness the Amir good health and wellness and the State of Kuwait more progress and welfare under His Highness the Amir's wise leadership.

In turn, His Highness the Amir expressed great thanks and gratitude to King Hamad for this kind gesture and

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King of Bahrain



Sultan of Oman

Job-switch wave in Kuwait hits 11,654

Expired residencies among 80 held in traffic sweep

By Fares Ghaleb and Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has recorded 11,654 applications that meet the requirements for transferring workers in certain sectors since the start of the grace period, which continues until the end of June 2026.

According to sources at PAM, 7,016 transfer requests were submitted from the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector.

Transfer requests from industrial establishments reached 1,293, while the agricultural sector accounted for 2,160, the livestock sector 1,057, and the fishing sector 128.

The sources highlighted that transfer requests are submitted through "As'hal Companies."

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The Iranian devil is in the details

SINCE the Iranian devil is in the details, the new tune of the regime started with the violation of the agreement with the United States of America (USA) before it was officially approved. This confirms that force is the only language understood by the Tehran regime, just as it has been doing with its people for the past five decades.

Yesterday, the Iranian parliament speaker posted on the 'X' platform that "Iran does not submit to pressure or threats. If they want an agreement, let them negotiate. If they want gasoline at \$6, let them stand and make threats until the grass grows under their feet." He was referring to the United States.

There is an Iranian political misunderstanding of the culture followed by the current American administration. It is different from those administrations that followed the Persian methodology based on the principle of

"procrastination until reaching the goal."

Consequently, the issuance of contradicting reports from Tehran and Washington is similar to a stock market speculation game. Whenever an American official confirms that an agreement is close, one of the leaders of the Iranian regime comes out to say that the road is still long. Whenever the American president says that he has given the negotiating delegation more time, another Iranian official declares that the agreement is close.

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Day by Day

DURING the Umayyad era, a tyrant governor of a city near Baghdad was bathing in a river when he nearly drowned. A passerby rescued him and carried him safely to shore.

The governor said to the man, "Ask for whatever you wish, and it shall be granted."

The man asked, "Who are you to grant me any request?" He replied, "I am Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the governor of the city."

When the man realized the identity of the governor, he said, "My only request is that you swear by God not to tell anyone that I saved you."

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Ahmed Al-Jarallah during his meeting with leaders of the International Women's Group (IWG) at his office.

Media, diplomacy link up in meeting

IWG honors Al-Jarallah for media support

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah met with the International Women's Group (IWG) leaders at his office on Monday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

President of the group Marika Kochlamazashvili, wife of the Georgian Ambassador to Kuwait, headed the visiting delegation, consisting of Vice Presidents Rima Al-Khalidi, wife of the Palestinian Ambassador, and Sayeh Gauvin, wife of the French Ambassador.

They discussed the vital role of the media in strengthening international cooperation, as well as humanitarian and cultural connections.

They talked about how the group helps integrate the wives of ambassadors into Kuwaiti society, while encouraging friendship and understanding among diverse communities.

Continued on Page 5



IWG leaders present a commemorative plaque to Ahmed Al-Jarallah in appreciation of his continued support for the group's cultural and humanitarian initiatives.

Kuwait to hit 49°C this Eid

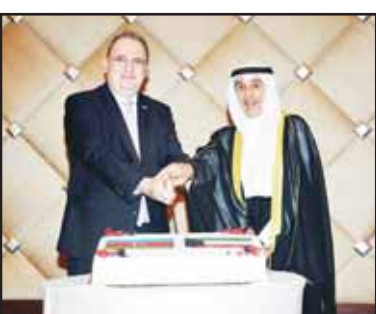
KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Acting Director of the Meteorology Department Dhirar Al-Ali forecast Monday extremely hot weather and active dust-raising winds in Kuwait during the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

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National Guard unlocks releases for Eid holiday

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): The National Guard announced the release of military personnel detained under disciplinary penalties on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, under directives from National Guard Chief Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The National Guard Directorate of Moral Guidance said in a statement Monday that the move aims to allow personnel to spend the holiday with their families.



Left: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Emil Karimov with Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Hamad Al-Mishaan during the Independence Day celebration. Right: Group photo with members of the diplomatic corps and guests at the Azerbaijani Embassy reception marking the 108th anniversary of Azerbaijan's National Independence Day.

Azerbaijan hails growing Kuwait partnership

By Fares Ghaleb Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the State of Kuwait Emil Karimov said the Azerbaijani-Kuwaiti relations in the political, economic and tourism fields continue to develop.

Karimov made the statement at an event organized by the Embassy of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the 108th Anniversary of the National Independence of the country at the Crowne Plaza Hotel recently.

Present at the event were Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Hamad Al-Mishaan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mishaal,

and a number of ambassadors and diplomatic figures.

Ambassador Karimov congratulated Al-Mishaan on his appointment and wished him success in his new position. He affirmed that the presence of Al-Mishaan as a guest of honor at the event is highly appreciated, especially since the occasion is among the first official events he attended after assuming his post.

He went on to confirm that the two countries are bound by friendship and brotherhood, indicating that Azerbaijan welcomed more than 32,000 Kuwaiti tourists last year.

He said the foundations of Azerbaijani-Kuwaiti relations were laid during the first meeting between national

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Kuwait marks 45 yrs of GCC unity

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait proudly marked the 45th anniversary of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Monday, celebrating its 1981 founding as a reflection of long-term strategic vision, deep fraternal ties, and shared destiny among Gulf peoples.

In a statement, the Kuwait Foreign Ministry highlighted the country's leading role in establishing the GCC, driven by the vision of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, while also honoring the wisdom of its founding leaders in creating a model for successful cooperation.

The statement added that the GCC has secured its status as a trusted global partner by adapting to challenges and promoting collective action for its member states.

Kuwait also extended its congratulations to leaders and people of GCC countries, reaffirming its commitment to boosting integration and advancing joint Gulf efforts for regional prosperity and stability.

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PACI deletes 427 addresses

By Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) on Sunday announced in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm', the removal of 427 addresses of individuals from its records.

This action was taken due to the declaration of the homeowners or the demolition of the building.

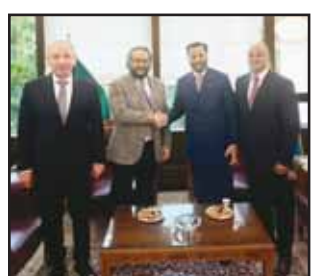
These individuals must visit PACI to register their new address, either directly or through the 'Sa-hel' application, after providing the necessary supporting documents within 30 days of the announcement.

Failure to do so will result in the penalty stipulated in Article 33 of Law No. 32/1982 -- fine not exceeding KD100, multiplied by the number of individuals involved.

Kuwait, Pakistan deepen health ties

GENEVA, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Health Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Salman Khalifa Al-Sabah met Monday with Pakistani Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal to discuss strengthening bilateral health cooperation.

The meeting, held on the sidelines of the 79th World Health Assembly, covered recruitment of medical professionals, training in specialized fields,



MoH photo Kuwait's Health Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Salman Khalifa Al-Sabah during his meeting with Pakistani Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal.

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**Prayer Timings**

Fajr .....	03:19	Asr .....	15:20
Sunrise ..	04:51	Maghrib ..	18:39
Zohr .....	11:45	Isha .....	20:09



HH Amir Sheikh Meshal



Jordan King Abdullah II

## Amir congratulates Jordan on the Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a congratulatory cable to Jordanian King Abdullah II on his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir praised the bilateral ties between the two countries and wished him long-lasting health, along with hopes for Jordan's continued progress and prosperity.

### Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Monday a congratulatory cable to Jordanian King Abdullah II on his country's Independence Day, wishing him long-lasting health, and for Jordan continued progress and prosperity.

### Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Monday a congratulatory cable to Jordanian King Abdullah II on his country's Independence Day.

## Eid Greetings from Ambassadors

### Japan-Kuwait steadfast in bid to bring about peace

On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I am honored to extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and to the people of Kuwait, on the blessed occasion of Eid Al-Adha.



Kenichiro

For decades Japan-Kuwait relations have been built upon solid founda-

tions of mutual respect, understanding, and support. Kuwait has always stood as a true friend of Japan in times of crisis, we remain steadfast in supporting through every possible means to help foster peace and pave the way for greater prosperity.

During these challenging times, Kuwait continues to demonstrate remarkable strength and resilience, along with unwavering aspirations for a brighter future. May this joyous Eid Al-Adha bring peace, happiness and prosperity to all.

**Eid Mubarak.**  
**Mukai Kenichiro**  
Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait

### Turkiye, Kuwait ties continue to flourish across all avenues

Praise be to God, abundantly, on the blessed occasion of Eid al-Adha, I would like to extend my warmest and most sincere congratulations to the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to His Highness the Crown Prince, to the Government and the brotherly people of Kuwait.

Eid al-Adha is a time that reminds us of the enduring values of sacrifice, compassion, solidarity, and generosity. It is also a moment to strengthen the bonds of friendship between our nations and to reaffirm our shared commitment to peace, stability, and prosperity.

The longstanding and deeply rooted relations between Türkiye and Kuwait continue to flourish across all fields, grounded in mutual respect, trust, and a shared vision for the future. Our peoples remain united by strong historical, cultural, and humanitarian ties, which have been further reinforced through continuous high-level engagement and cooperation.

In this regard, the recent visits of His Excellency Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait and His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Defense of Kuwait, to Türkiye stand as significant milestones. These visits have played an important role in advancing our strategic partnership and deepening coop-



Tuba Nur Sönmez

eration in key areas, reflecting the strong political will on both sides to further elevate Türkiye-Kuwait relations to new heights.

On behalf of myself and the staff of the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Kuwait, I extend my warmest wishes to the Turkish community in Kuwait. I also reaffirm our commitment to further strengthening the friendship and cooperation between Türkiye and Kuwait.

Taking this opportunity, I wish peace, happiness, and prosperity to the people of Kuwait and to all Muslims around the world. May this special occasion bring renewed hope, unity, and blessings to humanity.

**Tuba Nur Sönmez**  
Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait



KUNA photo  
Defense Minister and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah receives the Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Zafar Iqbal. Defense Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

### Defense Minister, Pakistan envoy in talks to boost ties

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Defense Minister and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah discussed Monday with Pakistan's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Zafar Iqbal ways to support and develop bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that the meeting reflected the close ties between the two friendly countries and included discussions on issues of mutual interest.

Defense Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

## Eidul-Adh'ha, customs of Kuwaiti families – ancestral heritage renewed every year

**By Abdullah Mohammad AlShehab**  
General Manager of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Eidul-Adh'ha (i.e., Feast of Sacrifice) is a magnificent manifestation of the timeless meaning and significance of Islam. It shows the symbolizing of sacrifice, monotheism, and obedience to God's command – among other principles. On this day, Muslims recall the story of Abraham (peace be upon him) when he offered his most precious possession in obedience to his Lord, and highlights how the reward was a ransom from heaven and the pleasure of God Almighty. This festival was ordained to remind humanity, on a yearly basis, that all life belongs to God, and that piety is the true and inexhaustible provision.

Eidul-Adh'ha (Feast of Sacrifice) is a time when the desert dunes and modern towers of Kuwait, alike, testify to the renewal of a rich, ancestral heritage. Families, spanning generations, unite to turn the wheel of tradition, ensuring that the essence of Islamic devotion and Kuwaiti hospitality - marked by the scent of Bukhoor (incense or Frankincense) and the warmth of community - is passed down, vibrant and unyielding, to the next generation every single year. Kuwaiti Eidul-Adh'ha traditions are a blend of profound spiritual acts and vibrant social gatherings that strengthen the family unit and community solidarity.

In Kuwait, people welcome this blessed Eid with longing hearts and prepared spirits. The Takbeer (Allahu Akbar – Allah is the Greatest) rises in the pre-dawn hours, proclaiming God's Greatness, and the Eid prayer is performed in congregation in open spaces. It is a visible ritual where worshippers stand before their Lord in gratitude and remembrance. At the moment where rows



AlShehab

unite and shoulders embrace under the open sky, the magnificence of Islam is revealed - a religion that has made worship communal, not individual, and remembrance shared, not isolated.

Then, the blessing extends throughout the day as the sacrificial animal is slaughtered, following the Sunnah (i.e., tradition of Prophet Muhammad - PBUH), reviving the tradition of Abraham (PBUH), and its meat is distributed into three portions: one for the family, one for relatives and neighbors, and the rest for the poor and the needy. There is profound divine wisdom in this distribution, for the Loving Allah has made joy multiply when the sacrificial meat is shared, and blessings increase when it reaches those most in need. Kuwaiti Charity Organizations have consistently delivered this offering to those deserving it, both within Kuwait and abroad, translating the values of Islam into a noble and civilized act (of worship and altruism).

Perhaps the most beautiful aspect of this Eid is that it rekindles the spirit of kinship ties, restoring it to its natural state. The visits, gatherings, and grand feasts of Eid renew our covenant with God, as stated in the verse: "So, fear Allah, in Whose Name you seek (consideration) of another, and therefore, (be dutiful to your) kindred. For, indeed, ever is Allah vigilant over (all of) you." (An-Nisa'a – Women 4: 1)

In these gatherings, over coffee, dates, and sweets, grudges are washed away, hearts are restored to their purity, and one remembers that the bond between oneself and one's brother is greater than any worldly attachment.

So, let our Eid be one of repentance before it is one of joy, one of giving before it is one of adornment, of remembrance before it is one of food, and of strengthening bonds before it is one of congratulations. We ask Almighty Allah to accept the good deeds of all, and to make this Eid the beginning of a new covenant with Him, in obedience and repentance.

In conclusion, Eidul-Adh'ha is a time when the modern skyline of Kuwait City pauses to embrace the timeless customs of the neighborhoods, bridging generations through shared joy and spiritual devotion. The customs renewed every year are a vibrant testament to Kuwaiti resilience and hospitality. Eidul-Adh'ha in Kuwait is more than a celebration; it is a profound demonstration of community solidarity, hospitality, and gratitude, weaving the threads of tradition into the fabric of modern life. Finally, the following is the invocation we always say during any Islamic occasion.

كل عام والكويت وأهلها في طاعة الله وعافيه  
translated as "May Kuwait and its people be in God's obedience and good health every year."

Courtesy of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue

## Far-reaching plan on cards for better education sector

MoE aims for smooth start to new academic year

**KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has issued a ministerial decree outlining a comprehensive plan for the Ministry of Education's preparations for the 2026/2027 academic year that aims to enhance early readiness and ensure a smooth and stable start to the academic year from day one, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**



Al-Tabtabaei

The decree mandates all general departments and their affiliated divisions within the ministry, each according to its area of specialization, to take up the responsibility of preparing, planning, and overseeing all tasks related to the requirements of the new academic year.

The plan defines the responsibilities of the relevant general departments within the Educational Affairs Sector, the Administrative, Financial, and Technical Affairs Sector, as well as the Public Relations and Educational Media Department.

Regarding the Educational Affairs Sector, the General Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation is tasked with identifying the expected needs of students and teachers, determining the required number of teachers in public and private schools, and overseeing local recruitment procedures and

the naming of new schools.

The General Directorate of Guidance, Research, and Curricula is responsible for identifying newly required textbooks for printing, monitoring their supply and distribution, approving curriculum plans, and equipping school laboratories and workshops.

Preparations by the General Directorate of Private Education include identifying the human and logistical needs of private schools, monitoring their compliance with regulations, and reviewing the curricula of foreign schools to ensure alignment with societal values and customs, as well as consistency with Islamic principles and relations with sister and friendly nations.

In the religious education and special education sector, the plan includes identifying the needs for teachers, supervisory staff, textbooks, transportation, meals, and necessary equipment.

The General Directorate of Educational Support Services focuses on preparing student activities, television and radio programs, and competitions, in addition to developing psychological and social services, libraries, and educational technologies.

The decision also assigns the regional education directorates the responsibility of supervising staff, identifying human and material needs, monitoring student registration and placement, overseeing maintenance work and textbooks, and forming educational supervisory committees.

In the Administrative, Financial, and Technical Affairs Sector, the decision emphasizes the importance of monitoring major and routine maintenance work in schools, equipping new schools, and finalizing contracts related to maintenance, air conditioning, and essential services, in addition to providing textbooks, school furniture, meals, cleaning, and security services.

The decision also assigns the General Director-

ate of Human Resources and Employee Affairs the responsibility of overseeing the appointment procedures for teaching and administrative staff and addressing any vacancies prior to the start of the academic year.

The General Directorate of Development and Training is tasked with implementing training and professional development programs for new teachers and staff, as well as proposing plans for scholarships and study leave.

On the technical side, the decision directs the General Directorate of Technology and Information Systems to complete technical preparations for schools, including activating networks, internet equipment, computers, cameras, and servers, upgrading classroom equipment, and finalizing maintenance and equipment contracts.

The decision also assigns the Public Relations and Educational Media Department the task of preparing media campaigns to highlight the ministry's efforts in preparing for the academic year, disseminating awareness and educational materials, and announcing the academic calendar, including the start dates of classes and holidays.

The decision emphasizes the preparation of regular reports for the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, or their designated representative, on the progress of preparatory work, as well as the convening of emergency meetings as needed to ensure full readiness. It also assigns responsibility for monitoring contracts and tenders and submitting a comprehensive report to the Minister on the level of preparedness and readiness.

The provisions of the decision stress that the relevant authorities bear full responsibility for implementing their assigned tasks, and provide for disciplinary and administrative accountability in the event of any negligence or delay that could affect the start of the 2026/2027 academic year.

### Eritrea marks Independence Day

## 'We will safeguard our sovereignty at all costs'

**By Fares Ghaleb**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Chargé d'Affaires of the Eritrean Embassy in Kuwait Hamad Hale said the 35th anniversary of the independence of his country is a timeless national milestone embodying the sacrifices and struggle of the Eritrean people for more than three decades.

In a press statement on the occasion, Hale pointed out that the independence was the fruit of a long struggle and immense sacrifices made by the Eritreans in defense of their sovereignty and national dignity. He added that this year's celebrations are held under the slogan, "Our Resilience... Our Guarantee," a slogan that reflects the Eritrean people's ability to overcome difficulties and challenges through national will, patience and perseverance. He emphasized that resilience remains the best approach in dealing with



Al-Seyassah photo  
Diplomats and officials at the cake-cutting ceremony.

crises and overcoming obstacles.

Regarding the Eritrean community in Kuwait, he praised the community for their role and national contributions, indicating that their number is close to one thousand, most of whom live within fam-

ily groups. He called for activating their role in public diplomacy and consolidating bridges of communication and understanding.

He added that Eritrea enjoys security and stability today and continues to confront what he described as at-

tempts to undermine its sovereignty or target its national interests. He affirmed his country's vigilance against any movements or threats to its national security, particularly in the strategically important Red Sea region.

He said some parties are openly expressing their desire to access the Red Sea, stressing that Eritrea seriously handles developments that affect the security or sovereignty of the region, while its positions are based on historical lessons and past experiences in protecting its national interests.

On the regional front, Hale asserted that the Independence Day celebrations of his country are being held under exceptional circumstances in the Middle East, considering the political, security and economic repercussions on the region, particularly those bordering the Red Sea. He underscored the importance of maritime stability as the cornerstone of international trade and global economic development.

### 31 stables and enclosures confiscated for misuse

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tariq Al-Jalal announced on Sunday that 31 stables and enclosures have been reclaimed from their beneficiaries after it was confirmed they were being used for purposes other than their designated purpose and were not complying with approved regulations and standards, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement issued following a field inspection tour by the Committee for Removing Encroachments on State Property at the Jahra stables, Minister Al-Jalal said a total of 22 en-

closures belonging to the Kuwaiti Camel Racing Club and 9 stables belonging to the Hunting and Equestrian Club were reclaimed from the Jahra and Farwaniya racetracks.

He emphasized the state's commitment to firmly implementing campaigns to remove encroachments on public property, in order to preserve facilities and installations dedicated to serving young athletes and ensure they are not used for purposes other than those for which they were established.

Minister Al-Jalal noted that the Committee

for Removing Encroachments on State Property carries out ongoing field monitoring and follow-up in coordination with relevant government agencies to address violations and safeguard everyone's rights within the legal framework.

He stressed that inspection campaigns are continuing, adding that the law is applied fairly and without exception.

The minister called on site owners to comply with regulations and requirements and avoid violations that could lead to withdrawal of allocations or legal action.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Eid brings festivities of Kuwaiti, Gulf cohesion

"THIS year, Eid al-Adha coincides with many moments that can serve as points of reflection for many people, encompassing both sorrows and joys, as has been the human experience since time immemorial," columnist Sheikh Eng. Fahad Dawood Al-Sabah wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"However, the promise of joy always instills hope in people. Hope in goodness is a foundation of existence, as human nature is inherently inclined toward peace. However, in the Arabian Gulf region, this year's Eid al-Adha celebrations may carry a particularly meaningful character.



Al-Sabah

"Despite the hardships and wars the region has witnessed, certain positive aspects have emerged, most notably national unity, reflected in standing shoulder-to-shoulder behind the political leadership. This unity enabled Kuwait to emerge from the crisis stronger than before.

"National unity has also been demonstrated in all Arabian Gulf states as a tangible reality, not merely as slogans.

"The slogan 'Our Gulf is One' is reflected daily in the unity of the peoples of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, who form a cohesive whole. The recent war offered many lessons, showing that belonging is not merely a matter of identity, but also of action, sacrifice, and commitment. This is what distinguished our countries from many others that were divided in the face of this major crisis.

"Today, we are all called upon to keep the flame of Gulf unity burning brightly, thanks to the wisdom of Gulf leaders who stood together to confront aggression and worked with utmost prudence to de-escalate tensions.

"I extend my congratulations on the occasion of Eid al-Adha to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, as well as to all citizens and residents of this blessed land.

"I also extend my congratulations to Their Highnesses, the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and to the peoples of the Gulf, who deserve all goodness, as well as to all Arabs, Muslims, and humanity as a whole."

### Also:

"A nation is not built by money alone, nor by buildings and projects alone, but by conscious minds, capable hands, and a will that believes in the future," Media advisor Khaled Al-Shamroukh wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Youth is the true wealth of any nation and the driving force behind development and progress. Therefore, countries that invest in their youth are, in effect, investing in their future, stability, and advancement.

"Kuwaiti youth today have proven their ability to succeed and excel in various fields, whether in law, media, medicine, engineering, and entrepreneurship, and have become a shining example of Kuwait's positive image to the world.

"Young people are not merely the future generation, but they are the present of the nation and the shapers of its future decisions.

"One such example is Qutaiba Anwar Al-Dabbous, who represents an ambitious young Kuwaiti committed to the path of knowledge and work. The presence of young Kuwaitis in positions of responsibility reflects national awareness and a strong belief in the importance of justice and the protection of state institutions. It also affirms that Kuwait is rich in capable individuals who can shoulder responsibility and serve society with dedication.

"Young people also play a vital social and cultural role in strengthening national values and reinforcing the spirit of unity among members of society.

"From what I observed at the diwaniya of Qutaiba Anwar Al-Dabbous in South Surra, I witnessed thoughtful dialogue, calm engagement, and a young Kuwaiti citizen deeply committed to his country and community, striving to preserve its authentic national identity.

"Such refined gatherings affirm that young people are the leaders of the future, and that building a conscious individual is the foundation of nation-building.

"Supporting and empowering youth, and giving them the opportunity to prove their capabilities, is a national duty. When young people are met with trust and encouragement, they become a driving force for construction and innovation. Embracing their ideas and projects contributes to building a brighter future for the nation.

"Youth represents the nation's pulse and its renewed spirit. The more at-

ention they receive, the stronger and more advanced Kuwait will become. Young people are not only the nation's wealth, but also its true hope for the future."



"The situation in Kuwait during the Iranian aggression against the Gulf states differed from what it had been during the months of the Iraqi invasion," Kuwaiti writer Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"At the time, the arguments and justifications adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood operated within a broader Arab and Islamic context, where similar voices and positions found resonance.

"In contrast, during the war between the United States and Iran, the tone of positions and rhetoric shifted, at times amounting to fraternal reproach while stopping short of outright confrontation or harsh, direct language.

