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MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2026 / DHUL-HIJJAH 15, 1447 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 19217

16 PAGES

150 FILS

## KUWAIT TRIMS WORK HOURS IN SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT

# 6-hour workday in summer

New flexible work system runs June 1 to August 31

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) issued an administrative circular regarding official working hours during summer – from June 1 until Aug 31 – in order to regulate summer working hours and**

**promote a more efficient and flexible work environment.**

The circular stipulates one-hour reduction in daily working hours, bringing the total to six hours per day.

According to the circular, the morning attendance period is from 7:00 to 8:00 am and employees must leave after completing six hours of work. The 30-minute grace period is granted for arrival after 8:00 am.

The circular clarifies that female employees are entitled to the 15-minute

early departure time daily, with an additional 30 minutes if the grace period is not utilized.

Regarding the evening shift, the circular indicates that it is from 5:00 to 9:30 pm, totaling 4.5 working hours per day, with a 30-minute grace period for arrival.

It includes a clause for partial reduction or change in working hours, without pay, of up to four hours per day within the specified periods – from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm or from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm.

## Envoys hail Crown Prince leadership on anniversary

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah** received numerous congratulatory messages from heads of diplomatic missions and ambassadors on the occasion of the second anniversary of his appointment as Crown Prince.

The messages included appreciation for the diplomatic and political expertise of HH the Crown Prince, his valuable contributions to the development of Kuwait and the solidification of its regional and international standing, and his commitment to promote international cooperation and support efforts to maintain regional security and stability.

In separate statements, the ambassadors affirmed that His Highness the Crown Prince is a model of prudent leadership and balanced vision, while commending the development achievements of Kuwait and its active role at the regional and international levels.

Ambassador of the State of Qatar Ali bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud extended his warmest congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, stressing that His Highness serves as an example of wise leadership with balanced political vision. He described him as a steadfast supporter of the development journey of Kuwait, dedicated to serving his country, safeguarding its interests, and preserving its security and stability.

In his congratulatory message, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Dr. Matar Al Neyadi stated that the Emirati people highly value the extensive political and diplomatic experience of HH the Crown Prince, and his role in promoting the development, progress and prosperity of the State of Kuwait, as well as maintaining its stability.

Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al Kharousi warmly greeted His Highness the Crown Prince, indicating that the occasion reflects the institutional stability enjoyed by the State of Kuwait. He also lauded the role of HH the Crown Prince in supporting the comprehensive development of the nation.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain Salah Al-Maliki expressed his heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, emphasizing that the occasion is an opportunity to recall the extensive political and diplomatic experience of His Highness and his contributions to strengthening Gulf cooperation and advancing development efforts.

Ambassador of the European Union Anne Koistinen conveyed her warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Crown Prince. She lauded his vital role in strengthening the position of Kuwait regionally and internationally, and in promoting dialogue and cooperation.

French Ambassador Olivier Gauvin extended his sincere congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince. He also expressed the appreciation of France for its strong friendship with the State of Kuwait and its commitment to expand cooperation in various fields, while reaffirming support for efforts aimed at promoting security and stability in the region.

Ambassador of Italy Lorenzo Morini congratulated His Highness the Crown Prince, commending his role in supporting development and stability and his dedication to serve Kuwait and its people.

Ambassador of the Russia Vladimir Zheltov conveyed his warmest congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, affirming that this occasion shows the high level of confidence in his leadership and his role in advancing the development journey of the nation.

He also expressed the desire of his country to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation with the State of Kuwait.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Wierish Ramsoekh greeted His Highness the Crown Prince, lauding his role in supporting stability, strengthening the international

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Al Mahmoud



Al Neyadi



Al Kharousi



Al-Maliki



Koistinen



Gauvin



Morini



Zheltov



Sönmez



Ahmed Al-Jarallah speaking in a televised interview on Middle East developments and regional stability.

'Tehran is politically and militarily weakened'

## Al-Jarallah launches fierce Iran critique

By Omar Al-Bardan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: In his most scathing attack yet on Iran and its regional proxies, Dean of Kuwaiti journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah** stated in an interview in the "Qabil lil Jadal" (Controversial) program on Al-Arabiya that "the Gulf states extremely suffered from the reckless practices of the Iranian regime and this eroded the trust between us and them."

Al-Jarallah pointed out that "a strong Iran will inflict serious damage on the countries in the region. Therefore, we want it to be a weak state, without nuclear weapons, and without exporting religious ideologies to us. Let us take as an example what the Iranian regime has done in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq and how it transformed the mosques in these countries to spread its religious and sectarian ideas, something unacceptable to Sunni Muslim countries."

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## Moon crowns mosque minaret in Kuwait

Photo feature by Anwaar Rawhuddin

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31, (KUNA):** A striking celestial alignment captivated onlookers in Kuwait on Saturday evening as the full moon positioned itself directly above the crescent of a local mosque minaret.

The synchronized spectacle, captured by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) photographers, showcased a vivid visual harmony between Islamic architectural design and natural lunar luminosity.

The cosmic display coincided with the eve of a rare "Blue Moon" phenomenon, marking the second time the moon reaches its full phase within the current calendar month.

This astronomical event occurs roughly every two and a half years, driven by the cyclical variance between the lunar orbit and the Gregorian calendar.



KUNA photo

Full moon aligns above a mosque minaret in Kuwait in a rare celestial moment.

## Kuwait-Italy defence accord published in official gazette

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" published on Sunday Decree Law No. 60/2026 approving the agreement between the Government of the State of Kuwait and the Government of Italy on cooperation in the field of defense, signed in Rome, Italy, on January 13, 2026, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

The decree stipulates that the ministers, each within their respective jurisdiction, shall implement its provisions, and that it shall come into force from the date of its publication in the official gazette.

The agreement aims to enhance defense cooperation between the two

countries through the exchange of expertise and knowledge in the military field, the provision of military and educational courses and programs, and the exchange of expertise in military training and information technology, in order to serve the common interests of both parties.

The agreement regulates the principles and forms of military cooperation, including the exchange of official visits between civilian and military delegations, and the holding of consultations between the two sides to complete the frameworks of

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## Kuwait Society Against Violence calls for lifeguards to reduce drowning incidents

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Head of the Kuwait Society Against Violence, Ali Mohammed Al-Ali, called on the relevant authorities to strengthen safety measures at designated swimming beaches by providing qualified lifeguards, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

These calls come in light of an increase in child drowning incidents and fatalities recorded during holidays and summer seasons.

In a press statement, Al-Ali explained that the recurring tragic incidents in which children lose their lives while swimming require quick and practical measures to curb this phenomenon. The presence of specialized lifeguards at beaches is one of the most important means of prevention and rapid interven-



Al-Ali

tion to save lives.

Many countries around the world implement lifeguard systems at designated swimming areas, given their proven effectiveness in reducing drowning and fatality rates.

He highlighted that a rapid response in the first minutes of an incident is a crucial factor in rescuing the injured and minimizing human losses.

Al-Ali affirmed that protecting children is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation between government agencies, families, and beachgoers.

He urged parents not to leave their children unattended while swimming and to adhere to marine safety guidelines.

Al-Ali stressed that the Kuwait Society Against Violence is closely monitoring incidents that occur during holiday periods and supports implementing more preventive measures that would enhance security and public safety at beaches, in order to preserve the lives of children and reduce tragic accidents.

Crackdown widens amid emerging threats

## Kuwait blacklists 17 new narcotics

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The Ministry of Health has added 17 narcotic substances to the approved list as per Law No. 159/2025 on combating narcotics and psychotropic substances.**

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi issued Decision No. 165/2026 to update the list, specifically groups one, two and four attached to Law No. 159/2025 on combating narcotics and psychotropic substances and regulating their use and trafficking.

This move aims to keep pace with developments related to narcotic and psychotropic substances, and intensify national efforts to prevent drug trafficking and mitigate the as-

sociated risks.

The decision was published in the official gazette, "Kuwait Al-Youm", stipulating the inclusion of 17 narcotic substances, along with their minerals, isotopes, derivatives and hydrolysates, to the approved list as per the abovementioned law.

Article One of the decision states the addition of four types of narcotic substances to Group One as follows: N-pyrrolidinoprotonitazine (N1-135), N-pyrrolidinoprotonitazine (N1-136), etonitazepine (N1-137) and N-decylisotonitazine (N1-138).

Articles Two, Three and Four stipulate adding 13 more substances, along with their minerals, isotopes and hydrolysates, to Group Two and Group Four as per the classifications specified in Law No. 159/2025.

## 'Check-in' closes earlier for flights

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced revised check-in counter closing times for passengers traveling through Kuwait International Airport, effective June 1, 2026.**

Under the new guidelines, check-in counters for flights to GCC and other Arab countries will close one hour before the scheduled departure time. For flights to all other international destinations, check-in counters will close one hour and 30 minutes before departure.

The DGCA urged travelers to arrive at the airport well in advance to complete check-in and travel procedures on time and avoid missing their flights.

The updated policy is part of efforts to streamline airport operations and ensure smooth passenger processing at Kuwait International Airport.



ABK obtains Central Bank of Kuwait approval to adopt ChatGPT Enterprise with OpenAI



Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:16 Asr ..... 15:20  
Sunrise .. 04:49 Maghrib .. 18:43  
Zohr ..... 11:46 Isha ..... 20:13

# Japan, India envoys felicitate HH Crown Prince on 2 years of Kuwait rule

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the second anniversary of the appointment of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait.

I clearly remember His Highness's visit to Japan one year ago, when Japan-Kuwait relations dramatically evolved into a "comprehensive and strategic partnership", thus contributing substantially to the expansion of cooperation across a wide range of fields.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to reiterate my sincere congratulations and express my deep appreciation for His Highness's dedicated efforts to foster Japan-Kuwait relations. HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, with his unparalleled diplomatic skills, has solidified Kuwait's international standing and

has been active in various international conferences, including at the United Nations.

Japan shares Kuwait's values of diplomacy that prioritize achieving peace through dialogue and respect for international law. As the regional environment remains challenging and uncertain, Japan reaffirms its solidarity with Kuwait and expresses its hope that the country will continue to enjoy peace, stability, and prosperity.

I wish His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled good health, and continued success in his future endeavors.

**Mukai Kenichiro**  
Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait

**INDIAN EMBASSY**  
ON behalf of the people and the Government of India, I extend warm congratula-



Mukai Kenichiro



Paramita Tripathi

tions to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on the occasion of the second anniversary of assuming the high office of the Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait.

His Highness the Crown Prince has provided visionary leadership in advancing Kuwait's aspirations for progress, prosperity, and national development.

His commitment to dialogue, peace, and regional harmony continues to inspire admiration and confidence both within the region and beyond.

India and Kuwait share a long-standing relationship shaped by history, maritime links, cultural affinity, and deep-rooted friendship between our peoples. The visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Kuwait and his meetings with the leadership of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, imparted momentum to the India-Kuwait Strategic Partnership, reaffirming our two countries' shared vision for peace, prosperity, and cooperation.

Amid regional developments and heightened tensions, the telephone conversations held on two occasions between Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Nar-

endra Modi and His Highness the Crown Prince reflected the deep trust and close engagement between our two countries, as well as our common commitment to peace and stability in the region.

India values Kuwait as a trusted friend and an important partner in the Gulf region. I am confident that under the visionary leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, the bonds between India and Kuwait will continue to deepen for the benefit of our peoples and the wider region.

I convey my sincere best wishes for the continued success and well-being of His Highness the Crown Prince and for the enduring prosperity and progress of the State of Kuwait.

**Mrs. Paramita Tripathi**  
Ambassador of the Republic of India to the State of Kuwait

# Co-ops workers degrees will be verified – official

Employees failing scrutiny to lose jobs

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs and Cooperative Affairs, and Director of the General Department of Planning and Administrative Development at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Dr. Sayed Issa, says the ministry is moving forward with implementing new**



Dr. Sayed Issa

**regulatory and oversight procedures at the level of cooperative societies.**

The plan includes launching a comprehensive audit campaign of the academic qualifications of all employees in cooperative societies, both citizens and residents, in line with Cabinet directives on this matter.

In a press statement, Issa explained that the ministry has issued a circular to the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS), instructing it to address the boards of directors of all cooperative societies to begin obtaining approvals from the Ministry of Higher Education for the academic certificates of Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in cooperative societies, within a period not exceeding three months.

The first phase of the audit process will cover higher academic qualifications, followed by

a second phase to review lower qualifications.

He affirmed that this step is part of an approach the ministry is working on to restructure the work environment within cooperative societies and ensure that academic qualifications align with job requirements and actual tasks, thereby enhancing performance efficiency and strengthening the principles of corporate governance.

Issa indicated that, following the completion of standardizing organizational structures, job descriptions, and salary scales across all cooperative societies, the ministry is moving towards developing automated employee assessments similar to those currently used for filling supervisory positions. These assessments aim to evaluate employee competence, suitability, and continued relevance to their current roles.

He emphasized that employees who fail these assessments will be terminated for lack of qualifications.

## Hunt for talented candidates

### MoE to conduct department head interviews from June 2

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31:** The Ministry of Education (MoE) continues to fill up vacant educational supervisory positions to support the educational field with qualified national talent and improve the school and technical work system by selecting individuals capable of leading educational work and raising performance levels in various educational disciplines.

In a press statement, the ministry confirmed that interviews for department head candidates will be conducted on June 2-9 according to the schedule approved by the concerned authorities.

It disclosed that there are 1,057 applicants for head of department positions in different subjects, in addition to applicants for the general subjects division head positions. This indicates a high demand for educational supervisory positions and the desire to develop the educational process.

It stated that the concerned committees will conduct the interviews using organized mechanisms and procedures that ensure fairness and equal opportunities for applicants in order to select the most qualified for such important supervisory

positions. It added that interviews will be conducted twice daily – in the morning at 8:00 am and in the afternoon at 4:00 pm – to accommodate the big number of applicants and complete the interviews as scheduled.

It pointed out that interviews for applicants to educational supervisory positions are in line with the timetable prepared by the relevant authorities, with the aim of finalizing all stages related to promotions and supervisory selections before the distribution of educational entitlements.

It stated that the interview committees had earlier completed interviewing candidates for the positions of school principal and subject matter technical supervisor, while interviews for candidates for the position of assistant school principal at various educational levels are still ongoing according to the established schedule.

It also revealed that interviews for assistant school principal applicants will end on June 8, thereby, completing an important stage in the procedures for filling vacant educational supervisory positions.

## Return to full-scale conflict real possibility

### EU eyes boost in Gulf ties amid 'no war, no peace'

**BRUSSELS, May 31, (KUNA):** EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas said Thursday that the EU is working to strengthen security and defense cooperation with Gulf countries amid rising tensions in the Middle East.

Speaking at a press conference in Cyprus following talks between EU foreign ministers, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Kallas said both countries play "an important role through their extensive diplomatic engagement across the region."

She warned that the situation surrounding

Iran and the Strait of Hormuz "remains caught in a dangerous grey zone between war and peace," noting ongoing, but fragile, diplomatic efforts to extend the ceasefire and reopen the strait to navigation.

Kallas said any initial agreement between the United States and Iran should be followed by deeper talks covering Iran's nuclear stockpile and other key regional security issues, stressing that the EU stands ready to contribute technical expertise to nuclear negotiations.

She added that the EU continues to support freedom of navigation in the region through its naval mission in the Red Sea, noting that the bloc could reinforce the operation with

additional ships, although expanding its operational role would require further capabilities.

On Lebanon, Kallas warned that the ceasefire "appears to be more nominal by the day," stressing that a return to full-scale war "is a real possibility."

She also said discussions covered the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including proposals related to trade restrictions linked to settlements and sanctions on ministers in the Israeli occupation government. The measures are expected to be discussed at the next meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg.

## Other Voices

### Tucker Carlson's confessions

By Ahmad alsarraf

**SINCE Donald Trump** was elected President of the United States in 2017, Fox News host Tucker Carlson has been a prominent presence and one of most active supporters of his campaign.

However, their paths later diverged, and Carlson became one of Trump's most vocal critics, particularly over his perceived subservience to Benjamin Netanyahu, the war with Iran, and the unprecedented amount of aid provided to Israel.

Carlson rejected his country's subservience to Israel, a position that gained overwhelming support from various segments of American society. He became a central figure in media debates across the political spectrum and one of the most prominent conservative voices most followed in American media.

Carlson began his popular program on Fox News immediately after the 2017 election. Despite being fired from Fox in 2013, he remained a key figure in Trump's world.

Later, Carlson expressed regret over his support for Trump and, through his program, emerged as a prominent and influential critic. He publicly accused Israel of making Trump a "slave" to Israel due to what he viewed as his strong focus on Israeli interests.

Over time, Carlson has been labeled as anti-Semitic and an opponent of Israel, particularly following his controversial interview with white nationalist influencer Nick Fuentes, who is openly anti-Semitic.

In a lengthy television interview, summarized below, Carlson said he had been speaking with Trump for ten years about the huge pressure he, like other American presidents, faced to change the regime in Iran. He said Trump understood how difficult the situation was and believed it was not in the best interest of his country.

He said the goal of the war was always regime change, not the nuclear program, as Charlie Kirk had also previously told him.

Carlson said, "I met with the president alone three times and spoke with him on the phone several times. He would always ask me, 'Do you want Iran to have a nuclear weapon?' I would reply that wasn't the question; it was what we should do about



alsarraf

it.

Iran is an economic powerhouse, controlling the largest coastline along the Persian Gulf, the source of one-fifth of the world's energy. This is common knowledge now, and it was known to the president at the time as well. I think he fully understood the consequences. I found that Trump had no choice and that he acquiesced, under pressure from Netanyahu and influential donors like Murdoch and Miriam Adelson.

President Trump thought a war with Iran would be like the Venezuela operation, underestimating the Iranians and what they might do. I haven't seen any signs of dementia or mental decline in him; on the contrary, he possesses an exceptional ability to understand people and the dynamics of power. He's smart on important political issues. I believe he did all of this 'against his will.'

Joe Kent, the head of the National Counterterrorism Center and a senior intelligence official, expressed the same opinion about Trump: that he failed to restrain Netanyahu and stop his attacks in Lebanon, even though Israel could collapse without the United States. Regardless of what is said, what allowed a foreign leader to influence Trump? I don't know the answer, but in my opinion, this is the dumbest thing any American president has ever done.

I say this frankly, I am against the idea that Hezbollah and Hamas are the focus of our internal debate. They aren't the two main problems we face. Credit card debt, for example, is a much bigger problem than Hezbollah.

I was saddened by Trump's use of vulgar language and his threats to kill civilians in Iran. That's morally reprehensible. How can he boast about it?

One thing that has worried me for many years is that many of Trump's close associates have been severely harmed, incarcerated, unemployed, publicly shamed, and even diagnosed with cancer. I believe in a comprehensive assessment of things.

Israel has power in Congress, not because we have a large Jewish population, but because tens of millions of evangelical Christians support Israel unequivocally, believing it to be their religious duty. So, the fate of our economy and the lives of American soldiers hang on this 'biblical vision.'

A war with Iran is unpopular, and the idea of sending Americans to risk their lives to change any regime is unpopular."



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# Mol deployment facilitates return of Hajjis



KUNA photos

Left and right: Kuwait Airways employees welcome the returning pilgrims with bags of gifts.

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31:** The Ministry of Interior implemented its security and organizational plan to welcome returning Hajj pilgrims at Kuwait International Airport (T4).

The reception procedures were carried out smoothly and efficiently, proving the high level of preparedness and coordination between various sectors in the ministry and other concerned authorities.

Ministry personnel were deployed at the airport to ease entry procedures for the returning pilgrims, providing all the necessary services to ensure their

comfort upon arrival until they head home.

These efforts are in line with the directives of the senior officials at the ministry, who emphasized the need to use all the available human and technical resources to better serve the pilgrims upon their arrival in the country.

Kuwait Airways received Saturday the first incoming flight of pilgrims at Kuwait International Airport, T4, starting a series of return flights from Saudi Arabia's Jeddah, Taif and Madinah.

Speaking to KUNA, Kuwait Airways Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdulwahab Al-Shatti said the reception of pilgrims reflects the company's commitment to providing all possible means of comfort and assistance upon their arrival.

The company places great importance on ensuring that procedures are smooth, comfortable, convenient, and simplified, in cooperation and coordination with all relevant sectors in the country.

The national carrier provided ground handling services at T4 for pilgrims traveling on Saudia Airlines and Flynas, both on departure and arrival, and facilitated their travel procedures, he noted.

Kuwait Airways forms every year a committee for Hajj and Umrah to follow up on organizing flights for the best service for travelers on the aircraft of Kuwait Airways, he stated.

The company would continue offering the best services to pilgrims, he affirmed, thanking all Hajj campaigns which put confidence in the national carrier of Kuwait.

# Turn off lights, AC in unused areas, gov't sector told

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31:** The State budget report for fiscal 2026/2027 revealed an allocation of KD173.2 million for electricity and water for 36 ministries and government entities, an increase of KD39.726 million compared to KD133.476 million in the 2025/2026 budget.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the report, stating that the approved expenditures for electricity reached KD139.498 million and KD33.702 million for water.

Electricity and water fees for the government sector are the highest compared to residential sectors. The electricity fee for the government sector

is 25 fils per kilowatt-hour, while the price of 1,000 imperial gallons of water for the sector is KD4 – a huge difference compared to 750 fils for the industrial and agricultural sectors.

On the other hand, the ministry intends to construct 23 service buildings (administrative and technical) in various areas to de-centralize service delivery and make services more accessible to citizens and residents, particularly emergency services, power connections, debt payments and others.

These buildings will also provide a suitable environment for the employees and visitors. The ministry included these buildings in its current annual plan, which will be tendered through the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), in accordance with the regulations and laws. The other buildings will be tendered in future fiscal years.

Among the important buildings are six green buildings to serve customers in all governorates, a workshop for producing solar panels and water analysis laboratories in Shuwaikh, in addition to several service buildings in new areas like Saad Al-Abdullah and Sabah Al-Ahmad.

In another development, sources from the ministry unveiled its plan to send letters to other ministries and government agencies in the coming days, urging them to adopt responsible and conscious consumption practices in order to alleviate pressure on the electrical grid, especially after official working hours when government buildings are empty.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Will Municipal Council cut malaise in society?

"I HEAR and read that all members of the Municipal Council will be appointed, but I have questions because there are still unclear points in this news," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi for Al-Seyassah daily.

"According to Law No. 5/2005, the Municipal Council was stripped of its independence and made subordinate to the State Minister for Municipal Affairs at the request of the National Assembly.

The aim was to combat corruption by ensuring that, if corruption occurred, the responsible minister would be held accountable. As a result, the Municipal Council's role became purely advisory, and it no longer had the power to impede development.

"In effect, all members of the Municipal Council became similar to appointed officials. In the current council, there are six appointed members, allowing the State Minister for Municipal Affairs to block any decision. In addition, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality and his deputies are also appointed.

"The government is seeking to streamline or reduce the number of agencies, as it did with the Public Transport Authority, in an effort to reduce the budget deficit.

"Appointing members of the Municipal Council would mean repeating past mistakes, albeit under a government framework. The main advantage of electing Municipal Council members is that they can be held accountable by the residents of the areas they represent if they fail to perform their duties, especially since the role is more technical than political.

"Frankly, given the major changes taking place in public institutions and positions, I expected the Municipal Council to be abolished altogether.

"Even today, citizens continue to suffer from the same infrastructure and road problems. At the same time, technical councils require specialized expertise. Kuwait has many highly educated individuals with extensive experience across a wide range of technical fields. Technical councils, particularly the municipality, need people who understand the nature of the areas they serve and appreciate their specific needs.

"Kuwait Municipality is overcrowded with employees who carry out their duties according to regulations rather than responding to the needs and concerns of citizens.

"Whenever these issues are discussed, some object and argue that closed doors should remain closed, despite the fact that the community continues to face environmental problems such as cleanliness.

"The Public Authority for Housing Welfare has distributed 250-square-meter houses in areas where the infrastructure is inadequate for the size of the population. In addition, some important economic activities are taking place in areas that are not registered with Kuwait Municipality, and it is unclear who owns or manages these activities.

"This situation reflects a lack of awareness regarding licensing procedures and business development, despite the presence of capable engineers with vision within Kuwait Municipality. However, these professionals work under considerable pressure.

"I believe that electing Municipal Council members offers many advantages, whereas appointment means that an appointed member ultimately remains accountable to those who appointed them."

