



Amir receives Kuwait Club after historic victory Page 16



16,721 flagged in traffic blitz

31 held for residency violations

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The General Traffic Department, which is under the Traffic Affairs and Operations Sector in the Interior Ministry, carried out intensive traffic campaigns in various governorates from June 15-21.

These campaigns resulted in the issuance of 16,721 traffic violation citations, impoundment of 354 vehicles, and detention of 42 individuals. This is in line with the efforts of the department to guarantee traffic

safety and apprehend violators.

The weekly statistics revealed that the violations included speeding, illegal parking, and failure to adhere to designated lanes, in addition to violations related to vehicle road-worthiness. Five motorcycles were impounded.

Furthermore, seven juveniles were referred to the relevant authorities, as part of the legal measures taken against violators.

The statistics also indicated that the Operations Unit received 2,339 reports within the abovementioned week, while the field teams dealt with 1,040 traffic accidents, including 175 that resulted in injuries.

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KUWAIT SWELTERS UNDER 51°C HEAT



A man pours water over his head in a fleeting relief, as Kuwait's scorching heat peaked on a sweltering Tuesday.

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Adailiya outage after feeder trips

Heat ban exemptions issued for vital services

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced that two 11 kV sub-feeders in Al-Khalidiya (B) main substation went out of service due to a technical malfunction resulting from high temperatures and electrical

overload.

In a press statement on Tuesday, the ministry pointed out that the outage of the two feeders resulted in a power cut in a limited part of Adailiya, Block One. It affirmed that its emergency teams rushed to the site and worked hard to restore power as quickly as possible.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Churchill: 'There are no permanent enemies or permanent friends'

THERE is something surprising about the Chinese and Russian positions on the recent war, particularly Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the resulting difficulties for the global economy. While the negative impact on China and Russia was greater than on other countries, they did not take any action.

They rather supported Iran on several occasions, even though their trade volume with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is many times more than with Iran.

China, Russia and the European countries left the United States and Israel to confront Iran, as if the world abandoned this vital waterway to allow the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to blackmail countries in the energy sector.

Undoubtedly, this is a highly significant turning point regarding the future of the region, as well as for countries that rely more heavily on the Strait of Hormuz, such as Russia and China, and threatens their considerable interests in the region.

The failure to restrain the Iranian regime by its two most important military allies, Moscow and Beijing, means that they prefer Iran over the GCC countries despite their vital interests in the latter.

The United States, led by Donald Trump, intends to contain China and prevent Russia from achieving its objectives in Ukraine, lest it gain control over Eastern Europe and weaken NATO, which has expanded into some European countries.

However, on the other hand, China and Russia have major strategic interests in the Gulf countries. Abandoning these strategic interests could mean that they (Russia and China) will weaken the region. Did the US-China summit held in Beijing in mid-January result in the region being handed over to the United States, thus, abandoning the Russian and Chinese interests?

This question has been raised in Arab and international political and media circles. Some observers wonder whether the new plan is a lifeline for the Iranian regime in Tehran.

The question is based on recent events. In re-

cent years, the world suffered from the terrorist acts of Iran's Yemeni proxy, the Houthi group, which targeted ships passing through the Bab al-Mandab Strait. During the recent war, the Houthis threatened to close this vital waterway, coinciding with Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

This threat had an impact on the global economy, particularly on the flow of oil to China and Europe. East Asian countries remained silent, as if to say that their significant interests in the GCC states are not important compared to the Iranian threat.

National interests are not based on mere courtesy. Therefore, many politicians and observers are questioning the ambiguity of the stance of major powers toward countries with which they have strong ties. Despite this, these countries allow the Iranian regime to continue its terrorist aggression without attempting to stop it.

Yes, the competition for interests among the United States, China and Russia is fierce. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental principle of international relations that no strategic interest or position should be relinquished without a price. We witnessed this in the recent war. Did Moscow and Beijing abandon their interests in the region?