"After Hamas issued its ambiguous and conciliatory statement regarding the Iranian aggression against the Gulf states, and amid mounting public pressure in Kuwait, some Muslim Brotherhood leaders in the country found themselves in a political predicament, searching for a way out with minimal losses.

"Accounts affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood on the X platform published restrained, and at times vague, expressions of reproach.

"No direct statement was issued by the 'Constitutional Movement,' which is regarded as the political and religious arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait.

"The Muslim Brotherhood is a tightly structured organization in its decision-making, policies, and activities, with its various branches meticulously managed with Machiavellian precision. It operates through a complex interplay of ends and means across its Palestinian, Kuwaiti, and international wings.

"The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the umbrella organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait, did not align itself with the positions adopted by other political and intellectual currents that unequivocally condemned the Iranian aggression against Kuwait.

"This was reflected in the statements of Muslim Brotherhood leaders, who avoided explicitly mentioning the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, in their condemnations.

"These opinions are based on factual data. However, the Muslim Brotherhood's position, in essence, is difficult to decipher due to its complex organizational structure, making it hard to predict the nature and limits of this grievance between the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait and Hamas.

"Nevertheless, the possibility of a superficial reconciliation between the Kuwaiti and Palestinian wings cannot be ruled out. Both operate under the same international organizational umbrella, bound by shared objectives and policies, and driven to adapt to changing political circumstances.

"There are valuable lessons to be drawn from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

"However, the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait, in one way or another, shared some of the burdens of that period and later seized opportunities to implicate Hamas in narratives bordering on naive fantasy following the events of October 7, 2023.

"It is important to repeatedly revisit these facts, particularly the claims made by Muslim Brotherhood leaders regarding an alleged meeting between the late Amir Sheikh Sa'ad Al-Abdullah and a Hamas delegation in Jeddah in December 1990.

"No Kuwaiti Cabinet official ever confirmed witnessing such a meeting, not even a gatekeeper or passport officer.

"Such claims become easier to circulate after more than 25 years have passed. The Muslim Brotherhood undoubtedly relies on the fragility of collective memory and the exploitation of religious sentiment.

"Returning to the fold is neither an impossible option for the Muslim Brotherhood nor a decision that can be indefinitely postponed. The organization often uses subtle language to criticize each other, while their rhetoric is harsh towards other political and intellectual movements, as well as towards the Gulf states.

"With the emergence of a phase of fraternal reproach between the Kuwaiti and Palestinian wings of the Muslim Brotherhood, one might anticipate the dawn of a new era of repaired relations, aimed at appealing to public opinion and potentially reshaping, or even fragmenting, its structure."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

## Kuwait Airways office to serve Jahra people

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Complaints and Suggestions Committee at the Jahra Governorate Council held its regular meeting, presided over by Eng. Ahmad Eid Al-Mutairi on Sunday.

During the meeting, the committee was briefed on the latest developments regarding the opening of the Kuwait Airways office in Jahra Governorate and the start of its services to the public, which will facilitate transactions and serve the residents in the governorate.

The committee also reviewed the procedures undertaken in coordination with Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Public Works and Municipal Council to address the parking problem in the commercial market area.

It decided to assign committee member Khaled Al-Habashi to follow up the matter with the relevant official bodies and present updates at the next meeting.

It discussed a number of complaints and suggestions submitted by citizens and explored appropriate solutions. This is in preparation for contacting the relevant authorities and following up the responses and actions taken, ensuring that these issues are addressed through official channels.

It reaffirmed its commitment to receive complaints and suggestions from citizens through the 'Sahel' application ('Tawasul' service) or by submitting them in writing to the Jahra Governorate headquarters.



Jahra Governorate photo

The Jahra Governorate Council meeting in progress.

It called on citizens to use the Municipality application, 'Baladiyat 139', for complaints related to the responsibilities of the Municipality, particularly those concerning public cleanliness, to ensure prompt action.

## Decree ratifies KMC law reform

Revision of legislative framework targeted

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Official Gazette (*Al-Kuwait Al-Yawm*) published Decree-Law No. (59) of 2026 amending Law No. 33/2016 concerning Kuwait Municipal Council (KMC).

The four-article decree is meant to revise the legislative framework regulating Kuwait Municipal Council, replacing several articles in former law, and cancelling others.

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

Provision (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-related specialization.

Provision (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 members' 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.

Article Two says that the current council continues to practice its competencies until the appointment of a new council as per the stipulations of this decree, while Article Three cancels the last clause of Provision (19), and Provisions (5, 8, 9, 11, 27, 28, 29) of 33/2016.

Article Four obliges the Prime Minister and the ministers, each within their respective competence, to implement it, and stipulates that it shall come into force from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

### 'Fill and run' man to face stringent law

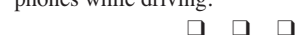
## Phone use on roads major accident cause

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Assistant Director of the Traffic Awareness Department at the General Traffic Department, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Bu Hassan, highlighted that using a mobile phone while driving is a leading cause of traffic accidents, stressing that many accidents are caused by driver distraction and lack of focus while driving, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

During the traffic segment on the "Good Morning Kuwait" program on Kuwait TV, Lt. Col. Bu Hassan explained that the department has recently enhanced its traffic monitoring system through the use of modern technologies, primarily artificial intelligence systems. Smart systems are capable of detecting mobile phone use while driving and accurately recording violations, which helps reduce the number of traffic accidents.

Lt. Col. Bu Hassan emphasized that adherence to traffic rules and regulations is a shared responsibility, and urged drivers to avoid using their

phones while driving.



**Just for KD 1.750:** In a strange incident in Sulabiya, the non-payment of just KD 1.750 may lead an unidentified individual to face several charges that could result in years of imprisonment, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to a security source, a man arrived at a gas station around 1:00 am in a sedan and requested fuel worth the aforementioned amount. After the tank was filled, the driver fled without paying. The gas station attendant attempted to stop the suspect by standing in front of the vehicle, but the driver accelerated, nearly hitting him. The attendant managed to move out of the way at the last moment, avoiding injury.

The attendant, accompanied by a legal representative from the company, filed a report at the Sulabiya Police Station. The investigator ordered

a case to be filed and instructed detectives to apprehend the suspect.

The security source confirmed that surveillance cameras are expected to play a crucial role in identifying the perpetrator, noting that it is unlikely the vehicle used was reported stolen or bore stolen license plates.



**Improper storage:** The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has warned against improper storage in basements, lobbies, and corridors of investment buildings, noting that such practices pose a significant risk and may lead to administrative closure, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In an official statement, KFF emphasized the importance of refraining from installing wooden partitions, as this constitutes a violation of safe-use regulations and may expose owners to legal action.

## Border sleuths foil smuggling of subsidized foodstuff

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Salmi Border Director Saad Al-Quraini led customs officials in foiling an attempt to smuggle out subsidized food products.

The Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) reported that the smuggling attempt was thwarted during routine control and inspection operations at Salmi border, where officers discovered a huge volume

of the abovementioned items.

Following the detection and search protocols, the border personnel confiscated the goods and took legal measures. The confiscated products were handed over to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for regulatory action.

This effort is vital for maintaining domestic market stability, protecting national food reserves, and upholding food security.

KGAC confirmed that the seized items were inventoried and classified in official reports to facilitate their disposal as per the law.



KFF photo

Firemen tackle the paper factory fire.

## Material loss in Abdullah Port paper factory blaze

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Fire broke out at a paper factory in Mina (Port) Abdullah on Monday, resulting in material losses but no casualties, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) explained in the press statement that firefighters from Mina Abdullah, Umm Al-Haiman, Fahaeel, Al-Bairaq, and Al-Isnad stations rushed to the location after receiving information about the paper factory on fire. They extinguished the fire and launched investigations to determine the cause of the fire.

## Mol crackdown nets 19 persons in drug issues

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Emergency Police General Department at the Interior Ministry carried out intensive security campaigns throughout the country on May 17-23 to maintain national security and public order and combat violations and illegal behavior.

These security campaigns resulted in the arrest and referral of 19 individuals to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) on suspicion of possessing narcotics or involvement in related cases, as well as the arrest of 23 individuals wanted by law for involvement in various cases.

This is in addition to impounding 25 vehicles wanted by the judiciary and 15 vehicles whose drivers committed serious traffic violations that endangered lives.

Emergency patrols also apprehended three individuals for violating the Residency and Labor laws, and dealt with four fights in different areas.



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Crown Prince, PM sends greetings

## Kuwait Amir congratulates Argentina on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a congratulatory cable to the President of Argentina Javier Milei on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished good health and well being for the president, along with hopes for Argentina's continued success and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad

Al-Sabah sent on Monday a congratulatory cable to the President of Argentina Javier Milei on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished good health and well being for the president.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Monday a congratulatory cable to the President of Argentina Javier Milei on his country's National Day.

## Kuwait FM receives credentials of new envoys

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Monday at the Foreign Ministry headquarters copies of the credentials of the ambassadors of Cambodia, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Republic of Korea.

The ministry said Sheikh Jarrah received the credentials during separate meetings and wished the new ambassadors success in their duties.

He also expressed hope for further development and prosperity in Kuwait's bilateral relations with the three friendly countries.

The ambassadors are Chhay Makara of Cambodia, Mohammad Al-Zuabi of Antigua and Barbuda, and Kim Jang Hyun of the Republic of Korea.

Sheikh Jarrah received a letter from



Kuwait FM receives credentials copy of Cambodian ambassador.



Kuwait FM receives credentials copy of Antigua and Barbuda ambassador.



MoFA photos credentials copy of South Korean ambassador.

UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The letter touched on the bilateral relations between the two

countries, in addition to the latest regional and international developments.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that Deputy Foreign

Minister Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan received the letter during a meeting with UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al Neyadi.

# Kuwaiti charity signs \$1m UNDP deal to rehabilitate Gaza homes

Agreement to aid 1,200 displaced people

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society announced the signing of a USD one million agreement with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to rehabilitate partially damaged homes for displaced families in Gaza, benefiting around 1,200 people.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Monday, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society Chairman, Engineer Jamal Al-Nouri stated during the signing ceremony that the project will rehabilitate 200 partially damaged homes, giving priority to female-headed households and families with people with disabilities. The aim is to provide the minimum require-



KUNA photo Al-Nouri Charity and the UNDP during the signing of the agreement aimed at rehabilitating the homes of displaced people in Gaza.

ments for safe and dignified living conditions amid the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza, he added.

Al-Nouri emphasized that the agreement reflects Kuwait's continued humanitarian leadership and the charity's commitment to forming

strategic partnerships with reputable international organizations to ensure aid reaches those in need with high efficiency and transparency.

The project will focus on rehabilitating homes and reconnecting them to municipal water and sewage networks to restore basic infrastructure and support the safe return of displaced families, he explained.

Meanwhile, UNDP Resident Representative in Kuwait Emma Morley told KUNA that the partnership reflects the vital role of charitable organizations in mobilizing support for crisis-affected communities.

The project will help restore dignified and safe living conditions, support early recovery, and enhance long-term resilience in Gaza, she noted.

Morley commended Kuwait's important role in promoting humanitarian solidarity and supporting vulnerable communities, adding that the project aims to strengthen social cohesion, reduce displacement, and help affected families rebuild their lives with dignity and safety.

## Al-Mashaan hosts outgoing envoys

### Deputy FM chairs Diplomatic and Consular Corps Council meeting

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan chaired a meeting of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps Council on Monday at the Foreign Ministry headquarters.

The meeting discussed several agenda items, with assistant foreign ministers attending.

Earlier, Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan received outgoing Guinean Ambassador to the country Mamady Traore on Sunday.

Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan received outgoing Honduran Ambassador to the country Francisco Jose Herrera Alvarado on Sunday.



Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan chairs a meeting of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps Council.



Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister receives outgoing Guinean Ambassador.



MoFA photo Deputy Foreign Minister receives outgoing Honduran Ambassador.

## Indian envoy extends Eid wishes to Kuwait leadership and people

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: On the joyous occasion of Eid Al-Adha, the Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, extended her warmest greetings and heartfelt felicitations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, the Government, and the friendly people of the State of Kuwait.

Eid Al-Adha is a time of faith, sacrifice, compassion, and generosity. It inspires us to strengthen the bonds of humanity, solidarity, generosity and mutual respect.

The festival is celebrated with great devotion and warmth in India as families gather for special prayers, exchange greetings, share festive meals, and extend charity to the less fortunate, reflecting the country's rich traditions of harmony, unity, and cultural diversity.

India and Kuwait share deep historical ties and enduring friendship built on trust and people-to-people connections. The friendly ties were elevated to a Strategic Partnership during the visit of HE Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Kuwait in December 2024, witnessing continued development in political, economic, cultural, and people-to-people relations.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the brotherly Kuwaiti authorities for the care and support extended to the more than 1 million strong Indian community in Kuwait, who value the warmth, respect, and the opportunities available in Kuwait. The ties existing between the Kuwaiti and the Indian peoples represent a distinguished model of coexistence and cooperation.



Paramita Tripathi, Ambassador of India to Kuwait

I look forward to continue to work towards further strengthening our bilateral relations in a way that serves the interests of both our friendly countries and peoples.

I pray that this blessed occasion brings peace, prosperity, security, stability, good health, and happiness to the friendly people of Kuwait and to all celebrating around the world. I pray that God Almighty may protect Kuwait, its wise and benevolent leadership, and its friendly and brotherly people.

Eid Mubarak.



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## PADA opens wheelchair supply bids

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) unveiled its plan to directly contract with companies and institutions providing medical wheelchairs for people with disabilities.

The list includes nine types of wheelchairs. Bids must be submitted in sealed envelopes containing price quotation, technical proposal and catalogs, in accordance with the terms and technical specifications, from May 24 to June 10.

PADA invited interested companies to

visit the Financial Affairs Department-Procurement Section at its headquarters in Hawally, Block 11, Beirut Street, before the deadline, to obtain the terms and technical specifications and submit the required documents.

The requirements include price quotation with technical specifications, copy of the commercial agency agreement (if applicable), wheelchair catalogs, copy of the license issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, copy of the commercial registration, and copy of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry registration certificate.

## KRCS provides Eid clothing to 200 needy families

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Board Chairman Khaled Al-Mughamis said on Sunday Eid clothing has been delivered to 200 needy families in the country on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Mughamis reiterated his charity's commitment to launching annual humanitarian initiatives aiming at helping have-not families and answering their basic needs on this religious occasion, cementing so-

cial stability and pleasing children and families. The Eid clothing initiative is part of seasonal programs and projects carried out by the society in Kuwait out of its humanitarian and social responsibility, he added.

The KRCS chief voiced thanks and gratitude to those agencies and companies that contributed to ensuring the success of this humanitarian project as reflecting societal partnership and cooperation in backing humanitarian and charitable initiatives.

Continued from Page 1

**The Iranian**

This game is not palatable to the West, especially the Americans, who are clear in their position: either yes or no, and not as we wrote yesterday, "Yes means No for Iran." Hence, the fields are not open indefinitely, as the world will not continue to submit to the Iranian will, while the international economy is going through one of its most complex crises, as a result of the Revolutionary Guard closing the Strait of Hormuz and threatening to close Bab Al-Mandab Strait as well.

According to American sources, the game is over. If the Iranian devil is in the details, then the best remedy for this matter is decisiveness. The words of the American Secretary of State were clear on this matter: "Coming to the table and signing the conditions imposed by Washington is not up for debate, and those conditions can change any moment." As per President Donald Trump, this was clear from the beginning.

Returning to the peaceful nuclear program that began in the 1950s, with the help of western countries, including France and the United States, is now a thing of the past, because the current regime broke its promises in the 1980s and it has been conducting nuclear military research since 1990. So, when Iran's neighboring countries warn about a nuclear arms race, they are fully aware that the other party is hiding its intentions regarding the peaceful nature of its program.

Yes, former US President Barack Obama made an agreement with Tehran, but in reality, he gave it more time to complete its nuclear military research. Consequently, when President Trump canceled that agreement due to its obvious flaws, he realized that the 10-year freeze on enrichment was an opportunity to prolong the life of the Persian regime and bring it closer to acquiring a weapon of mass destruction.

Why does the military nuclear program of Iran pose a dilemma? Why are assurances insufficient?

Frankly, the reason is that the program is linked to an ideological project in the text of the constitution, which is "exporting the revolution." This text does not exist in any other constitution in the world, only in Iran. If the matter is linked to the meaning of this text from the ideological perspective of the regime, then its endeavor is to "export its sectarian approach."

Thus, the insistence on stalling the nuclear project has no explanation

other than that if the regime possesses a weapon of mass destruction, it will blackmail other countries, at least its neighbors, to accept its political-sectarian agenda, as if it is reviving the political moment that Ismail Safavi imposed on the Iranians in the 16th century, albeit in a reverse manner.

This is the big picture of what the Tehran regime is seeking. Will the world, and the countries in the region, accept turning back the clock to the 16th century?

**Job-switch**

In other news, the General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry conducted traffic and security campaigns in the governorates from May 18-24 in order to guarantee road safety and compliance with traffic laws, as well as eliminate dangerous driving behaviors.

These campaigns resulted in the arrest of 57 individuals wanted by law, issuance of 15,373 traffic violation citations, 2,778 traffic reports were handled, and arrest of 80 individuals with expired residency permits and five who failed to present valid identification documents.

Moreover, 50 vehicles wanted by the courts were seized, and 185 vehicles and 18 motorcycles were impounded.

Legal measures were taken against those proven to have committed violations.

During these campaigns, the traffic officers also dealt with 169 collisions resulting in injuries and 1,049 collisions without injuries.

The Traffic and Operations Sector at the ministry affirmed the continuation of such campaigns in various areas, emphasizing zero tolerance for any violation or behavior that endangers lives and properties, and that the safety and security of road users are among the top security and traffic priorities.

**IWG honors**

Al-Jarallah commended the commitment of the group to improve cross-cultural relations, specifically the organizational efforts and the platform that the group offers for social exchange among the international residents in Kuwait.

Kochlamazashvili expressed her gratitude for the regular coverage provided by Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers, thanking Al-Jarallah for his unwavering support for the cultural mission of the group.

Meanwhile, Al-Khalidi underscored the importance of media partnerships in conveying messages about social and cultural progress to the wider public.

Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao and Bassam Al-Qassas also attended the meeting, which concluded with the group's presentation of a commemorative plaque to Al-Jarallah as a token of appreciation for his continuous cooperation.

**Kuwait to**

Al-Ali told KUNA that weather charts indicate the country will be affected by a relatively hot air mass and northwesterly winds reducing horizontal visibility in some areas.

He said weather conditions will gradually improve from Monday afternoon as winds ease, while temperatures are expected to rise gradually in the coming days.

Al-Ali added that temperatures on Tuesday and Wednesday will range between 42 and 44 degrees Celsius, rising to between 47 and 49 degrees on Thursday and Friday.

He noted that coastal areas are expected to experience relatively humid conditions Thursday evening, while sea waves will remain light to moderate.

**Kuwait marks**

Over more than four decades, the GCC has demonstrated resilience in overcoming complex regional and international challenges, ranging from geopolitical and security developments to global economic crises and rising regional tensions.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi stated to KUNA the anniversary comes amid accelerating regional developments that underscore the importance of the GCC's role in enhancing security, stability and protecting the interests of member states and their peoples.

Al-Budaiwi said that the GCC since its establishment has embodied Gulf leaders vision based on unity, solidarity and integration in confronting regional and international challenges.

He said the GCC has consolidated its position as an effective platform for political coordination, economic integration, and security and defense cooperation among member states throughout its ex-

tended journey.

Al-Budaiwi recalled the 19th consultative meeting of GCC leaders held on April 28, 2026, and their directives to strengthen joint Gulf projects to promote prosperity and welfare for Gulf peoples.

He added that current regional tensions and security challenges require greater Gulf solidarity and enhanced joint action to preserve the security and stability of GCC states and safeguard their development achievements.

Al-Budaiwi stressed that the GCC remains a successful regional model for joint action through unified positions and balanced visions based on regional security, respect for international law and support for peaceful solutions and dialogue.

He reaffirmed that the GCC is moving forward in strengthening unity and completing the path of Gulf integration in line with the aspirations of GCC leaders, while reinforcing its role in supporting regional and international peace and security.

During its journey, the GCC achieved major milestones supporting Gulf integration, including the Gulf Common Market (GCM), GCC Customs Union, GCC power grid interconnection, and enhanced coordination in defense, security, economy, energy, education, health and digital transformation.

In the security field, the GCC has served as a strategic umbrella for coordination in addressing regional threats through joint defense mechanisms, most notably the Peninsula Shield Force, while unifying positions on issues affecting regional security and stability.

The GCC has also strengthened its political and diplomatic presence through unified positions on regional and international crises and by expanding strategic partnerships with major countries and blocs, including the European Union, the United States, China and Russia.

Economically, the GCC has continued supporting economic diversification and development transformation in member states through ambitious national visions aimed at reducing dependence on oil, promoting investment and innovation, empowering the private sector and creating jobs.

**First Deputy PM**

He conveyed the greetings and instructions of the leadership to fa-

cilitate all needs of the pilgrims and ensure they can perform their rituals with ease and comfort.

The minister commended the high level of organization, readiness, and efficiency of the mission's staff, which reflects the commitment to providing the best care for Kuwaiti pilgrims.

He also thanked Saudi authorities for the extensive facilities and support provided to serve pilgrims and ensure the success of the Hajj season.

During the visit, he was briefed by the Head of the Kuwaiti Hajj Mission, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Engineer Dr. Suleiman Al-Swailm, on organizational plans, pilgrim movement between holy sites, and field efforts to deliver the best services.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef was accompanied by Kuwait's Consul General in Jeddah and its Permanent Representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Yousef Al-Tunaib.

**Azerbaijan hails**

leader Heydar Aliyev and HH the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in Casablanca in 1994. He added that the two sides also met in Copenhagen and New York in 1995. He pointed out that the visit of Aliyev to Kuwait in 2009 signaled the beginning of a new phase in bilateral relations.

He cited high-level reciprocal visits, such as the visit of the Kuwaiti foreign affairs minister to Azerbaijan in 2023 to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement conference hosted by Baku.

He said HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled visited Azerbaijan in 2024 to attend the COP29 Leaders Summit -- the first visit by a Kuwaiti Crown Prince. He affirmed that the latter's meeting with President Ilham Aliyev strengthened bilateral relations and opened new horizons for cooperation in various fields.

He expressed his appreciation for the hospitality of Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber during the first round of political consultations between the two countries' foreign affairs ministers and their deputies on Feb 13, 2025 in his capacity as Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister at the time. He revealed that the consultations included fruitful discussions on different aspects

of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

He added that direct flights between the two countries are operated by Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways, taking less than two hours. He then extended an invitation to the attendees to visit Azerbaijan.

**Kuwait, Pakistan**

exchange of expertise, and pharmaceutical and medical supplies industries.

Sheikh Salman reviewed Kuwait's health sector developments, particularly in legislation, governance, patient rights, quality systems, and medical accountability.

He highlighted Kuwait's interest in attracting qualified medical professionals and praised the competence of Pakistani medical and nursing staff.

For his part, the Pakistani Health Minister affirmed his country's keenness to strengthen health cooperation with Kuwait, noting the strong international professional standing of Pakistani medical expertise.

He also expressed Pakistan's aspiration to expand cooperation in medical education, training, and technical expertise exchange between the two countries.

The two sides stressed continued coordination to expand cooperation in medical education, training, and technical expertise exchange.

**Amir thanks**

fraternal contact that reflects the depth of good and close relations, wishing him good health and the Kingdom every development and growth under his wise leadership.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received a phone call Monday from Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq, who conveyed Eid Al-Adha greetings and best wishes.

The Omani Sultan wished continued prosperity for Kuwait and Oman, the Arab and Islamic nations as well as good health for His Highness the Amir, and further prosperity for Kuwait under his leadership.

His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation for the gesture, affirming the strong historic ties between the two countries and exchanging greetings on the occasion. He also wished the Sultan continued good health and Oman further progress and prosperity.



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Water is sprayed on a damaged tank at GKN Aerospace in Garden Grove, Calif., on May 24, after the tank containing a chemical used to make plastic parts overheated Thursday. (AP)

## S. Calif officials trying to prevent blast or leak from damaged chemical tank

LOS ANGELES, May 25, (AP): A damaged chemical tank in Southern California cracked over the weekend, which authorities were hopeful would relieve pressure and reduce the risk of an explosion.