### Also:

"The teacher couldn't correct her exam paper because her handwriting was illegible. When asked to read what she had written, she was unable to do so," Kuwaiti writer Zaid Al-Jalawi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"How did this student manage to pass the three grades preceding university?"

"We must work to reduce the number of students who are unable to read what they write due to poor handwriting. The automatic promotion of elementary students through the five grades without proper examinations should be abolished. Guaranteed success must end so that parents become more engaged in their children's education.

"In the past, teachers would mark failing grades with a red circle. This practice encouraged competition among students and motivated them to avoid any embarrassing situation.

"The red circle on the yellow certificate of a failing student had a strong impact, often causing embarrassment for parents who neglected their children's education.

"Parents would avoid being seen after receiving the yellow certificates. Everyone anxiously awaited the arrival of their own results. Students who

failed their exams would often retreat to sports fields and gyms, avoiding others until discussion of the semester results subsided. These were not ordinary moments, but difficult times that extended beyond high school exams to all stages of education.

"Granting teachers greater authority would help increase parental involvement in monitoring their children's progress and strengthen students' interest in and respect for their teachers."

□ □ □

"There is no doubt that protecting victims of domestic violence is a legitimate and undisputed objective. However, achieving this goal should not come at the expense of fundamental legal safeguards or through the creation of parallel, unqualified investigative mechanisms that raise broad legal and human rights concerns," columnist Bassam Fahad Thunayyan Al-Ghanim wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The haste in enacting the recent amendments to the Domestic Violence Law has, unfortunately, created a new reality. It has granted certain administrative bodies, represented by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and social workers, roles that extend beyond social guidance to functions resembling investigations into incidents that may rise to the level of misdemeanors or crimes. This is especially concerning given that some domestic violence complaints may include allegations that affect honor or reputation, or involve serious claims with grave legal and social consequences.

"The amendments introduced a new mechanism for handling domestic violence complaints by establishing a "hotline" under the auspices of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. This hotline receives complaints and refers them to the council's Protection Centers Department, instead of allowing the complainant to go directly to the Public Prosecution, which conducts investigations and issues decisions in accordance with its jurisdiction and legal safeguards.

"However, the new amendment places the initial handling of complaints with social workers affiliated with the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, who are not qualified to conduct such investigations. Such investigations require expertise in evaluating evidence, taking statements, and ensuring the rights of all parties, which are responsibilities that fall squarely within the remit of judicial investigative authorities.

"Social work differs fundamentally from legal investigations, which can have repercussions affecting the reputation, standing, and legal status of individuals. This procedure effectively excludes the Public Prosecution from the initial stages of handling these complaints, creating a parallel mechanism within the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. This approach does not effectively address domestic violence complaints or achieve the intended purpose of the amendments to the Domestic Violence Law.

Investigating such incidents should remain the responsibility of the Public Prosecution, given its specialized legal expertise, qualified personnel, and legally mandated investigative powers, as well as the procedural safeguards that ensure all parties are heard, necessary inquiries are conducted, and evidence is evaluated and verified.

"Assigning judicial tasks to social workers in place of the Public Prosecution undermines established investigative procedures, especially since their role is social and advisory rather than judicial. A specialized Family Affairs Prosecution already exists to handle such cases, given its expertise and experience.

"The problem also arises when a case is dismissed. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs reportedly refuses to provide the accused with any notification confirming the dismissal of the complaint or that it was not substantiated. This limits their ability to take the necessary legal action to restore their reputation, which may open the door for some complainants to exploit this loophole, confident that they will not be held accountable if their claims are not proven. This could lead to a proliferation of malicious complaints.

"The justification sometimes given for refusing to issue proof of a complaint is "confidentiality of proceedings." However, how can a complaint be considered confidential after a series of summonses, reviews, communications, and investigations that may already affect the reputation of the accused within their family, social, and professional circles?"

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Adel Al-Kharafi



Al-Ghanim

## 20 Asian gamblers blacklisted, deported

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The Criminal Security Sector, represented by officers from the General Department of Criminal Investigation, has referred 20 Asian expatriates to the Administrative Deportation Department following a security operation in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, the Criminal Investigation Department had received information about gambling activities tak-

ing place inside a house in the area during the Eid Al-Adha holiday. The house was raided, resulting in the arrest of the suspects. Cash and gambling paraphernalia were found in their possession.

The suspects were then referred to the Administrative Deportation Department where they were fingerprinted, which prevents their return to Kuwait or any other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.



Mol photo  
Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib during the visit.

### Mol: Take good care

## Better services eyed for security personnel, kin

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, conducted an inspection tour of the Police Officers' Club recently to review workflow and the level of services provided to Ministry of Interior personnel, their families, and club members, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Interior, Major General Al-Wuhaib was received by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Police Officers' Club, Brigadier General Abdulmohsen Al-Akshan, and members of the board.

During the tour, Major General Al-Wuhaib reviewed operational procedures, services, and activities offered during the Eid holiday. The visit also included a visual presentation highlighting the most significant development and modernization projects recently undertaken at the club, as well as a review of future plans and projects.

Major General Al-Wuhaib emphasized the importance of providing comprehensive services that meet the aspirations of security personnel and their families.

He commended the efforts of the club's management, praising their commitment to providing a comprehensive social and recreational environment that helps strengthen bonds among Ministry of Interior personnel and their families.

Major General Al-Wuhaib stressed that attention to the social and humanitarian aspects of Ministry of Interior employees is an essential part of the institutional work system, and highlighted the importance of continuing to develop services, facilities, and activities in a way that enhances the quality of life for employees of the security institution and their families.



KUNA photo  
Director General of Kuwait's General Administration of Customs (GAC) Yusuf Al-Nuwaif and his deputy for Ports, Search, and Customs Investigation Affairs Saleh Al-Omar during their visit to the border post.

## Customs chief reviews steps to receive Hajjis

KUWAIT CITY, May 31, (KUNA): Director General of Kuwait's General Administration of Customs (GAC) Yusuf Al-Nuwaif and his deputy for Ports, Search, and Customs Investigation Affairs Saleh Al-Omar paid an inspection tour to Al-Nuwaiseeb Border Crossing to review the readiness and measures made to receive pilgrims coming from Saudi Arabia after performing Hajj.

In a press release, the GAC said that they pursued the field action mechanism and the readiness of customs cadres as well as approved inspection and organization mechanisms to ensure the smooth movement and speed implementation of measures to facilitate the easy crossing of pilgrims' campaigns.

They were briefed on security and technical preparations and applied operational plans at the border.

Al-Nuwaif and Al-Omar affirmed the importance of intensifying efforts and coordination among concerned bodies to offer the best services to pilgrims and efficiently implement customs measures, the statement noted.

The GAC stressed that it would continue implementing its operational plans and pursue preparedness of all customs exits, it noted.



KFF photo  
Firemen tackle the blaze.

## Cut use of AC & lights to reduce grid burden

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Firefighters from Manqaf and Ahmadi fire stations extinguished the fire that broke out in a transformer and several vehicles in Fahad Al-Ahmad recently, reports Al-Anba daily.

Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) reported that the fire did not cause injuries or fatalities.

The source urged citizens and residents to set their cooling devices to moderate temperatures during summer, switch off unnecessary lights and conserve electricity, emphasizing that these simple measures reduce burden on energy resources.

A source from KFF stated that the investigation unit has started looking into the cause of the fire, indicating that high temperatures and excessive use of cooling devices could be among the causes.

## Wife 'wins' right to dwelling plot

75% rise in e-complaints

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court in favor of a female citizen, granting her the right to obtain the title deed for a residential plot, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Attorney Ali Al-Ali, lawyer for the plaintiff, filed the case against the husband of his client and several government entities.

The Court of First Instance previously ruled in favor of the plaintiff, granting her the right to obtain the title deed for the property allocated to her and her husband.

It also granted her the authority to take legal and administrative steps at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), Kuwait Credit Bank, Ministry of Justice and Real Estate Registration Department without the consent or signature of her husband.

This decision was taken after the court determined that the husband refused to complete the procedures for obtaining the title deed despite attempts of the plaintiff to reach an amicable settlement.

Al-Ali affirmed in court that his client is the co-owner of the residential plot, as per the allocation certificate issued by the PAHW. He argued that the refusal of the husband to sign prevented his client from obtaining her legal right to the title deed,

hence, the need for legal action to protect her housing rights.

He added that the ruling established the principle of protecting the rights of beneficiaries of government housing and preventing abuse of that right, especially in matters related to ownership procedures and administrative action concerning housing plots.

□ □ □

**75 % rise witnessed:** Data issued by the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed a significant shift in consumer behavior and complaint mechanisms, with growing reliance on digital channels and smart platforms, reports Al-Anba daily.

Statistics for the first quarter of 2026, covering January, February, and March, showed that the total number of regulatory transactions, seizure reports, licensing violations, requests to open and close shops, and complaints of all types reached 21,075.

Complaints submitted electronically emerged as the most frequently used channel by consumers.

Complaints received through the ministry's online portal, the Sahel app, and WhatsApp reached approximately 16,728 during the first three months of this year, compared to 9,530 complaints during the same period in 2025, representing a growth of nearly 75 percent.

## Al-Rashidi inspects progress of road repair in Al-Omariya

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works Eid Al-Rashidi assessed the road maintenance project in Al-Omariya recently, during which he looked into the progress of the asphalt work.

This is part of field follow ups conducted by the officials of the ministry to monitor recent developments, ensure work quality, and expedite completion in all road project sites.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Communications announced the inclusion of five contracts, valued at more than KD75,000, in its annual plan for tenders and direct


contracting for fiscal 2026/2027.

The announcement published in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Yaum', includes the one-year contract for connecting government entities to the advanced DWDM network to increase data transmission speeds.


This is in addition to contracts for the supply, installation, maintenance and operation of the telephone network in the six governorates for a period of three years each.



Al-Rashidi



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Crown Prince and Prime Minister extend greetings

## Kuwait Amir congratulates Nepal on Nat'l Day

KUWAIT CITY, May 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a congratulatory cable to the President of Nepal Ram Chandra Paudel on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the president good health and further progress and prosperity to Nepal and its people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-

Sabah sent on Thursday a congratulatory cable to the President of Nepal Ram Chandra Paudel on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Crown Prince wished the president lasting good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a congratulatory cable to the President of Nepal Ram Chandra Paudel on his country's National Day.

# PAHW allocates 150 homes to women in Sulaibiya and Taimaa

Distribution continues as units become available

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

**KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Chairperson of the Women's Housing Affairs Committee at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef announced the distribution of about 150 ready-built houses to female citizens as part of the rental housing projects in Sulaibiya and Taima.**

In a press statement on the sidelines of the housing distribution ceremony for female citizens who updated their information and received notifications through the 'Sahel' application held Monday in the Abbas Maarifi Hall at PAHW, Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef confirmed that PAHW called the eligible applicants upon availability of the housing units.

She said the committee expedited the distribution following an increase in available housing units, indicating the weekly lotteries used to be limited to 20 to 30 houses due to regional circumstances. She affirmed that the distribution will continue once additional houses are available, resulting from the ongoing evacuation plan.

She revealed that a new decision will be announced in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm', requiring applicants for rented housing to update

their information within three months, otherwise, their housing application will be canceled. She explained that the decision aims to ensure that housing units are granted to those who are eligible and to prevent delays caused by incomplete applications.

She stressed that the committee ensures that allocations are made according to the available units and application seniority.

She pointed out that some citizens request units in certain areas, but PAHW operates according to current availability, clarifying this is just a transitional and temporary phase lasting about one year and a half, until the move to new houses in the affordable housing project. She confirmed that PAHW will not distribute units within the affordable housing project before essential services are complete, that is, once the schools, cooperative societies and health services are ready. She urged the citizens not to bear the high cost of temporary housing, assuring them that the units in this project are habitable. She affirmed that unsuitable units are being removed and reports are submitted to the minister for demolition, as the authority is keen on providing suitable and safe housing.

She emphasized the importance of not leaving housing units vacant after receiving them, adding that citizens must complete occupancy procedures within two months of receiving the unit, other-

wise, it will be withdrawn to ensure actual use of the houses and prevent vacancy.

She also explained that some cases were not included in the allocation despite the length of their application due to failure to meet requirements or outdated information, such as high salary, ownership of commercial licenses or the family owning a house. She said housing assistance is for families in need, according to the regulations and criteria.

Regarding evictions, she indicated that the eviction period is extended for two months -- until next August -- for families with children in Grade 12, and applicants documented as undergoing treatment abroad.

She confirmed that a new batch of housing units will be distributed after the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

Regarding military personnel discharged from the ministries of Interior and Defense, she pointed out "there are no exceptions, as the law is applied to everyone to ensure fairness, while considering difficult humanitarian cases under strict regulations, such as families with more than one member with disability residing in the house."

She went on to affirm that housing regulations are link to the border control system, indicating those whose stay outside the country beyond the defined limit are not allowed to submit or continue housing applications.

On the legal status of the children of a deceased Kuwaiti woman with a non-Kuwaiti husband, she asserted that as per the regulations, daughters have the right to continue residing in the unit as social welfare, while sons, who have reached the age 21, must vacate the housing unit.



Sheikha Bibi

## Mexico extends congratulations to HH Crown Prince's 2nd anniversary

On the occasion of the Second Anniversary of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's appointment as Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, I have the honour to extend on behalf of the Government and People of Mexico and in my personal capacity, my warmest congratulations and sincere best wishes to His Highness, His Highness Amir of the State of Kuwait, Government and the people of Kuwait.

This important occasion reflects the confidence bestowed upon His Highness's wise leadership and distinguished service to the State of Kuwait. Over the past two years, His Highness has continued to demonstrate remarkable dedication to the progress, prosperity, and stability of Kuwait, while further strengthening its esteemed position regionally and internationally.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the strong and friendly relations between the United Mexican States and the State of Kuwait, and our aspiration to further enhance bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Please accept, Your Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration and esteem, together with my sincere wishes for Your Highness's continued good health, happiness, and success, and



Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller  
Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait

for the continued prosperity and well-being of the people of Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness Amir of the State of Kuwait and Your Highness's stewardship.

Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller  
Ambassador

## Coptic Church congratulates Kuwait Crown Prince on second anniversary

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Father Bigoul Anba Bishoy, senior priest and patron of the St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Kuwait, extended his heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (May God protect him) on the second anniversary of his appointment as Crown Prince of Kuwait, praying that God grant him success in serving Kuwait.



Father Bishoy

In a press release, Father Bigoul conveyed to His Highness the Crown Prince the congratulations of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark in Egypt and all the lands of the diaspora.

Father Bigoul also conveyed the congratulations of His Grace Bishop Antonios, Metropolitan of Jerusalem, Kuwait, and the Near East, along with his wishes for continued success and prosperity for His Highness the Crown Prince, and for the State of Kuwait to continue its blessed journey of progress and development.

He stated that this occasion represents a milestone of appreciation for the distinguished national service associated with His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, given his sincere dedication in various

positions of responsibility, and his renowned wisdom, composure, and sound political and diplomatic experience.

Father Bigoul stressed that His Highness the Crown Prince embodies the ideal image of a statesman, combining calm leadership with profound vision, and demonstrating a deep commitment to responsibility and a keen interest in the national interest.

He affirmed that the State of Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him), and with the support of His Highness the Crown Prince (May God protect him), is steadily progressing in consolidating the foundations of stability and strengthening the path of reform and development.

Father Bigoul pointed out that Kuwait is distinguished by its people's unity around their leadership and their adherence to the values of patriotism, which enhances Kuwait's ability to face challenges.

He emphasized that the relationship between the leadership and the people will remain one of the most important secrets of Kuwait's stability.

Father Bigoul concluded his statement with a prayer that God protect the State of Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, bless the steps of His Highness the Crown Prince, and grant him success in all that is good for the country, its advancement, and its progress.



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### Infection control measures

## MoH issues strict guidelines to manage Hantavirus cases

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The Ministry of Health has circulated a guide concerning the preventive and technical procedures for managing cases of Andes hantavirus, reports Al-Rai daily.

The guide includes a comprehensive set of organizational and technical procedures covering various stages of handling suspected or confirmed cases, including epidemiological surveillance and early reporting, treatment and isolation protocols, and procedures for handling, transporting, and preserving laboratory samples.

It also defines the roles of all healthcare providers, including government and private hospitals, health centers, laboratories, physicians in the public and private sectors, company doctors, and laboratory technicians.

The guide outlines the procedures for managing cases in accordance with approved treatment protocols. These protocols include isolating patients in negative-pressure ventilated rooms and providing supportive care as needed, such as oxygen therapy, fluids, and respiratory support.

The guide also specifies the isola-

tion period for confirmed cases, ranging from 5 to 8 weeks depending on the progression of the clinical condition.

It further includes strict epidemiological surveillance mechanisms within healthcare facilities, such as immediate reporting, coordination between relevant departments, active case detection in emergency departments and wards, contact tracing and follow-up for 42 days, and the implementation of infection prevention and control measures within healthcare facilities.

Contacts are defined according to specific criteria, including physical proximity, direct contact, and exposure to patient secretions, and are subject to daily health monitoring.

The guide also outlines infection prevention measures in healthcare facilities, including the implementation of air isolation procedures and standard precautions within hospitals, the use of personal protective equipment by healthcare workers, and the handling of suspected cases in accordance with strict protocols designed to minimize the risk of transmission.

## MPW unveils 25 new contracts

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: The Ministry of Public Works unveiled its annual plan for fiscal 2026/2027, consisting of 25 supply, service and other contracts, with an estimated cost of KD75,000 for each project.

In its announcement in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm,' the ministry disclosed that the plan includes 14 contracts for the study, design and supervision of infrastructure upgrades, adding that 24 of the 25 contracts are for the Sanitary Engineering Sector and one for the Information Center in the Planning and Development Sector.

These projects, including deep tunnels, are in line with the commitment of the ministry to modernize the national sewage network, which is a vital component of the infrastructure of the country. The tunnel

system will integrate stormwater outlets and emergency lines from all pumping stations to protect the environment. It is designed to block water flow into Kuwait Bay, thereby, mitigating environmental risks associated with emergency sewage discharge.

The main goals of these projects are to boost network reliability, reduce pollution, protect the ecosystem, and resolve structural issues caused by aging infrastructure.

The contract for the Information Center is for leasing INFO WORK software. This advanced technology enables planners and engineers to model and manage sewage and water networks more effectively.

By utilizing these tools for the design, operation and maintenance of water infrastructure, the ministry aims to improve decision-making and overall planning for future initiatives.

Oil Minister authorized to set merger's effective date

# SPC approves KIPIC dissolution, merger into KNPC by absorption

KUWAIT CITY, May 31, (KUNA): The official gazette (Kuwait Alyoum) published on Sunday the Supreme Petroleum Council's (SPC) decision on the dissolution of the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) and its merger into Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) through absorption.

The decision, issued by the Extraordinary General Assembly of KIPIC, approved the merger of KIPIC into KNPC through absorption, with KNPC legally replacing KIPIC in all its rights and obligations and assuming all effects resulting from the merger. The decision also authorized the Minister of Oil and Chairman of the Board of Directors of

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to determine the effective date of the merger and its consequences, including the complete termination of KIPIC's legal personality, with the authority to delegate such powers to others.

It further approved an increase in KNPC's capital by an amount equivalent to the book value of KIPIC's assets as of March 31,

raising KNPC's capital to approximately KD 2.632 billion.

The decision also included amendments to Article Five of KNPC's Articles of Association concerning capital, as well as amendments to Article Four to align with KIPIC's objectives.

The amendments cover activities related to the petroleum, gas and hydrocarbon industries,

including production, refining, manufacturing, transportation, storage and marketing, in addition to developing the petroleum industry and its products, cooperating with similar companies, establishing petroleum chemical and petrochemical industries and carrying out related supporting activities.

The decision further authorized

the Minister of Oil and Chairman of KPC to approve the final versions of KNPC's Memorandum and Articles of Association, introduce any amendments deemed appropriate, sign the necessary documents and papers, and complete the procedures for registering the merger decision, with the authority to delegate such powers to others.

Continued from Page 1

## Al-Jarallah launches

He said "the armies of the Gulf states have had remarkable performance in countering Iranian attacks, particularly the ballistic missiles and drones which, in total, exceeded those targeting Israel."

He emphasized that "Iranians always link victories to defeats. The Strait of Hormuz issue is a card they have misused. The whole world stands against them. Even the allies of Iran like China rejected their actions regarding the Strait. This card they are playing is not working for them."

He added "we wished the regime would fall, but it still exists. Why can't Iran become like Gaza, so its people rise up against it? What is preventing such action? For 47 years, Iran has been knocking on our doors. The incidents in Makkah and the riots they instigated in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are documented and well-known. More than that, how many terrorist bombings have occurred in Saudi Arabia?"

He also stated that "Iran attempted to assassinate HH the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him, when they bombed his car. Even I was not spared their treachery when I was targeted for assassination in 1985, after criticizing the practices of the Iranian regime and what was happening in Syria and Libya, which are under its influence."

He disclosed that he rejected calls to refrain from criticizing the Iranian regime, "because I was fully aware of the terrorist plots of the Iranian regime against the Gulf states. This has been my path. I have not deviated from it - against a regime that came to wreak havoc and harm the region. Consequently, it has become a heavy burden and must be eliminated through any

means."

In response to the Iraqi criticism against him, he reiterated that "Iran rules Iraq. There is no clearer proof of this than my statement that Iraqis drink the water used to wash the feet of Iranians when they visit Iraq. Their response to my statement was that it is holy water. Is that conceivable? That is why one week later, the Iraqi government issued a decree banning the washing of Iranians' feet, as it became a disgraceful act. I still maintain my opinion that Iraq is not governing itself. Around 150,000 popular mobilization forces receive their salaries from the Iraqi government."

"In addition, there are about 60 Iraqi Shiite factions, along with the Coordination Committee, all of which are affiliated with Iran. Moreover, the Iraqis were unable to elect a prime minister until an envoy from Iran came and gave them his blessing."

He accused the Iraqi factions affiliated with Iran of targeting Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. He said "despite this, the generosity of the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia was evident in their mediation with the Americans to prevent an attack on Iran, in the hope that it will come to its senses. The appeasement of some Gulf states towards Iran somewhat hindered the Gulf media from expressing its stance on Iran's actions against these countries."

"Gulf newspapers should have taken a stronger and more forceful stance in the campaign against the Iranian regime, given its actions in the region. Gulf governments sometimes appeased the Iranian regime. This was evident in the mediation efforts of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the United States of America to give Iran a chance."

He revealed that "Iran pays part of the salaries of these Iraqi Shiite fac-

tions, but from the Iraqi treasury. The same applies to Iranian proxies in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. God willing, they will soon eliminate all those who orbit around them."

He added "it is strange that while the countries in the region are negotiating with Iran, they are being attacked by it. This is astonishing from such people who do not hesitate to attack you, even if you mediate to prevent them from being attacked. Each Iraqi faction has a share of the oil they divide amongst themselves, a blatant example of corruption in Iraq."

He stressed the need for "Gulf states to demand that Iran pay compensation for its attacks. The GCC countries and other Middle Eastern countries that have been targeted by Iranian attacks, such as Jordan, must emphasize this. Iran is a rogue state that must be held accountable. This accountability must be international."

He concluded that "the Iranian regime has weakened politically and militarily despite its attempts to deny it. The Iranian people will rise against their regime in the future. Although some say this is difficult, I believe that the living conditions will motivate Iranians to do so. The Iranian people cannot remain silent about the living conditions they are enduring."

## Envoys hail

relations of Kuwait, and utilizing his diplomatic experience to reinforce the presence of Kuwait on the global stage.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain Manuel Hernández Gamallo extended his warmest congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, praising his political experience and his role in supporting development, while emphasizing the depth of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye Tuba Nur Sönmez stated that the occasion is an opportunity to convey her congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, praising his wisdom and his political and diplomatic experience, which strengthened the regional and international standing of Kuwait. She also confirmed the strength and continuous growth of Turkish-Kuwaiti relations.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Dr. Zafar Iqbal expressed his congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, affirming that the occasion marks an important milestone in the development of Kuwait and praised his role in supporting stability and strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia Mohamed Karim Boudali extended his congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, indicating that His Highness is a staunch supporter of the development of Kuwait and a pillar in strengthening fraternal ties between the two countries.

Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan Awad Al-Karim Al-Rayah Balla greeted His Highness the Crown Prince, emphasizing that the occasion reflects the great confidence in the leadership of Kuwait and lauded His Highness for supporting national development and stability.

Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan Emil Karimov extended his congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, stressing that his country is keen on strengthening friendship and cooperation with the State of Kuwait in various fields.

Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt Mohamed Abu Al-Wafa congratulated His Highness the Crown Prince, wishing him continuous success and guidance. He affirmed that the high level of trust bestowed upon him by His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah proves his stature, political and diplomatic expertise, and his role in supporting the development process.

Ambassador of the State of Palestine Rami Tahboub greeted HH the Crown Prince, asserting that the occasion reflects the precious trust that His Highness the Amir bestowed on Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled.

He prayed to Almighty Allah to grant His Highness the Crown Prince continuous good health and well-being, guide him in serving Kuwait and its noble people, and perpetuate the blessings of security, stability and prosperity for the country.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco Ali Ibn Issa greeted His Highness the Crown Prince, praising his role in supporting the comprehensive development process, while emphasizing the deep fraternal relations between the two countries and the commitment of their leaders to further strengthen such relations in different sectors.

Ambassador of Ukraine Maksym Subkh expressed his congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, lauding his role in developing the regional and international standing of Kuwait. He also affirmed his country's pride in its cooperative relations with the State of Kuwait and its aspiration to expand these relations in various fields.

Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines Jose Cabrera III extended his congratulations to His Highness the Crown Prince, stressing that the occasion reflects the institutional continuity of the State of Kuwait, while praising the strength of bilateral relations and cooperation.

Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus Andreas Panayiotou greeted His Highness the Crown Prince, praising the deep-rooted historical relations between the two countries.

## Midday heat

The ministry highlighted that Ministerial Decision No. 3/2026 is in line with laws and regulations governing the labor market, keeps pace with climate change, and promotes a safe working environment.

The Traffic and Operations Sector emphasized that it will not tolerate violations and will take legal action against offenders.

It called on employers to fully comply with the decision's provisions to ensure worker safety and enhance safe working environment standards.

## Kuwait-Italy

cooperation and explore new areas.

The agreement defines the mechanisms for the exchange of certain military equipment, materials, and training materials, and regulates the reciprocal procurement of materials of interest to the armed forces of both countries, whether through direct transactions or through licensed companies.

The agreement includes provisions for the protection of exchanged confidential information, intellectual property rights, and personal data, in addition to regulating financial aspects, compensation for damages, and mechanisms for settling disputes arising from the interpretation or implementation of the agreement through diplomatic channels, consultations, and negotiations.

The agreement consists of 14 articles and is consistent with the State of Kuwait's commitments in the Arab and international arenas, serving the interests of both countries in strengthening joint defense and military cooperation.



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'Everything checked out perfectly'

## Trump's physician says president in 'excellent health' and 'fully fit' to serve

WASHINGTON, May 31, (AP) — Donald Trump's physician says the president is in "excellent health" and is "fully fit" to serve as commander in chief after a medical exam Tuesday at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

A report from Dr. Sean Barbabella, released late Friday, says Trump underwent a CT scan and other heart imaging, along with cancer screenings and other preventative assessments carried out by 22 specialists.

Trump, 79, said after the three-hour visit Tuesday that everything checked out "PERFECTLY."

The president weighed in at 238 pounds (108 kilograms), up 14 pounds (6 kg) from a medical exam in April 2025. His doctors gave him guidance on his diet, physical activity and weight loss, but concluded his "cognitive and physical performance are excellent."

With his 6-foot, 3-inch (1.9-meter) frame, Trump has a body mass index of 29.7. An index of 30 is considered by doctors to be obese.

The report also documented bruising on Trump's hands, explained as "minor soft tissue irritation related to frequent handshaking," and said it was "a common and benign effect of aspirin therapy." Among the recommendations was a switch to low-dose aspirin.

Last year the White House said Trump was diagnosed with chronic venous insufficiency, a fairly common condition for older adults that causes blood to pool in the president's legs. The report from his latest exam noted "slight lower leg swelling" but said there was "improvement from last year."

His doctor reported nothing abnormal, saying Trump demonstrated strong cardiac, pulmonary, neurological and overall health.

"His demanding daily schedule, including multiple high-level meetings, public engagements, and regular physical activity, continues to support his overall well-being," Barbabella wrote.

Trump was again given the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, which is used



President Donald Trump speaks during the 158th National Memorial Day Observance coinciding with the nation's 250th anniversary, at the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery on May 25, in Arlington, Va. (AP)

to screen for dementia and cognitive impairment. Trump's doctors reported he scored 30 out of 30, the same that was reported last year and in 2018.

His cholesterol levels have improved significantly with the help of medication. Trump's total cholesterol came in at 143, down from 223 in 2018. It had been down to 140 last April. He takes rosuvastatin to help lower his bad cholesterol, known as LDL, and to raise his good cholesterol, or HDL. He also takes ezetimibe to help lower his LDL.

The exam, which Trump described as a six-month physical, was his fourth publicly disclosed medical exam since he returned to office for a second term. It comes as he tries to project strength ahead of midterm elections.

Past administrations have also released selected results from presidential physicals, offering the public a glimpse at the commander in chief's health.

But there is no law requiring presidents to disclose their full health records, and the degree of transparency has varied by administration. Trump's past reports have been criticized for offering scant detail and for providing statistics that some medical experts have viewed with skepticism.

Trump, a Republican, turns 80 next month and was the oldest person elected US president. His immediate predecessor, President Joe Biden, a Democrat, was 82 when he left office, dropping out of the 2024 presidential race because of widespread concerns he was too old for the job.

Trump has tried to fight off public concern over his age and stamina. He often appears with makeup covering bruises on his hands, and photographs have shown the president with swollen feet, ankles and calves.

He has recently talked about how good he feels, even as he jokes about his fondness for fast food and his minimal exercise beyond frequent golf outings. At recent public appearances, Trump has said he feels the same as he did 50 years ago.

## NJ state police set up protest zone outside contested immigration detention center

NEWARK, NJ, May 31, (AP) — New Jersey state police set up designated protest zones and vehicle checkpoints outside an immigration detention center in Newark on Friday, relieving federal immigration enforcement agents who have been clashing with protesters for days.

Gov. Mikie Sherrill said she sent in state police to bring order outside Delaney Hall as the demonstrations have intensified, with violence and arrests increasing as night falls.

"It has grown unsafe, and that's completely unacceptable," the Democratic governor said at a news conference announcing the new measures. "We need to take this opportunity to lower the temperature."

As police erected protest barriers, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents who had formed an line in front of protesters moved inside the building's perimeter fence.

New Jersey State Police Lt. Col. David Sierotowicz said ICE officers

agreed to stand down with state police assuming responsibility.

Demonstrators had mixed reactions. Some staged a sit-in and refused to move into one of the new protest areas police set up using metal barriers and concrete blocks.

Rachel Cohen worried that demonstrators exercising their First Amendment rights were being silenced.

"It is not helpful to quell protest for the sake of a false peace," she said. "There is no peace while we are torturing our neighbors on government dime inside this facility."

US Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, on social media, called the measures a "win for law and order" and noted that Sherrill had resisted sending state police for days.

The protests began a week earlier after immigrant advocates said detainees inside launched a hunger strike over poor living conditions at the 1,000-bed facility, which opened

last May.

Demonstrators have been attempting to block people and vehicles from entering and exiting, linking their arms in a human chain and using trash cans, umbrellas and other items as makeshift shields and barricades.

ICE officers wearing helmets and tactical vests have used pepper spray and batons to try to disperse the protesters and clear the roadway for vehicles.

At least six demonstrators were arrested for allegedly assaulting law enforcement officers Wednesday night, and more have been arrested on other nights, according to DHS.

Acting US Attorney General Todd Blanche shared images online Friday of bloody wounds and bruises sustained by ICE officers.

"These riots are clearly not 'peaceful protests' as you can see from the photos of these horrific wounds," he said. "Assault a federal officer, you'll be held accountable."



Police try to hold the line as protesters removed the fences outside the Delaney Hall detention center during a protest against the transfer of detainees and federal immigration policies on May 30 in Newark, NJ. (AP)

## Ukraine hits Russian energy targets and denies striking Kremlin-occupied nuke plant

KYIV, May 31, (AP) — Ukraine launched fresh strikes on Russian energy sites overnight into Sunday, Russian authorities and media reported, while Kyiv denied Russian claims that a Ukrainian drone struck a key Kremlin-occupied nuclear plant.

Drone debris set fire to a fuel storage facility in Russia's southwestern Rostov region, Gov. Yuriy Slyusar reported on Telegram on Sunday. He said residents of nearby homes were evacuated.

The drones also damaged civilian infrastructure in Saratov province, also in southwestern Russia, according to Gov. Roman Busargin. Astra, an independent Russian news channel, said an oil refinery was on fire in the regional capital, Saratov.

Ukraine has stepped up its attacks on Russia's oil and gas facilities in recent months, arguing the energy sector both funds and directly fuels Moscow's more than 4-year-old invasion.

Meanwhile, Kyiv denied Russia's claims that a Ukrainian drone struck the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, the largest in Ukraine and Europe.

Russian forces captured the plant in the early weeks of the war, and it remains close to the front lines in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, one of four Russia has formally annexed



Servicemen of Ukraine's defense intelligence set up drones against Russian in an undisclosed location in Ukraine on May 28. (AP)

despite lacking full military control or international recognition for its actions.

Russia's state nuclear energy company, Rosatom, said on Saturday that the drone exploded after tearing a hole in the wall of a turbine hall. Rosatom's CEO Alexei Likhachev accused Ukraine of a "deliberate" attack.

"This afternoon, a Ukrainian kamikaze combat drone struck the turbine hall building of Power Unit No. 6, resulting in a detonation," Likh-

achev said. He added there was no damage to main equipment.

Ukraine's military denied Russia's "yet another propaganda ploy," saying it did not strike or target the plant. The military said in a statement that it adheres to international humanitarian law and is aware of the "consequences of any actions targeting nuclear facilities."

"Along the relevant section of the front line, there was no active fighting at the time of the incident, and no weapons were used," it said.

## EU unlocks billions in funding for Hungary after rapid reforms by Magyar

BRUSSELS, May 31, (AP) — The European Union will unlock 16.4 billion euros (around \$19 billion) in funds for Hungary, officials said Friday, after new Prime Minister Peter Magyar enacted rapid reforms to roll back the democratic backsliding that occurred under his predecessor.

The release of the funds was a signal of Brussels' embrace of the new government in Budapest after the 16-year tenure of Viktor Orbán, who was allied with Russia and antagonized the EU.

The agreement, announced during a media briefing in Brussels on Friday by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, capped off weeks of negotiations between Magyar's government and the EU to release the crucial funding that is badly needed by Hungary's slumping economy.

Magyar called the deal "a historic breakthrough" for the nation, and said that his government was "very grateful, and we are ready to continuing cooperating together in the interest of the Hungarian people and all the European citizens."

Partly by campaigning on forging



Hungary's Prime Minister Peter Magyar addresses the media at EU headquarters in Brussels on May 29. (AP)

stronger ties with the EU, Magyar's earthquake success in the April election ended the long tenure of Orbán, who had vilified von der Leyen and other powerbrokers in the 27-nation bloc as he hollowed out institutional checks and balances in Hungary.

Those actions, and concerns over

corruption and the erosion of judicial independence, prompted the EU to freeze the billions in funding to Budapest in 2022. A year later, the commission found that the government had carried out sufficient reforms to have around 10.2 billion euros (\$12.1 billion) released.

On Friday, von der Leyen said that only a few weeks since Magyar's new government took office, "we can already feel a strong wind of change across Hungary."

"A great deal of work has already been achieved in very short time, and markets are already taking notice. Investors confidence is returning. Trust is being rebuilt," she said.

After Magyar's party Tisza won a super-majority in parliament, which enabled deep and quick reforms, leaders in Brussels and Budapest prioritized releasing the funds as soon as possible to help Hungary's economy, which has stagnated for years.

The funds are split between 10 billion euros (\$11.6 billion) of COVID-19 recovery funds and more than 6.3 billion euros (\$7.3 billion) in the cohesion funds designed to lift up struggling economies within the EU.

## Louisiana enacts new congressional districts in bid to give GOP another seat

BATON ROUGE, La., May 31, (AP) — Louisiana lawmakers passed a new congressional map Friday designed to pick up a Republican seat while leaving the state with just one of its two majority-Black House districts represented by Democrats.

Approval of the new House map came a month after the US Supreme Court struck down the state's current map as an illegal racial gerrymander, weakening the landmark 1965 federal Voting Rights Act. That decision intensified a national redistricting battle fueled by President Donald Trump's efforts to protect the Republicans' slim House majority in the midterm elections.

Louisiana Republicans had considered drawing a map giving the party a shot at winning all six of the state's US House seats. But that would have required adding more Black voters to Republican-held districts, potentially backfiring with losses. Some Republicans said a 5-1 map better protects US House Speaker Mike Johnson from facing a difficult reelection.

Republican Gov. Jeff Landry is expected to sign the new map into law.

In the weeks following the Supreme Court's decision, several other Republican-controlled Southern states have seized upon a weakened federal Voting Rights Act to try to redraw their own congressional districts. It's the latest flare-up in a heated national redistricting battle heading into the November elections, spurred along by President Donald Trump.

So far, Republicans are winning the redistricting contest. But that doesn't necessarily mean they will win a narrowly divided US House in November. So far, Republicans think they could gain as many as 14 seats from their redistricting efforts, while Democrats think they could gain six seats from new districts in California and Utah.

In Louisiana, Republicans currently hold four of six congressional seats on a court-ordered map drawn



Louisiana Reps Adrian Fisher, D-Dist 16, left, Chad Michael Boyer, R-Dist 46, and C. Travis Johnson, D-Dist 21, right, recite the pledge of allegiance prior to a house vote on a redistricting plan to eliminate a majority-Black congressional district in response to a US Supreme Court ruling, in Baton Rouge, La on May 21. (AP)

in 2024 to comply with the Voting Rights Act by including a second district with a majority-Black population.

That map, however, was challenged in court, and the Supreme Court responded on April 30 by striking it down as an illegal racial gerrymander.

Landry postponed the state's US House primary, scheduled for May 16, until later this summer to allow time for Republican lawmakers to draw and pass a new map.

The proposed map redraws Democratic US Rep Cleo Fields' district, clustering it around predominantly white communities in the Baton Rouge area and southern Louisiana. It also adds part of Baton Rouge to a heavily Democratic, majority-Black district based in New Orleans currently represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Troy Carter.

More lawsuits were expected over the new map.

Democrats say the proposed map could still constitute a racial gerrymander because it packs Black voters into a single congressional

district. Meanwhile, the plaintiffs in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision criticized the Legislature's map for leaving a majority-Black district in place.

Several other Southern states also have acted on redistricting since the Supreme Court's decision.

Florida's Legislature passed new congressional districts just hours after the ruling, completing a redrawing that was in the works in anticipation of the decision. It could yield Republicans as many as four additional seats in the midterm elections. Tennessee adopted new US House districts a week after the ruling, carving up a majority-Black district based in Memphis in a Republican attempt to win an additional seat.

In Alabama, Republicans are attempting to pick up another seat by redrawing two districts where Black residents compose a majority or close to it. Democrats hold both seats, and the proposal is mired in a court battle.

South Carolina's Senate, meanwhile, decided against redistricting, despite pressure from Trump.

## Turks and Caicos Islands ex-PM gets 4 years in corruption case

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, May 31, (AP) — A court in the Turks and Caicos Islands has sentenced former premier Michael Misick to just over four years in prison after he was convicted in a landmark corruption case that had dragged on for years.

Misick was arrested in December 2012 in Brazil, after his application for political asylum was rejected there. He was accused of corruption, misusing public money and profiting from the sale of government-owned land to developers.

The verdict, handed down on Friday, sentenced Misick to four years and 26 days in prison. In early February, Misick was convicted on three counts of bribery. He has said that all the charges against him were politically motivated.



Michael Misick addresses the crowd in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands on Aug 15, 2003, after being sworn in as the Chief Minister. (AP)

## INTERNATIONAL

## Heavy rains threaten to delay search for two missing in flooded Laos cave

BANGKOK, May 31, (AP) — Heavy rains threatened to delay the search for two people missing in a flooded cave in Laos on Sunday, after the rescue of five other people who were trapped underground for over a week.

Finnish diver Mikko Paasi, one of the first international rescuers to arrive at the site, told The Associated Press that rains had filled the cave up to the second chamber, preventing divers from entering the cave until pumps can lower the water level.

The seven villagers reportedly entered the cave last week to look for valuable minerals before being trapped by a flash flood that blocked their way out. One other villager escaped and alerted the authorities.

Rescue teams from Laos and neighboring Thailand have been working together in the past week at the site in a rugged area in the central province of Xaisomboun, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of the capital, Vientiane. They were joined by divers from countries including Finland, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, France and Australia.

Several of the rescuers previously

took part in the complicated 2018 cave rescue in northern Thailand that saved 12 schoolboys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave.

The rescued men are being treated at a local hospital and are doing well, Malaysian diver Lee Kian Lie, who's taking part in the operation, told the AP on Sunday.

"We interviewed them about how the deeper part of the cave looks like. We will continue to search based on the information we have, and perhaps we will be able to get to the other two," he said.

According to rescuers, they have navigated more than 200 meters into the cave and discovered five chambers in the system. The five people rescued so far were found in the fifth chamber.

Paasi told the AP that the survivors said there's a narrow crack in the fifth chamber that could be a passage leading to a deeper part of the cave system.

"This was the only place that we haven't checked in the mine, where the two lost miners could still be," he said during a video interview.

"Now there's a theory that, through that small crack, it still continues, and there's a sixth chamber, which gives us hope now that, if we could penetrate that small restriction, we might be able to reach the sixth chamber and then see what is there."

The five people who have been rescued were first found Wednesday. They were identified by their first names as Khamla, Mued, Ee, Ing and Laen.

The first man was safely evacuated on Friday, guided through a narrow flooded passage by an expert diver. The remaining four left the cave on Saturday after the water receded enough for them to walk out on their own, rescuers said.

Videos posted online Saturday by rescuers at the site showed emotional moments as the men emerged one by one from the cave. Some collapsed on the ground at the cave's entrance, and were hugged by a group of workers who cried in joy. Later moments showed them lying on a stretcher, wrapped in foil blankets and fitted with an oxygen mask before being transported out of the site.



This image released by Metta Tham Rescue Kalasin, shows rescue workers gathering in a flooded cave in Xaisomboun province, Laos on May 29. (AP)

Japanese defense minister praises Hegseth for commitment to Indo-Pacific

## US allies warn division weakens deterrence in calls for global unity to meet new threats

SINGAPORE, May 31, (AP) — American allies stressed the need for unity at a top defense conference Sunday, saying that as threats increasingly transcend regions, cooperation is more important than ever, even as Washington has become more critical of its traditional friends.

US President Donald Trump has been extremely harsh about NATO, and the comments at the Shangri-La conference came the day after US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth again chided Western European allies at the forum for not devoting enough resources to defense.

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi praised Hegseth for his commitment to the Indo-Pacific, but at the same time stressed the continued need for strong coalitions globally.

"Division weakens deterrence, unity strengthens deterrence," he told the conference, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"If gaps emerge among the United States, Europe, and allies and like-minded countries, forces which take it as an opportunity will surely come in," he said. "We must prevent such a situation. We must keep our cooperation going on. Now is the time to make our cooperation even stronger."

As China has been rapidly expanding and modernizing its military, Japan has been reshaping its own defense policy. Last month, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports, a major change in its postwar pacifist policy.

China criticized the change, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun saying China would "resolutely resist Japan's reckless moves toward a new type of militarism."

Koizumi scoffed at that accusation as ironic, coming from China. "Think about it, there is a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers," he said, speaking in English. "Japan has neither of such weapons, and yet Japan is labeled new militarism. Isn't it strange?"

He said that transparency comes from "discussion and dialogue" and lamented that China had not sent its defense minister to the conference.

At this year's conference, Hegseth toned down his comments from the previous year on China, when he had warned of rapidly developing threats from Beijing and cautioned it was "actively training" for a possible invasion of Taiwan.



Japan's Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi delivers a speech during the Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's annual defense and security forum, in Singapore on May 31. (AP)

This year's conference came only about two weeks after US President Donald Trump visited Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing, however, where Hegseth said the two had agreed to "build a constructive relationship of strategic stability." His comments were met with praise from China's delegation in Singapore.

On Sunday, Philippines Defense Minister Gilberto Teodoro Jr., whose country has clashed repeatedly over competing maritime claims with China, told a small group of reporters that he wasn't concerned with the change in tone from his most important ally.

"The situation with the United States is different than that from the Philip-

pinas," he said. "They can talk to China that way in a position of parity, if not superiority, while the Philippines cannot."

He added, however, that he had no intention of following suit.

"If China doesn't change its behavior, my tone won't change," he said. In his speech Saturday, Hegseth applauded many Asian partners for their efforts to step-up defense spending, while reiterating criticism of European allies, who he suggested got "distracted by empty globalist rhetoric about the rules-based international order, while European capitals threw open their borders and hollowed out their militaries."

"You can have all the rules you want and rules are great," Hegseth said. "But if you can't back them up with hard power, the rules are not worth the paper they are written on."

Many NATO countries failed for years to meet alliance defense spending commitments, but since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many dramatically increased military expenditures and plan more in the future.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the conference Sunday, Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles, said he agreed with Hegseth's point that "the rules based order needs to be underpinned by power," but at the same time said strong rules were "more important today than they have ever been."

"We are all committed to a rules based system, because that is actually what gives middle powers like Australia or smaller countries agency," he said.

He also said alliances remain critical to the region's defense. "This is a collective challenge and it demands a collective response, which is actually what the rules based order is all about," he said.

Netherlands Defense Minister Dilan Yesilgöz-Zegerius said the current conflicts have global implications and demand a shared response.

"A war in Europe involves drones from Iran, soldiers and ammunition from North Korea and various types of support from China," she said. "The lesson is clear: regional tensions are no longer regional. Our security is interconnected."

She said that if middle powers do not work together, they risk becoming spectators or the "subject of conversations," but with coalitions they can help preserve stability.

## Ethiopia heads to polls for election expected to be dominated again by Abiy's ruling party

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, May 31, (AP) — Ethiopia heads to the polls on Monday in an election that the ruling party is predicted to win by a landslide due to a fragmented and weak opposition.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party currently holds more than 500 seats in the House of Representatives and is expected to win a majority in this election, securing him another five-year term.

Some 50 million people, out of a population of 130 million Ethiopians, are expected to vote for members of the House of Representatives, but insecurity in the most populous regions, including Amhara and Oromia, is expected to affect turnout.

Ethiopia's electoral system allows voters to select their representatives, who then vote for a prime minister. Ethiopians will also vote for members of their local regional government councils.

This year's election themes include national reconciliation due to the fighting seen in regions such as Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara, and there is also a development theme as the government pledges to undertake major projects.

Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who helped facilitate the Tigray peace talks, is leading 73 observers from the African Union.

Arriving in Ethiopia on Saturday, Kenyatta emphasized the importance of Ethiopia's elections for the continent, as the country hosts the African Union



Supporters of Ethiopia's ruling Prosperity Party cheer at a rally ahead of the national elections in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on May 26. (AP)

headquarters. "Ours is to call for peaceful situation as Ethiopians are known for," he said. Abiy's administration has been accused of human rights violations against critics and journalists despite the promise of democracy and peace he made in 2020. During his tenure, Ethiopia has been through the Tigray war in the north of the country, where hundreds of thousands of people died as the federal security forces clashed with the regional forces. A peace deal was signed in November 2022.

Abiy won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for solving a long-standing conflict between Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea, though the two countries are

currently at loggerheads, with Addis Ababa accusing Asmara of supporting rebel groups to destabilize it.

There are fears that the situation could escalate and drag the volatile Tigray region into a proxy war, even as relief agencies warn of a dire humanitarian situation on the ground.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front - the dominant political party in Ethiopia's far northern region of Tigray - has been outlawed as the party maintains control of the regional government and threatens to cancel the 2022 peace agreement, which the federal government sees as an attempt to trigger another conflict.

## Colombia's presidential election pits Petro's ally against pro-Trump candidates

BOGOTÁ, Colombia, May 31, (AP) — Colombians cast ballots on Sunday in the first round of the South American nation's presidential election, choosing between candidates with radically diverging visions for the future of peace in a country haunted by decades of armed conflict.