A cautious, balancing act of diplomacy is ineffective in this situation, because it grants the Tehran regime advantages that threaten the interests of these countries in the future. The late British Prime Minister Winston Churchill established a golden rule: "There are no permanent enemies or permanent friends, only permanent interests." This rule applies to the relations between China and Russia with the GCC states. The volume of trade and shared interests linking Russia and China with the GCC countries far exceed those linking them with Iran. Maintaining relations between Russia, China and Iran will not benefit them in any way.

Follow me on: @Ahmedaljarallah Ahmed aljarallah ahmed@aljarallah.com Scan QR code to visit the website: aljarallah.com

Fahmy named next Arab League chief

Arab unity in focus as crises mount

AMMAN, June 23, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday chaired his country's delegation attending the consultative meeting of Arab foreign ministers and the Arab League Council meeting at the ministerial level in its resumed ordinary session (165) in the Jordanian capital Amman.

During both meetings, regional international developments and efforts to cement regional security and stability were discussed, said the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry in a press release.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Aboul-Gheit said on Monday that the Arab region is facing unprecedented challenges that necessitate pan-Arab solidarity and concerted efforts to address ongoing crises and rapidly evolving crises.

Aboul-Gheit made the statements while addressing the opening session of the consultative meeting of Arab foreign ministers, held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, highlighting shared political and security issues. He underlined that the Palestinian



Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah heads the delegation of the State of Kuwait in the consultative meeting of Arab foreign ministers and the Arab League Council meeting in Jordan.

KUNA photo

cause would remain the Arab world's central issue, stressing the significance of continuing political and diplomatic efforts aimed at ceasing the war in the Gaza Strip, protecting civilians and delivering sufficient and sustainable humanitarian aid.

The pan-Arab bloc's chief called for finding just and comprehensive

political settlement to the Palestinian issue in line with international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, leading up to an independent Palestinian state along the June 4, 1967, borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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Violence flares again in Lebanon

Hormuz security, N-row strain US-Iran deal push

ISLAMABAD, June 23, (AP): The U.S. and Iran were in dispute Tuesday over whether Tehran had agreed to allow U.N. inspectors to view bombed Iranian nuclear sites, as officials mediated talks on a permanent end to their war and violence broke out again in Lebanon.

The differing accounts came as Iran's president met with Pakistani officials mediating negotiations and while technical teams were working on details following talks in Switzerland between the U.S. and Iran.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told reporters in Tehran that U.N. inspectors were not scheduled to examine the nuclear sites bombed by the U.S. last year, refuting comments made a day earlier by U.S. Vice President JD Vance. In response, President Donald Trump posted on social media that Iran had



In this photo released by the Inter Services Public Relations, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, right, meets with Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Tuesday, June 23, 2026. (AP)

agreed to nuclear inspections long into the future, saying that without this concession "there would be no further negotiations!"

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Drug crackdown nets 29 suspects

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Interior announced on Tuesday the arrest of 29 suspects in separate cases involving drug trafficking and abuse, with various quantities of narcotic substances and psychotropic drugs seized in their possession.

The ministry said in a press statement that the arrests came as part of ongoing intensive efforts by the General Department for Drug Control to combat narcotics and pursue drug traffickers and dealers.

It added that the operations resulted in the seizure of nearly 12,000 capsules of Lyrica, 606 grams of crystal meth (shabu), 1,170 grams of marijuana, three bags containing marijuana, 612 grams of hashish, and 200 grams of synthetic chemical narcotics.

The ministry said authorities also confiscated around 35 grams of heroin, 248 Captagon pills, 307 methadone tablets, 10 milliliters of wax narcotic substance, seven precision scales, 14 packets containing papers used for drug consumption, empty bags used for packaging narcotics, and a sum of money suspected to be proceeds from drug trafficking.



Kuwait Finance House, Ministry of Social Affairs sign MoU to foster sustainable community and development partnership



Action Energy Co. appoints KIC as Market Maker



The Ambassador of Argentina with a number of ambassadors during the event.