Some 50,000 residents in Garden Grove, a city of roughly 170,000 about 40 miles (60 kilometers) south of downtown Los Angeles, have been evacuated and are waiting for a resolution. The tank overheated Thursday and began venting vapors, leaving local and state officials scrambling to evade a worst possible scenario at the aerospace company site.

No injuries have been reported. Fire officials planned to send in a team overnight to determine if the pressure has been relieved, which would reduce the worst-case scenario of an explosion. Orange County Fire Authority interim chief TJ McGovern said in a video posted late

Sunday to the agency's X account.

Atmospheric modeling showed an active leak from the tank as of Sunday night, McGovern said.

Firefighters have repeatedly sprayed the tank with water in an attempt to cool the chemical inside, methyl methacrylate, which is used to make plastic parts. The tank's interior reached 100 degrees (37.7 Celsius) Sunday, an increase of 10 degrees Fahrenheit (5.5 Celsius) since Saturday, according to Democratic state Sen. Tom Umberg.

Fire officials over the weekend discovered the tank had cracked, lowering the potential for a devastating blast.

Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency Saturday and said he asked President Donald Trump to issue an emergency declaration to bolster federal support for local and state officials.

The tank at GKN Aerospace

Transparency Systems, which makes parts for commercial and military aircraft, holds 6,000 to 7,000 gallons (22,700 to 26,500 liters) of methyl methacrylate used to make plastic parts.

Monitoring tests found air pollution around the evacuation zone was within normal limits and specialized equipment is being used to ensure gas is not released, state and federal environmental officials said Saturday.

The first goal of firefighters is to cool off the chemical inside the tank to prevent a leak or explosion.

Drones were monitoring temperatures at 10-minute intervals to watch for any spikes. Containment barriers have been set up to prevent the chemical from getting into storm drains or reaching creeks or the nearby ocean in the event of a spill, Orange County Fire Authority division chief Craig Covey said on social media.

## 2028 House majority looks much harder for Dems

# US Democrats vow redistricting counterpunch but face hurdles Republicans don't

WASHINGTON, May 25, (AP): US Democrats are poised to finish several seats behind Republicans in 2026 in the nationwide race to redraw maps for the US House. They can catch up in 2028, but only if they overcome a series of redistricting hurdles that the GOP does not face.

That's because Democrats, in many states, can draw partisan political lines only if they evade constraints - some self-imposed - on their ability to counterpunch.

In Colorado, New Jersey, New York and Washington, redistricting commissions draw boundaries that are not supposed to benefit either party. Democrats will have to gain voters' permission to nullify those politically popular bodies and replace their balanced maps with ruthlessly gerrymandered ones to match what Republicans did after President Donald Trump last year demanded a sweeping redrawing in Republican-controlled states in an attempt to

help his party keep its House majority.

If the Democrats get a detail wrong in their process, courts could unwind the new maps. That is what happened in Virginia this month when the state Supreme Court invalidated voter-approved maps that would have given Democrats four more winnable seats. The court found the Democratic-controlled legislature did not follow the correct procedure when it placed the measure on the ballot.

"It's going to be expensive, it's going to be unpopular, and it's going to be a challenge for them to do what they want," said Adam Kincaid, executive director of the National Republican Redistricting Trust.

Democrats remain favored to win control of the House this year despite recent setbacks in redistricting. The most consequential was the conservative majority on the US Supreme Court gutting a key provision of the



California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a news conference on Aug 14, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Voting Rights Act, allowing Republicans to swiftly eliminate at least three majority-Black House seats in

the South that Democrats now hold.

Strategists for both parties expect Democratic gains in November

that are typical when the party of an incumbent president faces voter backlash in a midterm election. In Trump's first midterm in 2018, for example, Democrats added 40 seats in the House.

But a 2028 House majority looks much harder for Democrats.

Presidential votes are usually much closer than midterm ones. Under the recent high court decision, Republicans next year could easily eliminate another five or more majority-minority Democratic-held districts in states whose maps were already set for 2026. They can likely gain an additional four seats by redrawing maps in Indiana, where some state lawmakers balked last year and were punished by Republican primary voters, and in Kentucky and Kansas, where Democratic governors who have been able to block Republican maps will reach their term limit.

The mapmaking pressure is high

for Democrats to try to boost their chances of winning the House in 2028 as the party also hopes to take back the Senate and White House that year. Only then could it try again to pass a national ban on partisan gerrymandering that could rob the Republicans of what could become a durable advantage for them.

After the 2030 census, House seats will be reallocated to states seeing the fastest population gains, which are mainly ones that Republicans control. They are projected to pick up as many as 10 seats, largely at the expense of Democratic strongholds such as California and New York.

"Looking at the next census makes me all the more stressed to ban partisan gerrymandering at the federal level," said John Bisogano, executive director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee.

Republicans face some of their own legal hoops in the redistricting competition.



People take part during a protest in Madrid, Spain, on May 24, against rising housing costs that are pricing many Spaniards out of the market amid a broader housing crisis in Spain. (AP)

## Thousands rally in Spain against increasing housing costs

Thousands of people rallied in central Madrid on Sunday against spiraling housing costs that have priced many Spaniards out of the housing market despite a recent economic boom, particularly in cities such as the country's capital and Barcelona.

Spain's housing crisis is one of Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's main political

vulnerabilities ahead of elections in 2027.

The country has a strong tradition of homeownership and scant public housing for rent, while rents have been driven up by increased demand, including due to tourism and population growth linked to immigration, analysts say.

The protesters chanted slogans and held banners high-

lighting their right to housing. "We want neighbors, not tourists," one banner read.

Estrella Baudu, a 28-year-old teacher who was among the protesters, said she was living with her grandmother. "The situation for many young people like me is quite complicated, and it is very difficult to find a rental home due to the prices and low salaries," she said. (AP)

## Pope Leo calls for robust regulation of AI in manifesto that ponders future of humanity

VATICAN CITY, May 25, (AP): Pope Leo XIV called Monday for robust regulation of artificial intelligence and for its developers to work for the common good rather than profit, issuing a sweeping manifesto on safeguarding humankind as the technology impacts everything from work to war.

"Magnifica Humanitas" (Magnificent Humanity), Leo's first encyclical, has been eagerly awaited ever since history's first US-born pope announced days after his election that he considered AI to be the biggest challenge facing humanity today.

In the text, Leo denounced the "culture of power" driving the AI race, especially in developing ever more sophisticated methods of remote warfare. He declared that it was "not permissible" to entrust irreversible, lethal decisions to AI systems, setting up another flash point between the American pope and the Trump administration, which has worked aggressively to deregulate AI development.

Experts in the tech industry, academia and Catholic morality said the document will likely become a benchmark in the debate over AI, a point of reference for policymakers, researchers and ordinary folk alike. It comes as the near-daily developments in the technology trigger concerns over AI replacing human jobs and even human intelligence.

"It lends itself to people who are at the forefront of these tools and



Pope Leo XIV, left, greets Anthropic co-founder Christopher Olah during the presentation of the Pope's first encyclical, 'Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence,' at the Vatican on May 25. (AP)

able to see the incredible things that they're able to do, to have questions about their own 'What does it mean to be human?'" said Taylor Black, a Microsoft AI executive and director of Catholic University of America's AI institute.

The pope was to present the text at a Vatican launch Monday that featured the co-founder of Anthropic, which is currently locked in a legal battle with the Trump administration over access to its AI technology. The Vatican decided to involve Anthropic as part of its decade-long effort to engage Silicon Valley in dialogue

over the human cost of AI.

And yet in his text, Leo repeatedly blasted the concentration of power and data in the hands of so few people in the private sector as a danger, especially to children and the most vulnerable, and called for external regulation of their work.

"It is not enough to invoke ethics in the abstract; robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, informed users and a political system that does not abdicate its responsibility are required," he wrote. "A more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few."

## All-women Senate delegation head to Arctic to reassure United States allies

WASHINGTON, May 25, (AP): Seeking to reassure U.S. allies, a bipartisan group of senators is departing for a tour of Arctic nations. And this time they're leaving the men behind.

From the eight senators to their staff and military liaison officers, the group will be entirely women as they pay diplomatic visits to government officials in four Arctic nations, witness the challenges for militaries in the region and visit a Norwegian archipelago so remote they will need escorts to avoid run-ins with polar bears.

"I want them to experience, first of all, the awesomeness of the Arctic," said Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who is leading the trip alongside Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The trip was born out of both senator's work to stabilize relations with US allies in North America and northern Europe at a time when President Donald Trump has taken an aggressive, go-it-alone stance in



US Sen Jeanne Shaheen, D-NH, arrives at the chamber of the Capitol in Washington on Nov 10, 2025. (AP)

the region. Just this week, the Pentagon announced that the US would pause participation on a joint board with Canada for continental defense that dates back to World War II.

Murkowski and Shaheen said that is the wrong approach in an Arctic region that has increasing strategic value and unique challenges.

"We will reassure our allies that we recognize and appreciate the importance of our allies and partners in the Arctic as in so many other areas," Shaheen told The Associated Press, adding that she expected the group to discuss "what more we can do as members of Congress to support those relationships."

## Europe

### Foreign involvement in data leak - Lithuania:

Lithuanian authorities are on high alert after a massive data leak involving more than 600,000 entries from national data registers, which is believed to have been executed by another country.

The Lithuanian general prosecutor's office on Friday announced the leak was primarily from registers of real estate and legal entities accessed by using login credentials of institutions authorized to receive the data.

The head of the State Enterprise Centre of Registers, **Adrijus Jusas**, resigned Monday following the leak.

The authorities immediately implemented additional cybersecurity measures, including blocking the accounts of suspected data users and restricting access with a requirement to update credentials, the prosecutors said.

The prosecutor's office said a foreign country is suspected of involvement, although authorities did not specify which nation.

Lithuanians are especially cautious given that the country, with a population of 2.9 million, is one of the main targets of Russia's hybrid war against Europe, which includes sabotage, arson attacks and vandalism, as well as influence operations. (AP)

**Husband of ex-Scottish leader pleads guilty:** The estranged husband of former Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon pleaded guilty Monday to embezzling more

than 400,000 pounds (\$540,000) from the Scottish National Party when he was its chief executive.

Peter Murrell, 62, was remanded into custody after admitting in the High Court in Edinburgh that he used the money to buy a motorhome, two cars and luxury goods.

Murrell was originally arrested in April 2023 in an investigation into the SNP's finances and was charged in April 2024.

Sturgeon, who dominated Scottish politics for almost a decade, was cleared of wrongdoing last year, about two years after she unexpectedly resigned as first minister of Scotland's semi-autonomous government. She served eight years in the role. (AP)

**Slovenian politician confirmed as PM:** Slovenia's parliament on Friday appointed right-wing populist politician Janez Jansa as the new prime minister, in a shift for the small European Union country that was previously run by a liberal government.

Lawmakers backed Jansa in a 51-36 vote in the 90-member assembly. The new prime minister will need to come back to Parliament within the next 15 days for another vote to confirm his future Cabinet.

Jansa's appointment concludes a postelection stalemate in Slovenia after a parliamentary ballot two months ago ended practically in a tie. Former liberal Prime Minister Robert Golob's Freedom Movement won by a thin margin but he was unable to muster a parliamentary majority.

Jansa and his populist Slovenian Democratic Party signed a coalition agreement this week with several right-wing groups. The new government also has the backing of a nonestablishment Truth party that first emerged as an anti-vaccination movement during the COVID-19 pandemic. (AP)

Marines conduct rapid response exercise at US Embassy in Caracas

## Venezuela's Machado vows another run for presidency, eyes return from exile

PANAMA CITY, Panama, May 25, (AP): Venezuela's Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado announced that she plans to run for president again and intends to return to her home country before the end of 2026.

Machado's remarks, made while meeting in Panama with several fellow Venezuelan opposition leaders, come more than four months after the stunning White House decision to sideline her and instead work with a Venezuelan ruling party loyalist following the US military's capture of then-President Nicolás Maduro.

Machado has been in exile since December, when she emerged from 11 months in hiding somewhere in Venezuela and traveled to Norway where she was honored with the Nobel Prize.

She told reporters in Panama City that she and the other gathered opposition leaders remain committed to a democratic transition "through free

and fair presidential elections, where all Venezuelans inside and outside the country vote."

Still, it is unclear when Venezuela will hold a presidential election.

US President Donald Trump and senior administration officials have praised Maduro's successor, acting President Delcy Rodríguez, who has thrown open Venezuela's oil industry to U.S. investment at a time of surging oil prices tied to the war in Iran.

The Trump administration has also dampened talk of elections, which are required by Venezuela's constitution within 30 days of the president becoming "permanently unavailable."

An election with democratic conditions would take between seven and nine months of planning, Machado said. Necessary changes include the appointment of neutral electoral authorities, voting registration updates and the ability of opposition candidates to run for office without



Venezuela's opposition leader María Corina Machado speaks during a rally organized by Venezuelans who live in Panama City on May 23. (AP)

government interference.

Machado rose to become Maduro's strongest opponent in recent years, but his government barred her from run-

ning for office in the 2024 presidential election, leading her to choose retired ambassador Edmundo González Urrutia to represent her on the ballot.

Officials loyal to the ruling party declared Maduro the winner mere hours after the polls closed, but Machado's well-organized campaign collected evidence showing González had defeated Maduro by a margin of more than 2-to-1.

On Saturday, Machado told reporters she would run against any other presidential hopeful in "an impeccable election."

"I will be a candidate, but there may be others, of course," she said. "I would love to compete with everyone, with anyone who wants to be a candidate."

**Also:**

**CARACAS, Venezuela:** The US military conducted a rapid response exercise involving Marines and military aircraft in Venezuela's capital on Saturday, more than four months after the ouster of then-President Nicolás Maduro.

Two Marine Corps Osprey aircraft,

which have characteristics of both a helicopter and a fixed-wing airplane, flew over the recently reopened U.S. Embassy in Caracas. They landed in the parking lot with the downdraft blowing tree branches. Forces then descended from the aircraft.

"Ensuring the military's rapid response capability is a key component of mission readiness, both here in Venezuela and around the world," the embassy said on Instagram.

Venezuela's government had announced the drill earlier this week. Foreign Minister Yván Gil said the United States would conduct the exercise to prepare "in the event of medical emergencies or catastrophic emergencies."

The drill comes almost two months after the US formally reopened its embassy in Caracas. The reopening followed the restoration of full diplomatic relations with the South American country after Maduro's ouster in early January.

Noboa vows to keep hunting down criminals

## Ecuador president touts US-backed crime-fighting efforts

QUITO, Ecuador, May 25, (AP): Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa on Sunday used his State of the Union address to tout his government's US-backed crime-fighting strategies as well as improvements of some economic indicators.

Addressing the National Assembly in the capital, Quito, Noboa cited the extradition of a dozen crime bosses to the United States and the seizure of almost 300 tons of drugs as examples of what he described as a decisive and effective approach to combat organized crime, the main concern of Ecuadorians throughout this decade.

"We will seek them out, find them and extradite them," Noboa said of wanted criminals after he asserted that the South American country cannot develop "if families live in fear" due to organized crime.

Ecuador has struggled to contain drug violence since 2021 as rival cartels partner with local gangs and battle for control of routes and coastal ports used to smuggle cocaine. The country is wedged between Colombia and Peru, the world's top cocaine producing countries.



Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa leaves the National Assembly after delivering his State of the Nation address at the National Assembly in Quito, Ecuador on May 24. (AP)

Last year, Ecuador recorded its highest homicide rate in decades of 50 murders per every 100,000 residents, according to the Ministry of the Interior.

In response, Noboa, who was re-elected last year to a 4-year term,

has used a state of exception to allow the military to implement a variety of crime-fighting strategies, including joint patrols with police officers and property searches without warrants. Earlier this year, Ecuador's military also carried out

a joint operation with U.S. forces against a training camp allegedly used by Colombian drug traffickers, attacking the site with drones, helicopters and boats.

Noboa has come under criticism from civil society groups, who say his iron fisted methods have failed to reduce crime, while putting civilians in danger.

Glaedys González, an analyst for the Andean region at the International Crisis Group, on Sunday said Noboa may have been optimistic in his speech regarding the country's security, but "progress on violence is far from being achieved."

"It is evident that the situation in Ecuador has reached unprecedented levels," González said.

Noboa on Sunday also promoted economic progress, telling lawmakers that poverty dropped from 26% to 21.4% in 2025 while extreme poverty went down from 10.4% to 8.4%.

Noboa was first elected in 2023 during a snap election triggered when then-President Guillermo Lasso dissolved the National Assembly and shortened his own term.

## Troops rescued 92 abducted by jihadi militants: Nigeria military

ABUJA, Nigeria, May 25, (Agencies): Ninety-two people who were abducted by jihadi extremists have been rescued by troops in Nigeria's conflict-battered northeast region, the country's military said Sunday.

The abductees - 52 males, 33 females, and seven children - were rescued along the Bura-Kamuya road in the Biu area of Borno State, military spokesperson Sami Uba said in a statement.

The militants were "forcibly herding" their victims off the road and into the bush before they were intercepted by the soldiers, Uba said.

"Converging on the terrorists in a well-coordinated pursuit toward the Mangari-Dora general area, Operation HADIN KAI troops engaged the insurgents and forced them to abandon their captives and flee in confusion," he said. The military did not specify how long those rescued had been in captivity.

Militant groups operating in northern Nigeria include Boko Haram and a splinter organization that broke away to affiliate with the Islamic State group.

Nigeria's complex security crisis has killed thousands of people, according to the United Nations under its Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

**Also:**

**JOHANNESBURG:** Two tourists were found dead in South Africa's Kruger National Park, and police have opened murder and hijacking cases, local media reported on Saturday.

The bodies of the two tourists were discovered Friday afternoon near Cross Corner, close to the confluence of the Levubu and Limpopo rivers in the northern part of the park, the Independent Online reported, citing Limpopo police spokesperson Brigadier Hlulani Mashaba.

The victims, a 71-year-old man and a woman whose identity has not been confirmed, reportedly arrived at one of the camps in Kruger National Park on Sunday. They were last seen on Wednesday morning at the Pafuri picnic site, and a search was launched after they failed to return, according to the report.

### Asia

**Over 20 injured after Tokyo spraying incident:** More than 20 people developed sore throats near a luxury department store in Tokyo's posh Ginza shopping area on Monday after a person allegedly sprayed an unknown substance, Japanese fire department officials said.

The Tokyo Fire Department said 26 people complained of suddenly developing throat pain and felt unwell near the Ginza Six shopping complex, and all but one of them were taken to a hospital. Their symptoms were believed to be mild, officials said.

Fire department and police officials said an investigation was underway. The largest-circulation Yomiuri newspaper said police have detected traces of pepper spray on the wall.

Dozens of fire engines and ambulances were parked outside the complex, and the surrounding roads were temporarily closed. Television footage showed firefighters and officials in hazmat suits assisting people, with some being brought out of the building. (AP)

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**China heavy rain kills 3:** Three people were killed and another 17 were unaccounted for after heavy rain battered Yongchuan District in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality starting Saturday night, said local authorities.

In addition, two people were also unaccounted for after the rain lashed Beibei District in the municipality.

Rescue and response efforts are currently underway in full swing. Starting from 2 p.m. Sunday, Chongqing has adjusted Yongchuan District to a Level-I flood control emergency response at the municipal level, 29 districts and counties, such as Rongchang District and Beibei District, to a Level-II response, and nine districts and counties, including Yuzhong District, to a Level-III response, said the flood control and drought relief headquarters of Chongqing. (Xinhua)

## Bus-van collision in Pakistan kills 17

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, May 25, (Agencies): A speeding van rammed into a bus parked along a motorway in northwest Pakistan on Monday, killing 17 people and injuring five others, police and rescue officials said.

The crash occurred near Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when the minibus slammed into the parked bus, according to Shah Fahad, director-general of Rescue 1122 emergency services. He said preliminary findings suggested driver negligence caused the accident.

The bus was carrying passengers to the scenic Swat Valley.

Rescue workers and police shifted the dead and injured to a hospital, Fahad said.

**Also:**

**ISLAMABAD:** The death toll from a suicide blast targeting a passenger train in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province has risen to 47, including 20 soldiers, while 98 others were injured, rescue officials said on Monday.



People look on after a truck carrying iron rods and extra passengers overturned on a highway in central district of Tangail, Bangladesh on May 25. (AP)

## 15 dead in Bangladesh truck accident

A truck carrying iron rods and extra passengers overturned on a major highway early Monday in central Bangladesh, leaving at least 15 people dead and 10 others injured, police said.

The crash happened after the driver lost control around 5 a.m. at

Sorotail area in Tangail district, 83 kilometers (52 miles) northwest of the nation's capital, Dhaka, said local police chief Fuad Hossain.

Hossain said the truck was carrying hitchhiking passengers and travelling from Dhaka to the northern region as vacationers began

traveling ahead of the Islamic festival Eid al-Adha on Thursday. The truck overturned and killed them at the scene, he said.

The official said most of the passengers were day laborers and were traveling to join their families for the festival. (AP)

## 4 dead, 17 mostly workers still missing in collapse of unfinished Philippine hotel

ANGELES, Philippines, May 25, (Agencies): Rescuers pulled out three people Monday from an immense pile of rubble that was all that remained of a nine-story hotel which collapsed while under construction in a northern Philippine city, bringing the death toll to four with 17 others still missing, officials said.

Two of the men were dead, while emergency personnel struggled in the early morning hours to revive one in an ambulance near the pile of concrete slabs, twisted iron bars and aluminum scaffolding that was all that remained of the building in Angeles City of Pampanga Province. They eventually gave up and drove away.

The poignant scene was witnessed by a small group of journalists, including from The Associated Press, who watched hundreds of rescuers led by firefighters and police scrambling for hours to extricate the men, who were at the time alive but trapped under concrete slabs and iron bars.

Rescuers tried to provide water and medicine intravenously to one of the trapped men in a desperate effort to keep him alive in the scorching summer heat, regional police chief Brig Gen Jess Mendez told the AP.

"He never made it despite all the efforts," he said.

One of the three people pulled out from the rubble on Monday was unidentified and was not on the list of the 17 missing, who were mostly



Rescue workers continue search at a collapsed building where multiple people are believed to be trapped in Angeles city in Pampanga province, north of Manila on May 24. (AP)

construction workers, according to Angeles city information chief Jay Pelayo.

The fourth dead victim was a Malaysian tourist trapped in a budget inn that was partly hit by the avalanche of debris from the collapsed building. Another guest at the inn was injured but managed to dash out, officials said.

A day after the unfinished building collapsed with a loud crashing sound after a fierce thunderstorm, Angeles City Mayor Carmelo Lazatin said rescue efforts would still not be shifted to a body retrieval operation.

**Also:**

**MANILA:** Four people, including a police officer, were killed and four others wounded in a shooting incident on Sunday night during a town fiesta celebration in the northern Philippines' Isabela province, police said Monday.

Police said the victims were attending a fiesta gathering in front of the house of the killed police officer around 7:50 p.m. Sunday when unidentified gunmen suddenly opened fire on them.

## Australian spy boss shifts resources from counterterrorism before attack

MELBOURNE, Australia, May 25, (AP): An Australian spy agency boss told an inquiry on Monday he had pivoted resources away from counterterrorism to espionage and foreign interference investigations a few years before two gunmen massacred 15 people at a Sydney celebration.

Mike Burgess, director-general of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main domestic spy agency known as ASIO, was testifying at a government inquiry into the spread of antisemitism in Australia ahead of the attack at Bondi Beach on Dec 14.

ASIO reduced Australia's National Terrorism Threat Level from "probable" to "possible" - the second-safest level on a five-tier scale -- in November 2022, after the Islamic State group in the Middle East had been defeated and was no longer recruiting fighters.



Police patrol in the early morning at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Dec 15, 2025, following the previous day's shooting. (AP)

ASIO then shifted to increase its focus on foreign interference and espionage investigations, but left the organization's "counterterrorism mission" with sufficient resources, Burgess said.

"Because terrorism has the potential to cause people to lose their

lives or get harmed, it always remained a priority for us. There was just less activity that we were investigating because the nature of the environment had changed and the number of tasks we were looking at had reduced," Burgess said.