The vote, seen as a referendum on outgoing President Gustavo Petro's policies, comes 10 years after Colombia signed an historic peace pact with guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

That agreement offered hope to break the nation out of a vicious cycle of fighting between rebel groups and the government but violence has roared back since then, coming to a head in the lead-up to the presidential vote. Criminal groups have increasingly launched drone strikes, armed attacks have plagued the race and last June, 39-year-old politician and presidential hopeful Miguel Uribe Turbay was fatally shot at a political rally.

In a country where the fight for peace has long been a part of the political ethos, the question of



An electoral worker sets up a voting center in preparation for Sunday's presidential election in Cali, Colombia on May 30. (AP)

how to address the conflict is once again dividing the country.

There are 14 candidates on the ballot, but the election has basically turned into a three-horse race.

Senator and peace-builder Ivan Cepeda - a Petro ally - has led the polls and promises to carry on with Petro's "total peace" initiative to negotiate with the country's remaining rebel groups and

sign peace agreements with them in an effort to resolve the persistent crisis.

While the peace plan has largely failed as criminals have taken advantage of ceasefires with the government, Cepeda and Petro have maintained strong support among many because of progressive policies pushed forward under Petro, such as boosting the minimum wage.

## Africa

**S. Africa court weighs feud over body of Lungu:** A bitter feud over whether the body of Zambia's former President Edgar Lungu should return to his country for a state funeral or stay in South Africa for burial went before a South African appeals court Friday, nearly a year after his death.

Lungu, who was Zambia's leader from 2015 to 2021, died of an undisclosed illness in a South African hospital on June 5, 2025 at the age of 68.

He has not yet been buried because of a tug-of-war between his family and his long-time rival, current Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema.

Hichilema wants Lungu's body returned for a state ceremony, and his government won a ruling in August from the Pretoria High Court that the remains be turned over to Zambian diplomats for repatriation. (AP)



Lungu

**S. African gov't, Afrikaners reject US claim:** The South African government and advocacy groups for the country's Afrikaner white minority rejected the Trump ad-

ministration's position that there's a humanitarian emergency affecting white people in South Africa.

The argument served as the administration's rationale for raising the US refugee cap, but only for white Afrikaners. The Trump administration said that it will admit an additional 10,000 white South Africans into the US as refugees this year, increasing its annual quota, but blocking people from other countries from entering through the program. (AP)

**Zimbabwe bus-truck collision kills 10:** A collision between a bus and a haulage truck killed 10 people in central Zimbabwe police said, bringing the country's death toll from major road crashes to 41 in May.

Police spokesperson Paul Nyathi said the victims in Wednesday's crash died after a bus carrying 36 passengers attempted to overtake and collided with a truck near the city of Kwekwe. More details would be released later, he said.

Road accidents involving buses, minibus taxis and unregulated sedan taxis are common in the southern African country of around 15 million people and are often blamed on speeding and poor road conditions.

At least 24 people died in major crashes over the past week, including eight Roman Catholic parishioners whose vehicle plunged into a river. Earlier in May, another 17 people were killed when a bus crashed in northern Zimbabwe, most of them Malawian nationals returning home from South Africa. (AP)

## US strike on drug boat kills three in Pacific Ocean

WASHINGTON, May 31, (AP) — The US military said it carried out another strike Friday on a boat accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing three men in the third attack this week and pushing the overall death toll above 200 people.

US Southern Command announced the latest strike in the monthslong campaign against alleged drug boats traversing the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific with its usual language that the vessel was "engaged in narco-trafficking operations" and operated by a designated terrorist organization. It provided no evidence.

While the military's social media announcements always include video of the attacks, this appears to be the first with the footage in color instead of black and white. The video shows a small vessel floating in the ocean before it's hit and engulfed in a fireball. It cuts to what could be the boat in flames, surrounded by a large plume of particles or some other objects spread around it in the water.

The attack puts the death toll at 202 people from the series of U.S. strikes that began in early September, with two other attacks announced Tuesday and Wednesday.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a Cabinet meeting at the White House, Wednesday, May 27, 2026, in Washington, as Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, looks on. (AP)

## Strengthening operations with Enterprise AI implementation

# ABK obtains Central Bank of Kuwait approval to adopt ChatGPT Enterprise with OpenAI

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues its digital transformation journey through the adoption of AI-powered capabilities, having obtained the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) approval to adopt the ChatGPT Enterprise by OpenAI platform.

This follows the Proof of Concept (PoC) initiative that aimed to evaluate the potential of the platform in enhancing employees' internal capabilities, developing their skills, and improving operational efficiency across the Bank's various divisions.

This step represents an important milestone in the Bank's journey towards adopting advanced AI solutions within a secure environment governed by clear regulatory frameworks.

During the pilot phase, the Bank focused on testing multiple use cases, validating security controls and data protection measures, and assessing how AI can enable employees to work faster, more accurately, and more efficiently through AI-powered technologies.

The initiative also included tailored training programs for different employee segments, including dedicated workshops for executive management, in addition to practical and interactive training sessions for a select group of employees (AI Champions) from various divisions. Participants were able to test the platform's practical applications and provide valuable feedback that contributed to evaluating its business value, ease of use, and operational impact.

The ChatGPT Enterprise platform provided participants with enterprise-grade AI capabilities supported by advanced security, privacy, and data protection controls.

With it, employees will benefit from faster access to internal infor-



Khalil AlQattan, Chief Digital Transformation & Innovation Officer



mation, enhanced collaboration between divisions, support in problem-solving, and reduced time spent on repetitive manual tasks. This will enable teams to focus on higher-value activities such as in-depth analysis, advisory support, innovation, and workflow enhancement across the Bank.

During the PoC phase, the OpenAI team provided close and continuous support to ABK, helping ensure the smooth implementation of the platform, addressing technical and operational inquiries, and playing a positive role in the success of the pilot while reinforcing confidence in the platform's readiness for enterprise use to obtain CBK approval.

Commenting on the initiative, Khalil AlQattan, Chief Digital Transformation and Innovation Officer at ABK, said, "Obtaining approval to adopt the ChatGPT Enterprise platform within our operations reflects

the Bank's to adopting the latest technologies that redefine productivity and enhance employee experience, while maintaining full compliance with regulatory requirements. By empowering employees with AI capabilities, we are enabling them to work more efficiently while fostering innovation and collaboration across the Bank to deliver high-quality outcomes."

AlQattan added, "AI tools, such as ChatGPT Enterprise, will enhance the Bank's internal environment by improving productivity and enabling employees to access information quickly and accurately to execute their daily tasks and accelerate their pace of delivery."

He noted that the service contributes to improving operational efficiency and enables employees to focus on innovative initiatives that deliver added value across the Bank's services.

He noted that CBK's approval was granted following the successful completion of the required testing and evidence-gathering processes, as well as a thorough assessment of the Bank's governance framework, security controls, risk management practices, and operational readiness, paving the way for the platform's official adoption.

This initiative supports ABK's vision to build future-ready human capabilities through the integration of innovation, digital capabilities, and AI technologies into daily operations, while maintaining the highest standards of compliance and risk management.

The Bank continues to leverage AI technologies internally to enhance employee productivity and operational efficiency, further strengthening its position as one of the leaders in technological innovation and operational excellence within Kuwait's banking sector.

## Shuaiba, Umm Al-Aish Plants produce 28 mln gas cylinders annually

# KNPC gas plants capacity meets demand through 2030

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Following the transfer of the liquefied gas plants in Shuaiba and Umm Al-Aish to the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) last August, the total production capacity of the two plants has reached approximately 28 million gas cylinders annually (13 million cylinders annually for the Shuaiba Industrial Plant and about 15 million for the Umm Al-Aish Plant).

According to informed sources, the capacity of the Shuaiba and Umm Al-Aish liquefied gas bottling plants is sufficient to meet the needs of the local market until

2030, especially since the strategic reserve of liquefied gas has more than tripled, covering consumer needs by over 300 percent.

The liquefied gas cylinder bottling plant in the Shuaiba Industrial Area includes six new tanks with a storage capacity of 6,000 metric tons, which is sufficient to meet the needs of the local market for 14 days.

The same plant has a fleet of distribution trucks that deliver gas cylinders to all distribution centers.

The Umm Al-Aish plant includes six underground tanks with high efficiency levels.

The sources affirmed that the gas cylinders filled at the Shuaiba and Umm Al-Aish plants are completely safe, as they undergo strict inspection procedures upon arrival

from distribution centers before being transferred to the filling plants.

They revealed that KNPC is keen to dispose of cylinders once they reach the end of their service life.

The sources urged consumers to ensure their gas cylinders are tightly closed and kept out of reach of children, adding, "If a rotten egg smell is detected in the kitchen, the gas cylinder should be disconnected immediately."

In addition, they indicated that the number of Kuwaiti employees at KNPC increased from 5,864 on March 31, 2025, to more than 6,065 in August 2025 after the inclusion of employees at the Umm Al-Aish and Shuaiba gas filling plants.

## Inflation, geopolitics keep Central Banks on hold

# Global markets brace for prolonged high rates

By National Bank of Kuwait

GLOBAL financial markets this week remain firmly in the grip of two overarching themes: the persistence of above-target inflation and the unresolved geopolitical shock emanating from the Middle East conflict. Central banks across the US, UK, and the Asia-Pacific region are in a delicate holding pattern, unwilling to ease prematurely, yet mindful that prolonged tightening risks stifling already fragile growth. Energy prices, elevated since the outbreak of the Iran conflict, continue to act as a supply-side tax on the global economy, complicating the inflation trajectory for virtually every major central bank. Against this backdrop, the US dollar remains broadly supported, while rate-sensitive currencies face headwinds from the prospect of rates staying higher for longer.

### United States

#### US PCE Inflation Remains Elevated as Growth Slows

The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge showed continued price pressures in April, with the headline PCE price index rising 0.4% month-on-month and 3.8% year-on-year, the highest annual rate since May 2023. Core PCE, which excludes food and energy, increased 0.2% on the month and 3.3% annually, matching expectations and suggesting some moderation in underlying inflation. Higher gasoline prices remained a key driver, while housing and services costs also continued to rise. Meanwhile, the US economy showed signs of slowing, as first-quarter GDP growth was revised down to an annualized 1.6% from the initial 2.0% estimate, reflecting weaker consumer spending and investment. Consumer spending still rose 0.5% in April, but flat income growth and a decline in the personal savings rate to its lowest level since June 2022 suggested households were increasingly relying on savings to support spending. Labor market conditions remained relatively stable, with jobless claims edging slightly higher, while durable goods orders surged 7.9%. Overall, the data reinforces expectations that the Federal Reserve will remain cautious, balancing persistent inflation risks, exacerbated by the Iran conflict and tariffs, against signs of moderating economic growth. While softer monthly inflation readings offer some encouragement, markets continue to expect policymakers to keep interest rates unchanged for the foreseeable future.

### United Kingdom

#### Bailey Signals BoE's Cautious Approach Amid Inflation Risks

Bank of England Governor Andrew

Bailey emphasized that the decision to keep interest rates unchanged was an "active choice," reflecting the need to closely monitor the impact of Middle East developments on the UK economy and inflation. Bailey noted that the BoE has already tightened monetary policy significantly by removing previously expected rate cuts from its outlook. While he acknowledged there may be a case for tolerating temporarily above-target inflation driven by external shocks, he stressed that policymakers remain vigilant. He also highlighted signs of a gradually softening labor market and said higher inflation expectations have not yet translated into stronger wage demands or settlements, suggesting that broader inflationary pressures remain contained for now.

The GBP/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3459.

### Europe

#### Lagarde Stresses That Central Bank Independence Must Be Earned Through Credibility

ECB President Christine Lagarde emphasized that while legal independence is essential for central banks, true independence ultimately depends on credibility and public trust built through consistent actions. Drawing on the ECB's experience over the past two decades, she highlighted how the institution earned its reputation by navigating financial crises, market fragmentation, and the inflation surge of 2022 while remaining focused on its price stability mandate. Lagarde warned that an increasingly challenging environment marked by frequent supply shocks, rising fiscal pressures, and declining trust in public institutions is putting central bank independence to the test. She stressed that maintaining a clear commitment to price stability, communicating transparently with citizens, and preserving fiscal and financial resilience are critical to safeguarding monetary policy independence. Ultimately, she argued that credibility is the foundation of effective central banking, taking years to build but only moments to lose.

The EUR/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.1659.

### Asia-Pacific

#### Australian Inflation Cools More Than Expected in April

Australia's annual inflation rate eased to 4.2% in April 2026 from 4.6% in March, coming in below market expectations of 4.4%, though it remained above the Reserve Bank of Australia's 2-3% target range. The slowdown was driven by softer goods inflation, particularly transportation costs, as fuel price pressures eased following a government reduction in fuel

excise taxes. Inflation also moderated for food, non-alcoholic beverages, and housing, while services inflation edged slightly lower. On a monthly basis, consumer prices rose 0.4%, down sharply from March's 1.1% increase and below forecasts. However, underlying inflation remained persistent, with the trimmed mean CPI rising to 3.4% year-on-year, its highest level since September 2024, highlighting ongoing core price pressures despite the broader easing in headline inflation.

The AUD/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 0.7183.

#### RBNZ Holds Rates Steady but Signals Potential Tightening Ahead

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand kept its Official Cash Rate unchanged at 2.25% in May, marking a third consecutive meeting without a change, despite differing views among policymakers. The central bank expects higher petrochemical prices to push inflation higher in the near term, with headline inflation projected to peak at 4.3% in the third quarter before gradually returning to its 2% target by mid-2027. While the economy remains in the early stages of recovery, with spare capacity and elevated unemployment, rising fuel and input costs are expected to pressure households and businesses. The RBNZ emphasized its commitment to preventing temporary cost shocks from becoming embedded in longer-term inflation and indicated that interest rates may need to rise sooner and by more than previously anticipated, depending on the persistence of inflationary pressures and wage growth.

The NZD/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 0.5988.

#### Tokyo Core Inflation Slows Further in May

Core consumer prices in Tokyo's central wards rose 1.3% year-on-year in May 2026, easing from 1.5% in April and coming in below market expectations of 1.5%. The reading marked the slowest pace of inflation since March 2022 and remained below the Bank of Japan's 2% target for a fourth consecutive month. Inflationary pressures were tempered by government fuel subsidies and favorable base effects, which helped offset higher raw material costs stemming from the Middle East conflict. Nevertheless, policymakers remain cautious, as persistently elevated oil prices could eventually feed into broader inflation if companies continue passing higher costs on to consumers.

The USD/JPY currency pair was last seen trading at 159.26.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30670.

# Bank's AI just blocked your payment – what can you do?

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

By Pragati Awasthi  
Drexel University

Imagine you're at the supermarket check-out. Your cart is full. The line behind you is long. You tap your card. Declined. You try again. Declined.

You haven't overspent. You haven't done anything suspicious. But somewhere inside your bank's computer systems, a machine made a decision about you in less time than it takes to blink - and it made a mistake.

What just happened? And why does it keep happening to people who haven't done anything wrong?

This isn't a rare glitch, but something that happens to millions of people every day. And most of us have no idea why it happens or what we can do about it. The answer lies inside a fraud detection system powered by AI.

As a data science teaching professor and former financial-services data scientist, I understand how this system works and can explain why it sometimes fails the very customers it's meant to protect. Just as important, I can help you find out what you need to know and what you can do if you or your loved ones are unfairly flagged.

When you tap your card, a signal travels to your bank's fraud detection system in the time it takes to blink. The transaction processing at your checkout is fully automated, operating within AI systems that handle millions of payments simultaneously, and computes a risk score based on dozens of features extracted from that single moment. Those features might include the transaction amount relative to your recent spending average; the type of merchant; your geographic location; the time of day; the device used for online purchases; and how this purchase compares to your historical patterns.

Once those factors are plugged in, an algorithm scores your purchase in real time. A model trained on millions of past transactions then assigns each combination of features a probability on how likely it is that this transaction would be fraudulent. If that probability crosses a threshold, the transaction is blocked or flagged for review. The whole process takes less than 200 milliseconds.

What sets this technology apart is speed. Financial institutions process millions of transactions every day, which is far greater than any human team can effectively monitor. Banks also have fraud analysts, but their work happens at a different layer entirely - reviewing patterns, investigating cases, and handling disputes that the automated system escalates to them.

To their credit, these new systems are usually accurate at catching fraud. Banks lose far less money due to card fraud today than they did before machine learning - one of the foundational technologies that power today's AI systems - became standard.

Still, the word "accurate" conceals a problem. Consider the numbers. The Federal Trade Commission reported that Americans lost more than \$12.5 billion to fraud in 2024 - a 25% increase from the year before. As banks process more transactions than ever, fraudsters are keeping pace, too.

And here is the part that is especially worth noting: According to Stripe, one of the world's largest payment processors, "false declines" (legitimate transactions wrongly rejected) are a structural problem across the entire industry, and industry research consistently suggests they cost the financial system more than actual fraud does.

These errors aren't random. They cluster around people and situations that the algorithm wasn't properly trained to expect. Buying gas in a city you've never visited or making a large rent payment for the first time aren't inherently suspicious. But to a machine trained on past patterns, they can look that way.

There's something even more troubling. These algorithms learn from historical data, which is almost always imbalanced. Because fraudulent transactions are rare on a per-transaction basis, the model has seen relatively few examples of what fraud looks like across every type of customer.

What does this mean? Research has found that customers in lower-income areas and communities of color face higher rates of erroneous declines. When a model hasn't seen enough transactions from a particular group of people or in a given situation, it has less data to build an accurate

baseline for them. So when something slightly unusual happens, it flags it. Not out of intent, but out of unfamiliarity.

The model isn't necessarily explicitly discriminating against anyone. But its outputs can still produce what researchers call disparate impact - unequal harm, distributed unequally.

As researchers at MIT explain in their book "Fairness and Machine Learning," this is a known limitation. A model trained on incomplete representation will perform less reliably for the groups it saw least. The fix isn't to blame the algorithm, but to train it on better, more representative data, and to test its error rates across different customer groups before deployment.

What makes these cases worse is the lack of any information.

When a loan officer denies your mortgage application, the law requires a written explanation. But when an algorithm declines your debit card, you get "flagged by our system" message. If you're lucky enough to connect with a human representative, they can't tell you much more.

This gap isn't an accident. Most high-performing fraud models are black boxes. Their internal logic isn't designed for human interpretation. A bank may genuinely be unable to articulate plainly why your transaction was stopped. That's not because it's hiding something, but because the model itself doesn't produce a reason. It produces a number.

In response, some financial institutions are moving toward tools that make their algorithms more transparent. Known in the industry as "explainable AI," these systems are designed to surface the most influential factors behind a given decision - flagging, for instance, that a transaction was blocked because of an unusual location combined with an atypically large amount. It's a meaningful step toward accountability.

However, these adoptions are uneven, and the explanations that do exist are rarely surfaced to customers.

Meanwhile, those pressures haven't yet translated into a consistent, enforceable right to a meaningful explanation when your card gets declined. Challenging a decision made by AI can be enormously difficult, and most of us don't even know we have the right to try.

For most people, the path of least resistance is simply to move on, switch to another card, take their business elsewhere or say nothing. Research suggests a quarter of consumers who experience a false decline never return to that merchant at all.

Some people go further and close the account entirely. That instinct is understandable. However, it carries a hidden cost. A declined transaction won't appear on your credit report, but closing the card can shut down an account reduces your available credit and can shorten your credit history, which can directly affect your credit score.

You have more power here than the banks would like you to think.

Call your bank immediately. A fraud flag is probabilistic, not final. A bank representative can override a declined transaction in real time. The model made a guess, but a human can correct it. Do not wait.

Set alerts if you're planning to make unusual purchases: Most banks allow you to notify them of upcoming travel, large purchases, or changes in your spending pattern. This doesn't override the model, but it gives it new information to work with, which can prevent the flag from triggering in the first place.

Know your rights: Under the Fair Credit Billing Act, you can dispute erroneous transaction blocks and request an explanation. If you believe you've been systematically and unfairly blocked, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau accepts consumer complaints.

Ask your bank what appeal processes are available: Increasingly, banks are building more customer-facing appeal services. Visa reported 106 million disputes globally in 2025, a 35% rise since 2019, and has called dispute management a "strategic priority." Improper declines are expensive for payment companies and financial institutions, too, through customer service costs, lost revenue and eroded trust.

The algorithm that blocked your payment isn't all-knowing or neutral. It's a machine making a statistical guess about you, based on data that was probably never perfectly fair to begin with.

As AI spreads further into our daily lives, the question of who controls these decisions, and whether we can challenge them, becomes ever more urgent. The technology will keep expanding into new realms. The rules, and our own financial fluency, need to keep up. (AP)

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1629	1.1584	1.1685	1.1659	1.1560	1.1880	1.1702
GBP	1.3441	1.3364	1.3509	1.3459	1.3350	1.3680	1.3458
JPY	158.90	158.74	159.65	159.26	158.30	160.10	158.10
CHF	0.7843	0.7794	0.7899	0.7810	0.7570	0.7900	0.7733

## Airlines cut flights as fuel costs soar

## Soaring prices during the Iran war jeopardize travel to tourism-dependent countries in Asia

BANGKOK, May 31, (AP): With summer around the corner, soaring prices and other complications from the war with Iran are straining the tourism-dependent economies of countries in Southeast Asia, including Thailand and Vietnam.

The region's peak tourist summer season is at risk as elevated jet fuel costs coupled with cease-fire uncertainties prompt flight cancellations and higher ticket prices.

Tourism in Asia has yet to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, many countries are coping with the war's repercussions for global energy supplies and prices, which hit Asia first and hardest. Some families are pulling back on travel as visiting gas stations and grocery stores gets more expensive worldwide. Crowds have thinned at some places once synonymous with travel.

"With gasoline prices rising and tourism declining, how can we make money?" asked Siv Pech, a 58-year-old tuk-tuk driver in Siem Reap, home to Cambodia's centuries-old Angkor Wat temple complex.

Tourism is an economic lifeline for many developing nations. It contributes nearly 13% of gross domestic product in Thailand and nearly 9% in Vietnam, and it underpins millions of jobs in Cambodia. Travelers bring in much-needed foreign currency for import-dependent economies such as the Philippines and Nepal.

Those tourism dollars are more critical than ever as war-driven spikes in oil prices push up the cost of fuel imports, especially for parts of the world that relied on the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast as a conduit for much of their oil and gas.

The war will determine which tourism businesses can survive long enough to benefit from the eventual return of travelers, said Jitsai Santaputra of The Lantau Group, an energy industry consulting firm. "This, happening within five years of each other, first the pandemic and now the war, is horrible for the tourism industry," she said.

Jet fuel shortages and surging costs have led Vietnam Airlines, the Malaysia-based AirAsia group, Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific and other carriers to cut flights or re-adjust schedules.

European carriers face a squeeze from similar issues.

Airspace closures across the Persian Gulf early in the war and the intermittent closures of certain Gulf airports cut off key layover locations for Asia-bound flights or forced commercial airplanes to take longer, costlier



A crowd of tourists take pictures of a passing train at the Mae Klong Railway Market near Bangkok, Thailand on Dec. 6, 2025. (AP)



A vendor offers jackfruit slices to tourists visiting a floating market in Can Tho, Vietnam on June 22, 2024. (AP)

routes.

Airfares have jumped, with airlines like Air India and Cathay Pacific implementing sharp increases in fuel surcharges.

Cathay Pacific's fuel surcharge for medium-haul flights has jumped to 633 Hong Kong dollars (\$80) from 264 Hong Kong dollars (\$34) before the war. For long-haul flights, it increased to 1,362 Hong Kong dollars (\$174) from 569 Hong Kong dollars (\$73).

"Jet fuel prices remain at highly elevated levels" and have increased cost pressures, said Lavinia Lau, Cathay's chief customer and commercial officer. Travelers are booking closer to their departure dates, she said, indicating growing unease.

Sandra Awodele, a freelance travel writer in the Washington area, often plans year-round international trips and hoped this summer would finally be the one she crossed Asia off her bucket list.

In March, she began planning a long-awaited vacation to Thailand, envisioning one to two weeks of exploring. Her plans hit a wall when she checked airfares.

"I looked at flight options and that's where it ended," Awodele said.