Embassy hosts WC viewing event

Ambassador of Argentina praises Kuwaiti support for national team

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Ambassador of Argentina to Kuwait Ramiro Velloso affirmed that football is considered a universal language that

unites people and transcends the boundaries of athletic competition, praising the love and support that the national team of his country enjoys among Kuwaiti fans.

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### Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:14    Asr ..... 15:24  
 Sunrise .. 04:50    Maghrib .. 18:51  
 Zohr ..... 11:50    Isha ..... 20:23



HH the Amir



Grand Duke Guillaume V

## Kuwait Amir congratulates Luxembourg on Nat'l Day

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a congratulatory cable to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg Guillaume V on his country's national day.

His Highness the Amir wished the Grand Duke long-lasting health and the country of Luxembourg and its people further progress and prosperity.

### Crown Prince felicitates

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad

Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a congratulatory cable to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg Guillaume V on his country's national day.

His Highness wished the Grand Duke long-lasting health and the people of Luxembourg further progress and prosperity.

### Prime Minister congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a congratulatory cable to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg Guillaume V on his country's national day.

# 'Rumors wreck societies'

Single word leads to crisis: media consultant

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, June 23: A dialogue session titled, "Rumors are Dangerous... Awareness is a National Responsibility," was held at the Kuwaiti Sociologists Association headquarters on Monday.**

Media consultant Khaled Al-Shamroukh conducted a presentation at the session, with several members of the association in attendance.

Dr. Saud Al-Masoud opened the session, explaining that the spread of rumors is one of the most serious challenges that societies are facing in the digital age. He said rumors have become a tool capable of influencing public opinion, undermining trust in institutions, and inciting anxiety and social division. "They can even be exploited to achieve political, economic or security objectives," he added.

Al-Masoud stressed that societal awareness is essential in maintain-



Photo by Samer Shaqir

Media consultant Khaled Al-Shamroukh talking to the dialogue attendees.

ing stability and strengthening trust between society and its institutions, hence, the importance of integration among official bodies, media outlets, educational institutions, social media platforms and content creators in order to create an information environment based on credibility, transparency and responsibility.

He explained that the most dangerous aspect of rumors is not

the speed of their spread, but the tendency of people to believe and circulate them without scrutiny. He added that while technology has given rumors unprecedented means of dissemination, awareness remains the most powerful tool for confronting them.

On the other hand, Al-Shamroukh indicated that rumors begin with a single word and end

with a crisis, and that responsible media is a key partner in protecting society. He underscored the importance of strengthening trust in official sources as a national duty, adding that cooperation between citizens, the media, and official institutions is the first line of defense against rumors and crises.

He said rumors have harmful effects on society, such as inciting fear and anxiety among citizens, undermining trust in official institutions, impacting the economy and investment, creating division and social tension, and being exploited by those with dubious agendas.

He highlighted the necessity of verifying and confirming information before publishing or forwarding it, as well as how to identify misleading news, use reliable official sources, and bear legal and ethical responsibility for publishing.

He cited Article 36 of the Constitution, stipulating that freedom of opinion is guaranteed, and every person has the right to express his opinion and publish it orally, in writing or otherwise, in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by law.

## Guarantee safety for motorists

### Open service stations on both sides of Salmi, Abdally roads

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Enezi submitted a proposal to conduct a comprehensive technical and planning study to allocate sites for integrated service stations on both directions of Salmi and Abdally roads in order to improve services for road users and guarantee safety on roads leading to the borders.

Al-Enezi explained that the Salmi and Abdally roads are among the important roads

due to their connection to the borders and the movement of land and commercial transport. He pointed out that the level of services currently available along the two roads is inadequate for the increasing volume of traffic. He stated that the proposal aims to enhance traffic safety, reduce risks resulting from fuel shortages or breakdowns, provide essential services for travelers and truck drivers, support the land transport sector, and keep pace with urban expansion. He added that the proposed stations will include a range of services, such as a mosque, ab-

lution facilities, public restrooms, restaurants, convenience stores, ATMs, parking for trucks and other vehicles, light maintenance workshops and tire services, as well as ambulance and emergency services when needed.