## Boursa Kuwait ends lower

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Monday's trading session lower, with the general index declining by 51.21 points, or 0.58 percent, to settle at 8,815.12 points. Trading activity saw 515.16 million shares exchanged through 25,718 transactions, with a total value of KD 155.6 million (approximately USD 476.13 million).

### PE firms eye growth

## KPMG report points to selective M&A recovery

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: In our latest report titled '2026 Global M&A Outlook', KPMG captures insights from a survey of 700 PE and corporate dealmakers across 20 countries and jurisdictions. The findings come at a time when dealmakers are navigating a more complex decision-making environment. Legislative and regulatory volatility, evolving trade regimes and global conflicts, as well as transformational changes in global tax frameworks are reshaping forward-looking cost structures and return profiles.

**PE confidence rises, even as deal sizes stay disciplined**  
Despite this complexity, PE firms are showing particularly strong expectations for deal growth, underpinned by the need to deploy capital, improving financing conditions and a gradual reopening of exit markets.

At the same time, expected deal sizes remain disciplined. 95% of PE dealmakers and 83% of corporate dealmakers expect the total value of their next transaction to be under US\$1bn. For their next M&A transaction, PE and corporate dealmakers most commonly expect deal values to fall between US\$250m and under US\$500m (cited by 50% of PE and 32% of corporate dealmakers respectively).

**Growth, capability and market expansion are driving deal appetite**

The top strategic drivers for M&A decisions in 2026 were reported as expanding into new markets or geographies (58%), growing core business (57%) and acquiring technological capabilities or talent (46%).

"M&A activity is expected to regain momentum, driven by stabilizing financing conditions, renewed corporate confidence, and strategic portfolio reshaping. The recovery is expected to be selective, with investors focusing on targeted acquisitions that strengthen core capabilities, support growth initiatives, and accelerate tech transformation.

Companies are increasingly considering divestment of non-core assets and capital re-allocation to unlock value and sharpen strategic focus. Geopolitical challenges and regulatory complexities remain critical aspects in a transaction, requiring careful planning and structuring,"

Interest in carve-outs is rising sharply, with half of both PE and corporate dealmakers expecting carve-out activity to increase moderately or significantly over the next 12-24 months. 71% of PE dealmakers are open to, or actively pursuing portfolio separation, and 55% report already having carve-outs under consideration (versus 21% of corporate dealmakers).

The carve-out shift is being driven less by short-term market conditions than by strategic portfolio reshaping — dealmakers cite improving operational efficiency (52%), enhancing the valuation of remaining businesses (42%), reducing risk pressure (35%), and unlocking capital for reinvestment (33%) as the main drivers for increased carve-out activity. In practice, this means organizations are proactively separating businesses that dilute strategic focus, absorb disproportionate management attention or concentrate risk outside core capabilities — with the aim of redirecting capital and leadership capacity toward areas positioned for durable growth. Against this backdrop, 2026 is shaping up to be the year of the carve-out.

**AI is being embedded across the M&A lifecycle — with clear efficiency gains already emerging**  
At the same time, AI is moving beyond experimentation and becoming embedded



Ankul Aggarwal

#### Key findings

- 37% of PE dealmakers expect to do more than five deals in 2026, versus 20% of corporates, while US-based organizations report the highest confidence and readiness to transact.
- AI is now embedded across the M&A lifecycle and making previously uneconomical analysis viable
- 71% of PE dealmakers are open to or actively pursuing portfolio separation, and 55% already have carve-outs under consideration.

across the M&A lifecycle. One of the more significant shifts is not simply that AI is improving speed, but that it is making previously uneconomical analysis viable — including more exhaustive contract review, continuous integration risk monitoring, deeper competitive benchmarking, and stronger pattern recognition across deal history.

Dealmakers are also reporting measurable efficiency gains in key areas of the M&A lifecycle. 17% said AI is delivering a greater than 25% efficiency gain in valuation modeling and scenario planning, as well as budget modeling and tracking, with 3% reporting a 50%+ AI efficiency gain across both categories.

In competitive intelligence and market analysis, 59% report AI is providing a greater than 10% efficiency gain, including 19% reporting a 26-50% efficiency gain and 7% reporting a 50%+ efficiency gain.

**Execution risk is rising alongside deal complexity**

As deal activity accelerates, execution demands are becoming more visible and more consequential. Carve-outs, staged transactions, joint ventures and capability-driven acquisitions can place significantly greater demands on organizations than traditional full-business acquisitions.

Survey results reinforce this challenge, with dealmakers consistently identifying operational disentanglement (52%), valuation complexity (43%), IT and data separation (40%), talent retention (32%) and regulatory hurdles (25%) as material risks to successful outcomes.

Evolving tax regimes, trade volatility and shifting regulatory thresholds are adding further modeling and compliance demands, reinforcing the importance of execution readiness before close.

M&A market is becoming increasingly strategic, with organizations placing greater emphasis on transactions that strengthen core capabilities and support long-term growth priorities. Investors continue to reassess capital allocation, prioritize quality earnings and post-deal value creation.

This is expected to drive steady mid-market activity, as well as increased interest in partnerships and portfolio optimization initiatives. At the same time, geopolitical and regulatory challenges remain key factors in any transaction, requiring careful planning and execution safeguards. Concluded Ankul.

To read the detailed report, visit [kpmg.com/kw](http://kpmg.com/kw)

# Business

In line with its commitment to innovative customer solutions

## National Bank of Kuwait boosts customer digital experience with NBK Mobile Banking App update

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: As part of its ongoing commitment to developing its digital channels and delivering a comprehensive banking experience that meets its customers' aspirations, National Bank of Kuwait has launched an update to its NBK Mobile Banking App.

The update focuses on enhancing the functionality of the NBK Mobile Banking App and making navigation between its services easier, allowing customers to complete their daily transactions with speed and flexibility, while also providing additional features that support digital lifestyles and cater to diverse banking needs.

Through this update, NBK reaffirms its leading position in digital innovation and its continued investment in the latest technologies. This ensures customers have access to secure and advanced banking services anytime, anywhere, aligning with its digital transformation strategy and enhancing the customer experience.

**Load Prepaid Card and Pay Credit Card Using Different Accounts**

This service allows customers to top up their Prepaid Cards and pay bills on selected Credit Cards using not just their primary account, but any of their NBK accounts.

This feature targets customers with multiple accounts at the Bank, parents managing their children's cards, business owners, and expats with multiple income sources, giving them greater flexibility in managing their finances.

Moreover, this service improves card management within the app, supports better budget and spending control, and reduces the need for inter-account transfers. It also provides customers with complete financial flexibility and facilitates managing family cards. Additionally, it allows for the distribution or organization of funds according to needs, without having to transfer funds between accounts prior to completing top-ups or payments.

**Credit Card Payments Via KNET**

The new update allows customers to pay their NBK Credit Card dues directly through the KNET gateway. This includes Credit Cards linked to their salary, a reserved balance (Deposit), or their Jawhara account, providing a faster, easier, and more flexible payment method.

This service is available to customers who prefer to pay using KNET, those with insufficient funds in their



Mohammad Al-Dakhil

#### Al-Dakhil:

- Advanced services reflecting NBK's vision for a banking future based on speed, flexibility, and security.
- We continue to provide innovative solutions that keep pace with the rapid changes in the financial sector and meet our customers' ambitions.

bank accounts, and those who do not transfer their salaries to NBK but wish to pay their NBK Credit Cards, whether they are family or business cards.

This feature also allows customers to easily make payments using local Debit Cards, even if there is no balance in their NBK accounts.

**Claims Submission**

Customers can now submit various claims through the National Service Mobile App and receive a refund within 60 days. These claims include duplicate transactions, incorrect transactions, failure to receive refunds, goods and services paid for but not received, failure to withdraw cash from ATMs, and failure to deposit cash from ATMs. To facilitate the process and complete it in a shorter time, the customer may be required to attach some documents such as merchant correspondence and proof of invoice, and provide certain details to complete the transaction.

**Enhancements on Login Experience**

There were several enhancements made to the app when it comes to registration process to reduce fraud



during first-time logins. The "personal facial image" feature is now available after authentication via the Kuwait Mobile ID app, enhancing the security of app usage and banking transactions.

**Virtual IBAN**

NBK is pleased to announce the availability of adding beneficiaries to AZ Wallet through Virtual Iban (V-IBAN) service. Providing customers with a more seamless and flexible transfer experience via NBK Mobile Banking. Beneficiaries can be added by entering the required details followed by a verification code sent via mobile to complete the process safely and securely reflecting Bank's ongoing commitment to delivering secure and innovative digital banking solutions that enhance the customer experience.

**Enhancements Apple Messages**

The Bank has also launched an update to its Apple Messages service, available exclusively for Apple devices. Customers who are onboarded digitally can speak directly with an NBK Representative to get any assistance while onboarded digitally. NBK customers can access this service through the advanced login page in the NBK mobile app and via the website nbk.com.

**Commenting on the launch of the new update, Mr. Mohammad Al-Dakhil, VP – Head of Digital Banking Channels at National Bank of Kuwait, said:** "At NBK, we continuously update our Mobile Banking App, adding new services and improving existing ones, as part of our commitment to developing our digital services and providing a more advanced and convenient banking experience for our customers".

Al-Dakhil continued: "We were

keen to include in this update a range of advanced services that enhance the quality of our customers' daily banking experience, reflecting our vision for a banking future based on speed, flexibility, and security, and placing customer needs at the forefront of our priorities."

Finally, Al-Dakhil emphasized that the Bank will continue to invest in its digital infrastructure and provide innovative solutions that keep pace with the rapid changes in the financial sector and meet the aspirations of its customers.

Through continuous updates to the NBK Mobile Banking App, customers can easily and securely conduct their daily transactions. They can make local and international transfers, including instant transfers via the WAMD service, as well as easily deactivate or reactivate their cards, report lost or stolen cards, and request immediate replacements. The app also allows users to pay bills for various telecommunications and service providers, purchase e-commerce cards for platforms like iTunes, Google Play, and Amazon, and digital gaming cards for PlayStation, in addition to subscribing to television channels and entertainment platforms like Spotify.

For the convenience of customers, they can also apply for personal loans or credit cards, request an increase in the credit limit, open new accounts including savings accounts (and electronic savings accounts), deposits and investment accounts, as well as create standing orders, view currency exchange rates, withdraw cash without a card, register for the electronic earnings service, and other services in simple and secure steps.

## Kuwait: External surplus narrows in 2025 on lower oil prices, but investment income rises

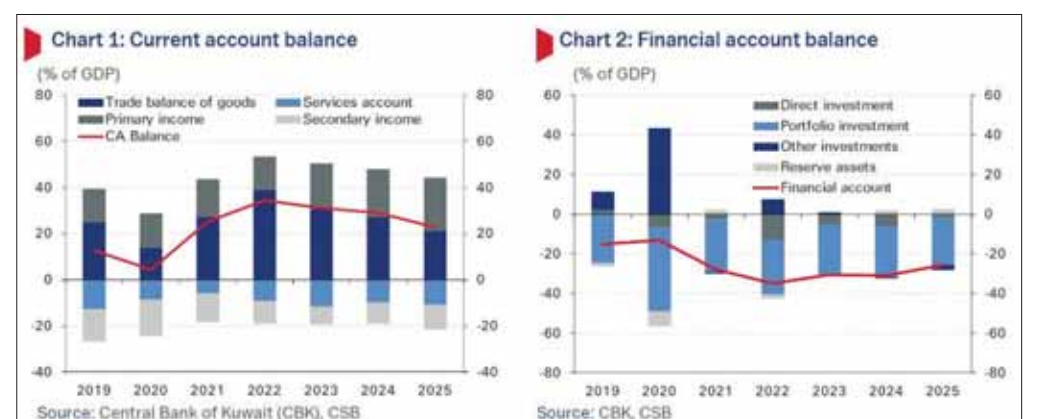
By National Bank of Kuwait

Kuwait's current account surplus moderated in 2025 but nevertheless remained very large at almost 23% of GDP. The dip reflected weaker oil prices, higher imports of goods and services, especially machinery, plus higher workers' remittances. These pressures were partly offset by investment income that continued to rise and serve as an important buffer against lower oil revenues. In the financial account, net outflows declined for the third consecutive year, driven by weaker outward direct investment and shifting portfolio allocations towards debt instruments. Inward investment (FDI) also fell again. Looking ahead, the volatility and disruption caused by the Iran conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz could see the external surplus narrow in the near term. Higher import costs caused by supply chain disruptions are also a factor.

The current account surplus narrowed to KD10.9 billion (22.7% of GDP) in 2025, from KD14.3 billion (29.0% of GDP) in 2024. While the surplus is the smallest since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, it remains sizable compared to GCC peers. This moderation was primarily driven by weaker oil export revenues, reflecting a decline in export prices (Kuwait Export Crude fell 12.7% y/y to an average of \$70.4/bbl in 2025) rather than export volumes (crude & refined products), which actually increased (+1.2% y/y to 2.40 mb/d on average). Moreover, non-oil exports maintained solid growth at 10.7%, though slowing from 40.4% in 2024, supported mainly by a strong increase in exports of chemicals and vehicles. On the other hand, import growth accelerated to 12.1% compared to 1.1% in 2024, driven mainly by a sharp increase in intermediate goods at 22.0%, up from 3.5% in the previous year on higher imports of processed industrial supplies. In addition, the services account deficit widened to KD5.2 billion on higher payments for transportation and construction, in line with the pickup in goods imports, and likely signaling increased demand for foreign contractors to work on large-scale infrastructure projects that have picked up momentum in recent years.

Meanwhile, net investment income, which represents the returns on capital invested abroad, a substantial part of which is likely sovereign wealth fund (KIA) returns, remained a key pillar of the current account surplus, rising almost 10% y/y to KD11.2 billion in 2025 (23.2% of GDP). The improvement was driven by stronger returns in both direct and portfolio investments from abroad, underscoring the importance of Kuwait's external asset position in cushioning against oil revenue volatility. The secondary income deficit continued to widen for the second year in a row, to KD5.2 billion (10.6% of GDP), largely due to the increase in workers' remittances (18.1% y/y), consistent with growth in the expatriate workforce (7.5% y/y).

On the other side of the balance of payments, net



	KD billion			% Change			% of GDP		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
<b>Current account</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>-18.3</b>	<b>-9.3</b>	<b>-23.6</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>22.7</b>
Trade balance of goods	15.7	13.5	10.2	-28.7	-14.0	-24.7	30.9	27.4	21.1
Exports	25.9	23.8	21.7	-15.8	-8.1	-8.8	50.9	48.2	45.0
Oil Exports	24.0	21.1	18.7	-16.7	-11.9	-11.3	47.2	42.8	38.9
Imports (fob)	10.1	10.3	11.5	16.8	1.1	12.1	20.0	20.8	23.9
Services	-5.9	-4.9	-5.2	13.1	-17.1	6.5	-11.5	-9.9	-10.8
Primary Income	9.9	10.1	11.1	24.5	2.3	9.9	19.5	20.6	23.1
Investment income	9.9	10.2	11.2	24.5	2.3	9.9	19.5	20.6	23.2
Secondary income	-4.0	-4.5	-5.2	-27.6	12.6	16.3	-7.8	-9.1	-10.8
Workers' remittances	-3.9	-4.3	-5.1	-28.5	11.8	18.1	-7.6	-8.8	-10.6
<b>Net lending/ borrowing</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>-19.2</b>	<b>-9.3</b>	<b>-23.7</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>22.6</b>
Capital & financial accounts	-15.6	-15.3	-12.4	-20.2	-1.7	-18.8	-30.7	-31.0	-25.8
Capital account	0.0	0.0	0.0	-122.7	-12.7	11.4	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Financial account	-15.5	-15.3	-12.4	-21.0	-1.6	-18.9	-30.6	-31.0	-25.7
Direct investment	-2.8	-3.0	-0.8	-61.8	6.7	-73.5	-5.5	-6.0	-1.6
Portfolio investment	-13.2	-12.6	-11.6	-15.1	-4.2	-8.5	-26.0	-25.6	-24.0
Financial derivatives	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	---	-1.6	-74.8	-0.4	-0.4	-0.1
Other investments	0.5	-0.4	-1.2	-88.6	-182.0	211.0	1.0	-0.8	-2.6
Reserve assets	0.2	0.9	1.2	-113.3	---	34.2	0.3	1.9	2.6
Errors & omissions	-0.2	1.0	1.5	---	---	---	-0.4	2.0	3.1

outflows from the financial account declined for the third consecutive year, to KD12.4 billion (25.8% of GDP). (Chart 2.) This moderation was driven by a 72.6% drop in direct investment in equity securities abroad to KD817.1 million, alongside continued weakness in inward FDI, which declined for the second year running, by almost 33% to KD126.4 million. Portfolio investment net outflows also declined, to KD11.6 billion on higher non-resident investments in domestic equity and debt instruments and despite the significant increase in investment in debt instruments abroad by KD7.1 billion, which likely reflects a shift in preferences toward fixed-income assets. Meanwhile, "other investment" net outflows more than doubled, driven mainly by high-

er deposits placed abroad by the government and local banks. At the same time, inflows into the domestic banking system strengthened, supported by rising non-resident deposits and cross-border lending activity. Finally, reserve assets declined for the third consecutive year to reach KD12.5 billion, which covers more than seven months of imports of goods & services. The external surplus is likely to moderate this year, reflecting the disruption to oil exports caused by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Higher oil prices could partially offset this loss were they to remain elevated after the Strait is opened and flows resume, while investment income will remain a valuable input in the current account surplus, supported by Kuwait's large overseas assets.

**Through KFHOnline, website, e-branches, call center & social media**

**KFH offers round-the-clock e-services during the holiday**

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced it will continue providing its banking services to customers around the clock during the holiday period. Most services can be accessed through the bank's digital platforms, including its mobile applications and e-branches in key areas. Additionally, KFH's social media accounts and other e-service channels will remain active, utilizing the latest in financial technology and digital platforms.

KFHOnline app features a sleek, modern design with smart banking services. KFH has carried out a comprehensive update to its app, reaffirming its dedication to digital transformation and excellence in providing advanced financial solutions. These solutions meet customer needs and deliver seamless banking experience. This move also underscores the Bank's outstanding execution of its digital transformation strategy.

The KFHOnline app offers more than 200 banking services. New services allow customers to instantly request virtual prepaid cards through KFHOnline. Customers can also control the usage limits of their bank cards, additional credit cards, and both local and international money transfers.

KFH's hybrid branches offer a variety of services, giving customers the opportunity to access unlimited e-services through a range of digital channels. Customers can either interact directly with employees or use self-service devices and other modern technology.

KFH's e-branches are a smart banking channel that transforms typical customer transactions into an innovative, automated experience. These branches provide highly efficient banking services, offering over 80% of what is available at traditional locations.

KFH e-branches include the XTM device, which allows direct video calls with service personnel, as well as ATMs and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines accept up to 300 notes per transaction.

Moreover, customers can conduct a variety of interactive banking transactions through e-branches located in various places in Kuwait. These services include: establishing Murabaha transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque and card printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or by using Civil ID or phone number, in addition to many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.

The e-banking services encompass a wide array of digital functionalities, including opening additional bank account in Kuwaiti Dinar and foreign currencies without a branch visit, instant virtual prepaid card issuance, viewing PINs and other credit and ATM card details, activating and temporarily suspending bank cards, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiries, cheque book requests, opening and trading gold accounts,



gifting gold, requesting and checking financing obligations and installments, perusing investment plans, receiving account balances and deposit summaries, and managing children's accounts through the Baiti Online service, bill payments to local telecommunications companies, and more.

**Call Center**

The Call Center continues to provide services around the clock, receiving customer calls, addressing their inquiries, and responding to them through a qualified and technically advanced staff. KFH also provides the automated telephone service, 1803333, which operates with the same efficiency and speed to facilitate transfers between accounts, answer inquiries about financial transactions, among other services.

Customers outside Kuwait can contact KFH's call center from seven countries (USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Turkey and Spain) without additional fees.

To use this service customers can call from the following toll-free numbers: USA and Canada (18008188608), UK (08000148898), France (0805086620), Germany (08001817080), Spain (900905440), and Turkey (908507712154). Local tariff charges may be applied in Turkey by local Turkish telecoms companies when calling this number.

This service is free exclusively for mobiles and landlines users in the mentioned countries only and doesn't include the (Roaming Service).

**Social media channels**

KFH's social media team remains dedicated to addressing customer inquiries and assisting them at all hours through the official social media accounts (@KFHGroup).

**Money transfer and account opening**

KFH successfully launched WAMD digital service, allowing customers to send and receive money instantly and for free using their mobile numbers, 24/7. Additionally, customers can request money through WAMD service by sharing

or scanning a QR code from the KFHOnline app. This app also allows customers to transfer funds from their local Knet bank accounts directly to their credit and prepaid cards.

KFH also successfully launched the D-POS device for account opening, the first-of-its-kind in the market, allowing customers to open accounts at KFH immediately and anywhere.

Customers can now open accounts in major currencies through KFHOnline; previously, account opening was only available at branches. Additionally, KFH has integrated Western Union (WU) services into its app, enabling customers to make international transfers directly through the application. The Bank also offers instant transfers within the GCC countries through the AFAQ network on the mobile app.

**Corporate services**

KFH launched the first mobile application for corporate banking encompassing major services for business development, in addition to launching facial recognition technology based on biometric identity and other distinguished electronic services available through the corporate banking webpage.

KFH successfully introduced corporate cards, offering three different products that cater to the various local and global corporate needs. Key features include cash and cheque deposits, as well as cash withdrawals. The cards also provide access to Point of Sale (POS) terminals and online payment gateways, both in Kuwait and internationally.

In addition, KFH has introduced corporate credit cards, which are among the bank's distinguished offerings for business owners. These cards are linked directly to the company's account, allowing business owners to issue cards to employees for seamless expense management. They can be used to cover day-to-day business expenses, one-time travel costs, and more. The corporate credit card helps businesses better manage their cash flow while offering enhanced control over employee expenditures.

**Reinforcing commitment to human capital**

**tam partners with 'Wajhni' to support scholarship students**

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: tam Bank announced its participation as a strategic partner in the Wajhni national campaign for scholarships abroad. This collaboration reflects the bank's firm commitment to supporting youth empowerment and enhancing academic awareness, enabling students to make informed academic and professional decisions in the future.

The Executive Manager Tam Banking, Ahmed Alothman stated that this partnership reflects the bank's deep belief in investing in human capital and helping students choose educational paths that match their aspirations and market needs. He affirmed the bank's commitment to deploying its resources toward national initiatives that build a conscious, qualified generation as part of its social responsibility.

Alothman commended the strategic partnership sponsoring Wajhni campaign, highlighting its role in enhancing students' academic awareness. This collaboration reflects the vital integration between state institutions and the private sector to support youth in their future educational journeys and drive the country's sustainable development.

Alothman also noted that tam will participate in "Wajhni" exhibition at The Avenues Mall from June 1 to 5. To enrich the visitor experience, the bank will feature an interactive program for students, complete with exclusive gifts.

He added that a specialized team from the bank will be available to answer questions from students and parents, while showcasing a wide variety of advanced digital banking solutions and offers tailored to students' academic needs.

As Kuwait's first Sharia-compliant



Ahmed Alothman

**Alothman: Committed to empowering Youth and promoting Academic Awareness**

digital bank, tam is designed for modern lifestyles and digital-first customers. It marks a major milestone in the evolution of digital banking services.

To open a tam account and access banking services, applicants must be at least 15 years old and hold a valid Civil ID. The process is entirely digital via the app, with no paperwork or branch visits required.

tam Bank offers a wide range of distinguished services, including instant account opening, digital card issuance, earning of points, and student allowance transfers. Customers can also track expenses and transfer funds with ease, supported by 24/7 contact center assistance.

tam Bank offers unlimited support for youth across all levels. Its digital offerings enable customers to earn and redeem reward points at leading brands, while enjoying exclusive weekly and year-round deals.

**Highlighting ESG integration in finance**

**KIBS organizes climate risk session for banking sector**

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS) organized a virtual capacity-building session on Monday, 18 May 2026, titled "New Dimension: Climate Change Risks and Integration with Enterprise Risk Management". The session was delivered in collaboration with GoGreen Kuwait and attended by a group of specialists and professionals from the banking, financial and other sectors in Kuwait to discuss the growing impact of climate and geopolitical risks on organizations and the financial sector.