On the ground, rising fuel costs in tourism-dependent Southeast Asia are squeezing taxi and ride-hailing app drivers.

Pech, the Cambodian tuk-tuk driver, said he used to earn up to \$20 a day toting tourists around Siem Reap. That's plummeted to about \$5 a day.

His gas bill eats half of that. The rest goes to food. "Some days, I don't earn even a cent," he said.

Tourism is vital for many regional economies, accounting for nearly 11% of economic activity in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2019, according to the World Travel and Tourism

opment Program.

Travel is often the first expense people cut when the economy worsens, said Le Tuyet Lan, who runs bed-and-breakfast properties in Vietnam's Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

In times of crisis luxury travelers tend to shift toward midrange options, midrange travelers move toward budget hotels, and the cheapest tier of the market becomes the most vulnerable.

"This will disrupt the whole industry," she said.

Tourism in Thailand is "a big industry and we are feeling it," said Santaputra with The Lantau Group in Bangkok, one of Southeast Asia's most visited cities.

The number of visitors to Thailand fell 7% year-on-year in April, while European arrivals fell almost 16% and Middle Eastern arrivals sank 57%, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

In neighboring Cambodia, Sokha Sambo, owner of the popular Sambo Khmer & Thai Restaurant in Siem Reap, said the rising price of liquefied petroleum gas used for cooking has strained her budget, hindering her ability to dish out her signature green curries.

"I'm worried about gas and goods inflation. It makes the business less profitable and difficult to cover employees' salaries," said Sambo, who has 14 staff members.

In the first four months of 2026, the number of recorded international and domestic visitors to Siem Reap dropped by 37.5% compared to the same period last year, according to the province's tourism department.

"This has greatly affected all of us," Sambo said.

## Biofertilizer demand surges amid global supply crunch

## Iran war forces farmers to seek fertilizer alternatives from cow dung to compost

DAKAR, May 31, (AP): When Senegalese farmer Abou Sow first watched U.S. missiles strike Iran on social media, he had a sinking feeling it would soon affect agriculture in the West African nation. Since the war began on Feb. 28, fertilizer prices have risen by 40%.

Sow was better prepared than most. Eight years ago, he gave up chemical fertilizers for organic compost and other natural sources. He now rallies farmers in Senegal to buy manure from local herders and gives advice on how to make a rich compost, picking out wriggling worms - a healthy sign.

"We can't afford to wait for a cease-fire," Sow said. "It's risky to depend on chemical fertilizers." Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz has affected the supply of natural gas, essential for making chemical fertilizer, as well as global shipping.

The Gulf region produces 30% of globally traded chemical fertilizer, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute, and global prices have increased by 50%, according to the World Bank's fertilizer price index.

"The clock is ticking very hard," said Maximo Torero, chief economist at the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, as concerns grow about food security.

Experts say a shift away from chemical fertilizer could have wider benefits, as its production and usage create significant greenhouse gas emissions, the main driver of climate change.

Natural fertilizers, by contrast, can sequester carbon in the soil and create fewer problems like runoff that can pollute waterways.

"It's good for the planet because

you're weaning food production off fossil fuels," said Susan Chomba, member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, a think tank.

Senegal annually imports 125,000 tons of fertilizer. The minister of agriculture, Mabouba Diagne, has said the state sourced enough chemical fertilizer for the current season, but farmers said it is increasingly difficult to find.

Farmer Aliou Fall blamed U.S. President Donald Trump for the soaring fertilizer costs. "He brings war to the world and he doesn't even think about it. Now farmers are suffering," Fall said.

Annually, Sow applies six tons of compost instead. He said he is fortunate to be near a town where manure is plentiful because residents rear sheep for religious holidays.

In rural areas and remote fields, however, it is challenging to source and transport large quantities of manure, and Sow fears that some people will abandon their fields in this difficult time.

One alternative is the industry in biofertilizers, products containing bacteria and other microorganisms to help plants absorb nitrogen, a crucial nutrient for growth, from the air and soil. A growing number of companies in Africa make industrial quantities of compost with municipal waste, decomposing food waste into fertilizer.

Senegal's government announced in April it would subsidize and distribute 30,000 tons of organic fertilizer products to help farmers. Sow said that's not enough.

Governments around the world spend \$700 billion annually on agricultural subsidies according to the Or-

ganization of Economic Co-operation and Development, with a large share spent on providing chemical fertilizer. Chomba said that makes alternatives more expensive and less competitive.

"You're incentivizing the wrong sort of products," she said.

Brazil is a leading exporter of soybeans, coffee, sugarcane, beef and poultry. But the nation imports over 80% of its fertilizer, said Joana Colussi, assistant professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

The price of fertilizer has increased by 50% since the Iran war began, according to Luis Barbieri, founder of the Folio Institute, a Brazilian organization that connects farmers, scientists and researchers.

"Whenever we have a war, farmers' use of biofertilizers is turbocharged," Barbieri said.

Despite the widespread adoption of chemical fertilizers in Brazil in the 1970s, they are less effective in the tropical climate because high rainfall and high temperatures cause runoff.

The biofertilizer sector grew 15% in Brazil from 2023 to 2024, according to the state-run Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, Embrapa. And patent laws mean that farmers can make their own biofertilizers at much lower cost.

In Mexico, however, very little progress has been made due to government subsidies promoting chemical fertilizer use and a lack of funding for alternatives, said Gerardo Noriega, a research professor at the Autonomous University of Chapingo and one of the country's leading advocates for organic fertilizers.

But he suggested the current crisis

"may force (farmers) to adopt organic fertilizers more quickly than they had imagined."

In India's southern Indian state of Telangana, Manohara Chari has been making jivamrita, a potent mix of cow dung, urine, flour, soil and sugar to replace the chemical fertilizer he used to apply.

"We do not depend on companies," said Chari, one of 1.7 million farmers in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states who have shifted to natural farming, which embraces natural fertilizers, integrates livestock waste and plants a diversity of crops to improve soil health.

Farmers and experts say the Iran war and chemical fertilizer shortage make the approach more attractive. On May 10, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a "national mission" to adopt natural farming and cut fertilizer use by 50%.

India imports 60% of its fertilizer from the Gulf. The government has rushed to source supplies and subsidized it to keep prices low, at significant expense to the state.

"There's certainly been more interest this year in natural farming, especially after the Middle East conflict began," said G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, agricultural scientist at the Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Some farmers have dedicated part of their land to assess the approach.

The switch requires additional labor, and farmers face a transition period. Chari said the government could help instead of subsidizing chemical fertilizers: "If even a fraction of that support is given to natural farmers, more people will shift towards it."

## Firms cut hiring

## UK economy strained by rising costs amid conflict

LONDON, May 31, (Xinhua): British businesses and households are struggling to cope with rising prices amid the conflict in the Middle East. Companies are reducing investment, slowing hiring, while consumers are purchasing cheaper necessities and cutting discretionary spending, with further inflationary pressures expected ahead.

Recent data from the Office for National Statistics showed that job vacancies in the February-April period fell to their lowest level in about five years, while retail sales in April recorded the steepest monthly decline since May 2025. Analysts believe that UK businesses and households are likely to face further price increases without sufficient policy support.

**Businesses concerned about rising costs**

Research recently released by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) found that 80 percent of surveyed firms reported either an existing or anticipated impact from the conflict, including higher energy prices, shipping disruptions, and rising raw material costs.

"Shipping costs are higher, and routes and transit times are unpredictable. Flights to visit suppliers and customers in Asia are now more expensive as routing options have diminished," the BCC quoted respondents as saying. Firms also reported supplier price increases under force majeure clauses, with costs rising by between 3 percent and 30 percent within just a few weeks.

Rajneesh Narula, a professor at the University of Reading, said that, in addition to manufacturing and agriculture, Britain's services sector -- a key pillar of the economy -- is also being affected by logistical disruptions. Rising transportation costs have begun feeding directly into prices on the high street, he added.

Energy costs remain one of businesses' main concerns. According to the survey, 75 percent of firms expect their energy bills to increase over the next 12 months, with most anticipating rises of more than 20 percent. Meanwhile, 36 percent expect difficulties paying their energy bills during the same period.

William Bain, head of Trade Policy at the BCC, said that even if the current cease-fire signals a swift end to the conflict, the economic repercussions will be felt for many months.

John Bryson, a professor at the University of Birmingham, told Xinhua that the conflict is challenging the UK's economic sovereignty. Access to energy and its rising cost are dampening economic growth, he said, adding that the near future is likely to bring higher inflation and significant pressures related to resource constraints.

**Households feeling the squeeze**

Like businesses, British house-

Council.

An analysis by Moody's Analytics estimated effects from the war would likely reduce economic growth across the Asia-Pacific region by 0.1 to 0.4 percentage points in 2026.

"The conflict will weigh on growth mainly through higher production costs and consumer prices, along with weaker external demand from trade and tourism," said Albert Park, chief economist at the Asia Development Bank.

Higher airfares and weaker travel confidence can quickly spill over into household livelihoods and public revenues in economies where visitor arrivals are a major source of jobs, income and foreign exchange, according to a recent report by the United Nations Devel-

## Biofertilizer demand surges amid global supply crunch

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India imports 60% of its fertilizer from the Gulf. The government has rushed to source supplies and subsidized it to keep prices low, at significant expense to the state.

"There's certainly been more interest this year in natural farming, especially after the Middle East conflict began," said G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, agricultural scientist at the Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Some farmers have dedicated part of their land to assess the approach.

The switch requires additional labor, and farmers face a transition period. Chari said the government could help instead of subsidizing chemical fertilizers: "If even a fraction of that support is given to natural farmers, more people will shift towards it."

## Firms cut hiring

## UK economy strained by rising costs amid conflict

LONDON, May 31, (Xinhua): British businesses and households are struggling to cope with rising prices amid the conflict in the Middle East. Companies are reducing investment, slowing hiring, while consumers are purchasing cheaper necessities and cutting discretionary spending, with further inflationary pressures expected ahead.

Recent data from the Office for National Statistics showed that job vacancies in the February-April period fell to their lowest level in about five years, while retail sales in April recorded the steepest monthly decline since May 2025. Analysts believe that UK businesses and households are likely to face further price increases without sufficient policy support.

**Businesses concerned about rising costs**

Research recently released by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) found that 80 percent of surveyed firms reported either an existing or anticipated impact from the conflict, including higher energy prices, shipping disruptions, and rising raw material costs.

"Shipping costs are higher, and routes and transit times are unpredictable. Flights to visit suppliers and customers in Asia are now more expensive as routing options have diminished," the BCC quoted respondents as saying. Firms also reported supplier price increases under force majeure clauses, with costs rising by between 3 percent and 30 percent within just a few weeks.

Rajneesh Narula, a professor at the University of Reading, said that, in addition to manufacturing and agriculture, Britain's services sector -- a key pillar of the economy -- is also being affected by logistical disruptions. Rising transportation costs have begun feeding directly into prices on the high street, he added.

Energy costs remain one of businesses' main concerns. According to the survey, 75 percent of firms expect their energy bills to increase over the next 12 months, with most anticipating rises of more than 20 percent. Meanwhile, 36 percent expect difficulties paying their energy bills during the same period.

William Bain, head of Trade Policy at the BCC, said that even if the current cease-fire signals a swift end to the conflict, the economic repercussions will be felt for many months.

John Bryson, a professor at the University of Birmingham, told Xinhua that the conflict is challenging the UK's economic sovereignty. Access to energy and its rising cost are dampening economic growth, he said, adding that the near future is likely to bring higher inflation and significant pressures related to resource constraints.

**Households feeling the squeeze**

Like businesses, British house-

holds are facing the dual pressures of rising living costs and shrinking job opportunities. There are already signs that concerns about the conflict and its impact on household finances are prompting consumers to curb spending in many areas, according to Harvir Dhillon, an economist at the British Retail Consortium.

"Everything has gone up in price -- food, gas, and electricity. When I go shopping, I have to look for bargains, and I also buy less food because food prices have risen the most," Carol Noble, a resident of Liverpool, told Xinhua. "Life is much more of a struggle than it was a year ago, or even a few years ago."

Although inflation in April rose more slowly than expected, aided by the government's energy bill support package, many analysts view this as only a temporary respite before a new wave of conflict-driven inflation.

Steve Nolan, an economist at Liverpool John Moores University, said that if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed, inflation could rise to between 4 and 5 percent.

Patrick Minford, a professor at Cardiff Business School, told Xinhua that the rising cost of living resulting from the conflict is likely to prompt tighter monetary policy and could generate recessionary pressures that slow economic growth and affect households.

**More policy support needed**

In late May, the British government announced a package of measures to support households and businesses facing higher costs linked to the conflict. These measures include funding for strategically important producers facing elevated energy costs, the suspension of tariffs on certain food products sold in supermarkets, an extension of the bus fare cap, and a reduction in value-added tax on summer attractions.

John O'Connell, chief executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said taxpayers would see through the plan as little more than a temporary fix.

Whether energy-related support will be sufficient for energy-intensive businesses depends on how long the energy shock persists, said Liza Jabbar, a professor at the University of Birmingham. If the conflict continues and energy prices keep rising, the current support package may prove inadequate, she added.

Since there is no price cap on business energy costs, most UK firms remain vulnerable to volatility in global energy markets despite government relief measures for major energy users, Bain argued.

Kate Shoemith, director of Policy at the BCC, called for further measures to reduce business costs, noting that the cost of living and the cost of doing business are two sides of the same coin. Raising productivity should be the long-term solution to addressing both challenges, she said.

## Cautious retirement spending doing more harm than good?

When we were children, it was common to be afraid of the boogeyman. As we age, the boogeyman gets replaced with a new fear: running out of money in retirement.

This concern is understandable given so many Americans are now responsible for not only building their retirement savings but also deciding how much they should pay themselves annually in retirement. It's a problem many don't feel adequately prepared to solve, especially when failure means a funding shortfall at the end of life.

Recent research from Morningstar's Behavioral Insights Group finds half of retirees opt for highly simplified approaches for determining their retirement spending, such as calculating their current expenses, just spending dividends, or anchoring on required minimum distributions.

A set-it-and-forget-it approach may sound like a prudent solution to a common fear, but these simplified methods don't account for factors such as your total wealth, life goals, or economic events like inflation. The resulting number tends to be inflexible and overly conservative.

In fact, contrary to our fears, retirees who have at least the median amount of assets tend to underspend relative to how much they could spend safely. Indeed, across retirement, many retirees see their wealth increase instead of decrease. These findings hold true even when accounting for retirees who are planning to leave a bequest or who anticipate a long postretirement period.

This issue persists even among retirees who are

using more complex spending strategies like a safe withdrawal rate. "Even the retirees who spend in line with our 'base case,' which in 2025 meant taking 3.9% initially and inflation-adjusting withdrawals each year thereafter, will tend to have significant remaining balances after 30 years of withdrawals," says Christine Benz, Morningstar's director of personal finance and retirement planning.

What's at stake for these retirees, then, is not becoming destitute, but rather not fully enjoying the fruits of their labor.

If you're a retiree, you may be underspending relative to your capacity if you:

1. Rely on simple, hands-off strategies like withdrawing only dividends and interest, basing calculations on your current lifestyle, or pulling just your RMDs.
2. Find your retirement savings portfolio barely declines or even grows year after year.
3. Defer essential or discretionary expenses that are reasonably affordable.

If this describes you, you are not alone. It's natural to think, "The worst thing that could happen is running out of money, and I know I won't if I just use this simple spending rule." However, by creating a more personalized plan to determine your retirement income, you can avoid underspending and possibly generate a more comfortable and meaningful retirement lifestyle for yourself.

Our research suggests that to engage with more complex ways of determining their retirement income, many retirees may need the motivation of personal goals. When you're working, goals help

motivate you to save. In retirement, your goals can help motivate you to spend.

To define your retirement goals, we first recommend examining which values you want to live in line with throughout your retirement. A framework like the PERMA-V model can help you articulate what matters to you. From there, you can build out financial goals that reflect the life you want to live.

For example, you may find that you value spending time in nature because when you hike, you feel happy and engaged in the world around you. Then, you might develop a list of the top 10 national parks you want to see and set a goal of visiting them all in the next 10 years. This new goal provides you with an exciting opportunity to spend your retirement savings in a way that feeds your values.

Armed with your new motivation, you should then begin to think about your retirement spending strategies. Do your current, simple strategies help you reach your new goals? If not, you may consider looking at some other (slightly more complicated) guidelines for retirement spending like a safe withdrawal rate.

If engaging with more complicated strategies on your own is still intimidating, consulting a financial adviser can help you determine how to draw on your retirement savings while meeting your goals.

It can feel daunting to get more involved with determining your retirement spending, but don't let that fear dictate whether you live the retirement you've dreamed of. (AP)

## Appeal threatens broader tariff refund eligibility

## US tariff refunds begin after Supreme Court ruling

NEW YORK, May 31, (AP): Businesses big and small have started receiving tariff refunds after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that President Donald Trump lacked the constitutional authority to impose higher import taxes on goods from nearly every other country.

The process could grind to a halt, however, after the Trump administration said Friday that it intended to appeal a federal judge's order to allow all companies that paid the invalidated duties to seek refunds, not just the ones that filed lawsuits.

Until the Department of Justice informed the judge of its planned appeal, the refund system overseen by U.S. Customs and Border Protection had worked fairly smoothly. Refunds reached the bank accounts of the first successful applicants on May 12, about three weeks after importers and their customs brokers could start submitting claims, according to CBP.

Applications for refunds totaling \$85 billion - more than half of the \$166 billion the agency estimated the government owes to companies that paid the tariffs on imported goods - were accepted for processing as of May 22, CBP reported in a legal filing earlier in the week. It said it had so far directed the Treasury Department to issue \$20.6 billion in refunds.

The administration revealed its appeal preparations while objecting to a demand by Judge Richard K. Eaton for CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott to appear in the U.S. Court of International Trade on June 9. The judge said he wants to know how long it would take to repay all 330,000 importers that might be eligible for refunds and whether he should require the government to speed up the process.

Justice Department lawyers asked Eaton to allow Scott's deputies to appear in his place, arguing that as a high-ranking presidential appointee, the CBP chief could not be compelled to testify. They also argued that Eaton exceeded his authority when he determined that the Supreme Court's ruling entitled "all importers of record" to refunds.

"For that reason, defendants intend to appeal the court's universal injunction," the lawyers wrote, adding that CBP would continue to move "as quickly as it can to process refunds in a phased approach" for businesses that filed legal complaints asserting their rights to refunds.

Eaton responded that he needed to hear directly from Scott whether the government would return all of the money it collected between April 2025, when Trump put what he called "reciprocal" tariffs on most countries, the Supreme Court's decision in late February.

"It is undisputed that the remedy for this unlawful collection is for the United States government to refund the unlawfully collected duties," the judge wrote.

Customs and Border Protection is handling refund claims in phases, focusing first on payments that weren't finalized before the Supreme Court handed down its 6-3 decision. CBP officials said those later, estimated payments were simpler to process because they remained open in its system.

In Friday's filing, the Justice Department said the agency required technological upgrades to its refund portal and "importer-specific orders" in each



In this Nov. 9, 2018 file photo, shoppers look at televisions at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. (AP)

lawsuit that businesses filed before it could recalculate the final tax bills for older "liquidated" accounts.

More than 1,000 companies filed lawsuits in the trade court to recoup their tariff costs. It was not immediately clear how many importers that paid the tariffs did not sue and might not receive refunds if an appeal of Eaton's blanket order succeeds.

Ryan Majerus, a partner on the international trade team at law firm King & Spaulding, said he thinks "it's definitely a fraction of the total in terms of folks who paid" the defunct duties. An appeal would likely affect only imported merchandise that was in the U.S. for 314 days, a time when CPB issues its official determination of the duties owed, he said.

"This doesn't cover everybody, only those really old entries," Majerus said about a potential appeal.

But filing an appeal could slow the refund process even if the government "already lost the war" before the Supreme Court, according to Barry Appleton, a professor at New York Law School and managing partner of Appleton & Associates International Lawyers.

"If the government can freeze the refund machinery while it litigates, it buys months, and every month of delay is a month the Treasury keeps the money," Appleton said.

Some national retail chains said they planned to use their tariff refunds to lower customer prices on some items. Walmart Chief Financial

Officer John David Rainey told analysts last week that the company would implement price cuts even though the maximum refund it might be eligible for represented less than half of 1% of Walmart's annual U.S. sales.

Costco intends to return the tariff costs that it passed on to members, CEO Ron Vachris said. How much of its refund the big-box retail chain redistributes, when and in what form, depends on factors such as the size of the refund, when it arrives, and developments in a lawsuit seeking tariff compensation for Costco customers, Vachris told investors Thursday.

Consumers may see refunds first from shipping companies such as FedEx, UPS and DHL, which acted as customs brokers when they delivered products ordered from overseas.

The companies charged either the sellers that shipped the packages or the buyers who received them and submitted the collected tariffs to CBP. All three promised to transmit any refunds they get to the customers that paid the import taxes.

The Supreme Court invalidated only the country-by-country tariff rates Trump set by citing the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act. The president also has moved to introduce new tariffs since the court's Feb. 20 ruling.

Some smaller companies told The Associated Press that the tariff refunds they've received so far would go toward paying remaining or future tariffs or getting back on solid financial footing after more than a year of uncertainty and additional costs.

Jay Foreman, CEO of toy company Basic Fun, said he received about \$450,000, or 7% of his total claim, over two consecutive days. He took the repayment as a positive sign but that the pace since then seemed like a "total slow roll."

"It's time to release the funds back into the economy, especially given how much we and others need these funds to support our businesses," Foreman said.

Men's grooming brand Manscaped has received about 30% of the \$12 million in refunds it applied for, President Kevin Dato said. The San Diego company deferred investments and took on debt to pay tariffs on imports from Indonesia, China and elsewhere in Asia, he said.

"We need to shore up the balance sheet because there's still a whole second chapter here," Dato said.

Melkon Khosrovian, who owns Greenbar Distillery in Los Angeles, said he applied for a tariff refund of about \$90,000 for 17 different shipments of herbs, spices and packaging that are hard to find domestically. To date, he said he received \$18,000.

Khosrovian invested in automating his bottling system last year to reduce personnel costs while his import expenses grew. He recalled how the White House had argued the tariffs would create more U.S. manufacturing jobs.

The tariffs were "painful," he said. "Our choices were bad and worse: raise prices and lose customers, or keep prices the same and not make any money."

## Trump food price claims clash with inflation data

WASHINGTON, May 31, (AP): In a Truth Social post on Wednesday, the president proclaimed "TRUMP'S MAKING FOOD AFFORDABLE," and cited falling prices for a range of groceries, including avocados, fresh berries, and a variety of pantry staples. Yet just two weeks earlier the Labor Department had released inflation figures showing grocery prices up nearly 3% in April from a year earlier.

So where's the reality?

The graphic shared by President Donald Trump may be correct about the specific items he listed. It's hard to know because he used data that isn't publicly available and he didn't specify what time frame he used.

But specific grocery items go up and down all the time, and his post ignores the broader reality consumers are facing at the supermarket: Overall, food prices have risen since his inauguration, and at a faster pace than they typically did before the pandemic. Most economists expect them to continue to do so in the coming months as a spike in

diesel fuel prices lifts the cost of shipping groceries to stores around the country.

The April gain in grocery prices was the largest in 2 1/2 years. The 2.9% increase is only modestly above the 20-year average of 2.6%, though in the decade before the pandemic, grocery prices rose an average of just 1.1% a year.

And the increase comes after much larger, painful spikes that took place in 2021-22 under former President Joe Biden. Grocery costs soared nearly 28% from just before the pandemic in February 2020 until Trump took office in January 2025.

In his social media post, Trump focused on nine specific items without looking at overall grocery costs. He said that avocado prices have fallen 19%, cheese has dropped 5.6%, fresh berries and butter have dropped 13%, olive oil prices are down 16%, while chicken breasts are down 2.4% and eggs 90%.

Trump's post cited data from Circana, a private company, as published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Neither Circana nor USDA responded

by press time to requests from The Associated Press. The White House also did not respond to an email seeking comment on the post.

Still, many of Trump's figures are in the ballpark of those in the government's consumer price index, compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the highest-profile gauge of inflation. That data shows cheese prices falling 3.1% in April compared with a year ago. Egg prices have dropped 39% from a year earlier and 60% from the peak in March 2025, short of Trump's 90% claim.