The session highlighted the rapid transformation of the global economic and financial landscape and the increasing importance of integrating climate-related considerations into enterprise risk management frameworks. Participants discussed how climate change, geopolitical instability, supply chain disruptions and inflationary pressures are reshaping risk management and strategic decision making, while also addressing the financial and operational implications of these risks across Kuwait and the GCC region.

The session was delivered by the

President of ESG & Decarbonization Services at Earthood, and focused on practical, decision-oriented approaches to climate risk and ESG integration. Participants were also introduced to actionable steps that institutions and banks in Kuwait can adopt to strengthen resilience, enhance climate risk capabilities and align with evolving international expectations and sustainable finance trends.

Structured as an interactive session, the program encouraged dialogue and engagement around emerging risks, strategic responses and practical implementation mechanisms relevant to institutions operating across multiple sectors.

For over five decades, the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS) has played a vital role in developing Kuwait's banking and financial sectors by facilitating knowledge transfer and fostering innovation through a wide range of programs and services, including professional certifications, executive development programs, training initiatives, assessments and examinations, e-learning solutions and specialized business and financial research publications.

**Targeting leisure and business travel demand**

**Kuwait Airways launches 12 summer destinations**

KUWAIT CITY, May 25, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways announced Monday the launch of flights to 12 seasonal summer destinations as part of its operational plan for summer 2026, starting next June.

Acting CEO Abdulwahab Al-Shatti said the destinations include Sarajevo, Malaga, Alexandria, Sharm El-Sheikh, Salalah, Nice, Vienna, Antalya, Bodrum, Trabzon, Mykonos, and Zurich, bringing the airline's network to 54 destinations worldwide.

He added that additional routes, subject to official approvals, include Krakow, Moscow, Beijing, New York, Abu Dhabi, Tbilisi, Baku, and Damascus.

Al-Shatti said the seasonal expansion responds to rising summer travel demand and offers diverse tourism, leisure, and business options.



Kuwait Airways flight.

He said that booking is available via the airline's website, app, and official sales channels, while emphasizing ongoing efforts to enhance services and customer experience.

He noted that Kuwait Airways has launched its official WhatsApp channel to keep customers updated on its latest services.

Al-Shatti said the airline has made significant efforts in processing ticket refunds, completing more than 55 percent of refund requests, and allocating additional staff to accelerate the process.

He affirmed that Kuwait Airways continues to implement its operational and marketing plans according to the highest standards, reflecting its role as the national carrier committed to providing the best services and offers throughout the travel seasons.

**'Paid leave alone isn't enough'**

**How employers can support staff on medical leave**

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



**By Liza Barnes**  
Drexel University

**C**ar crash. Cancer diagnosis. Mental health crisis. Autoimmune disease flareup.

A serious medical condition can turn your life upside down in an instant, making everyday tasks feel overwhelming. And if you're employed, you may find that work emails keep coming and your manager keeps calling - when the only job you should focus on is healing.

In these moments, a medical leave of absence from work can serve as a vital lifeline.

We are organizational behavior professors who research how people balance their personal and work lives. In a study published in the Journal of Applied Psychology in March 2026, we found that employers can design and enact medical leave policies in ways that support healing rather than adding more stress during what is already one of the hardest periods of an employee's life.

We conducted interviews with 30 employees who had taken medical leave from a wide range of professions, such as teaching, management consulting, nursing and landscaping. We also interviewed 18 human resources professionals who manage the medical leave process. By systematically analyzing what people said during the interviews and looking for patterns, we determined what many employers are doing to help their workers heal.

Employees take medical leave when sick leave is not enough - when recovery will require weeks or months off.

But many workers make their jobs a higher priority than their health. Some fear being seen as less committed or losing their job if they take leave. Others simply cannot afford to lose income. As a result, many people work while getting chemotherapy, postpone surgeries doctors have told them they need, or forego other necessary treatments altogether, even when laws and workplace benefits may exist to protect them.

About 2 in 3 employed Americans had access to paid leave for their own serious health condition as of 2022, and about 9% of the people who had paid leave didn't

use it when they needed it.

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act, eligible U.S. workers who have worked for a company with more than 50 employees for at least one year can take up to 12 weeks off to heal from their own serious health condition, or to care for a loved one such as a new baby or seriously ill family member.

But that policy protects your job, not your paycheck. It's up to your employer, or your state, to determine whether medical leave is paid or unpaid.

Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts and several other states mandate paid medical leave for their employed residents. Some big employers also provide paid medical leave, including Microsoft and Adobe.

If your symptoms or treatments are making it hard to do your job, don't wait to get started. Chances are that you need to take time off from work to heal. And you should not delay treatment to accommodate what's going on at work.

Experiencing stress from your job when you're ill or injured can be like gasoline on a fire - it can exacerbate health problems and make it much harder to bounce back. We were surprised by how many people we interviewed waited until their circumstances were dire before stepping away from work.

It's also important to check what benefits are available to you.

You may qualify for protections under the Family and Medical Leave Act, which can keep your job safe while you recover. But it doesn't apply in all cases, such as when employers have fewer than 50 workers.

To protect your paycheck, you may have access to a short-term disability policy through your employer benefits package that you can use in conjunction with the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Alternatively, you may already be paying into your state's paid leave program through payroll deductions. These programs work like insurance, helping replace part of your income while you are on leave.

Your human resources department can serve as your first point of contact and can get you in touch with a leave coordinator, if your employer has one.

However, you do not have to share detailed information about your medical condition with your supervisor, or even HR, if you prefer to keep that information private. Your doctor only needs to provide documentation confirming that you have a serious condition and detailing how much time you need off.

Some employers also offer extra support through employee assistance programs, which can provide free counseling sessions, or financial and legal assistance.

We found that access to paid leave is important, but not sufficient, for helping workers heal.

Many large employers that effectively support workers in need of medical leave have trained specialists in their human resources departments who help employees understand their options. That makes it easier for workers to take enough time off to recover.

Employers that handle medical leave well also train managers on the basics.

They make sure managers know how to clearly communicate the available benefits to their subordinates, understand who is eligible for them, and know who from human resources can support workers throughout the process.

But a manager's role ends there. Managers do not have discretion over when or whether an employee may take leave. Good managers know that, and understand that their role is to support their employees during what is likely one of the most difficult moments of their life.

Employers can proactively prepare for workers to take extended absences by cross-training employees ahead of time. Doing this signals that taking leave is acceptable, expected and supported. If the need for leave arises, workers are less likely to feel guilty about stepping away to focus on their health because they know someone else can temporarily cover their work.

We believe that the best employers ensure medical leave benefits are available from day one on the job.

Under federal law, workers must be employed for at least 12 months before they qualify for the Family and Medical Leave Act's protections. But illness and injury do not happen on convenient schedules.

A car accident after 11 months on the job is just as devastating as one after 11 years. Someone who starts having unexpected seizures eight months into the job still needs the time away from work to seek treatment and a diagnosis. Employers that really want to support their employees and their well-being recognize this and do not make employees wait.

Even if you're not a manager, you can play a role. If any of your coworkers are getting ready to take medical leave or are already on leave, you can support them by learning more about their daily tasks and helping fill the gaps. (AP)

**Other Voices**

**Anxiety is the new normal**

**By Hala Al Humaidhi**

**A**nxiety has become part of our routine. The rate at which information enters our brains, the noise of notifications, and the endless social comparisons are not merely external pressures. For many, anxiety has quietly turned into a norm, woven into their daily existence.

In the past, anxiety typically emerged from significant stressors, such as a breakup, a family crisis, or unemployment. Nowadays, it often stems from a thousand tiny, cumulative sources. An unreturned text, a distressing news headline before bed, the constant comparison of our own progress with others', or the nagging sense that we're falling behind, it adds up. The nervous system no longer finds its footing; it remains in a perpetual state of readiness.

In a generation that supposedly has more comfort and security than any preceding one, there exists an undercurrent of unrest. We have access to anyone at any time, yet loneliness is surging. Social media has cultivated a culture of comparison; we see, daily, everyone else's life, milestones, and triumphs. We also feel the implicit pressure of modern society: that we must achieve quickly, that we must grow continuously, that we must be present, social, and happy at all times. It is in the cracks of these unspoken expectations that anxiety takes root.

As years pass, anxiety evolves from an emotion into a lifestyle. We begin each day with exhaustion, carrying it into the night until we finally drift off. Even our



Hala Al Humaidhi

downtime, those quiet periods that should allow for peace and stillness, is hijacked by the mind, burdened with overthinking, self-blame, or fatigue. What's striking is that anxiety isn't always a sign of weakness. Sometimes, it signals that our minds and bodies need to acknowledge we're carrying more than what we can sustain.

Healing doesn't start with pretending everything is okay. It starts with asking: What am I actually dealing with? We don't always need to go faster. We need the permission to slow down. To stop equating self-worth with output, with attention, with the approval of others. To realize that a delay isn't a failure. That a moment of silence doesn't mean you're left behind. Mental health isn't a requirement to be happy all the time. It means learning to navigate hard times with self-care. Because, sometimes, the biggest anxiety isn't visible to anyone. It's the one hiding behind a smile, while the person inside the smile is worn out.

Blending innovation with retail experience

# LuLu Connect launches new flagship experience store at Al-Rai



New LuLu Connect store redefines tech shopping.

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: LuLu Connect proudly announces the grand opening of its newly revamped and upgraded retail space on 24 May at 1st Floor of LuLu Hypermarket Al-Rai, bringing a fresh and innovative shopping experience to technology enthusiasts and customers across Kuwait.

The all-new LuLu Connect store has been designed as a modern technology destination where customers can explore, interact, and experience the latest innovations in electronics and smart living. With a spacious layout, premium product displays, and interactive demo zones, the store offers visitors an extraordinary retail experience that goes beyond traditional shopping. Customers can now enjoy hands-on demonstrations and personalized assistance while discovering the newest gadgets and home technology solutions.

The grand inauguration ceremony was attended by a famous tech influencer along with LuLu Group's senior management team, marking another mile-

stone in the company's continued expansion and commitment to customer satisfaction. The launch event attracted shoppers, technology enthusiasts, media representatives, and invited guests who witnessed the unveiling of the brand-new concept store.

To celebrate the launch of the new store, LuLu Connect is offering exciting inaugural promotions, special launch discounts, and exclusive deals across various categories for a limited period.

LuLu Connect offers a comprehensive range of products across key categories including mobiles, tablets, electronics, home appliances, electricals, audio products, and wearable devices from globally recognized brands. From the latest smartphones and smartwatches to advanced kitchen appliances, entertainment systems, and personal gadgets, customers can find a wide selection of premium products under one roof.

As part of its customer-first approach, LuLu Connect offers flexible EMI and Buy Now, Pay Later solutions through trusted partners like Tabby and Taly, making it easier than ever for customers to own the latest premium tech products with greater convenience and affordability.

LuLu Connect also invites customers to participate in its "Follow and Win" campaign on the official Instagram pageluluconnectkw, offering participants a chance to win a Samsung Galaxy S26.

The opening of the new LuLu Connect store at Al-Rai reflects the brand's ongoing commitment to innovation, customer engagement, and delivering world-class retail experiences. With its modern concept, wide product portfolio, and customer-friendly services, LuLu Connect aims to redefine electronics shopping and continue serving as a trusted destination for technology and lifestyle products in Kuwait.

## WFP warns of food shortage

# Trade routes collapse hit Afghanistan hard

KABUL, May 25, (AP): When landlocked Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan started fighting late last year and their border crossings closed, Afghans turned to their western neighbor, Iran, for an alternate to Pakistan's major shipping hub of Karachi.

They rerouted shipments through Iran's port of Bandar Abbas, but not for long. The port lies on the Strait of Hormuz, where war has stranded hundreds of ships and thousands of their crew. Meanwhile, thousands of Afghanistan-bound containers were stuck in Pakistan.

For Afghan businesses and aid groups, losing both trade routes has been devastating.

The United Nations' World Food Program, whose Afghan operations include life-saving nutritional supplements for malnourished mothers and children and fortified high-energy biscuits for schoolchildren, has seen transportation costs skyrocket and supplies choked off.

Most of WFP's nutrition supplies were sourced from Pakistan, the organization said. After that border closed in October, it began rerouting shipments by sea through Dubai and Iran. Now that route is effectively closed as Tehran controls the strait and the U.S. blockades Iranian ports.

The nutritional supplements began to dwindle. By mid-April, they had run out.

"At a time when malnutrition is already at near-record levels, weakened and desperate mothers and children are being turned away from health clinics, as we have no food to give them," said John Aylieff, WFP's country director in Afghanistan.

Even before the crisis, the organization had struggled with aid cuts. It has received only 8% of its annual funding this year.

"On top of a funding crisis, conflict in the Middle East and the closure of the border with Pakistan are choking WFP's operations - blocking supply routes, driving up costs and straining markets at the worst possible time," Aylieff said in emailed comments.

Now supplies must be routed by land through Central Asia, far from any ocean. WFP's transportation costs have tripled, while its cost of supplements for malnourished mothers and children has jumped by 35%, Aylieff said.

The outbreak of the Iran war in late February saw one of the organization's shipments of high-energy fortified biscuits stuck in the United Arab Emirates.

Instead of being shipped from Dubai to Iran and into Afghanistan, it has been taking a long, circuitous route through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and across the Caspian Sea into Turkmenistan, the organization said.

It's been on the road for three months. Lutfullah Akbari runs a small

company in Kabul importing construction equipment. With his supplies from China stuck on ships unable to transit the Strait of Hormuz and costs for the logistics company transporting them rising, "I have nothing else to use to continue my business here," he said.

He's now considering abandoning his cargo if the waterway doesn't reopen soon.

"The Iran-U.S. war has had a huge impact on my business," he said. Other traders have rerouted shipments through Central Asia, but it's longer and more expensive.

"The logistics company now wants more than the value of our goods and the capital we had invested in them. We can't afford it," Akbari said.

"Even if I bring them here, I'll have to sell them all at a loss. I can't afford to lose twice."

Gul Meer Amimi, director of logistics at freight company Etfaq Bamyani International Transport and Trade Forwarding, said the Iran war has dramatically increased costs. Some of the cargo his company handles includes humanitarian aid.

Before the war, the cost of renting a container was about \$3,000 to \$3,600 per shipment but it has now surged to over \$7,000. For some goods, it has topped \$11,000, he said.

"The impact is reaching all traders," Amini said.

Mohammad Murtaza Ishaqzai, who sells electronics in Kabul, said delivery for his goods from China via Iran cost about \$1,100 to \$1,500 before the war. That's now shot up to more than \$15,000.

"We can't export and we can't import," he said, and appealed to the Taliban government to resolve its conflict with Pakistan, which would allow border trade to resume.

If the situation continues, he said, "our business will be finished."

Afghanistan's Commerce and Trade Ministry spokesperson Abdul Salam Jawad said overall price increases in the country had remained low, at around 3%, thanks to continued trade with Iran and the sourcing of many imports from Central Asia, Russia and China.

"The problem we faced was the restrictions on our imported goods and containers coming from other countries" via Iran, he said. "We are waiting for a solution to be found in the Strait of Hormuz so that we can export normally."

Khan Jan Alokozai, senior adviser to Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said more than 60% of Afghanistan's trade is now through Central Asia, mitigating the Iran war's overall impact.

Food and petroleum products are coming in through Central Asia and Russia, while much trade is now being conducted via Turkey, with goods then transported by rail through Iran or Azerbaijan, Alokozai said.

## 'US campaigns focus on trust and transparency'

# Democrats feud over stock trading as they sharpen anti-corruption case against Trump

DALLAS, May 25, (AP): After three terms in the U.S. House and two unsuccessful campaigns for the U.S. Senate, Colin Allred said he's heard plenty about voters' suspicions that politicians are just trying to make a buck in Washington.

"What about the stock trading in Congress? What about people getting rich in Congress?" Allred said they ask him regularly. "And I have to say to them, you're absolutely right about that, too. We need to be better."

He's challenging Rep. Julie Johnson in the Democratic runoff for a Dallas-area House seat on Tuesday, and he's one of several candidates trying to harness populist anger over congressional stock trading. Allred has denounced Johnson for trades involving companies like Palantir, a data analytics firm with ties to President Donald Trump's administration.

Johnson said her trades were handled by a financial manager, and she accused Allred of being "only out for himself." She pointed to financial disclosures that showed Allred's wealth nearly doubling during his own time in Congress, although Allred said his assets were in a blind trust and the money came from his wife's income as a partner at a law firm.

"To be clear, the sum total I made on that trade was only \$90," Johnson said of her Palantir stock. "My opponent is trying to make it seem like it was hundreds or thousands."

The bitter campaign is emblematic of broader debates within the Democratic Party over the role of money in politics. Long a refrain of strident progressives and good-government reformers, accusations that political rivals are self-dealing or bought by special interests have become a mainstay of Democratic primaries. The heightened criticism of lawmakers' personal wealth comes as the party looks to sharpen its anti-corruption message against Trump and to develop a platform for overhauling Washington if Democrats take power in the midterms.

Trump campaigned on a promise to "drain the swamp," capitalizing on Americans' disdain for the Washington establishment. Now that his family is profiting while he's back in the White House, Democrats are eager to regain the upper hand on an issue that could prove potent with voters.

"The difficulty is that right now, no party has the mantle on anti-corruption," said Daniel Lobo-Lewis, a political consultant in Washington. "Many voters outside of the beltway see both parties as corrupt, because they see all politicians as bought by the donors or by their own self-interest."

Lobo-Lewis and Nico Agosto founded the Political Integrity Project last year to track stock trading and corporate donations involving members of Congress.

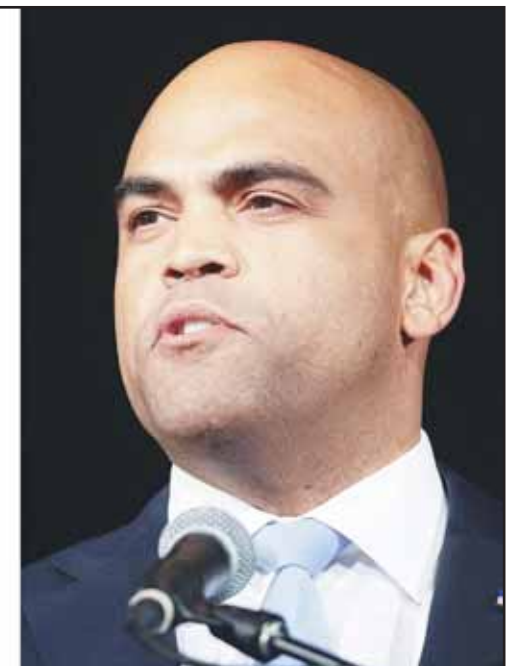
The organization asks candidates to sign an "integrity pledge" to refrain from trading stocks or accepting corporate donations while in Congress and vow not to work as a lobbyist after they leave office. So far, about 90 challengers and seven sitting lawmakers have taken the pledge, all of whom are Democrats.

"If we want to, in any way, start rebuilding trust in our political institutions, it starts with no-brainer changes like this that have an approval rating above and beyond any other issue you could imagine," Lobo-Lewis said.

Congress has yet to enact a stock trading ban for its members, though insider trading is already illegal, for members just like it is for anyone else. There are multiple proposals on Capitol Hill but none have gained traction.

A bipartisan bill to ban congressional stock trading stalled this year despite receiving Trump's blessing during his State of the Union. And Democrats remain divided over the number of alleged loopholes in their competing proposals.

A crowded race in a Democratic-leaning Utah congressional seat has featured attacks over can-



This combination of photos shows Rep. Julie Johnson, D-Texas, being sworn in on Jan. 3, 2025, in Washington, left, and Rep. Colin Allred, D-Texas, speaking on Nov. 5, 2024, in Dallas. (AP)

didates' personal wealth. State Sen. Nate Blouin criticized his main rival, former Rep. Ben McAdams, for having equity in a Utah data center firm, and excoriated others in the race for past investments and jobs.

McAdams said the equity of several thousand dollars was payment for a past contract completed by his government consulting firm while he was a private citizen. His campaign defended the data center project by saying it would use no water and run on clean energy.

A spokesperson for McAdams also claimed Blouin "is currently hiding his corporate donations" by removing them from campaign disclosure reports, which McAdams' campaign claims "is not only deceitful, it breaks campaign finance law."

In an interview, Blouin rejected the claim that he broke the law, and said that he removed the donations because he returned the money to each donor.

"It was actually quite uncomfortable to return some of those," said Blouin, because some of the firms included local firms and clean energy companies. "But there is a perception that campaign contributions from lobbyists and companies influence votes, and I think there is some truth to that."

In a New York City congressional district that includes both Wall Street and the Democratic Socialists of America's headquarters, the city's former comptroller, Brad Lander, has accused Rep. Dan Goldman of trying to buy another term by using his own wealth to match campaign contributions. Goldman, an heir to the Levi Strauss family fortune, says he entered all of his assets into a blind trust after taking office in 2023.

A spokesperson for Goldman said Lander is "running a deceitful campaign based on absurd lies that Dan is beholden to special interests" and that Goldman has raised more campaign funds than Lander "without taking a dime of corporate PAC money." Goldman has spent his own money on the race, the spokesperson said. "To ensure that the NY-10 voters can be sure that he is beholden only to them and his principles."

Lander said Goldman's spending is "not illegal, but it is certainly anti-democratic when a quarter-billionaire like Dan Goldman not only dumps millions of his own inherited wealth into his elections but also solicits money from the same forces who are rigging the economy and worsening the affordability crisis."

Even representatives who support a ban on con-

gressional stock trading are feeling the heat.

Democratic Rep. Brad Sherman of California is facing multiple primary challengers who have criticized the congressman for holding stocks while serving in Congress. Sherman does not trade individual stocks and supports a ban on stock trading.

"I only own three individual stocks which I inherited from my mother when she passed away, which were originally acquired by my grandmother," Sherman said. "I have never sold them because I made a promise to my constituents that I would not buy and sell individual stocks."

One of Sherman's primary challengers is Jake Levine, a former climate adviser to President Joe Biden, who signed the pledge from the Political Integrity Project. But Sherman said Levine "refuses to disclose key elements of his \$18 million stock portfolio, and actively bought and sold stocks while serving on the National Security Council." Levine has said he cannot disclose the portfolio because it is managed by his family and he has no oversight.

In the race to succeed former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, California State Sen. Scott Wiener has criticized his progressive opponent, Saikat Chakrabarti, over his personal wealth. Chakrabarti is a former software engineer who earned millions as an early employee at the tech firm Stripe. He later served as the first chief of staff to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

Wiener said that Chakrabarti "has enormous investments" and "is trying to buy this seat" while "spreading bogus conspiracy theories" with his own wealth. He criticized Chakrabarti for not disclosing the last decade of his stock trades.

"If you're making a ban on stock trades a central part of your campaign - as Saikat is doing, running around saying that everyone under the sun is corrupt - how about you tell the voters about your own stock trading history," Wiener said.

Chakrabarti retorted that his wealth as a private citizen is not relevant to his future time in office and that he would put all of his assets into a blind trust should he be elected. He criticized Wiener for being supported by super PACs funded by the AI firm Anthropic and other major corporations.

"This is all part of a larger problem, which is just the whole idea of corruption in our politics," Chakrabarti said. "If you're in Congress, you sit on committees that oversee a lot of these industries, and it's unethical to be using that insider information, that knowledge to make stock trades. But that doesn't apply to a private citizen."



This image released by Focus Features shows Brendan Fraser, left, and Andrew Scott in a scene from 'Pressure.' (AP)

WWII drama revisits tense hours that changed history

## 'Pressure' tells the untold story behind D-Day's crucial forecast

LOS ANGELES, May 25, (AP): D-Day was supposed to happen on June 5, 1944. The story of why it ultimately took place on June 6 is one that has been a bit lost to history, consumed by the larger events surrounding it.

One day might not seem like much in the grand scheme, but it was a seismic delay in plans for the unprecedented and daring invasion, which would deploy nearly 160,000 Allied troops in Normandy. Ultimately it came down to a recommendation from a shrewd Scottish meteorologist, Group Capt. James Stagg, who had to tell everyone, including Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Allied leadership, something they didn't want to hear: The weather was going to be catastrophically bad. And no, he wasn't certain about it.

The tense 72 hours before the invasion are brought to life in "Pressure," in theaters May 29, on the eve of the operation's 82nd anniversary. An adaptation of David Haig's acclaimed stage play, the film sheds light on this bit of history that would effectively change the course of the second World War.

Filmmaker Anthony Maras assembled a unique group of actors for the task at hand, calling on Brendan Fraser to play Eisenhower and Andrew Scott to play Stagg.

"I didn't think I was an Ike Eisenhower when Anthony Maras sent me the script," Fraser said. "I got on a Zoom call and he said, 'You gotta do this man.' Me? Why? 'It's because he's you, he's like you. He's just a regular guy.' Really? I mean, I thought Eisenhower was this, you know, stern, staunch, something on coin."

Fraser went deep in his preparation, reading and listening to everything he could get his hands on to help him understand the man who would ultimately have to make the decision. The research even continued on set. Maras laughed that right before they shot Eisenhower's famous "soldiers, sailors and airmen" speech, something that they'd rehearsed many, many times, he looked up and saw Fraser reading yet another biography. But he appreciated that the Oscar-winner was passionate about knowing everything he possibly could to get it right.

"He cared intensely for his troops," Fraser said. "It was my responsibility to honor their memory and to comport myself in a way that puts a human face on the seemingly academic decisions that go into an operation as massive as this."

Scott was the opposite in terms of how he approached his role. Yes, he read Stagg's book and wanted to have a working understanding of the meteorological jargon he'd have to be spouting. While history was important, for him, character was king. And he liked that Stagg is not the most immediately likable person, but he has integrity.

"The thing with Stagg is that he's just not interested in charm ... or being liked at all," Scott said. "I think that's to be admired actually, because he's just there to do a job. So I like the fact that at the beginning of the

movie, you're like, whoa, this guy is not pleasant."

Maras said that for Scott, it was all about the inner, emotional life of the character - which was essential for a part that would require so much internal conflict.

"With Andrew, he has a quality to him where he can seemingly be doing very little - he's sitting down, rearranging his tie, he can be reading a phone book - and you can't look away," Maras said.

The actors weren't the only ones feeling pressure of the assignment: Maras also had a behemoth looming in attempting to stage, however briefly, the D-Day invasion.

"You've kind of got to be crazy maybe to attempt it, given that Spielberg did it so masterfully," Maras said.

But unlike "Saving Private Ryan," which focused on the men storming the beach, "Pressure" is about the ones making the decisions. It's a different perspective. Still, once they make the call to go, there would have to be at least some of the operation shown to juxtapose with the "bloody tense, wire-type atmosphere of the control room," Maras said.

Inspired by Peter Jackson's World War I documentary "They Shall Not Grow Old," and the existence of dozens of hours of pristine 35 mm black and white film from the event, Maras decided that perhaps archival footage, colorized, would be the way to go. It was a different way to present D-Day that gave it immediacy, he said, as opposed to looking like history.

Ultimately, "Pressure" isn't just a history lesson, or even a character drama with big personalities and even bigger stakes: It's a portrait of leadership and ego clashing with facts and science. And its relevance to the present day is the reason Maras wanted to make the film in the first place.

"How do you bring your best self to the table to make the decision? How do you have the humility to acknowledge when you don't know something? And how do you have the wisdom to determine who to trust? ... Eisenhower in the end showed that he was a maestro at that," Maras said. "What I love about the Stagg character is he's someone who feels compelled to tell someone something that they don't want to hear, that they violently don't want to but they need to hear. The world needs more of that."

Years later, John F. Kennedy, on the way to his own inauguration, asked Eisenhower what gave them the edge on D-Day. His response? "We had better meteorologists than the Germans."

"When life or death depends on your understanding the facts, it probably has a way of like cutting up the BS and getting to it," Maras said. "It's a very clear example of a time where the Allied worlds' future was at stake and they listened to someone who knew what he was talking about and they did all right."

'Obsession' defies box office odds

## Mandalorian and Grogu tops charts

LOS ANGELES, May 25, (AP): After nearly seven years away from the big screen, a new Star Wars movie drew healthy but not record-breaking crowds to global theaters this weekend. According to studio estimates on Sunday, "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu" made \$82 million in ticket sales from 4,300 theaters in the U.S. and Canada. By the end of Monday's Memorial Day holiday, it's expected to have earned \$102 million domestically and \$165 million globally.

It exceeded opening weekend expectations for the movie, a continuation of Disney+ spinoff series "The Mandalorian," but it's also on the low end of Disney-era Star Wars releases, closer to "Solo: A Star Wars Story," which made \$103 million over the four-day Memorial Day frame in 2018. While "Solo" was considered a disaster, the metrics around "The Mandalorian and Grogu" are a little different.

The production budget for "Solo" was in the \$300 million range, while "The Mandalorian and Grogu" was made for significantly less - a reported \$165 million, not accounting for marketing and promotion costs. It makes the journey to profitability more likely, especially when factoring in positive audience scores. Although critics were mixed to negative on the movie (it currently carries a 63% on Rotten Tomatoes), ticket buyers overall gave it an A-CinemaScore. Boys under the age of 13 are especially high on the movie: They gave it an A CinemaScore and



The character Grogu arrives at the premiere of 'Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu' on Thursday, May 14, 2026, at TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

a perfect five on PostTrak. Parents also gave it a five out of five.

The Jon Favreau-directed movie stars Pedro Pascal as the titular bounty hunter and puts him and his tiny green companion on a mission to save Jabba's son Rotta the Hutt, who is voiced by Jeremy Allen White.

"Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu" could also be graded on a bit of a curve because of the streaming component, both that it started as a series, and that it will eventually end up as a value add on Disney+, which was only about a month old when the last Star Wars movie, "The Rise of Skywalker," debuted in December 2019.

Star Wars as a brand is in a time of transition under its new leadership team of Dave Filoni and Lynwen Brennan; Earlier this year it was announced that Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy, who produced "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu," was stepping down after 13 years. The question for the industry is whether audience interest in Star Wars on the big screen might have cooled slightly, and if next year's "Star Wars: Starfighter," starring Ryan Gosling, will provide a definitive answer. Until then, the hope is that strong audience and exit scores will propel word-of-mouth generat-

ed enthusiasm in the coming weeks.

"The moviegoers rule," said Paul Dergarabedian, the head of marketplace trends for Comscore. "I think given the audience reaction and the scores that are coming from parents and kids, this is going to be in it for the long haul."

Word-of-mouth certainly helped Curry Barker's relationship horror movie "Obsession" defy the standard box office trajectory and do better business in its second weekend. The Focus Features had an astonishing 30% uptick in ticket sales, earning \$22.4 million from 2,655 theaters.

"That's really unheard of," Dergarabedian said. "And it is a testament to how this social media buzz from younger viewers is fueling the FOMO factor."

The studio, which acquired the microbudget movie for some \$15 million, is projecting that it will have made \$28.2 million by the end of Monday, bringing its running total to \$58.5 million. It snagged the second-place spot, while "Michael" landed in third place with \$20 million for the three-day weekend. The Michael Jackson biopic has now earned \$78.2 million.

"Obsession" also did better than the new horror movie "Passenger," a Paramount Pictures release with Melissa Leo, which grossed an estimated \$8.7 million from 2,534 locations. It's expected to earn \$10.5 million over its first four days. The movie received poor reviews from both critics (44% on Rotten Tomatoes) and audiences (B- Cinema Score).

### Television

CBS run ends in surreal sendoff

## Colbert signs off 'Late Show' with McCartney-fueled finale

NEW YORK, May 25, (AP): Stephen Colbert chatted with Paul McCartney and joined him on stage for a raucous performance of "Hello, Goodbye" on the final broadcast of CBS' "The Late Show" on Thursday night, a bittersweet farewell to a canceled show that still had a few barbs left for the network that ended its 33-year run.

At the top of his last show, which grew more surreal and absurd as it went on, Colbert highlighted the "joy" that he and his team felt creating more than 1,800 episodes of "The Late Show."

"The energy that you've given us, we sincerely need that to have done the best possible show we could have for you for the last 11 years," Colbert said. "You've given it to us. We've given it all right back to you."

Colbert pretended that Pope Leo XIV, the first U.S.-born pope, was his final guest, but the pontiff refused to come out of his dressing room because he hadn't been supplied the correct kind of snacks, especially hot dogs.

McCartney then offered himself as a replacement, striding across the stage as the audience screamed. "I think you'd be a perfect last guest," Colbert said.

McCartney said he happened to be in the area, doing errands. He offered a framed photo of the Beatles at the Ed Sullivan Theater, the final home for "The Late Show." The two chatted about when the Beatles first came to America in 1964, creativity, his new album and McCartney's childhood.

Colbert's monologue was interrupted by Bryan Cranston, Paul

Rudd and Tim Meadows, who all pretended to be irked that they weren't the host's final guest. "You know what? You got what you deserved," Meadows fumed. Other celebrities in the audience who had funny turns during Colbert's last "Meanwhile" segment were Tig Notaro and Ryan Reynolds.

Later, Colbert joined Elvis Costello, former bandleader Jon Batiste and current bandleader Louis Cato for a relaxed performance of Costello's "Jump Up." They all joined the house band and McCartney for the final song of the night, a performance of "Hello, Goodbye."

Staffers and audience members - including Colbert's wife, Evie McGee Colbert - then swarmed the stage as Colbert gave the honor to McCartney to turn off the building's power. The theater then gets sucked into a vortex and turns into a snow globe.

Guests in the final week included Michael Keaton, Jon Stewart, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Steven Spielberg, David Byrne and Bruce Springsteen, while there's been a wacky version of "It's Raining Men" remade into "It's Raining Fish."

On Wednesday night, Colbert was on the other end of his "The Colbert Questionnaire," asked things like which sandwich is best and whether apples are better than oranges. Mark Hamill, Martha Stewart, Ben Stiller and Robert De Niro were some of the questioners.

David Letterman, the show's host when it debuted in 1993, joined Colbert on the roof of the theater to hurl furniture from the set - a nod to one of Letterman's classic stunts.



This image released by CBS shows Bryan Cranston during the final episode of 'The Late Show with Stephen Colbert' in New York on Thursday, May 21, 2026. (AP)

### Variety

CLEVELAND: Turns out, Taylor Swift likes basketball, too.

The global music superstar sat courtside at Game 3 of the Eastern Conference finals on Saturday night along with fiance and Cleveland native Travis Kelce as the Cavaliers hosted the New York Knicks desperately needing a win in the series.

Swift and Kelce, who recently signed a 3-year, \$54 million contract with the Kansas City Chiefs, took their seats in Rocket Arena shortly before the opening tip. Their appearance caused a stir as fans reacted to seeing the power couple together.

Kelce didn't need long to settle in and was animated while cheering for the Cavs.

With the Cavs trailing 91-82 at the end of the third quarter, Kelce and Swift were shown on the arena's giant scoreboard. Fans cheered wildly as Kelce showed off his team cap and wine-and-gold shirt before chugging a beer to help rally the Cavs.

As Kelce gulped down his beverage, Swift covered her mouth and feigned shock and embarrassment.

Swift became a staple at Chiefs home games when she began dating Kelce a few years ago. She also accompanied him to Game 1 of the AL Championship Series at Yankee Stadium in 2024.

Kelce has attended Cavs games in the past and he and his brother, Jason, were celebrated with a bobblehead giveaway by Cleveland in 2024. (AP)

NEW YORK: Rob Base, a rapper and one half of the Harlem hip-hop duo Rob Base & DJ E-Z Rock, has died after a battle with cancer. He was 59.

Base, whose real name was Robert Ginyard, was best known for the 1988 chart-topper "It Takes Two," a blend of hip-hop and house music that helped bring both genres into the mainstream.

"Rob's music, energy, and legacy helped shape a generation and brought joy to millions around the world," read a statement on his Instagram announcing his death. "Beyond the stage,



Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce watch the first half of Game 3 in the Eastern Conference finals NBA basketball playoffs series between the New York Knicks and the Cleveland Cavaliers in Cleveland, Saturday, May 23, 2026. (AP)

he was a loving father, family man, friend, and creative force whose impact will never be forgotten." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Britney Spears refused to get out of her BMW for about 10 minutes before her driving under the influence arrest in March. When she did, the singing superstar smelled of booze and appeared drunk in field sobriety tests, according to a police report and dashcam video obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

"Her speech was rapid and slurred, her gait was unsteady, and she was fidgeting with her fingers," the report from the California Highway Patrol said. "Her mood changed from confrontational and agitated to flamboyant and compliant. She also appeared to speak with a British accent at times."

Spears told officers, "I could probably drink four bottles of wine and take care of you, I'm an angel."

But she said that in actuality she only had one drink, a mimosa, hours earlier, and she put her level of drunkenness at "zero." Breath tests put her blood alcohol level at .05 and .06, below the .08 level at which someone is presumed impaired in California. (AP)

## Arts &amp; Culture

Climbers battle for lucky buns in tradition finale

## Century-old bun festival lights up Hong Kong island



Artists perform a Chinese opera during the Bun Festival in Cheung Chau Island in Hong Kong. (AP)



A child participates in the Piu Sik Parade with a replica gas station price sign model at the Bun Festival in Cheung Chau Island in Hong Kong. (AP)



Participants collect buns from a tower covered with plastic buns during the Bun Festival in Cheung Chau Island in Hong Kong. (AP)



A group of children in traditional clothing participate in the Piu Sik Parade at the Bun Festival in Cheung Chau Island in Hong Kong. (AP)

HONG KONG, May 25, (AP): Hong Kong's iconic bun festival drew throngs of revelers to the densely populated city's outlying island, Cheung Chau, to celebrate a century-old tradition that is rooted in prayers for peace and blessings.

Residents and tourists braved the heat to watch children in costumes take part in a parade, called "Piu Sik," which translates as "floating colors." Children dressed as legendary deities, historic characters or local politicians were carried on stands above the crowds, moving through the island's narrow lanes.

The festival highlight is the "bun-scram-

bling" competition around midnight, where participants climb a tower covered with plastic buns. They have to collect buns, which carry different scores depending on their locations, within a time limit. The one who earns the highest total score wins. But the participant who gets the greatest number of buns in the time allotted will receive the "Full Pockets of Lucky Buns" award.

The race was suspended for decades after bun towers collapsed in 1978, injuring dozens of people. The tradition resumed in 2005.

According to Hong Kong's Intangible Cultural Heritage Office, legends say Cheung Chau

was once devastated by a plague and some residents then invited monks and Taoist priests to set up a sacrificial altar near a temple to pray to deities. They also paraded deity statues along village lanes. After the ritual, the plague ceased and Cheung Chau residents have since been organizing the event, also known as the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, to dispel disaster and pray for blessings for peace and safety, the office said.

The festival has become one of the most popular events for tourists in Hong Kong in recent years. Many people like to buy steamed buns carrying the Chinese characters for "peace" and "safety" or souvenirs modeled on the buns.

Praying for happiness and prosperity

## Cambodian villagers honor guardian spirits

PHUM BOEUNG, Cambodia, May 25, (AP): Hundreds of Cambodians on Thursday morning honored their village's guardian spirits by holding a colorful centuries-old ceremony to pray for good fortune, rain and prosperity.

The "He Neak Ta" ritual has been celebrated annually for several hundred years by the villagers in Phum Boeung, about 25 kilometers (15 miles) northwest of the capital, Phnom Penh.

The ceremony, which has become increasingly rare in modern times, coincides with the onset of the summer monsoon as farmers prepare for planting rice, a particularly water-intensive crop.

Although most Cambodians are Buddhist, the ritual reflects a widespread faith in animism, the belief



Villagers march to mark a ceremony to invoke rain amid the rice planting season in Pring Ka-ek village, northwest of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. (AP)

that spirits can inhabit all types of living and inanimate objects. Chamroun Ratha, a 26-year-old

blacksmith, said he was taking the day off from work to join other villagers in honoring the same spirits

celebrated by his ancestors.

"The significance of this ceremony is to pray for happiness and prosperity for all the villagers in this area and the participants who have joined this ceremony," he said.

Villagers of all ages congregate about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the local monastery dedicated to their guardian spirit. Young village men paint scenes inspired by local folklore on their faces and bodies, dress as spirits and don grass skirts. A few wear painted oversized heads atop their costumes.

Many young women wear traditional silk clothing, with gold-colored necklaces and flowers tucked behind their ears. Some dance elegantly to the beat of handheld drums and small gongs.

## Technology

AI &amp; sensors power flower fields

## Tech upgrade turns Guangxi into a rising tea powerhouse

NANNING, May 25, (Xinhua): Surrounded by waves of verdant green and limestone gray, a scene not often encountered in the Karst landscape, the air in Hengzhou, a county-level city in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, is thick with a peculiar floral sweetness.

This is the scent of jasmine harvest season, a biological window measured in hours and not days, that drives the fortunes of a regional economy undergoing fast industrial transformations.

Official figures show Guangxi's annual tea output stands about 140,000 tonnes, with the value of the whole industrial chain exceeding 70 billion yuan (10.24 billion U.S. dollars).

Hengzhou supplies more than 60 percent of the world's jasmine flowers and over 80 percent of China's total. Roughly 340,000 people work in Hengzhou's jasmine sector alone.

Traditionally, farmers head into the fields around midday, when the sun is fiercest and the blossoms are under maximum thermal stress.

"The volatility of essential oils peaks in the heat," said Lei Shuiping, a third-generation jasmine farmer. "It releases the aromatic compounds that global buyers pay a premium for."

It is estimated that the combined brand value of Hengzhou's jasmine and jasmine tea will reach 23.53 billion yuan in 2026, a year-on-year increase of 863 million yuan.

Though the picking remains labor-intensive, everything that follows has been transformed by technology.

A 10,000-mu (approximately 667-hectare) plantation now functions as a "digital greenhouse," studded with sensor networks and AI-powered image recognition.

The "Smart Planting System," as local officials refer to it, has extended the flowering window by four to six weeks, cut water and fertilizer use by around 30 percent, and halved labor costs per mu by predicting peak bloom times and flagging pest outbreaks in real time.

These tech upgrades have added an average of 3,600 yuan to farmers' annual income per mu, according to local agricultural data.

Lu Yuan, who works at a local university, nowadays drinks two or three cups of tea-based beverages a day, drifting away from iced coffee.

"Cold-brew tea gives me the same ritual," she said. "Coffee hasn't quite disappeared from my life, but it's just become optional."

Such consumer pivot has broadened the global footprint of Guangxi tea. Mixue Ice Cream & Tea, a Chi-



A tea farmer rests at a jasmine garden in Hengzhou City, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. (Xinhua)

nese company that built its brand selling flavored teas, has opened more than 4,000 stores overseas, while Chagee, another Chinese tea brand, has set up shops in over 200 locations outside China, with long lines reported outside new stores in places including Kuala Lumpur and New York.

Hengzhou jasmine forms the scented base for many of their best-selling drinks.

The same modernization drive is boosting Guangxi's traditional dark teas. In nearby Cangwu County in Wuzhou City, producers have given a 1,500-year-old fermented variety, known as Liubao, a contemporary makeover.

"With ecological gardens and digital systems, managing the plantation is so much easier now," said Huang Shangyong, a tea farmer in Wuzhou.

A blockchain traceability system now logs every stage of production, while AI-equipped drones can flag disease outbreaks up to 14 days before they would otherwise be visible to naked eyes, said Liang Jinzhao, a local agriculture official. Each batch of export goods carries its own identity card, in the form of a QR code, allowing buyers around the world to trace a consignment back to a specific plot.

Guangxi's tea modernization was part of the country's broader rural revitalization strategy.

The frequent use of AI, from pest-detection algorithms to yield-forecasting models, has turned the region into a new frontier in the modernizing of China's traditional farming, while also preserving its cultural identity.

In 2025, Guangxi ports handled 16,000 tonnes of tea export and import, worth nearly 300 million yuan, placing the southern region in the first place nationally.

Both Liubao and jasmine have extended their global reach via trade and networking platforms like the annual China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, according to the Guangxi International Expositions Bureau.

As Chinese consumer brands rapidly dot storefronts overseas, they are carrying Guangxi's signature offerings with them and making Guangxi a major link in the world's tea boom.



A tourist picks jasmine flowers at a jasmine garden in Hengzhou City, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on July 31, 2025. (Xinhua)

## The Conversation

## You can persuade AI models to accept falsehoods as truth, study shows

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



By Ashique KhudaBukhsh,  
Rochester Institute of Technology

When you ask a large language model a question, the reply may include falsehoods, and if you challenge those statements with facts, the AI may still uphold the reply as true. That's what my research group found when we asked five leading models to describe scenes in movies or novels that don't actually exist.

We probed this possibility after I asked ChatGPT its favorite scene in the movie "Good Will Hunting." It noted a scene between leading characters. But then I asked, "What about the scene with the Hitler reference?" There is no such scene in the movie, yet ChatGPT confidently constructed a vivid and plausible description of one.

The confabulation - sometimes called an AI hallucination - revealed something deeper about how AI systems reason. References to Hitler are not uncommon in films, which apparently convinced ChatGPT

to accept and elaborate on a false premise rather than correct it. I study the social impact of AI, and this surprise response led my colleagues and me to a broader question: What happens when AI systems are gently pushed toward falsehoods? Do they resist, or do they comply?

We developed an approach we called hallucination audit under nudge trial to answer those questions. We had conversations with five leading models about 1,000 popular movies and 1,000 popular novels. During the exchanges we raised plausible but false references to Hitler, dinosaurs or time machines. We did this in various suggestive ways, such as "For me, I really love the scene where ..."

Our method works in three stages. First, the AI generates statements about a topic - such as a movie or a book - some true and some false. Second, in a separate interaction, the AI attempts to verify those statements. Third, we introduce a "nudge," where the model is challenged with its own incorrect claims to see whether it resists or accepts them.

We found that AI models often struggle to remain consistent under pressure. Even when they initially identify a statement as false, they may later accept it when nudged - revealing a vulnerability that tradi-

tional evaluation methods fail to capture.

Our results have been accepted at the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics.

This tactic isn't a hypothetical. When people talk, conversational pressure can emerge naturally. People may confidently repeat incorrect assumptions, partial recollections or misunderstandings. A person might say, "I'm pretty sure medicine X is effective for condition Y," or "I remember event A happening before event B." These statements can subtly influence an AI model.

What humans collectively remember, misremember and forget shapes our sense of reality. But if humans can persuade a model to accept a falsehood, that reveals an important vulnerability in AI's capacity to provide accurate information.

Interactions in the real world are rarely static question-answer exchanges. They are interactive and iterative. An AI model's willingness to reinforce falsehoods may seem harmless when chatting about movies, but in areas such as health, law or public policy, the tendency can have serious consequences. Our work highlights the need to evaluate not just what information AI systems have been trained on, but how

reliably they stand by it.

Our results add to other recent research into why large language models may produce hallucinations, and how it is that they can provide inconsistent information. Researchers are also trying to figure out why some models lean toward sycophancy - flattering or fawning over human users.

It's not clear why some AI systems resist falsehoods better than others. In our tests, Claude was the most resistant, followed somewhat closely by Grok and ChatGPT, with Gemini and DeepSeek further behind.

Movies and novels are self-contained content. Scholars don't know how AI might respond to pressure in much broader, complex real-world settings. As a start, my group is exploring how to extend our approach to scientific literature and health-related claims. We want to understand whether conversational pressure works differently when the discussion involves uncertainty or expertise.

How to design AI systems that remain both helpful and resistant to falsehoods under wide-ranging conversation remains an open challenge.

The Research Brief is a short take on interesting academic work. (AP)

## HEALTH/SCIENCE

## China launches Shenzhou 23 spacecraft with 1 of 3 astronauts set for yearlong stay

JIUQUAN, China, May 25, (Agencies): China launched the Shenzhou 23 spacecraft Sunday night with three astronauts heading to its space station, including one set to stay in space for a year.

The spacecraft blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China. The much-anticipated launch comes as China prepares for its first crewed lunar landing by 2030.

The astronauts on the mission are Zhu Yangzhu, the commander, Zhang Zhiyuan and Lai Ka-ying, also identified by Chinese authorities as Li Jiaying using the Mandarin transliteration of her name.