Many of the items Trump cited have gotten cheaper for reasons that have little to do with broader economic trends. Egg prices have fallen because chicken flocks have recovered after being devastated by the avian flu, and in part because the Trump administration allowed nearly 1 billion eggs to be imported last year.

The price of olive oil has declined recently because its production has recovered after a two-year drought.

## Colombia, Ecuador clash over trade and elections

BOGOTA, May 31, (AP): Colombia's government on Saturday rejected a move by Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa to eliminate tariffs on Colombian imports because of a tariff commitment made to an opposition candidate, calling it "deliberate interference" in the ongoing electoral process.

Noboa said Friday after talks with Colombian presidential candidate Abelardo de la Esparilla that he was committed to jointly fight narco-terrorism and would eliminate a security tax on June 1.

Colombia's Foreign Ministry responded on Saturday by saying the repeal of tariffs imposed by Ecuador on bilateral trade stems from a resolution issued by the Andean Community of Nations and rejected its portrayal as "a goodwill gesture by the Ecuadorian leader."

The ministry also described Noboa's remarks as "deliberate interference in the electoral process" and as "intrusion by a foreign leader" that constitutes a "flagrant violation of the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs."

Colombians go to the polls on Sunday to elect the successor to President Gustavo Petro.

De la Esparilla, who represents the political movement Defenders of the Homeland, is among the

frontrunners in the polls.

Noboa did not clarify whether he would maintain his decision should the ruling party candidate, Iván Cepeda, win.

The trade war between Ecuador and Colombia began in January when the Ecuadorian president imposed a so-called security tax on Colombian imports, alleging a lack of control on that side of the border and complaining of a trade deficit of at least \$1 billion.

The tariff began at 30%, gradually increased to 50%, and then reached 100%. Just days before the recent announcement, Noboa had said it would be reduced to 75% starting June 1st.

The Petro administration, which has denied any alleged neglect of the shared border, responded with reciprocal measures: it imposed tariffs of up to 75% on Ecuadorian products and prohibited energy sales to Ecuador.

The ongoing tensions led to the summoning of the ambassadors from both countries.

The Andean Community of Nations found earlier this month that the reciprocal tariffs must be eliminated because they hinder free trade and gave both countries a deadline to do so. The group is currently reviewing appeals opposing the resolution.

## Prediction markets face scrutiny after insider case

## Google employee charged with using confidential search data to make \$1.2 million on Polymarket

NEW YORK, May 31, (AP): U.S. prosecutors slapped insider trading charges against a Google employee this week, alleging the software engineer used confidential company information to pocket more than \$1.2 million from prediction market platform Polymarket with bets on search trends.

In a complaint unsealed in New York, authorities identified the employee as 36-year-old Michele Spagnuolo - an Italian citizen residing in Switzerland who has worked for Google since 2014. Under the online name "AlphaRaccoon," they alleged, Spagnuolo used the company's 2025 "Year in Search" data before it was published to enter Polymarket wagers about the most trending Googled people of last year.

This week's charges "reinforce a decades-old message: corporate insiders cannot use confidential business information to turn a profit in our markets," Jay Clayton, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, said Wednesday. "Insider trading compromises the integrity of our markets, and the American people want this greed-driven conduct

investigated and prosecuted."

Spagnuolo allegedly made new Polymarket trades as Google's internal search data evolved, from October into December of last year. For example, per the complaint, Spagnuolo initially wagered that Kendrick Lamar - who headlined the 2025 Super Bowl halftime show - would top search trends for people last year. But after internal Google data showed that alt-pop singer D4vd was later leading the influx of searches, he placed new bets. D4vd, whose legal name is David Burke, was charged last month with murdering 14-year-old Celeste Rivas Hernandez.

Using the prediction market's "yes" or "no" wagers, Spagnuolo also made a series of Polymarket trades about other individuals who would or wouldn't rank in Google's 2025 search trends, the complaint said. And after the data was published on Dec. 4, the AlphaRaccoon account soon pocketed sizeable profits. An FBI investigation later traced its cryptocurrency payments.

An attorney for Spagnuolo was not immediately identified. Califor-

nia-based Google confirmed to The Associated Press it had placed its employee on leave.

"The employee accessed our marketing material using a tool available to all employees, but using such confidential information to place bets is a serious breach of our policies," a Google spokesperson said in a statement - adding the company was working with law enforcement and "will take the appropriate action."

Polymarket reiterated it too worked closely with authorities. A spokesperson also touted that the company "is the only prediction platform to date whose cooperation has led to insider trading charges in the United States" - and maintained blockchain trading, which Polymarket uses, is "transparent, traceable, and bad actors leave footprints."

Spagnuolo isn't first person to face insider trading charges spanning from Polymarket trades. Last month, the government also charged a special forces soldier who made over \$400,000 from Polymarket trades betting on the downfall of former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. The soldier allegedly used

classified information ahead of January's U.S. military operation, which he was a part of.

Such scandals have put the spotlight on a murky (and growing) world of speculative, 24/7 transactions now filling the internet. Prediction markets sell event contracts - so they're also categorized and regulated differently from traditional forms of gambling. That's raised concerns about consumer protections, and legal battles over government oversight.

President Donald Trump's administration has already thrown its support behind company operators - and sued several states over their regulation efforts. Meanwhile, the industry is scrambling to assure the public with new guardrails. Polymarket recently rewrote its rules to clearly state users cannot trade on contracts where they might possess confidential information, or could influence the outcome of an event.

Spagnuolo is being charged with violating the U.S. Commodity Exchange Act, wire fraud and money laundering. He could face years of prison time.

## Weak domestic demand weighs on China PMI

## China's factory activity slows in May, raising questions over its economy

BEIJING, May 31, (AP): China's factory activity was flat in May, according to an official survey released Sunday, raising questions about how much further the country's economy can shield itself from the fallout of the ongoing Iran war and pressure on demand.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers index moderated to 50 from 50.3 in April, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Measured on a scale between 0 and 100, a PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below 50 reflects contraction.

The new orders sub-index dropped to 49.9 from 50.6 in April, while the sub-index on production edged down to 51.2 from April's 51.5. The sub-index for raw material stockpiles fell to 48.6 from 49.3 in April.

China has been less affected by the global energy shock from the Iran war than many other countries, which face inflationary pressures as oil prices have surged due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil is shipped in peacetime.

Analysts say China's ample oil reserves and diversified sources of energy have helped the world's second-largest economy weather the war nearly unscathed.

"Though the energy crisis remains the dominant headwind for Asia, China is relatively more shielded given its robust energy security set-up," Frederic Neumann, Chief Asia Economist at HSBC bank, wrote in a research note last week.



A worker takes a rest at a factory making steel bike rims for export to U.S., in Hangzhou in east China's Zhejiang province, on Friday, April 11, 2025. (AP)

Meanwhile, exports remain key for China's broader economy, HSBC said. While China's exports to the United States have dropped year-on-year during most months in the past year, its global exports have been robust, particularly to Europe and Southeast Asia.

Hopes for a recovery in exports to the U.S. have risen following President Donald Trump's summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing in mid-May, and after the two countries agreed to set up separate boards of trade and investment.

Autos, technology and artificial intelligence-related exports have been helping to drive export growth, but some economists also point to concerns over the broader economy. Domestic demand remains sluggish in the wake of a years-long property sector slump that has clobbered consumer confidence and investment.

"Domestic demand is lagging, but high-end manufacturing and exports are holding the line," Robin Xing, Chief China Economist at Morgan Stanley, wrote in a research note last week.

Chinese leaders have set an annual economic growth target of 4.5% to 5% for this year. That's the lowest target since 1991, albeit only slightly lower than the "around 5%" target set in 2025.

Morgan Stanley said China will still likely meet its 2026 target, but oil prices and the easing of uncertainties around global oil supplies would be key factors determining where things might be heading.

## Eid brings Kuwait's stage back to life



A scene from the play 'My Heart's Princess Zein.'

### 17 theatrical works unveiled in a flourish of culture and innovation

The Kuwaiti theatrical arena witnessed a remarkable artistic resurgence during the Eid Al-Adha holiday through 17 meaningful productions.

This vibrant activity affirmed the leading cultural status of Kuwait in the Gulf region, proven by the sheer scale of the plays and the technical sophistication of the artistic elements involved.

Theater professionals are keen on offering content that seamlessly integrates entertainment with educational values and cultural heritage. The performances showcased modern innovations in set design, sound, lighting and visual effects.

The season encompasses a wide variety of styles and themes, including musicals, social dramas and plays for children. This period of activity is noteworthy as it follows a hiatus caused by recent regional developments.

The Ministry of Interior authorized the resumption of theatrical performances on April 25 after assessing the regional situation, ushering in a new chapter for the local theater.

The main feature of the Eid Al-Adha season is the contemporary reimagining of the classic literary tale, "Cinderella." This production utilized modern spectacle and visual artistry to convey messages about self-confidence, ambition and resilience.

Producer Mai Al-Saleh informed the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday that the production was designed to merge educational themes with visual delight. She said it uses modern style that resonates with children, while ensuring the content remains family-friendly and rooted in positive values.

One of the celebratory performances focused on Kuwaiti identity and folk heritage through diverse musical ensemble on various aspects of Kuwaiti history and its social and cultural transformations in a contemporary visual style that keeps pace with the nature of modern popular works. The performance was directed by Bader Al-Shuaibi, under the artistic supervision of Abdulrahman Al-Yahyouth.

Writer Mariam Naseer told KUNA that her work is presented in the form of a national operetta that showcases different stages of Kuwait's history -- from the pearl diving journey to the manifestations of development and modernity -- through artistic scenes that reflect the spirit of Kuwaiti society and its cultural identity.

An aquatic theatrical performance by Director Mohammad Al-Musallam blended theatrical performance with modern technologies underwater and on stage simultaneously based on the directorial vision to present a different visual experience featuring kinetic and technical spectacles.

Another production features Lebanese actress Maguy Bou Ghosn, along with prominent Ku-



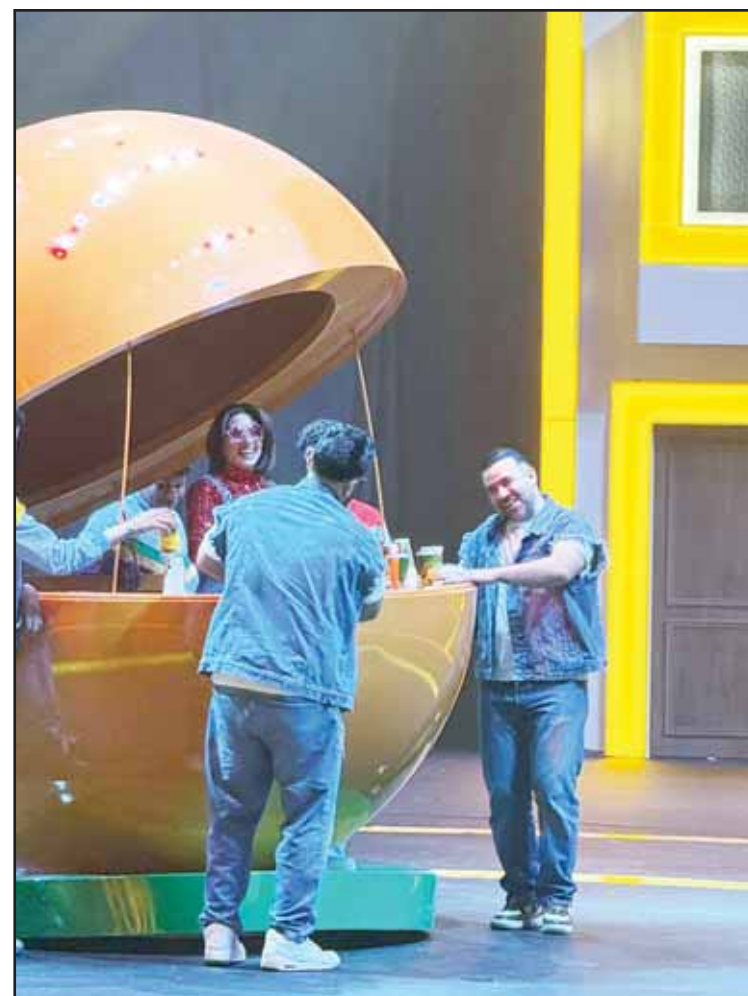
A scene from the play 'Kuwait Carnival.'

waiti and Gulf artists like Bashar Al-Shatti, Fouad Ali, Haya Abdul Salam and Abdullah Abdul Redha. Written by Ahmed Al-Awadhi and directed by Shamlan Al-Nassar, the play presents a socially entertaining format merging comedy and spectacle.

Bou Ghosn expressed her happiness over the chance to be part of a Kuwaiti theatrical production, praising the unique artistic atmosphere and the enthusiastic response of the audience. She un-

derscored the importance of theatrical works that convey meaningful messages while providing entertainment.

Another theatrical production draws its story from Greek mythology in an experiment by Writer and Director Najaf Jamal. It combined philosophy, imagination and modern theatrical style in a format suitable for both children and adults. It focused on the concept of true strength, linked to courage, honesty and helping oth-



A scene from the play 'Al-Khiran Park.'

ers. It utilized musical numbers, visual effects and elaborate sets to create a fantastical atmosphere.

Artist Tariq Al-Ali performed in a social comedy that relies on music and spectacle. It addresses a number of human issues and social relationships in an artistic style that merges comedy and musical rhythm, along with the use of visual and theatrical elements to create an entertaining experience.

Another theatrical work took a suspenseful, science-fiction ap-

proach. Directed by Abdullah Al-Musallam and written by Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Musallam, it unfolds within a dramatic framework exploring the impact of technology and artificial intelligence on human life.

This work is distinguished by its theatrical treatment, which utilizes visual effects and modern direction to offer a unique experience for young people and those interested in contemporary works. The play falls under the 'Gulf

comedy horror theater' category.

Artist Khalid Al-Mudhaffar is part of the social comedy directed by Abdulaziz Safar. This work depicts everyday behaviors and issues related to public taste in a lighthearted and satirical manner through situations that combine comedy with awareness messages in a family-friendly setting.

Al-Mudhaffar disclosed that his play is "a comedy that addresses the struggles of a couple awaiting their child and their desire for the child to have good morals and public taste." He affirmed his commitment to present a work that brings joy and laughter back to the Kuwaiti audience, while conveying significant social messages suitable for all family members.

Artist Abdulaziz Al-Nassar is part of the comedy play directed by Mohammad Al-Shatti. Presented within a social comedy framework, this work tackles bullying issues through awareness and comedic situations, focusing on the importance of accepting others and being content with what one has, free from comparisons and prejudices. It is a mix of comedy and drama aimed to deliver social messages for different age groups in order to promote the values of tolerance and coexistence, as well as the rejection of negative behaviors in society.

The social comedy of artist Mubarak Al-Mana, directed by Yousef Al-Baghli, relied on popular appeal and lightheartedness in tackling different issues. It discussed a number of everyday situations using the 'twist and turn' approach, with characters attempting to escape crises through unconventional and cunning methods.

In a purposeful and comedic way, this play put on the spotlight some aspects of corruption and abuse of power through events and situations that combine comedy and social commentary in an entertaining format, conveying direct and indirect messages to the audience.

A social comedy starring Osama Al-Muzayel, Mishari Al-Mujaybil and several other artists revolves around a character who deals with daily situations in a unique and unconventional way, leading to a series of paradoxes and humorous situations that reveal human and social aspects in a comedic style, while conveying humanitarian messages in a simplified manner suitable for all members of the family.

Plays by Director Mohammad Al-Hamli -- comedy, drama and children's works -- were featured as well, in addition to entertainment works written by Jassim Al-Jalalma for children that enjoy adventure, fiction and visual effects in an atmosphere suitable for the holiday season. One play brings back memories of timeless theatrical works with a renewed modern spirit inspired by the old and classical Kuwaiti theater with certain changes on the path of some characters. (KUNA)



A scene from the play 'My Heart's Princess Zein.'

KUNA photos

## Music

Young Kuwaiti musician adds Poland-Norway competition title

## Danah Rabeeya strikes gold on European piano stage

By Cezary Owerkowicz  
Special for Arab Times

Kuwaiti young talent Danah Ahmed Rabeeya has been a student at the Kuwait Music Academy (KMA) since 2019. Since then, she has continuously studied piano and music theory under the supervision of renowned pianist, Mr. Karol Masternak, Director of KMA.

Throughout her studies, Danah has participated in numerous concerts, consecutive editions of the Festival Treasure of Talents and music competitions. Her participation in these events enabled her to build an impressive record of achievements, including top awards, special prizes, honorary certificates and medals.

## From Gulf Stages to Europe

Among her many accomplishments, Danah is a two-time First Prize winner at the Sixth and Seventh Gulf International Chopin Competitions held in 2022 and 2025 respectively. She also received the Polish Ambassador's Award for the Best Kuwaiti Student and the Special Achievements Award presented by Prof. Cezary Owerkowicz.

In addition, she won First Prize at the Gulf Musician Idol Competition held in Bahrain in 2025, as well as at the Da Capo Academy International Piano Competition in Kuwait.

This year, Danah ventured onto the European stage and she emerged victorious. In May 2026, she became the First Prize laureate at the Caravan Culture – Star Bridge Poland & Norway Competition.

## Culture Brings People Together

Established in 2004, the Caravan Culture is a cultural exchange project that brings together diverse events and participants. This is the valuable initiative of the West Pomeranian maritime and tourism region in Poland. Its activities include artistic competitions and festivals for children, youths and adults, as well as concerts, workshops, outdoor activities, exhibitions, educational programs and many other cultural events. Programs are organized throughout the year, also during holidays.

## Kuwait Joins the International Ensemble

Regional and national authorities fully support the project. The 2026 edition is being organized in cooperation with Norway. In addition to domestic participants, the program already attracted up to 8,500 participants from abroad. It welcomes guests from dozens of countries like France, Indonesia, Germany, Estonia, Ukraine, Malaysia, Italy, Latvia,



Young Kuwaiti pianist Danah Rabeeya poses with her mentor, Karol Masternak, Director of the Kuwait Music Academy, after securing another international piano competition victory.

Lithuania, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, the Netherlands, Malta, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and the Republic of South Africa. Kuwait joined the list this year, thanks to the success of Danah.

Due to current circumstances, KMA will not be organizing the traditional Festival Treasure of Talents this year, but Danah and a

number of other young musical talents will be available for audiences on Friday, June 5, at the KMA headquarters in Salwa. Danah will perform with the KMA Orchestra at 7:00 pm, while the all-day performances of young Kuwaiti talents will begin at 11:00 am.

The public is warmly invited to the event. Music always brings people together.

## Post Scriptum

For music lovers in Kuwait, KMA has another special presentation scheduled for Friday, June 12, also at 7:00 pm. The academy will host a performance featuring members of the KMA Orchestra, including renowned soloists Dr. Shereene Shoukry, Viktor Shramko and Dmitri Krasnikov.



International recognition for young Kuwaiti pianist Danah Ahmed Rabeeya after winning first prize at the Caravan Culture – Star Bridge Poland &amp; Norway Competition 2026.



International recognition for KMA Director Karol Masternak's dedication to nurturing young musical talent.

A new shape on an iconic skyline

## The Obama presidential museum aims to reshape Chicago architecture

CHICAGO, May 31, (AP) — The granite monolith soars above a leafy stretch of Chicago's South Side, a nearly windowless exterior more suited to a sci-fi film set than the state-of-the-art presidential museum held within.

Crews are putting the finishing touches on the Obama Presidential Center ahead of the official public opening on Juneteenth, more than a decade after the site was chosen. But the design of the roughly \$850 million campus — particularly the conspicuous 225-foot high rise at its north end — still divides the city celebrated as the birthplace of the modern skyscraper.

For some, it's a jarring choice in Barack Obama's hometown after a grueling battle over its location in a lakefront park where classical style buildings are more common. To others, it's a bold addition that will shape Chicago's iconic skyline for decades to come.

Residents have compared it to a grain elevator, ship from "Star Wars" and a mausoleum.

"It doesn't fit in at all," said Brenda Nelms, who has lived in the area since the 1970s and leads a group that advocates for nearby Jackson Park, which spans more than 500 acres.

Leaders of the Obama Foundation, which has raised private funds, say they've heard it all. They enlisted "Star Wars" actor Mark Hamill for cheeky promotional videos on May the 4th, a day celebrated by fans of the movie franchise.

"Part of the joy of the center is everyone is going to have their unique experience," said Valerie Jarrett, foundation CEO and a former Obama advisor. "The design of the building was intended to be inviting and opening to people whether they live across the street or around the world."

The bar for architectural design is high in Chicago, from Louis Sullivan's modern skyscrapers after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 to Helmut Jahn's post-modern office buildings.

Discourse around design is so fierce in the nation's third-largest city that Chicago Sun-Times architecture critic Lee Bey calls it "a spectator sport." His initial impression of the Obama Presidential Center was that it looked more suited to a cemetery.

The striking design has few windows, all selectively placed. Foundation officials say that decision also helps protect the artifacts inside from sunlight, including an Oval Office replica.

Bey said the museum design makes more sense in context with the other low-lying buildings on the campus, which includes a basketball court, children's playground, public library branch and works by prominent artists.

Mixed public response has greeted other renown Chicago buildings,



The Obama Presidential Center in Chicago, Thursday, May 28, 2026. (AP)

he said. The former John Hancock Center, a black 100-story building marked by giant X's, was compared to an oil rig soon after it was built in the 1960s. Renamed 875 North Michigan Avenue in recent years for its address, the building houses stores, condos and offices.

"As we begin to experience buildings, we begin to imprint our own impressions," Bey said. "The John Hancock becomes less of an oil derrick and more of the building that

has your doctor's office."

Edward Keegan, a Chicago Tribune architecture columnist, has called the presidential museum "an un-Chicago building" because of the few windows and unusual shape. Still, it offers a unique perspective of the city.

Atop the building is a glass-enclosed "Sky Room," with panoramic views of Chicago, including north-facing perspectives of downtown, which are uncommon from that height.

"It doesn't feel like any other

place in Chicago," he said. "It does feel unique and unexpected."

The road to the museum was bumpy, even though support for Obama has remained vigorous in the Democratic stronghold.

Lawsuits to stop construction started after its location was announced in 2015. Concerns about displacement of low-income and Black residents living in pockets near the museum grew. Community groups lobbied for housing protections, but area residents say they don't go far



Statues of former President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama at the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago, May 28, 2026. (AP)



Visitors tour a replica of former President Barack Obama's oval office at the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago, May 28, 2026. (AP)

enough as prices for homes near the museum have soared.

Construction of the museum involved tearing up nearly 20 acres of park land and scrapping a section of major thoroughfare, which residents say was critical to connect residents from other parts of the city and suburbs with downtown.

On a recent walk through a bird sanctuary near the center, activist Robin Kaufman, 82, said she couldn't fully enjoy the wildflowers by the secluded ponds as she once did. She watched as ducks paddled through a lagoon but couldn't ignore the center's tower poking out above the tree line.

"Everywhere I go, you can see it, so you're reminded of what's going on and that's distressing," she said. "I'm very distrustful of anything they say."

She and others have anxiety about what else might come to the area because of Obama's presidential center.

"It's a Trojan horse," said Shannon Bennett with the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization. "It's an extreme version of a scheme to transform these communities for another population."

Several design choices were made by the former president with New York-based architects, Tod Williams

and Billie Tsien. Obama chose a stone design and wanted a high tower for city views not far from where he raised his family and taught law at the University of Chicago.

The tower's design is meant to depict four hands coming together in solidarity. Wrapped around one side are 5-foot concrete capital letters, an excerpt of Obama's 2015 speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery march. It begins, "You are America."

The Obama Foundation said they have widened some roads, added a new field to the area that local schools use and the campus has a new public library branch, basketball gym for community use, a playground and gardens that have been landscaped to blend in with the park around it.

"The benefit of having this extraordinary facility far outweighs any costs," Jarrett said. "It's a symbol to the community of how important they are to us."

Adam Rubin at the Chicago Architecture Center called it a successful project so far, but added that questions linger about whether the tradeoff of park land for the center was worth it.

"It really does have a sense of place," he said of the museum. "Time will tell how people utilize it."

'As temperature warms, more sea ice melts, the worse this makes it'

## Think it's hot now? Next five years will smash records, says United Nations

WASHINGTON, May 31, (AP): In the next five years, the Earth is overwhelmingly likely to surge again and again past the international climate threshold set as safe and shatter its hottest-year record along the way, according to new United Nations climate projections.