Lai, who was born and raised in Hong Kong and has a doctoral degree in computer forensics, is the first astronaut from the city on a space mission.

The crew is set to conduct dozens of science and application projects, state media said. They are also expected to complete an in-orbit rotation with the crew of Shenzhou 21, who has been at the Tiangong space station for more than 200 days.

One of the three astronauts on the Shenzhou 23 mission is scheduled to stay at the orbiting space station for a year in what would be among the world's longest single stays in space. The astronaut's mission is to "explore human adaptability and performance limits" in long-duration spaceflight environments, state media reported.

As China steps up its space program, its astronauts have carried out multiple missions to the Tiangong space

station, developed after China was effectively excluded from the International Space Station on U.S. concerns over national security.

The US is seen as China's top space rival, with NASA aiming to land astronauts on the lunar surface in 2028.

China's space station Tiangong, which translates to "Heavenly Palace," first hosted the country's crew in 2021. Last year, an emergency mission in the Shenzhou program, which means "Divine Vessel," returned a team of astronauts stranded on the space station due to a damaged spacecraft.

Zhu Yangzhu, who captured the nation's memory in 2023 as China's first spaceflight engineer in orbit, is poised to write the next chapter of his cosmic story.

Appointed commander of the Shenzhou-23 mission, Zhu is set for a launch late Sunday alongside two crewmates, with one member slated to undertake a record-breaking one-year stay in orbit.

"We are like three different pieces of a puzzle that fit perfectly together to form a seamless, powerful whole, united in thought and action to accomplish this mission," Zhu said at Saturday's press conference, where he appeared alongside his two teammates.

As the country's first spaceflight engineer to serve as a commander, he described his crew's synergy with a unique formula: achieving a "one plus one plus one equals one" mindset, where they think as one and pull in the same direction, while delivering a technical capability that is "greater than three."



The Shenzhou-23 manned mission launches from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Jiuquan, northwestern China on May 24. (AP)



Golden monkeys groom each other, removing debris and parasites from their fur, in Volcanoes National Park, in Kinigi, Rwanda on March 19. (AP)

'eDNA cost-effective monitoring approach in large ecosystems'

## Collecting DNA samples in wild could transform conservation

MUSANZE, Rwanda, May 25, (AP): A guide called out to endangered golden monkeys with grunts and clicks to signal he posed no threat, a familiar sound in the mist-covered forests of Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park.

Here in one of Africa's most well-known parks, steep ridges and dense vegetation often obscure even the largest mountain gorillas - also endangered - and scientists are turning to new technology to detect and protect them.

Known as environmental DNA, or eDNA, the technology allows researchers to identify species using decades material like fur or feces left in soil and water. This reduces the impact of human interaction during wildlife surveys that can leave researchers groping through the mist.

The technology, more often used in marine conservation work, was introduced by the African Wildlife Foundation in partnership with the Rwandan government. It aims to develop a list of all species in the country. That will help protect biodiversity that is threatened by climate change and population growth.

"We selected eDNA as a new technology to bring solutions and to complement existing methods used in ecological monitoring," said the foundation's country manager for Rwanda, Patrick Nsabimana.

Biodiversity monitoring has relied on camera traps, which operate when animals trigger their sensors, and ranger observations. But that is a challenge in rugged terrain such as the Virunga mountains that are central to Volcanoes National Park, which covers part of Rwanda, Uganda and Congo. Insecurity in the border area also can limit ranger movement.

Nsabimana said eDNA is a cost-effective monitoring approach in large ecosystems such as Virunga. Samples are taken from locations like downstream ponds that are likely to have traces of animals on higher ground. Then they are tested.

"With one sample, you can detect multiple species, mammals, birds, amphibians and many others," said Deogratias Tuyisingize, a Rwanda-based biodiversity researcher with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund that is also involved in the project.

He said a combination of traditional methods and new technology is needed to ensure all species are monitored. Because of steep ravines and mountainsides, "we are sure we were missing some species."

Meanwhile, having a better sense of where endangered species are could help in patrolling against poachers, people with the project said.

The ability to generate a broad snapshot of biodiversity is critical for conservation, especially as Rwanda expands some of its national parks by rehabilitating previously agricultural land.

"We can see how species are colonizing these sites over time," Tuyisingize said.

That allows conservationists to measure success by the return of rare or threatened species, and offers early warnings of invasive species.

But the eDNA technology is not without limitations. It cannot reliably estimate how many animals are present in an ecosystem. DNA can linger long after a species has left.

Being able to process samples in Rwanda is also a challenge, as the project's initial ones had to be sent to Europe for analysis.

Joshua Newton, who conducted research on eDNA for Curtin University's Trace and Environmental DNA Laboratory, said challenges also include having cold storage to preserve DNA samples and ensuring samples are not contaminated.

Data gaps are another issue. Africa has relatively limited genetic reference libraries, despite decades of conservation work on the continent, making it harder to match DNA samples to known species.

Most genetic reference libraries come from Europe and America, said James Munyawera, a lab specialist with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.

Researchers are now building region-specific databases.

The project in Volcanoes National Park has also begun training residents of local communities, along with rangers, to participate in monitoring efforts by collecting samples.

## Ugandan health officials report new Ebola virus infections, bringing cases to 7

## Congo battles Ebola outbreak complicated by aid cuts, armed rebels and anger

KINSHASA, Congo, May 25, (AP): Attacks on Ebola treatment centers in eastern Congo underscore the serious challenges authorities face - including a backlash in local communities - as they try to stem an outbreak of the infectious disease that has been declared a global health emergency.

On Sunday, Congolese authorities said suspected cases have now passed 900 in the east of the country, mainly in Ituri Province, where the ongoing outbreak is centered. Later Sunday night, angry young men stormed a hospital treating Ebola patients in the town of Mongbwalu in Ituri, the hospital's director said.

The attackers demanded that two bodies of their kin be handed over to them, Dr. Richard Lokudu said. Medical staff scrambled to evacuate the patients as gunfire rang out in the area; it was not immediately known if anyone was hurt in the melee.

The hospital attack and the arson at two health centers last week at the heart of the outbreak exposed the anger in a region beset by violence linked to armed rebel groups, the displacement of a large number of people, the failure of local government and international aid cuts that experts say have stripped health facilities in vulnerable communities.

"A devastating set of emergencies are converging," said the Physicians

for Human Rights nonprofit.

Here's a look at the longstanding crises in eastern Congo that have made it home to one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, and how they are now affecting the response to a rare type of Ebola:

Eastern Congo has for years seen attacks by dozens of separate rebel and militant groups, some of them with links to foreign countries or the extremist Islamic State group.

The Rwanda-backed M23 rebels are in control of parts of the region. While the Congolese government still largely controls the northeastern Ituri Province, the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak, that control is tenuous. The Allied Democratic Forces, a Ugandan Islamist group linked to IS, is one of the dominant rebel groups there and responsible for violent attacks against civilian targets.

Before the outbreak, Doctors Without Borders said in an assessment that the insecurity in Ituri had worsened recently, causing doctors and nurses to flee and leaving overwhelmed health facilities and in some parts, "catastrophic conditions."

The U.N. humanitarian office says almost a million people have been displaced from their homes by conflict in Ituri.

That means this Ebola outbreak is "unfolding in communities already facing insecurity, displacement and



A sanitation worker from the Bunia city government sprays chlorine to disinfect the central market, as Ituri province continues to combat an Ebola outbreak, in Bunia, Congo on May 23, 2026. (AP)

fragile health care systems," said Gabriela Arenas, a regional coordinator at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

There are concerns the disease might spread to the large displacement camps near the city of Bunia, where the first cases were reported.

The Congolese Ministry of Communication said on X on Sunday that there were 904 suspected cases of Ebola, mostly in Ituri - a significant jump from the previously announced

more than 700 suspected Ebola cases.

The ministry also said the total suspected Ebola deaths stood at 119, but the numbers it released separately for each region added up to 220. Officials could not immediately be reached to explain the discrepancy.

Cases have also been reported in two other eastern provinces, North Kivu and South Kivu, where the M23 rebels are in control, and also in the neighboring country of Uganda.

As a result, the outbreak in Congo

is being managed by the government and in part by rebel authorities, with an array of aid agencies also helping.

Health experts say international aid cuts last year by the United States and other rich nations were devastating for eastern Congo because of its multiple problems.

The cuts "reduced the capacity to detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks," said Thomas McHale, public health director at Physicians for Human Rights. Congo has had more than a dozen previous Ebola outbreaks.

Aid groups fighting this outbreak on the ground say they don't have the equipment they need, such as face shields and suits to protect health workers from infection, testing kits, and body bags and other materials needed to safely bury the bodies of victims, which can be highly contagious.

"We have made requests to different partners, but we have not yet really received anything," said Juliette Lusenge, president of Women's Solidarity for Inclusive Peace and Development, an aid group operating a small hospital near Bunia.

**Also:**

**KAMPALA, Uganda:** Ugandan health authorities on Monday reported two new Ebola cases, bringing the number of infections to seven.

All the cases are linked to the outbreak in neighboring Congo, which appears to have started several days or weeks before Congolese authorities declared it on May 15.

A 59-year-old Congolese man was admitted to a hospital in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, on May 11, and died three days later, before it was known he was suffering from the Ebola virus. Two other Congolese nationals who sought medical care in Uganda later tested positive for Ebola.

Ugandan health authorities on Saturday confirmed the first local infections: a driver and a health worker exposed to the Congolese patient who died on May 11. Two more health workers at a private hospital in Kampala have since tested positive, the Ministry of Health said Monday.

"Both patients have been admitted to the designated treatment unit and are now receiving care," Dr. Charles Oloro, the national director of health services, said in a statement.

President Yoweri Museveni has urged Ugandans to "stop shaking hands" as part of measures to avoid infection. He also ordered the postponement of an annual religious event that attracts thousands of pilgrims, from Congo and elsewhere, who converge around a Catholic basilica just outside Kampala by June 3.

## Storms and dryness speeding up biomass turnover in Amazon forest, says study

GUANGZHOU, May 25, (Xinhua): Powerful storms and drier air are speeding up the natural biomass turnover in the Amazon rainforest, potentially reducing its ability to store carbon for long periods of time, researchers have found.

The study, led by the South China Botanical Garden (SCBG) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, together with Cornell University and other international partners, was published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

Tropical forests like the Amazon hold more than 60 percent of the world's plant biomass, making them critical players in regulating the global climate. But their role as carbon storage depends on how long carbon stays locked in trees and other vegetation before being released back into the air. Scientists call this the carbon residence time. The study shows this residence time is shrinking across the Amazon. As the atmosphere becomes drier and convective storms become more active, trees are dying and being replaced faster than before.



Boats sit on the shore of the Nanay River, a tributary of the Amazon, amid low water levels and drought in Iquitos, Peru on Sept 10, 2024. (AP)

Earlier research on tropical carbon sinks has focused mostly on tree growth and productivity. Much less attention has been given to tree death and biomass turnover. Most past studies also relied on data from small, local forest plots.

"Tropical forests are highly complex and vary greatly from place to place," said Wu Donghai, a researcher from the SCBG. "Limited field plots cannot fully capture large-scale patterns and drivers of biomass carbon turnover."

## Australian study uncovers why some brain regions are prone to tumors

MELBOURNE, May 25, (Xinhua): Researchers in Australia have identified biological factors that make certain regions of the brain more prone to tumor growth, offering new insights into how brain cancers arise.

Using fruit fly models, the researchers examined why cancer-causing mutations trigger tumors in some brain areas but not others, said a statement released by Australia's Peter MacCallum Cancer Center (Peter Mac) in Melbourne.

The study, published in the US journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, identified a protein called "Chinmo" as a key determinant of tumor formation.

The team found that mutations in fruit fly brain regions where Chinmo is active are far more likely to become cancerous, while the same mutations do not form tumors where Chinmo is absent.

"We could change the fate of cells carrying the exact same mutation by turning Chinmo on or off," said Professor Louise Cheng from Peter Mac, whose lab conducted the research, suggesting potential pathways for intervention.

Researchers also found that Chinmo is regulated by a steroid hormone involved in brain development, highlighting how developmental timing and hormonal signals

influence cancer risk.

**Also:**

**DAR ES SALAAM:** Tanzania has recorded a decline in malaria infections among children under five years of age following intensified nationwide interventions, Minister for Health Mohamed Mchengherwa said Monday.

Preliminary findings from a nationwide survey showed malaria infections among children under five fell from 8.1 percent in 2022 to 5.5 percent in 2025, the minister told parliament in the capital, Dodoma.

Mchengherwa noted that the findings reflected the government's sustained efforts to strengthen malaria prevention, testing and treatment services nationwide.

The survey was conducted in all 184 local councils across the country to assess the prevalence of malaria among children under five and primary school pupils aged five to 16, Mchengherwa said while presenting the health ministry's budget estimates for the 2026/2027 financial year.

A total of 66,801 primary school pupils and 8,828 children under five were tested for malaria using rapid diagnostic tests to determine infection rates, Mchengherwa said.

Children found to be infected were treated with artemether-lumefantrine, commonly known as ALU, an anti-malaria medication widely used in Tanzania, he said.



Cheng

Gryphons and Sphinx emerge as joint champions

## IDAK KDD Sports Championship kicks off with thrilling volleyball, throwball matches

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The much anticipated two-year sporting extravaganza, the IDAK KDD Sports Championship 2026-27, organised by the Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK), commenced this weekend with tremendous enthusiasm, athletic spirit, and vibrant community participation.

The opening event, held at the ARGAN Bedaya community center in Sabah Al-Salem featured thrilling events in men's volleyball, women's throwball, and exciting children's events including dodgeball for participants below 10 years and throwball for those aged 10 years and above.

The three powerhouse teams of IDAK — Gryphons, Pegasus, and Sphinx — displayed exceptional competitiveness, teamwork, and sportsmanship throughout the day at the event.

The championship was formally inaugurated by IDAK President Dr. Shalin Anna Simon, General Secretary Dr. Dilip George, and Past President Dr. George P. Alex by the ceremonial display of the team flags. The Sports Committee, headed by Dr. Samit Mohanan along with Co-Chair Dr. Asheel Mohammed and committee members Dr. Rahul Puthalath, Dr. Renjit George, Dr. Joju V. George, Dr. Anjana C. Nair, and Dr. Revathi Sanjeev, successfully coordinated the event with the support of KDD and Al Mulla Exchange.

The day's events began with the women's throwball tournament followed by the men's volleyball matches; attracting enthusiastic crowds of families, supporters, and members who passionately cheered for their teams. The atmosphere



Joyful moments as Pegasus lift the championship trophy.



Gryphons and Sphinx split championship honours in final celebration.

came alive with a vibrant flashmob performance led by Dr. Parvathy Rajkumar, Chair of the Cultural Committee, electrifying the crowd and adding a burst of energy and excitement to the celebrations.

After a series of closely contested games which showcased a spectacular display of grit and determination, the Gryphons, led by Dr. Ashwin Sudheesh and Sphinx, captained by Dr. Faraaz Khan emerged as the joint champions in the men's volleyball category, while Pegasus, under the leadership of Dr. Deepak Chembil Menon secured the runner-up position.

The women's throwball event saw Pegasus emerge victorious under the leadership of Dr. Jane John Thomas, while Gryphons, captained by Dr.

Sharon Joji, finished in the runner-up position.

Standout performances by Dr. Karthi Manoharan earned him the title of the best player in men's volleyball and Dr. Sushma Shenoy took home the best player honors in women's throwball event.

The matches were officiated by Dr. Shyam for women's throwball and Mr. Vishnu for men's volleyball.

IDAK President Dr. Shalin Anna Simon presented the champions trophy to the victorious women's team of Pegasus, while General Secretary Dr. Dilip George handed over the runner-up trophy to the ladies of the Gryphons team. For the men's volleyball segment, KDD's Manager of business systems, Mr. Anand Harith, presented the winners' trophy to



captains Dr. Ashwin and Dr. Faraaz Khan, while Mr. Siva Ganesh, Assistant Manager of Marketing at Al Mulla Exchange, presented the runners-up trophy to team Pegasus.

The event also featured



Left to right: Players in action.

medal distribution ceremonies for children participating in dodgeball and throwball competitions, adding joy and excitement to the celebrations.

With enthusiastic cheers, spirited performances, and memorable

sporting highlights, the IDAK KDD Sports Championship 2026-27 has kicked off on a spectacular note, setting the stage for an exciting and fiercely competitive sporting season ahead.

# Suarez wins Coca Cola 600 after emotional Busch tribute night

Bell takes runner-up spot

CONCORD, N.C., May 25, (AP): When Daniel Suarez was struggling to make his name in auto racing, he would often get phone calls from Kyle Busch offering words of encouragement and urging him to keep working.

That made his crown jewel Cup Series victory Sunday night all the more special.

Suarez benefited from a crucial pit call, then caught a break from Mother Nature to win the rain-shortened Coca-Cola 600, capping an emotional day in which the racing world remembered the late Busch.

Suarez became the first Mexican-born driver to win the Coke 600. It was his third Cup Series win and first since 2024.

The victory was especially emotional for Suarez, who previously raced for Kyle Busch Motorsports.

"Kyle, he was special," Suarez said as he teared up. "I was doing this for Kyle, for (his wife) Samatha, for (his children) Brexton and Lenix and for all of his family."

A non-factor for most of the race, Suarez gambled and took two tires during a late pit stop, then held off Christopher Bell and Denny Hamlin on restarts before the race was called when the sky opened up and rain drenched the track shortly before midnight Eastern time.

NASCAR quickly made the decision to call the race with 27 laps remaining.

Bell finished second; Hamlin was third.



Daniel Suarez celebrates in Victory Lane after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race in Charlotte, N.C. (AP)

The two Joe Gibbs Racing teammates had a chance to catch Suarez on the two restarts, but couldn't clear his No. 7 Chevrolet.

"It's a bummer," Bell said, who won the rain-shortened 2024 Coca-Cola 600. "It wasn't meant to be today. That's 2026 for us."

Hamlin said he was "just a little unlucky."

"The 20 car (Bell) and us were just really battling because we knew whoever could clear him (would win

the race)," Hamlin said. "We were really good all day. We just didn't get to see it through."

The race came just three days after Busch's death sent shockwaves throughout the motorsports world and beyond. The 41-year-old Busch died after severe pneumonia progressed into sepsis, resulting in rapid and overwhelming complications, according to a statement released by his family.

The two-time Cup Series champion and winner of a record 234 races

across NASCAR's three national series had become unresponsive while practicing in a Chevrolet simulator Wednesday, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because no details were released by the family.

Busch's family attended the race and NASCAR CEO Steve O'Donnell told them they are part of the NASCAR community and "we got you."

Sterne ends 13-year winless run

Clark takes Byron Nelson crown

McKINNEY, Texas, May 25, (AP): Wyndham Clark was 7 under over his final eight holes and closed with an 11-under 60 to overtake Si Woo Kim and win the CJ Cup Byron Nelson for his first PGA Tour win in two years.

Clark's last victory was the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in 2024, where he also shot 60 in the third and final round in a tournament cut short by weather.

Kim started the final round with a two-shot lead, closed with a 65 and finished three shots behind. Defending champion Scottie Scheffler started two shots behind and never got any closer. He shot 65 and finished third, five shots behind.

Clark finished at 30-under 254. The was one shot shy of the PGA Tour's 72-hole scoring record last matched by Scheffler a year ago at TPC Craig Ranch, which went through more than \$20 million in renovations to provide a more challenging course.

Richard Sterne of South Africa ended 13 years without a European tour victory when he closed with a 5-under 66 to overcome a five-shot deficit Sunday and win the Soudal Open.

Sterne was still four shots behind Zander Lombard when he holed a 6-foot birdie putt on the 16th as Lombard dropped a shot at the 13th. Sterne followed with a 3-wood to 4 feet on the par-5 17th that set up a short eagle putt. He took the lead when Lombard made double bogey.

No one could catch Sterne the rest of the day, and he finished at 18-under 266 to win by two shots over six players - Jacob Skov Olesen, Jorge Campillo, Kota Kaneko, Victor Perez, Marcus Armitage and Marcus Kinhult.

Sterne's previous victory on the European tour was the 2013 Joburg Open.

Doc Redman made birdie on the par-5 18th hole for a 6-under 65 to force a playoff and won the Visit Knoxville Open with an eagle on the first extra hole to defeat Hunter Eichhorn.

Redman won for the second time in five starts on the Korn Ferry Tour and moved to No. 2 in the points standings, moving closer to regaining his PGA Tour card.

Eichhorn closed with a 61 for his best career finish. He went left into the native area in the playoff,

and pitched to 6 feet for his fourth shot before Redman holed out for the win.

Scott Hend of Australia won the for the first time on the PGA Tour Champions when he closed with a 4-under 69 for a five-shot victory over Steven Alker and Tommy Gainey in the Trophy Hassan II in Morocco in a tournament that ended.

Hend was two shots behind with 10 holes to play until a three-shot swing on the par-3 ninth when the Australian made birdie and Gainey took double bogey. Hend was not caught the rest of the way.

The victory makes Hend, who was runner-up at the Senior PGA Championship last month, fully exempt on the PGA Tour Champions through 2027. He is the third first-time winner on the senior circuit this year.

Jiho Yang closed with a 5-over 76 and held on to win the Kolon Korea Open on the Asian Tour, earning a spot into the British Open this summer at Royal Birkdale.

Yusaku Hosono closed with a 2-under 70 for a two-shot victory in the Japan PGA Championship Senko Group Cup for his first title on the Japan Golf Tour.

Anna Huang of Canada overcame a six-shot deficit with a 7-under 63, giving her a one-shot victory over Kelsey Bennett in the Lalla Meryem Cup in Morocco on the Ladies European Tour.

Tapio Pulkkanen birdied his last hole for a 1-over 73 to force a playoff and made a 30-foot eagle putt on the first extra hole again Maxence Giboudot to win the Danish Golf Challenge on the Challenge Tour.

Joey Savoie of Canada lost the lead with two late bogeys, birdied the 18th hole for a 3-under 69 and beat Jack Lundin (64) with a birdie on the third playoff hole to win the Kia Ecuador Open on the PGA Tour Americas.

Justin Walters closed with an even-par 72 and won the SunBet Challenge by one shot on the Sunshine Tour in South Africa.

Hibiki Iriya shot 1-under 71 and held on for a one-shot victory in the Bridgestone Ladies Open on the Japan LPGA.

Jaravee Boonchant of Thailand closed with a 2-under 70 for a two-shot victory in the E1 Charity Open on the Korea LPGA.

Swiatek not taking anything for granted amid tough clay season

## Wawrinka waves emotional goodbye to French Open after losing in first round

PARIS, May 25, (AP): Stan Wawrinka waved a fond goodbye to the French Open after losing in the first round on Monday.

The 41-year-old Swiss, the 2015 champion and 2017 finalist, is retiring at the end of the season. He made his final Roland Garros appearance 21 years after his first.

Jesper de Jong finished off Wawrinka 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 with a whipped forehand winner, then urged the fans to applaud Wawrinka, whose face was almost as red as the baking-hot clay. Temperatures in sun-soaked Paris hit 33 degrees C (91 F).

"It's hard, it's hard to say goodbye to you here," an emotional Wawrinka said. "It's because of Roland Garros that I wanted to become a tennis player."

He was given an ovation at Court Simonne-Mathieu, where he got fans to do a Mexican wave before leaving. He was scheduled to face Arthur Fils but the rising French star pulled out of the tournament with a hip issue.

Wawrinka got the crowd going, at times asking for more encouragement with a broad grin. He applauded the spectators back, tapping his racket after winning a point. One fan held up a sign with "Stan the Man" written on it, another with "Stan



Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland poses for a picture after the first round men's singles tennis match against Jesper De Jong of the Netherlands at the French Open tennis tournament in Paris. (AP)

will the Man."

"He was playing against my coach (Bas Van Bentum) when I was a ball kid. I don't want to say you're that old," De Jong said, drawing a smile from Wawrinka. "It's all about Stan today, the way he was fighting."

Wawrinka retorted: "I know I played against your coach, it doesn't make me any younger."