The World Meteorological Organization also forecasts an overheating Arctic that warms nearly 3 degrees Fahrenheit (1.66 degrees Celsius) between now and 2030 and a dangerous drought with potential wildfires for the Amazon, a crucial part of Earth's natural defenses to lessen human-caused climate change. A hotter globe from the burning of coal, oil and gas means more extreme weather including floods, droughts and heat waves, scientists said.

The projections by the UN climate agency and the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office said there's a 75% chance that the average global temperature between 2026 and 2030 will be more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) higher compared to pre-industrial times. That threshold is the agreed-upon limit of warming - averaged over 20 years - set in 2015 by the Paris climate agreement.

A UN science report a few years later detailed how exceeding that 1.5



Left: Residents transport drinking water from Humaita to the Paraizinho community, along the dry Madeira River, a tributary of the Amazon River, during the dry season, Amazonas state, Brazil on Sept 8, 2024. Right: Large icebergs float away as the sun rises near Kulusuk, Greenland, on Aug 16, 2019. (AP)

mark means more likely death, danger and species loss. Even though it's only a few tenths of a degree, some of the planet's ecosystems, such as coral and glaciers, can't handle the strain.

There's a 91% chance that at least one of the next five years will shoot past the 1.5 degree threshold and an 86% chance that one of those years will smash the record for Earth's hottest year set in 2024, the WMO

report said. The WMO projects each year between now and 2030 to be between 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 degrees Fahrenheit) and 1.9 degrees Celsius (3.4 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s.

"It's important to note that (1.5) is not kind of a cliff edge that we're going to fall off," said report co-author Melissa Seabrook, a climate scientist at the U.K. Meteorological Office. "Every kind of 0.1 of a



degree has more and more severe impact."

She pointed to unprecedented May heat in Europe this week.

An entire year or more above the 1.5 degree mark "means a whole range of extreme weather events, probably many so hot/wet/dry that it exceeds anything we've experienced in the past and thus crucially, anything our city planning, agriculture etc. has anticipated," Imperial

College of London climate scientist Friederike Otto, who wasn't part of the report, said in an email. "This will mean many people will lose their lives, we are in for a lot of food price shocks, and more intense wildfires."

Nearly all the shorter-term forecasts call for a strong El Nino - a natural warming of parts of the central Pacific that alters weather worldwide and spikes global temperatures - to

form soon. The WMO report said it could stretch all the way to 2028. Because of that, Seabrook said 2027 will likely break the 2024 heat record.

And if the next five years do average more than 1.5 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times, that means Earth will have warmed a quarter of a degree Celsius (0.45 degrees Fahrenheit) in a decade, which is faster than the previous rates of warming. Those were closer to two-tenths of a degree Celsius per decade.

Climate scientists are debating whether global warming is accelerating, "which obviously is quite scary," and if these projections come true it would give additional evidence to those who see a speeded up rate of change, Seabrook said.

The projections, based on the averaging of about 200 runs of computer simulations using 13 different climate models from various countries, show warming in the Arctic rising 3.5 times faster than the rest of the globe, because there's less ice and snow that had been reflecting solar radiation to space, Seabrook said. It becomes a vicious cycle.

"As the temperature warms, more sea ice melts, the worse this makes it," Seabrook said.

## Most new moms get baby blues, but it could be something more serious: postpartum depression

WASHINGTON, May 31, (AP): Moments after Jenna Carberg gave birth to her daughter, doctors put the baby on her chest.

"I felt a disconnect right away," she recalled.

At home, the Orlando, Florida, mom was exhausted and anxious and cried every day. She was eventually diagnosed with postpartum depression - a potentially dangerous condition that can fill a typically joyous time with deep despair.

The mood disorder has been on the rise. A 2024 study in the journal JAMA Network Open found that US rates more than doubled in just over a decade, climbing from 9.4% in 2010 to 19% in 2021, partly due to improved screening and diagnosis.

It can be hard to differentiate the disorder from the much milder and more common "baby blues" brought on by plummeting hormone levels. But recognizing and treating postpartum depression is crucial, said OB-GYN Dr. Tiffany Moore Simas at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School.

Moms who go untreated may have problems bonding with and caring for their babies. And they're at increased risk of suicide.

"A healthy you will ultimately be important for a healthy baby," Moore Simas said. Baby blues affects about 8 in 10 new moms, striking shortly after delivery.

"Moms will feel kind of more emotional than normal," said Dr. Jennifer Payne, an expert in reproductive psychiatry at the University of Virginia.

But the crying jags and feelings of sadness aren't severe enough to interfere with normal life. Moms should still be able to care for themselves and their babies.

Screening tools can help discern if the problem is more serious. A commonly used 10-item questionnaire, often given at a postpartum checkup, asks how often a mom has experienced feelings such as sadness, panic or worry. A high score points toward the need for further evaluation.

Experts say there's no single cause of postpartum depression. Genetics, physical

changes and emotional issues may contribute to it.

"We're pretty sure that having a case of the baby blues doesn't increase your risk of postpartum depression," Payne said. "But it does seem that both conditions can develop in the same person."

If sadness lingers for more than two weeks, that's one sign.

Others include intense feelings of despair, anxiety, loss of interest, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, low energy and decreased concentration and appetite. Moms may worry constantly about their babies, be unable to sleep, or stop showering for days.

They "feel negatively and badly about themselves. They'll feel that they're a bad mother. They might not feel attached to the baby very much," Payne said.

They may even have thoughts of harming themselves.

Carberg, who gave birth to her daughter in 2016, had such thoughts a couple of times - once while driving with her daughter. She went to a psychiatric facility for a few days and did better for a while.

But she later had a severe breakdown. She sent text messages to her husband, Chris, saying she was sorry, then turned her phone off. Chris desperately tried to reach her, worried she'd hurt herself.

"She luckily went to the hospital ER," he said.

Ultimately, finding the right medication was the key to Jenna Carberg's recovery. "I felt like myself again," she said after taking the stimulant Vyvanse.

Other medications include antidepressants such as Zoloft or Prozac, or Zurzuvac, the first pill approved for postpartum depression. Talk therapy is another common treatment, and experts also stress the importance of getting enough sleep and support from family and friends.

To help others, the Carbergs started an online information resource - postpartumdepression.org - to provide support and connect patients with professional help.



This image provided by Chris Carberg shows Jenna Carberg holding Elsie on April 30, 2017, in Winter Park, Fla. (AP)

## Dead whale brought to shore in Denmark

ANHOLT, Denmark, May 31, (AP): The carcass of a humpback whale, whose life and death captivated Germans for months as the mammal became repeatedly stranded in the Baltic Sea, was dragged Saturday onto a Danish beach after two weeks of the body languishing in shallow waters.

The whale had gained the nicknames "Timmy" and "Hope" as German media outlets sent push alerts and updated live blogs with the status of its health since it was first spotted off the German coast on March 3.

The whale was found dead on May 14, stranded just off the small island of Anholt in the Kattegat, the broad strait between Denmark and Sweden that connects the Baltic Sea to the North Sea.

The whale's death ended months of a spectacular and contentious rescue effort that culminated May 2, when the mammal was transported toward the North Sea in a barge in a final effort to guide it back to its natural habitat in the Atlantic Ocean.



The humpback whale lays in a washed-out tub off the island of Poel, Germany on April 22. (AP)

## Rice feeds billions of people - but its role in fueling climate change growing

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

By Hanqin Tian, Boston College; Jingting Zhang, Boston College; Pep Canadell, CSIRO, and Shufen (Susan) Pan, Boston College

Rice feeds more than half the world. From terraced paddies in Southeast Asia to irrigated fields in China and India, it underpins daily meals for billions of people.

But the same flooded soils that help rice thrive also create ideal conditions for microbes that release climate-warming gases.

In a new study, our team of environmental and agriculture scientists found that greenhouse gas emissions from rice paddies have nearly doubled globally since the 1960s, averaging about 1.1 billion tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions per year in the 2010s. That's roughly equal to the annual emissions of 239 million cars.

This makes rice-growing the largest emissions source in agriculture outside of livestock, and rice demand is expected to keep rising.

Farmers have ways to reduce their rice crops' emissions without lower-

ing their yields. If every grower used the best currently available "climate-smart" options, we found that global rice emissions could be reduced by about 10% by midcentury. However, greater reductions are needed to slow climate change, which would require developing additional, more effective strategies.

Rice emissions have risen for two reasons: the expansion of rice cultivation area and the intensification of management practices.

Just over half of the global increase is from the expansion of rice-growing areas. In Africa, for example, the rice-growing area has roughly doubled since the 1960s, helping drive a two-fold rise in methane emissions in the region.

At the same time, rice farmers are using more fertilizers and organic amendments, such as straw and manure, planting more productive rice varieties and growing the plants closer together. The result is more rice but also more greenhouse gas emissions.

We found that one practice in particular - leaving rice stalks in the field after harvest and then plowing them into the soil to improve soil fertility - was responsible for about 18% of rice's increase in overall net emissions since the 1960s. The reason: It increases the organic matter in the soil, which microbes then decompose, creating more methane emissions.

Rising global temperatures further

accelerate microbial activity in the soils, meaning even more emissions.

Fertilizer is another major contributor to emissions. Use of synthetic nitrogen increased by about 76% after 2000, boosting nitrous oxide - another powerful greenhouse gas. It contributed about 9% of the increase in total global net emissions from human activities.

Irrigation practices also affect emissions. In the past, irrigated rice paddies were kept flooded throughout the growing season, resulting in constant greenhouse gas emissions produced by microbes that thrive in the wet environment. Over the past two decades, however, more farmers have used intermittent flooding - draining their fields periodically.

This change has lowered methane emissions compared with keeping the paddies continuously flooded. However, we found a slight increase in nitrogen oxide emissions as soils cycled between wet and dry, which induces microbes to transform nitrogen in organic matter into nitrogen oxide gases, particularly nitrous oxide.

Putting a full climate price tag on rice production is harder than measuring one greenhouse gas at a time.

Rice paddies emit methane and nitrous oxide from wet or flooded soils. They also remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as rice grows, and they lose carbon from their soils between crop seasons. (AP)

## WHO chief hails 5 Ebola recoveries as new treatment center opens in e.Congo

BUNIA, Congo, May 31, (AP): Five patients have recovered from a rare type of Ebola, the head of the World Health Organization said Sunday during a visit to eastern Congo's Bunia, a city at the heart of an outbreak.

"Four people will be discharged today and there was one that was discharged the day before yesterday," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during the opening of a new Ebola treatment center in Bunia, the provincial capital of Ituri.

"Of course, we're still working on vaccines and treatments but that doesn't mean that people cannot recover from Ebola," he added.

The WHO said Friday a patient had recovered from the Bundibugyo virus, the current kind of Ebola, which has no approved treatment or vaccine. It was the first documented recovery of a confirmed Bundibugyo patient during the current outbreak.

The health organization said latest official figures showed 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths. Neighboring Uganda has confirmed nine cases and one death, the Ugandan Health Ministry said Friday.

The virus continues to spread faster than the response despite better-organized health facilities and new aid arrivals. Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, said Saturday, calling for the immediate expansion of testing, faster deployment of aid workers and sustained access for medical supplies.

The dangers faced by health workers have been heightened by anger among residents over the stringent



Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, visits health workers at the Evangelical Medical Centre (CEM) in Bunia, Congo on May 31. (AP)

medical protocols for handling the victims' bodies, which clash with local burial rites. Residents have launched at least three attacks against health centers.

Tedros stressed the importance of involving the community in the outbreak response during the opening of the new treatment center on Sunday.

"If you come to health facilities when you have symptoms, you can get the support and recover, so the key is to come forward as early as possible and to get the necessary support," the WHO chief said.

"We can stop this Ebola and anyone who has it can also recover. But the rule ... is this thing is everybody's business and every citizen should be involved," he added.

Attacks in Ituri by the Allied Dem-

ocratic Forces, a rebel group allied with the Islamic State group, and a coalition of ethnic militias have also hindered the response.

The illness also has been reported in the Congolese provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, south of Ituri, where the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group controls many key cities, including Goma and Bukavu. The rebels have reported two cases.

"The final message we would like to share with the Ituri community is that there is hope," Pierre Akilimali, Incident Manager at Congo's National Institute of Public Health, said during the inauguration on Sunday.

"With the symptomatic treatment that we are currently providing, we are seeing patients recover," Akilimali added.

## Volunteers bring games, laughter to Gaza cancer ward for children

GAZA, May 31, (Xinhua): Laughter briefly replaced the sound of medical equipment Saturday at Al-Rantisi Children's Hospital in Gaza City as volunteers organized games and activities for children with cancer, offering a short respite from illness and war.

The event was organized by psychological support and entertainment teams from the Egyptian Committee for Relief of the People of the Gaza Strip. Children participated in games, face painting and other activities aimed at providing emotional support to patients and their families.

"Children in Gaza are living through exceptional circumstances because of the war, making every smile and moment of happiness very important," said Suleiman Aboud, a volunteer clown.

Aboud said many children have experienced hardship and fear and need opportunities to play and express themselves, adding that support should include psychological and social care in addition to medical treatment.



A Palestinian volunteer dressed as a clown plays with a child with cancer at Al-Rantisi Children's Hospital in Gaza City, on May 30. (Xinhua)

India finishes second as Esha Singh breaks records

# China tops medal table at ISSF World Cup in Munich

BERLIN, May 31, (Xinhua): China finished on top of the medal table at the ISSF World Cup Rifle-Pistol Munich 2026 after sweeping the two mixed team titles on Saturday, while the competition also featured two world-record performances.

China led the medal tally with four gold and three bronze medals, making it the only team to win seven medals in Munich. India finished second with 2-2-0, while Norway

ranked third with 2-1-0.

China closed the competition in commanding fashion on Saturday. In the 10m air rifle mixed team final, Wang Zifei and Olympic champion Sheng Lihao combined for 505.5 points to take gold, two points ahead of Norway's Jeanette Hegg Duestad and Jon-Hermann Hegg. The other Chinese team of Han JiayuMa Sihang bagged a bronze.

The Chinese team then completed the sweep in the 10m air pistol mixed

team final, where Yao Qianxun and Hu Kai edged India's Manu Bhaker and Samrat Rana by just 0.3 points. Yao and Hu finished with 483.9 points, while India took silver with 483.6 points.

China's strong campaign had begun earlier in the week with Zhang Changhong's victory in the men's 10m air rifle. Zhang won a dramatic final with 253.7 points after both he and South Korea's Shin Min-ki fired perfect 10.9s in the last series.

Su Lianbofan then produced one of the standout performances of the event, setting a world record of 35 hits to win the men's 25m rapid fire pistol final. France's Clement Bessaguet took silver with 34 hits, while Germany's Florian Peter earned bronze in front of the home crowd.

"I am very excited now," Su said after the final. "I failed to reach the final at the previous World Cup in April, but over the past month, I

pushed myself hard in training. In the end, I did not let my coach down and won the gold medal."

The victory marked not only Su's first World Cup title, but also another milestone for China in an event where its shooters have shown growing strength since the Paris Olympic cycle.

India also enjoyed a memorable World Cup. Esha Singh, 21, broke both the senior and junior world records in the women's 25m pistol fi-

nal, winning gold with 43 hits. She later added a silver in the women's 10m air pistol, where compatriot Suruchi Inder Singh led an Indian one-two finish with 242.1 points.

Host nation Germany also left with important podium finishes, including Doreen Vennekamp's silver in the women's 25m pistol, Anna Janssen's bronze in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions and Florian Peter's bronze in the men's rapid fire pistol.



Defender Tim Ream of the United States men's national soccer team is presented during the announcement of the team roster, in New York City, ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. (AP)

'More than a dream come true'

## Ream to lead US at World Cup

FAYETTEVILLE, Ga., May 31, (AP): Tim Ream was surprised, his voice filled with emotion.

On the verge of becoming the oldest U.S. player to appear in a World Cup, the 38-year-old defender was picked by coach Mauricio Pochettino to captain the Americans next month.

"Wow," Ream said during a news conference Saturday, seated alongside Pochettino. "This is more than a dream come true. I've done everything possible to be a part of this group, to help this group along. I'm just really, really grateful to be sitting here, to have this honor."

Ream was not aware he was going to be appointed captain until Pochettino made the announcement during a news conference on an indoor field at the new U.S. National Soccer Training Center.

"It's the highest honor for me in this group," he said, his voice echoing in the gym-like room. "I'm not going to take that for granted."

A St. Louis native who plays for Charlotte in Major League Soccer, Ream will be 38 years, 250 days on the day the U.S. plays its opener against Paraguay on June 12, older than defender Fernando Clavijo when the U.S. was knocked out by Brazil in 1994. Clavijo was 37 years, 162 days or 38 years, 162 days - his birthdate was listed at Jan. 23, 1957, when he played and Jan. 23, 1956, at the time of his death in 2019.

Ream started all four games for the U.S. at the 2022 World Cup, when Tyler Adams at 23 was the youngest captain among the 32 nations and the youngest for the U.S. since 1950.

Adams said Thursday that he

didn't care whether he would return as captain.

"It's a privilege and honor, anyone that gets to wear the armband," he said. "What I represent and how I lead, I think anybody that plays with me knows that I'm a leader. That's just how I've been my entire career whether I'm wearing the armband or not."

Ream has 80 international appearances and has captained the U.S. in 16 of 23 games since Pochettino took over in October 2024.

"A great captain, not only on the field, maybe more important off the field," Pochettino said. "He has the experience, he has a capacity to be the leader that we want, the positive leader."

Ream played college soccer for Saint Louis University, then joined the New York Red Bulls in 2010. He moved to England with Bolton in 2012, then signed with Fulham in 2015 and spent 10 seasons at Craven Cottage. He returned to MLS with Charlotte in 2024.

Previous U.S. World Cup captains include 24-year-old Mike Windischmann in 1990, 25-year-old Tony Meola in 1994, 37-year-old Thomas Dooley in 1998, 28-year-old Claudio Reyna in 2002, Reyna again in 2006, 31-year-old Carlos Bocanegra in 2010 and 31-year-old Clint Dempsey in 2014.

"So lucky to have a player like him with his personality and his character involved and helping the young players and the players also that have lesser experience," Pochettino said. "Playing or not playing, he is the captain. It's not now he's the captain, he's going to be sure in the starting 11."

Exit with sadness

## Moana Pasifika bows out in style with Brumbies upset

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, May 31, (AP): Moana Pasifika's four-year tenure in Super Rugby ended not with a whimper but a bang Saturday when they snapped a 12-match losing streak by beating the playoff-bound Brumbies in their last match in the tournament.

Playing with 14 men for the last 20 minutes after center Faletoi Peni received a second yellow card which became a red card, Moana Pasifika hung on to beat the Brumbies 21-19 for their second win of the season.

The impulse to celebrate was overwhelmed by the pathos of the moment. After the final whistle the Moana Pasifika players and staff formed a circle and sang a poignant hymn which evoked both their pride and sadness that their journey together has ended.

The Moana Pasifika organization has been placed in liquidation and, though efforts are still being made to save the team which offers players of Pasifika heritage a pathway to professional rugby, the future seems forlorn.

New Zealand Rugby will ensure the players and staff are paid through July and the New Zealand government is to provide some financial assistance. But that is not likely to be enough to allow the team to continue and Super Rugby will be a 10-team competition next year.

A group of former All Blacks is still hopeful of taking over the team but with a liquidator in place, that seems increasingly unlikely.

Among many farewells, head coach Tana Umaga is leaving to become an assistant to new All Blacks coach Dave Rennie. Many of the players will join the Pacific diaspora, playing for clubs overseas.

But Umaga says the spirit that motivated the creation of Moana Pasifika

won't die with the team.

The legacy is what we've left behind," he said. "You've seen the support of our Pacific people. We have a good vibe and I think that's encouraging."

"We'll always have our supporters that support us through our family and our culture. Everything that we did through our club and what we tried to portray was we were unapologetically Pacific and some people really resonated with that and enjoyed that. And that's just us being us."

The last pieces of the playoff picture clicked into place over the last weekend of the regular season.

The Wellington-based Hurricanes retained first place despite an awful 47-14 loss to the Crusaders who jumped ahead of the Auckland-based Blues when the Blues lost 59-34 to the Chiefs.

That means the Hurricanes in Wellington, the Chiefs in Hamilton and the Crusaders in Christchurch will host matches in the first round of the playoffs next weekend.



In this file photo, Christian Lealiifano of Moana Pasifika is tackled by Billy Pollard of the Brumbies during the Super Rugby Pacific Round 5 match between the ACT Brumbies and Moana Pasifika in Canberra. (AP)

# Minhas' debut five-for leads Pakistan's win over Australia

Pakistan join India, Australia in 1,000-ODI club

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, May 31, (AP): Arafat Minhas took five wickets on debut and hit the winning runs for Pakistan to beat an under-strength Australia by five wickets in a one-day international on Saturday.

The 21-year-old left-arm spinner Minhas took 5-32 and became the first Pakistan bowler to pick up five wickets in an ODI debut.

Australia was dismissed for 200 in 44.1 overs on a dry pitch tailor-made for spinners.

Pakistan reached 202-5 in 42.3 overs to lead the three-match series 1-0.

Babar Azam scored 69 off 94 balls and wicketkeeper-batter Ghazi Ghori 65 for his maiden ODI fifty. Their 127-run stand helped Pakistan cruise to the target.

Minhas then sealed the game with a straight six against Marnus Labuschagne in an unbeaten 18 off 17 balls.

"There was indeed pressure," Minhas said, "but I like to enjoy that pressure environment and my focus was on enjoying this opportunity."

Babar was recalled after missing the Bangladesh series in March. He was dropped by Matthew Kuhnemann just after he completed his 38th ODI half-century, including four boundaries and a six.

Nathan Ellis clean-bowled Babar and trapped Ghori leg before but by then Pakistan was on the brink of victory.

Pakistan became the third nation after India (1,075) and Australia (1,020) to play 1,000 ODIs. Lahore hosts the remaining two games on Tuesday and Thursday.

Australia was without first-



Pakistan's Babar Azam bats during the first one day international cricket match between Pakistan and Australia, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (AP)

choice bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc due to the Indian Premier League and workload management, and the bowling resources were further depleted when Adam Zampa was ruled out of Saturday's game due to neck spasms.

Spinners Kuhnemann (1-29) and Tanveer Sangha (1-31) bowled steadily for 20 overs but Babar and Ghori didn't attempt any extravagant shots against them.

Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi read the sweltering conditions perfectly and after he won the toss Minhas cleaned out the Australia top order with support from Abrar Ahmed (2-44) and Salman Ali Agha (1-21).

"We knew there would be a lot of assistance for the spinners and the spinners delivered," Afridi said. "I



Pakistan's Arafat Minhas, who took five wickets, displays the ball as he walks off the field on the end of first innings during the first one day international cricket match between Pakistan and Australia, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (AP)

am very happy for Arafat Minhas. ... Ghori is a great player against both spin and pace, so the future of Pakistan looks bright."

Minhas took three wickets in six balls.

He trapped captain Inglis and Labuschagne and hit the top of Cameron Green's off stump with a magical delivery that spun away from the right-hander.

Australia slipped to 68-4 in the 16th over.

Leg-spinner Shadab Khan played his first ODI since the 2023 World Cup and was expensive in his wicket-less eight overs.

Matthew Renshaw top-scored for Australia with 61, six runs more than opener Matthew Short.

## Sun edges Sparks as Morrow shines

# Fire dominates Fever as Clark held to six points

PORTLAND, Ore., May 31, (AP): Megan Gustafson had 22 points and the Portland Fire held Indiana's Caitlin Clark to six points in a 100-84 victory over the Fever.

Carla Leite had 18 points and 12 assists, while Emily Engstler had 16 points and 10 rebounds, the first double-doubles for the expansion Fire. Portland has won four of its last five games.

Aliyah Boston led the Fever with 18 points and seven rebounds. Clark played for 22 minutes, going 1 for 7 from the field with two rebounds, six assists. She got into foul trouble, collecting her fourth in the third quarter, and finished with five.

The Fever were coming off a 90-88 loss at the Golden State Valkyries on Thursday night.

The Fire jumped out to a 29-15 lead after the first quarter after a layup from Gustafson, who led all players with eight points in the quarter.

Portland's dominance continued in the second quarter, with Sarah Ashlee Barker's 3-pointer putting the Fire up 44-26 with four minutes to go before the half.