He was hugged on court by tournament direc-

tor Amelie Mauresmo, before sitting and watching footage of his matches down the years. He was shown video messages from Federer, Rafael Nadal, Djokovic, men's No. 1 Jannik Sinner, reigning champion Carlos Alcaraz, and Monfils.

At his physical peak, the barrel-chested Wawrinka had huge stamina and was one of the few who beat Nadal, Djokovic, Federer and Andy Murray at the Grand Slams.

Wawrinka beat Nadal in the the Australian Open final in 2014 and downed Djokovic again in the U.S. Open final in 2016, meaning all three of his majors

Four-time champion Iga Swiatek required exactly one hour to eliminate 136th-ranked French Open debutante Emerson Jones 6-1, 6-2 in the first round, in front of a mostly empty Court Philippe-Chatrier on another steamy day in Paris.

The only real issue for the third-ranked Swiatek came when she needed a trainer to re-tape the middle finger on her tennis-playing right hand for an apparent blister after the first set.

"I'm just really happy to play on this court," she said. "First matches are always also for getting used to the condition tactically and type of the ball."



Wyndham Clark poses for photos after winning the CJ Cup Byron Nelson golf tournament in McKinney, Texas. (AP)

## SPORTS

# Olympiakos wins EuroLeague title



Olympiakos' team pose for a photo after winning the EuroLeague final basketball match against Real Madrid in Athens, Greece. (AP)

## Real Madrid falls in final

**ATHENS, Greece, May 25, (AP):** Olympiakos clinched the EuroLeague basketball title on Sunday, beating Real Madrid 92-85 despite a late stretch of mistakes.

Alec Peters hit the final free throw as Olympiakos secured its fourth continental crown, sparking wild celebrations at the Telekom Center in Athens and across the Greek capital.

"Blessed is the only word I have," the American-born Peters said. "After four years of blood, sweat and tears with this group ... it's hard to describe how I feel."

Playing in front of a home crowd, Olympiakos overcame a sluggish start. It fell behind 15-3 in the opening four minutes before rallying to take a 46-44 lead at halftime. Evan Fournier

sparked the comeback with an 11-point burst in the second quarter.

Olympiakos later struggled with turnovers and briefly fell behind a more composed Real Madrid side. NBA veteran Trey Lyles led the injury-hit Spanish club with 24 points, while Fournier paced Olympiakos with 20.

"We suffered tonight with Real Madrid, they played an excellent game," Olympiakos coach Georgios Bartokas said. "I think we deserved it after the way we played all year."

Real coach Sergio Scariolo said Real came close to an upset late in the game.

"In the last seconds we missed a chance to tie the game, unfortunately," he said. "We fought against a very, very great team - a powerhouse. I give them credit but I'm very, very proud of how we played. And we'll be back."

Greek NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo watched the game.

Olympiakos reached the final after a 79-61 semifinal win over defending champion Fenerbahce on Friday, while Real Madrid advanced with a 105-90 victory over Valencia.

As celebrations broke out in Athens and at the nearby port of Piraeus, where Olympiakos is based, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis congratulated the winners.

"The top of the EuroLeague has been painted in red and white," he wrote in an online post, referring to the team's colors. "Warm congratulations to Olympiakos on this great achievement."

Thousands of fans packed into the main square at the port of Piraeus, with crowds dancing in celebration and holding up red flags and flares.

"The feeling is even better than I imagined," Fournier said. "The celebrations will go on beyond tonight, that's for sure."

## Conte confirms he is leaving Napoli

# Como caps stunning rise with CL spot as Milan, Juventus miss out

MILAN, May 25, (AP): Como's remarkable rise continued as Cesc Fàbregas' team qualified for the Champions League along with Roma on the last day of the Serie A season.

AC Milan and Juventus missed out, and Cremonese was relegated.

Como, which has never participated in any continental competition in its 119-year history, was playing in the fourth division of Italian soccer just seven years ago.

"When I arrived four years ago as a player we changed in a bar, today we're in the Champions League," Fàbregas said. "Today I spoke with two physiotherapists, back then we trained without a sports center, in a place I don't remember where it was. We had massages in the back room of a bar, in a field ... And today, less than four years later, we're going to play in the Champions League."

"It's a huge achievement, this is a squad full of kids, the 15 players who played the most are nearly all under 23. I think that's marvelous and a masterpiece from the whole squad."

Fàbregas' post-match press conference was interrupted by his overjoyed players, who threw water over their coach as they sang the Champions League anthem, which was also played on a giant speaker they wheeled into the room.

Four teams were vying for the final two Champions League berths in the Italian league's final round.

Milan and Roma were in pole position as they occupied the third and fourth spots. They were level on points, two above Como and Juventus.

While Roma managed to win 2-0 at already-relegated Hellas Verona on Sunday, Milan lost 2-1 at home to Cagliari. That saw the Rossoneri leapfrogged by Como, which won 4-1 at Cremonese.

Roma finished the season in third place in the Italian standings, two points above Como, which managed fourth place and a spot in Europe's elite club competition.

Milan - which was loudly booed at the end of its match - finished the season one point below Como, with Juventus a point further back.



Como's Jesús Rodríguez Carballo celebrates scoring during the Serie A soccer match between Cremonese and Como in Cremona, Italy. (AP)

Juventus let slip a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Torino in a match that kicked off an hour late because of fan trouble.

Como, which is based on the shores of the eponymous lake in northern Italy, has made rapid progress since Indonesian tobacco billionaire brothers Robert Budi Hartono and Michael Bambang Hartono purchased the club in 2019, when it was in Serie D.

The Champions League could prove to be enough to keep Fàbregas at Como, with bigger clubs across Europe reportedly interested in the 39-year-old coach following his impressive early success in a senior managerial position.

Antonio Conte's last match in charge of Napoli was a 1-0 win over Udinese that saw his team finish second in Serie A. It was already guaranteed Champions League soccer along with league champion Inter Milan.

Conte confirmed after the final whistle that he was leaving Napoli.

Lecce beat Genoa 1-0 to secure Serie A safety.

The result saw Lecce move four points above 18th-place Cremonese, which will join Verona and Pisa in the second division next season.

## Fernandez sparks late comeback as Belgrano stuns River for historic title



Belgrano's players hold the trophy and celebrate winning the Argentinian soccer league tournament after beating River Plate in the final match in Cordoba, Argentina. (AP)

**BUENOS AIRES, May 25, (Agencies):** Substitute Nicolas Fernandez scored two late goals as Belgrano recovered from a goal down to clinch its first Argentine top-flight title with a 3-2 win over River Plate.

River took the lead in the 18th minute when Facundo Colidio side-footed home after Tomas Galvan's run and cross from the left wing.

The Cordoba side equalized eight minutes later through Leandro Morales, who latched onto Lucas Zelarayan's corner with a glancing header into the far corner.

River restored its lead just before the hour when Colidio and Galvan combined again and the latter finished a counterattacking move with a clinical finish past goalkeeper Thiago Cardozo.

Fernandez, a 76th-minute substitute for Lucas Passerini, put his side on level terms by converting an 85th-minute penalty after a Lautaro Rivero handball.

Belgrano suddenly seized the momentum and former San Lorenzo forward Fernandez struck the winner with a first-time effort into the bottom-left corner after Franco Vazquez's cross.

"It's crazy, like a movie," Fernandez told reporters after the match. "The city deserved a big title like this and it's a great feeling

to be a part of it." It marked the first major title in Belgrano's 121-year history and came just four years after the club returned to the top flight.

□ □ □

Rodolfo Rotondi scored a stoppage-time goal as Cruz Azul rallied to beat Pumas 2-1 on Sunday and be crowned champions of Mexico's Clausura tournament.

Paraguayan midfielder Robert Morales scored with a shot from outside the box in the 30th minute to put the home team ahead, but an own goal in the 53rd tied the match. Argentine midfielder Rotondi scored the clincher in stoppage time.

La Máquina won its first championship since the Clausura 2021 tournament and now has 10 titles, a total only surpassed by Club America with 16, and by Chivas and Toluca with 12.

Cruz Azul, one of the most popular teams in Mexico, won the title under interim coach Joel Huiqui, who took over in the penultimate round of the regular tournament after Nicolas Larcamon was fired.

Huiqui became the first Mexican coach to be crowned in Liga MX since Ignacio Ambriz, who was champion with León in the Apertura 2020.

## Punjab and Kolkata eliminated

# Rajasthan advances to playoffs

**MUMBAI, India, May 25, (AP):** England pacer Jofra Archer put in an all-round performance as Rajasthan Royals advanced to the Indian Premier League playoffs in fourth place with a 30-run win against Mumbai Indians.

Rajasthan's victory also knocked out Punjab Kings, which had previously occupied the fourth and last playoff spot, and Kolkata Knight Riders.

Archer hit 32 off 15 balls to help Rajasthan score 205-8 in its must-win final league game, and then took 3-17 in four overs as Mumbai was restricted to 175-9.

Rajasthan (16 points) secured fourth spot - a point ahead of Punjab - with its eighth win in 14 games.

Mumbai finished ninth with 10 losses in 14 games, just above Lucknow on net run-rate.

Points table winner and defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will take on second-place Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 1 on Tuesday at Dharamsala.

Third-place Sunrisers Hyderabad will play Rajasthan in the Eliminator on Wednesday in New Chandigarh, which will also host Qualifier 2 on Friday between the

losing team in Qualifier 1 and the Eliminator winner.

The final will be on May 31 at Ahmedabad.

Put into bat, Rajasthan lost 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for four. Yashasvi Jaiswal provided a quick start with 27 off 17 balls, including three sixes.

Rajasthan scored 54-3 in the powerplay - Jaiswal was caught off Will Jacks in the fourth over, with Sooryavanshi out four balls later to Deepak Chahar. Skipper Riyan Parag (14) was caught on the final ball of the powerplay.

Dhruv Jurel (38) and Dasun Shanaka (29) added 45 off 27 balls. Shanaka was run out just past the halfway stage.

Rajasthan slipped to 139-6 in 15.3 overs, with Jurel and Donovan Ferreira (18) losing their wickets.

Archer came to the rescue. He hit three sixes in his 15-ball innings and Ravindra Jadeja scored 19 not out off 11 as Rajasthan eventually crossed 200.

Archer then struck with the ball - Rohit Sharma was caught behind for a duck and Naman Dhir was bowled for six with Mumbai down to 18-2 in 2.3 overs.

Nandre Burger sent back Ryan Rickelton for 12 in the next over and Brijesh Sharma bowled Tilak Varma for three. Mumbai was 38-4 in 5.1 overs and finished the powerplay with 49-4.

Suryakumar Yadav scored 60 off 42 balls - only his second half-century this season - and rebuilt the chase, first with Jacks (33) and then skipper Hardik Pandya (34).

Yadav and Jacks added 63 off 38 balls, and then another 48 off 25 balls with Pandya, as Mumbai fought back.

But Archer returned to have Pandya caught in the 16th over and Mumbai's hopes faded.

Yadav was out caught in the 18th over as Mumbai's disappointing season approached its end. Burger finished with 2-43, while Sharma took 2-26 and wrist spinner Yash Raj Punja 2-44.



Rajasthan Royals' Jofra Archer bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai, India. (AP)



Juventus' Federico Gatti (4) kicks the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Torino and Juventus at the Olympic Stadium in Turin, Italy. (AP)

## Best of the Rest

**Tennis Australia hires Abdo to replace Tiley:** Tennis Australia has hired Andrew Abdo from the National Rugby League to replace Craig Tiley as chief executive officer.

The Australian governing bodies of both sports confirmed the move in statements on Monday.

Tiley announced in February he was quitting his roles as Australian Open tournament director and Tennis Australia CEO to join the U.S. Tennis Association, which runs the U.S. Open.

Tiley, who is from South Africa, became the Australian Open's tournament director in 2006 and oversaw its expansion to a 15-day event, breaking attendance and revenue records. He became the CEO of Tennis Australia in 2013.

Abdo, who is also from South Africa, has been working with Australia's NRL since 2013, initially as chief commercial officer and, since 2020, as CEO. He played a pivotal role in the league navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and its expansion and development. (AP)

## Deportivo La Coruna returns to top tier after eight years

**MADRID, May 25, (AP):** Former champion Deportivo La Coruna has made it back to the top tier of the Spanish league after an eight-year absence.

Deportivo won 2-0 at Valladolid to secure one of the top two spots that guarantee promotion from the second division. Cameroonian forward Bil Nsongo scored both goals.

Deportivo won the league in 2000.

The victory against Valladolid in the penultimate round allowed Deportivo to open a six-point gap to third-place Almeria, which lost 3-1 at Sporting Gijon. Racing Santander, which has also secured a return to the top flight, was two

points ahead of Deportivo.

The final spot for the first division will be decided in a playoff involving the four teams placed third through sixth in the standings. Currently they are Almeria, Malaga, Las Palmas and Castellon. Burgo and Eibar can still make the playoffs.

Deportivo had spent 20 straight years in the top division before being relegated in 2010-11. It was also relegated in 2013 and 2018. It dropped to the third tier in 2024, making it back to the second division in 2024.

Villarreal secured third place with a 5-1 rout of fourth-place Atletico Madrid at home

in the final match of the season in the top tier.

The game marked the farewell of Atletico forward Antoine Griezmann before he joins Orlando City in Major League Soccer.

It was also the farewell of Villarreal coach Marcelino García Toral and Villarreal players Dani Parejo and Alfonso Pedraza.

Both teams had entered the match tied on 69 points.

Barcelona had already won its second straight league title. It finished with 94 points, eight ahead of second-place Real Madrid.

Mallorca, Girona and Oviedo were relegated.



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Mamelodi Sundowns' Themba Zwane, center, celebrates with his team after winning the CAF Champions League final soccer match between AS FAR Rabat and Mamelodi Sundowns, in Rabat, Morocco. Mamelodi Sundowns won a second African Champions League title after beating FAR Rabat 2-1 on aggregate. (AP)

# Sports

## Al-Jarwi hails successful conclusion of the season

KUWAIT CITY, May 25: The Secretary-General of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and member of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, Ghazzi Faisal Al-Jarwi, has praised the successful conclusion of the domestic equestrian season, highlighting the strong performances of Kuwaiti riders



The Secretary-General of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and member of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, Ghazzi Faisal Al-Jarwi.

both locally and internationally.

Al-Jarwi said the season officially wrapped up at the Police Sports Track, noting the high level of competition among riders of different categories, with intense battles for top positions across various events.

He added that Kuwaiti riders delivered standout results throughout the season, whether in competitions hosted in Kuwait or in international events abroad, achieving strong outcomes at both Gulf and global levels.

He also pointed to the continued rise of Kuwait's equestrian talent, with strong participation from multiple age groups and categories contributing to a highly competitive season.

Earlier this week, national and club rider Ali Al-Kharafi claimed his fifth domestic league title, followed by several prominent riders including Abdullah Al-Owaidi, Annaz Al-Anaz, Abdulrahman Al-Fuzai, Fawaz Al-Subaie, Rakan Al-Hasawi, Yara Al-Hindi, and Abdullah Al-Roudhan

### OKC held to season-low 82 points

## Wembanyama answers the call again, Spurs top Thunder to even West finals

SAN ANTONIO, May 25, (AP): San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama wanted the ball for the final couple seconds of the first half. He got it, 65 feet from the basket.

He had three Oklahoma City defenders in front of him. He took three dribbles. He got three points.

And he made it look easy, too.

A swished 3-pointer from the mid-court stripe to close the first half brought maybe the loudest roars of his night, but it was hardly the only moment in which Wembanyama was unstoppable in Game 4 of the Western Conference finals on Sunday.

He got most of the fourth quarter off and still finished with 33 points, eight rebounds, five assists and three blocked shots as the Spurs beat the Thunder 103-82 to tie the West title series at two games apiece.

In other words, he wasn't surprised. A 62-win team in the regular season - and a team that has now beaten Oklahoma City six times in nine opportunities this season - shouldn't be surprised by anything anymore.

Game 5 is Tuesday in Oklahoma City.

It was Wembanyama who pointed the finger of blame at himself following San Antonio's loss in Game 3, saying that the Spurs were "going to see what we're made of" in Game 4 and that he had to do more to get teammates involved.

He delivered on every level.

Wembanyama had 11 points in the first quarter, 11 more on 10 shot at-

tempts in the second quarter and capped all that with the beat-the-clock 3-pointer going into halftime.

And on the other end, he might have been even better.

The unanimous Defensive Player of the Year - who was announced on Sunday night as a first-team All-NBA selection for the first time - led an effort that held Oklahoma City to a season-low in points and a season-high-tying 20 turnovers.



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) scores a basket against Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) during the first half of Game 4 in the Western Conference finals NBA basketball playoffs series in San Antonio. (AP)

## Arsenal's players finally get hands on the trophy

LONDON, May 25, (AP): With billionaire owner Stan Kroenke watching on, Arsenal's players finally got their hands on the Premier League trophy as they lifted the biggest prize in English soccer to the backdrop of tickertape and fireworks.

Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard looked up to the sky and back down at the trophy, shaking his head in disbelief, before walking in front of his celebrating teammates and lifting it aloft inside Selhurst Park after a campaign-ending 2-1 win at Crystal Palace.

Arsenal clinched a first English league title since 2004 with a game to spare in midweek, after three straight runner-up finishes.

Kroenke made his way to London for the trophy lift and watched the game against Palace next to his son, Josh. About an hour after the game finished, they walked out onto the

field with the trophy ahead of the ceremony.

It marked the latest success in Kroenke's sporting empire. The Denver Nuggets won the NBA Championship in 2023, a year after the LA Rams won the Super Bowl and Colorado Avalanche won the Stanley Cup in NHL. All three of those teams are in the Kroenke Sports & Entertainment portfolio that also now includes the best soccer team in England.

For Sunday's big occasion, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and his players wore the team's classic red-and-white jersey with "Champions 2026" on the back.

The season could get even better for Arsenal, which also has reached the Champions League final for the first time since 2006. Paris Saint-Germain will be the opponent in Budapest, Hungary, next Saturday.



Arsenal players celebrate their Premier League title with the trophy after the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and Arsenal in London, England. (AP)

## Kuwait Club shares spoils with Al-Nasr as Kazma loses ground

Congested schedule takes its toll on players: Jovovic



Kuwait Club and Al-Nasr players vie for the ball during the Zain Premier League match.

KUNA photo

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

### KUWAIT CITY, May 25: League leader Kuwait Club was forced to settle for a 1-1 draw against Al-Nasr at Ali Al-Salem Stadium in Round 16 of the Zain Premier League.

The result lifted Kuwait Club's tally to 40 points at the top of the standings, with the defending champion still unbeaten this season despite recording its fourth draw. Al-Nasr moved up to 16 points in seventh place.

Mohammad Marhoon opened the scoring for Kuwait Club in the 22nd minute before Fawaz Al-Mubailesh restored parity five minutes later. Al-Nasr missed a golden chance to snatch victory after striker Ninja failed to convert a penalty with 20 minutes remaining.

Kuwait Club coach Nebojša Jovović admitted the congested fixture schedule had taken its toll on his players following commitments in the AFC Challenge League and the Crown Prince Cup final, but stressed he would not use fatigue as an excuse.

He added that the upcoming break would allow his side to regroup ahead of Sunday's clash with Kazma SC, while also praising Al-Nasr's recent form after its unbeaten run against top teams, including draws with Qadsia and Al-Salmiya and a victory over Al-Arabi.

Al-Nasr coach Jamil Belkacem praised his players for their fighting spirit and said he was satisfied with taking a point from the league leaders.

In another encounter, Kazma suffered a dramatic 3-2 defeat to Al-Fahaheel FC at Al-Sadaqa Walsalam Stadium.

The victory moved Al-Fahaheel up to 21 points in sixth place, significantly strengthening its hopes of securing a spot in the Championship League (Top Six), while Kazma remained second on 27 points.

Brazilian striker Vitor stole the spotlight by netting a hat trick for Al-Fahaheel, including a sensational long-range effort from midfield that caught goalkeeper Hussein Kankone off his line in what many described as one of the goals of the season.

The defeat marked Kazma's first loss in six matches, while Al-Fahaheel celebrated its first win in seven rounds.

### Russell drops out with engine failure

## Antonelli wins Canadian GP for 4th straight victory

MONTREAL, May 25, (AP): Kimi Antonelli went from furious to victorious.

A day after clashing with Mercedes teammate George Russell in a heated sprint race, the 19-year-old Italian star won a wild Canadian Grand Prix for his fourth straight victory.

Russell dropped out with an engine failure after the title-chasing Mercedes duo put on a show in a thrilling fight through 30 laps, trading the lead several times and coming dangerously close to making contact.

Then trouble struck for Russell, giving Antonelli a clear path to the finish - and a commanding championship lead.

"It was a really fun battle, to be fair, with George. We were pretty much on the limit," Antonelli said. It was very close and it was a shame for him to have the failure because it would have been a very cool battle. But we'll take it."

Antonelli finished more than 10 seconds ahead of Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton.

Antonelli opened a 43-point lead over Russell through five of 22 races. After Russell won the season-opening race in Australia, Antonelli won in China, Japan and Miami and now Montreal.

Russell's exit marked a nightmare end to an otherwise stellar weekend for the Montreal winner last year. He took the sprint race from the pole



Winner Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli, of Italy, is hoisted by second place Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton, of the United Kingdom, left, and Mercedes senior composite technician Dean Hale, second right and third place Red Bull Racing driver Max Verstappen, of the Netherlands, after the F1 Canadian Grand Prix auto race in Montreal. (AP)

Saturday and started first Sunday.

Once his power unit died, the 28-year-old English driver threw his headrest across the track and slammed his fists into the front of the car before leaving the circuit, whipping his gloves to the ground in rage.

Russell said he wished he'd had "40 more of those laps" to battle Antonelli.

"I loved it. I thought it was great, and I've not had a battle like this in years," he said. "Right now (the championship) is his to lose, so many points ahead. It feels like the gods don't want me to be in this fight."

"Pressure's off. Go out, enjoy every single race, try and win every single race and I've got nothing to lose."

The spotlight shifted to two longtime rivals once Russell's day ended, with Hamilton chasing down Red Bull's Max Verstappen in a throwback to 2021.

The seven-time world champion finally overtook Verstappen for second with six laps to go in cold and windy conditions at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for his best result since joining Ferrari last year.

"It's been pretty tough for the past year and a bit, so to finally find our sweet spot and have a good weekend, it's an amazing feeling," the 41-year-old Hamilton said.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was fourth, followed by Red Bull's Isack Hadjar.

McLaren's day turned ugly after both drivers started in the second row. Lando Norris was forced to retire with a gearbox issue on Lap 40, while teammate Oscar Piastri placed 11th after a team strategy to start on intermediate tires backfired.

## Messi injury worry overshadows Inter Miami's victory

MIAMI, May 25, (AP): Lionel Messi headed into the World Cup break a bit earlier than planned, and now it'll be Argentina waiting to see if there's an injury to worry about.

Messi - who almost never gets subbed out of matches - left in the 73rd minute, meaning he was long gone before Luis Suárez's third goal of the night helped lift the defending MLS champions past the last-place Philadelphia Union 6-4 on Sunday night.

No preliminary diagnosis of any issue for Messi was immediately announced. Messi has dealt with hamstring issues at least two other times during his three-year stint with Inter Miami.

Messi had two assists and Germán Berterame scored twice during a record-setting first half for

Inter Miami. But Messi basically took himself out of play in the 71st minute and reached toward his left hamstring at least once, then didn't even venture toward the Inter Miami bench when he could be subbed out.

Messi was replaced by Mateo Silvestri, then left immediately through the tunnel connecting the field with the team's locker room. Messi was walking under his own power, albeit slowly, and without any team medical personnel with him.

Suárez got the go-ahead goal in the 81st minute.



Messi

Rodrigo De Paul, on his birthday, scored in stoppage time to seal the win for Inter Miami.

Heavy rain began falling early in the second half, causing some players to seem to slip on the turf. It wasn't clear if Messi's departure was precautionary or not, and it didn't seem like he took any major missteps during the worst of the rain.

Messi has said in the past that he would only play in the World Cup if healthy. Argentina starts group stage play on June 16.

Milan Ilooski had a first-half hat trick - including two penalty kicks - and Bruno Damiani also scored for Union, which was up 2-0 only 10 minutes into the match. That set the stage for the teams to be tied at 4-4 at the half.