After leading 50-37 at the break, the Fire stretched the lead to 25 points in the third quarter. Barker capped the period with another 3-pointer that put the crowd at the Moda Center on its feet.

With the Fire up 98-79 in the fourth quarter, coach Alex Sarama sat most of his starters.

Clark did not play in the Fever's May 21 game against the Fire in Indianapolis because of a back issue. The Fever disclosed her injury less than two hours before tipoff, prompting a warning from the WNBA the next day for not report-



Golden State Valkyries' Gabby Williams (1) shoots a 3-point shot over Indiana Fevers' Caitlin Clark (22) during the first half of a WNBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

ing the injury sooner. The Fever beat Portland 90-73 without Clark.

### Sun 84, Sparks 81

In Hartford, Anesah Morrow had 17 points and 14 rebounds, her fourth consecutive game with a double-double, and the Connecticut Sun beat the Los Angeles Sparks at Peoples Bank Arena.

Morrow leads the WNBA with seven double-doubles this season. Kennedy Burke scored 14 points for the Sun. Leila Lacan, who made her season debut, and Diamond Miller added 12 points apiece.

Connecticut (2-8) had lost three in a row, all by double figures. The Sun tied their season high with 11 steals.

Ariel Atkins and Rae Burrell led the Sparks (4-4) with 16 points apiece, Erica Wheeler scored 13 and Dearica Hamby 11. Ogwumike finished with 12 points and three rebounds.

Wheeler made a layup 27 seconds into the fourth quarter and the

Sparks didn't make another field goal until she made another layup with 3:38 to play. Nneka Ogumike followed with a three-point play and Atkins hit two free throws to make it a three-point game less than a minute later.

Burrell's 3-pointer made it 81-79 with 52 seconds left, but the Sparks got no closer.

Ogwumike has 3,315 career rebounds to move into a tie with Tamika Catchings for fifth on the WNBA's career list.

Connecticut's Brittney Griner (rib injury) returned from a four-game absence but left the game for good late in the first half after she was apparently poked in the eye. She finished with nine points.

Lacan helped Basket Landes to a championship, and was named finals MVP, in the top French professional league earlier this month. She averaged 10.4 points, 3.7 assists and 2.2 steals as a rookie last season in 25 games for Connecticut and the Sun were 2-17 before

the point guard returned from international duty and went 9-16 after.

Kelsey Plum (ankle) missed her second consecutive game for the Sparks. Plum, the WNBA's leading scorer at 28.6 points per game, will be re-evaluated on Tuesday.

### Tempo 93, Storm 72

In Toronto, Marina Mabrey scored 18 points, rookie Kiki Rice scored 13 of her 17 in the second half and added a season-high four steals, and the Toronto Tempo beat the Seattle Storm.

Brittney Sykes, who finished last season with the Storm, had 15 points against her former team and rookie Laura Juskaite scored 14, which included a career-high four 3-pointers, for the Tempo (5-4). Maria Conde added 13 points, the rookie's second consecutive game scoring in double figures.

Toronto set a WNBA record when the Tempo made their first 31 free throws before Teonni Key missed back-to-back foul shots with 58 seconds left and they finished 31 of 33 (94%).

Katie Lou Samuelson made a short turn-around jumper that tied it at 51-all with 3:50 left in the third quarter, but the Storm committed turnovers on their next three possessions as Toronto sparked a 19-5 run over the next three-plus minutes.

Natasha Hiedeman scored 18 points and Jordan Horston added a season-high 15 for Seattle.

The Storm hit 7 of 27 (26%) from 3-point range and attempted only eight free throws, making seven.

Seattle (3-5) is 3-0 this season when shooting 38% or better from behind the arc, 0-6 when it makes 37% or worse.

# Kostyuk stuns 4-time champion Swiatek on big day for Ukraine

Jodar moves into first GS quarterfinal

**PARIS, May 31, (AP):** There will be a first-time women's champion at the French Open this year, and two Ukrainian players are among the strongest contenders.

Undeclared this season on clay, 15th-seeded Marta Kostyuk showed her strong credentials as she reached the quarterfinals in Paris for the first time on Sunday by taking out four-time champion Iga Swiatek 7-5, 6-1 and ruining her birthday.

She will be up against her compatriot Elina Svitolina next, ensuring there will be an Ukrainian woman semifinalist at Roland Garros for the first time in the professional era (1968). The seventh-seeded Svitolina rallied past Belinda Bencic 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

"There's going to be Ukraine in the semifinals, so it's already amazing," said Svitolina, whose country is in a 4-year-old war with Russia.

"I think it couldn't be a better, amazing achievement for Ukrainian tennis. I think in such a difficult situation right now in the war, with the invasion, it's really, really difficult, and I think it's really inspiring for the next generation to really believe that it is possible one day to play on this court and win."

None of the players still in the draw have yet lifted the trophy in Paris, following Coco Gauff's elimination on Saturday and Swiatek's exit. It's the same in the men's draw, after the defeats of Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic and with Carlos Alcaraz absent because of an injury.

In men's play, Spanish teenager Rafael Jodar moved into his first Grand Slam quarterfinal after coming back from two sets down to beat Pablo Carreno Busta 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2. Jodar, who also played five sets in the previous round, will play second-seeded and former runner-up Alexander Zverev in the quarterfinals. Zverev defeated Jesper de Jong 7-6 (3), 6-4, 6-1.

Kostyuk had lost her three previous matches against Swiatek and never taken a set against the former top-ranked player, who turned 25 on Sunday.

"I'm still in shock. To beat such an unbelievable player, who won four times here," she said.

Kostyuk has been the best player of the clay-court season. She defended extremely well, chasing Swiatek's shots all over the court, and also produced some stunning groundstroke winners while her rival was also undone by her own mistakes.

An intense baseline battle unfolded from the outset. Swiatek showed signs of nerves as she double-faulted, shanked a forehand wide and then missed a volley at the net, allowing Kostyuk to level at 5-5 in the opener. Swiatek hit two more double faults in the 12th game and the 15th-seeded Ukrainian player sealed the set with a backhand passing shot.

Swiatek then briefly left the court. Meanwhile, Kostyuk kept herself warm by stretching and hopping beside her chair, then received some applause as



Germany's Alexander Zverev returns to Jesper De Jong of the Netherlands during the fourth-round tennis match at the French Open in Paris. (AP)

she did a few dance moves to the music playing in the stadium.

Following a first week marked by a suffocating heatwave, relief finally arrived in Paris on Sunday, with temperatures dropping to 21 degrees C (70 F) around midday. When play resumed, Swiatek broke but another double fault coupled with more unforced errors brought her opponent back at 1-1. Kostyuk then won the last five games.

Kostyuk, who had reached the fourth round at Roland Garros in 2021 when

she lost to Swiatek, extended her winning streak on clay to 16 matches. Ahead of the French Open, she won in Madrid, the biggest title of her career, after she claimed another clay-court title in Rouen, France.

"The most important thing that I've been doing this whole time is really just trying to enjoy," she said. "It's helping. I want to keep enjoying. I try not to focus at all on winning or losing because I'm not playing tennis to win, I'm playing tennis because I love it."

Mexico pips Australia in a World Cup warm-up

## Thunderstorms force unusual finish in Switzerland's win against Jordan

ST. GALLEN, Switzerland, May 31, (AP): A World Cup warm-up game between Switzerland and Jordan ended in chaos amid extreme weather on Sunday ahead of a tournament where severe thunderstorms are forecast.

The match referee blew the final whistle in the 88th minute after several minutes of heavy rain pounded the field with the Swiss leading 4-1 in their last game before flying to the United States.

The Swiss squad did a lap of honor and some players completed post-game interviews before the broadcast noted the teams had been summoned by Norwegian referee Rohit Saggi and told to prepare to go

back on the field and complete the 90 minutes.

The Swiss soccer federation then sent a message to international media on WhatsApp: "We will play the last minutes. Match is not over."

Play resumed after a 15-minute delay with water slowing the ball and splashing up from puddles with every tackle. A second final whistle was blown within about three minutes.

Heavy rain and electric storms are likely at some World Cup games in the U.S. A year ago, six games at the FIFA Club World Cup were put into weather delays totaling 8½ hours.

The tight match scheduling for national broadcast networks worldwide is much more complex at a World

Cup. Switzerland dominated Sunday's game against World Cup debutant Jordan, getting first-half goals from the penalty spot by Breel Embolo and Granit Xhaka, either side of a shot by Dan Ndoye.

Jordan cut the lead on Odeh Al Fakhouri's strike from the outside the penalty area in the 52nd, and Swiss substitute Christian Fassnacht made it 4-1 in the 79th, just before the rain started.

On Tuesday, Switzerland heads to a training camp in San Diego to prepare for World Cup games against Qatar, Bosnia-Herzegovina and co-host Canada.

Jordan is the underdog in a World Cup group with defending champion Argentina, Austria and Algeria.

□ □ □

Defender Johan Vazquez scored a first-half goal and Mexico beat Australia 1-0 on Saturday night in a warm-up match for the World Cup.

On a corner kick taken by Alexis Vega, Vázquez connected with a header that went in past the right post of goalkeeper Mathew Ryan in the 27th minute.

Mexico extended its unbeaten streak to seven games this year and has not lost since Nov. 18, when it fell 2-1 to Paraguay in a friendly match in San Antonio.

Mexico will open World Cup play June 11 against South Africa at the Azteca stadium in Mexico City. On the 18th, it will face South Korea in Guadalajara and close out the first round against Czechia on the 24th.



Mexico's defender Israel Reyes, right, blocks the shot by Australia's midfielder Ajdin Hrustic during the second half of an international friendly soccer match in Pasadena, Calif. (AP)

Luis Garcia shines in a shootout

## Toluca ends 23-year CONCACAF title drought



Toluca's Marcel Ruiz lifts the trophy after beating Tigres during the CONCACAF Champions Cup final soccer match in Toluca, Mexico. (AP)

MEXICO CITY, May 31, (AP): Goalkeeper Luis Garcia's shootout heroics lifted Toluca past UANL Tigres, securing the club's first CONCACAF Champions Cup title in 23 years.

Jorge Diaz Price, who came into the match in the 88th minute, put the home side ahead at the end of the first period of extra time, but Brazilian defender Joaquim Pereira leveled things with a header in the 113th minute.

In the penalty shootout Garcia saved attempts from Fernando Gorrriaran and then José Juan Purata to

give Toluca a 6-5 victory.

The Red Devils, who defeated LAFC in the semifinals with a dramatic comeback victory, won the CONCACAF title for the third time in their history and first since 2003.

With the win, Toluca earned a place in both the 2026 FIFA Intercontinental Cup and the 2029 FIFA Club World Cup, where they joined the 2025 champion Cruz Azul.

CONCACAF has four spots allocated for the next Club World Cup.

The UANL Tigres were aiming for its second CONCACAF title, and its

first since 2020.

With Toluca's victory, Mexican teams extended their winning streak to four consecutive titles in the Campeones Cup. The Seattle Sounders were the last non-Mexican team to win the title in 2022.

Tigres forward Marcelo Flores, who has been called up to the Canadian national team for the 2026 World Cup, suffered a right knee injury in the 77th minute. The team did not immediately disclose the severity of the injury, but the 22-year-old left the pitch in tears.

So how do you make the best better?

## PSG targeting Champions League threeppeat

MANCHESTER, England, May 31, (AP): After going back-to-back in the Champions League, the next target for Paris Saint-Germain is the threeppeat.

The French team, built with Qatari riches and styled by a Spanish perfectionist, looks capable of setting all kinds of records in European club soccer's biggest competition. And after triumphing 4-3 in a penalty shootout against Arsenal in Saturday's final, there is no indication that PSG is ready to relinquish its position of dominance.

"Of course we're going to go to the market," president Nasser Al-Khelaifi told TNT Sports while celebrations were just getting started in the center of the field at the Puskas Arena in Budapest.

Those words will ring ominously around Europe. When Qatar-backed PSG goes to the market, it goes hard.

That was the case when signing the world's biggest stars during its Galactico era of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Neymar, Kylian Mbappé and Lionel Messi. And the same is true in its current incarnation, where it has amassed a remarkable array of young talent that has swept all aside and taken a stronghold on the Champions League in a manner only bettered by Real Madrid in the modern era.

The team that started against Arsenal had an average age of

25.8 years. Ten of the starting XI was in the starting lineup that won the trophy 12 months earlier.

In other words, Spanish coach Luis Enrique has built a squad that looks capable of dominating for years to come.

"It's whet our appetite," said man of the match Vitinha. "You always want to win again. Never give up. Never stop. Luis Enrique is probably guilty of that and I hope that he will continue to push us so we can win more and more."

The best don't stand still and Luis Enrique demonstrated his ruthless

side when discarding goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma last year and promoting back-up Matvey Safonov as his replacement.

The 20-year-old midfielder Warren Zaire-Emery could have more of a prominent role next season and potentially break up the central trio of Fabian Ruiz, João Neves and Vitinha. Luis Enrique made a point of saying how unfortunate Zaire-Emery was not to start the final.

Perhaps a long-term successor to 32-year-old captain Marquinhos will be sought, but it is diffi-

cult to see how PSG can improve on a team that, even when it was not at its most fluid, totally dominated Arsenal.

"What they are able to do with the ball, individual actions, I haven't seen it (before)," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said afterwards.

And while the usually lethal Ousmane Dembélé, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Désiré Doué were subdued by Arsenal's suffocating defense, PSG still found a way through when trailing to Kai Havertz's early goal.

Its incessant pressure paid off when Kvaratskhelia's dribbling forced Cristhian Mosquera into a rash challenge in the box to concede the penalty that Dembélé converted to take the game to extra time.

As mesmerizing as PSG's attacking talent is, maybe a more consistent back-up to Dembélé than Goncalo Ramos would add depth. Bradley Barcola still has room to improve as demonstrated by his errant touch when given the chance to score a late winner at the end of regulation time.

"We are going to follow the same line. We do not need a lot of players because it is very difficult to find the right players to play in our team," Luis Enrique said. "We already have a great squad and we need some players to change some different positions."



PSG's fans gather the day after winning the Champions League title, at the Eiffel Tower, in Paris. (AP)

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San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama shoots against Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jaylin Williams (6) in the second half of Game 7 of the Western Conference finals of the NBA basketball playoffs series in Oklahoma City. (AP)

# Sports

Al-Arabi ends winless run as relegation battle heats up

## Kuwait Club closes in on fifth straight Zain Premier League title

By Hassan Mosa  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Defending champion Kuwait Club moved another step closer to retaining the Zain Premier League title after defeating Kazma 2-0 in Round 17 at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium.

The victory restored Kuwait Club's 12-point advantage over nearest rival Qadsia and brought the White Brigade within touching distance of a fifth consecutive league crown and the 21st championship in club history. Having dropped points in a 1-1 draw with Al-Nasr in the previous round, Kuwait Club quickly returned to winning ways and now requires just seven points from its remaining six matches to mathematically secure the title.

Qadsia climbed back into second place with 31 points, overtaking Al-Salmiya and keeping alive its hopes of ending a decade-long wait for the league trophy. However, with a significant gap separating it from the leaders, its title aspirations remain slim.

Al-Arabi enjoyed one of its most important victories of the season, defeating Al-Nasr 2-1 to end a frustrating six-match winless run that included three defeats and three draws. The result lifted the Green Team to third place on 29 points and revived its momentum heading into the final stretch of the campaign.

Al-Salmiya matched Al-Arabi's tally after securing a 2-0 win over Al-Fa-

haheel. The victory strengthened Al-Salmiya's chances of finishing among the top four and earning qualification for regional competition next season.

Despite the defeat, Al-Fahaheel guaranteed its place in the Championship Group and avoided involvement in the relegation battle.

Kazma endured another disappointing round, suffering a second consecutive loss and dropping to fifth place with 27 points after occupying second position only two rounds earlier.

The line-up for the relegation phase has now been finalized, with Al-Nasr, Al-Tadamon, Al-Shabab and Al-Jahra set to fight for survival. Two of the four clubs will retain their Premier League status, while the other two will be relegated to the First Division.

Al-Tadamon emerged as the biggest winner among the quartet after recording a valuable 2-0 victory over Al-Shabab, moving into eighth place with 15 points. The defeat saw Al-Shabab slip to ninth after previously occupying seventh position.

Although Al-Nasr fell to Al-Arabi, the team maintained seventh place and continued to produce encouraging performances.

Bottom-placed Al-Jahra faces the toughest challenge. With only eight points, the club's hopes of survival are fading rapidly, and its upcoming clash against Al-Shabab on June 11 may represent its final opportunity to keep its Premier League dream alive.



Kuwait Club players celebrate after scoring against Kazma during the Zain Premier League match.

## Wembanyama, Spurs topple Thunder head to NBA Finals

Kornet delivers an epic block

OKLAHOMA CITY, May 31, (AP): Victor Wembanyama and the San Antonio Spurs started the Western Conference finals with a win in Oklahoma City, then ended the series the same way.

The champions are dethroned. Wembanyama and the Spurs are headed to the NBA Finals.

Wembanyama scored 22 points, Julian Champagnie got 18 of his 20 off of 3-pointers and the Spurs beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 111-103 - bucking heavy odds to win a Game 7 on the road.

"This feeling, I can't explain it," Wembanyama said. "It's so powerful."

Stephon Castle scored 16 points and De'Aaron Fox had 15. Dylan Harper added 12 and Keldon Johnson and Devin Vassell each finished with 11 for the Spurs, who are headed to the NBA Finals for the first time since 2014.

They will host the New York Knicks in Game 1 on Wednesday night.

"Back in October, we knew we had a chance to be pretty good," Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said.

Correction - the Spurs have a chance to be great. Championship-level great.

A huge moment came midway through the fourth, when San Antonio's Luke Kornet blocked Oklahoma City's Isaiah Hartenstein at the rim - denying a fast-break score that would have gotten the Thunder within four.

It felt like the last gasp for the Thunder. Kornet played six minutes, missed all three of his shot attempts and finished with only two points, but the block was an epic moment.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 35 points and nine assists, but for the eighth consecutive season the NBA will have a new champion. Cason Wallace scored 17 points, while Jared McCain and Alex Caruso had 12 apiece for the Thunder.

der. "You have to grow from every experience, including the tough ones," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "And it's the NBA - there are tough ones. We can also be really disappointed. ... There's nobody that we don't think we can beat, respectfully."

After four straight games that were largely decided going into the fourth quarter - the Thunder led Game 3 by 11, the Spurs led Game 4 by 18, the Thunder led Game 5 by 10 and the Spurs led Game 6 by 26, those leads all holding up with relative ease - this one was different, worthy of a Game 7.

Spurs 80, Thunder 77 was the score going into the fourth, a bit of a back-and-forth contest where the Spurs led by as many as 14 in the first half and then by as many as 11 in the third, only to see the Thunder come roaring back both times.

"The players did what they've been doing all year and they met the biggest moment," Johnson said.

The Spurs pulled away in the fourth again, daring the Thunder to try to come back one more time. The champions - short-handed, with Jalen Williams sidelined with a bad hamstring - just didn't have anything left.

"Winning an NBA championship is very hard in itself to do one time," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "So to do it all over again would just only make it harder."

San Antonio won eight of the 12 meetings against the Thunder this season - and in the end, the only matchup that really mattered.

"We want four more," Wembanyama said. "We're not done."

When the season ended, and when his team's reign as NBA champions ended along with it, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander tipped his cap.

The Oklahoma City guard - the back-to-back NBA Most Valuable Player - was great in Game 7 of the Western Conference finals. The San Antonio Spurs were greater. And that meant there won't be a repeat champion in the NBA this year.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35



San Antonio Spurs' Jordan McLaughlin, left, Devin Vassell, second from left, Julian Champagnie, center, Dylan Harper, second from right, and Stephon Castle, right, celebrate after Game 7 of the Western Conference finals of the NBA basketball playoffs series win against the Oklahoma City Thunder in Oklahoma City. (AP)

points and was his normal brilliant self with an array of mid-range scores, paint attacks, even step-backs over San Antonio's 7-foot-4 wall named Victor Wembanyama. It wasn't enough and Gilgeous-Alexander made no excuses.

"So many things go into it," Gilgeous-Alexander said when asked about the difficulty of winning a championship - and trying to go back-to-back. "Sometimes it's like things you can't control, sometimes it's things you can control. Yeah, it's a hard task to do one time, so to do it twice will only make it even more challenging."

The Thunder played all season to have home-court advantage in Game 7 and got it by two games, winning 64 to San Antonio's 62. But the Spurs beat the Thunder four out of five in the regular season, then got four more out of seven in the West finals. And Oklahoma City, to be fair, was not at its best - with Jalen Williams and Ajay Mitchell out with injuries.

"Not to make any excuses, but they're a really good team over there," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "And losing Ajay and Dub the way we did in the midst of a series, you would think it would be a lot harder

for us."

Oklahoma City looks like a team that is built to contend for years. So, too, do the Spurs. A rivalry seems very much born.

"Yeah, they're young, they're talented, well-coached," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "Play the right way, play together, seems like they like each other. They have the makeup, for sure. You don't beat us without the makeup and they beat us. They have the makeup to go get one."

The Thunder will have some roster decisions to make and have multiple first-round picks to either use to add

talent - or perhaps combine in a trade if they want to move up for a chance to draft a specific person.

Those decisions aren't for Gilgeous-Alexander to make. Canada is hoping he'll play a little bit of World Cup qualifying this summer - basketball's next World Cup is in 2027 - and he'll be looking to add to his game, as elite players always do.

"We just have to take it one day at a time from here on out," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "Try to get better this summer, be a better team than we were this season - and try to get back over the hump."

## Dashti ends three-decade spell with Qadsia

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 31: Qadsia volleyball veteran Nasser Dashti has brought down the curtain on his long career with the club's first team, ending a 30-year association with the Yellow Castle marked by consistent achievements and contributions at both domestic and regional levels.

Dashti said his ties with Qadsia remain strong despite stepping away from the playing squad, confirming his intention to continue his sporting career and explore a new challenge with another club in the near future.

"After 30 years with Qadsia volleyball, I will study the offers presented to me and look forward to a new experience with a different team," he said.

Considered one of the club's most notable volleyball figures, Dashti played a key role in several of Qadsia's successes over the years, leaving a clear imprint on the team's history and the sport in Kuwait.

His next move is expected to be

decided soon, as he remains keen to continue competing and benefit from the vast experience he has accumulated over three decades in the game.

Meanwhile, Qadsia has been undergoing a phase of renewal. Mohamed Al-Damkhi has been appointed

as director of the volleyball section, replacing Ismail Dashti, who has also stepped down from his administrative role.

Ismail Dashti wished the new management, technical staff, and players success for the upcoming season.



A file photo of veteran Nasser Dashti celebrating.

## Yamal says he was scared of missing World Cup after he injured hamstring

MADRID, May 31, (AP): Lamine Yamal was scared of missing the World Cup after injuring his hamstring and prayed that he could recover in time.

Yamal is expected to be fit for the tournament that begins on June 11 in North America. He injured his left hamstring while converting a penalty kick with Barcelona in a Spanish league match on April 22.

"I never had a hamstring injury like that but I knew that it wasn't going to be a short recovery time," Yamal said in an interview with the Spanish soccer federation published on Sunday. "I was afraid that it was something serious or that it could relapse and that I would miss the World Cup."

The 18-year-old Yamal went down after converting a first-half penalty kick in the game against Celta Vigo. He scored and immediately looked to the bench to signal he was hurt. He dropped to the ground as his teammates arrived to celebrate, then appeared to grab the back of his left leg.

"I remember the play in which I got injured," Yamal said. "I was praying inside for it not to be serious, for it

to be a cramp or something like that, because I knew the World Cup was very close."

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said last week after including Yamal in his World Cup squad that the forward was expected to be ready to play either the first or second Spain match. La Roja will debut against Cape Verde on June 15 in Atlanta. It then faces Saudi Arabia on June 21 in Atlanta and Uruguay on June 26 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Yamal is expected to lead the Spain squad that will try to win its second world title. It won the World Cup for the first time in South Africa in 2010.

"The moment has finally arrived," Yamal said. "I think that ever since the European Championship ended, we've all been thinking about this day, and we are all very excited. We will enter the tournament as the European champions, and we are going to give it everything we have."

Spain officially began its World Cup preparations on Saturday in Madrid. Some 2,000 people watched the team's first training session on Sunday.