He suggested that the executive body, in coordination with the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and other relevant authorities, should conduct a study to identify the actual needs and the suitable sites for establishing these stations.



KUNA photo

President of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation, Sheikh Eng. Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah discussed with the Czech Ambassador to Kuwait, Jiri Khmeil, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries in civil aviation.

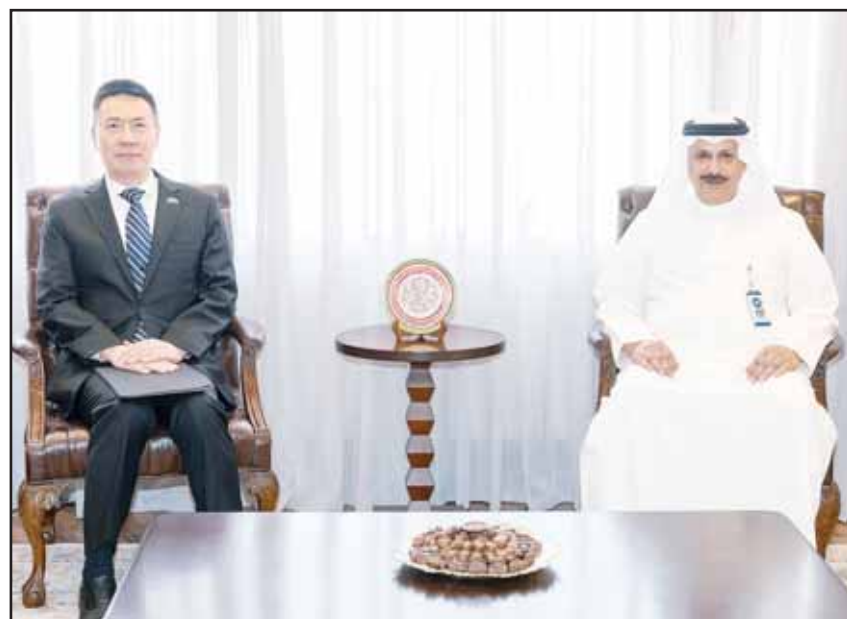
## Kuwait, Czech Republic seek cooperation boost in aviation

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): President of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation, Sheikh Eng. Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah discussed on Monday with the Czech Ambassador to Kuwait, Jiri Khmeil, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries in civil aviation.

In a statement, the Public Authority of Civil Aviation said the meeting re-

viewed opportunities to develop bilateral relations between Kuwait and the Czech Republic and discussed aspects of cooperation in the civil aviation sector.

It added that both sides also explored ways to strengthen the exchange of expertise in technical and operational fields, contributing to the support of air transport and enhancing cooperation between the two friendly countries.



KUNA photo

Acting Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Mohammad Al-Mannai receives the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Yang Xin in his office.

## KUNA Chief, Chinese envoy discuss media cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Acting Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Mohammad Al-Mannai discussed with Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Yang Xin on Tuesday ways to enhance Kuwaiti-Chinese media cooperation in support of the media sectors in both countries.

During the meeting, Al-Mannai stressed the importance of strengthening media cooperation to reflect the depth of bilateral strategic relations, reaffirming KUNA's commitment to expanding collaboration with Chinese media institutions, particularly Xinhua News Agency, under an existing memorandum of understanding.

For his part, Ambassador Yang praised KUNA's standing at the local, regional and international levels and its

objective coverage of events, expressing China's readiness to further develop bilateral cooperation.

He noted that Kuwait was the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with China and that this year marks the 55th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Yang also highlighted the role of the Chinese Media Center in Kuwait in strengthening people-to-people communication and underscored the importance of growing economic cooperation, reflected in expanding trade exchange between the two countries.

The meeting was attended by KUNA Deputy Director General for Editorial Affairs Essam Al-Ghanem, Director of the Director General's Office Lamia Al-Farsi, and several members of the Chinese Embassy.

## PAAET begins distribution of graduation certificates

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has announced the schedule for distributing graduation certificates to students graduating from its various colleges for the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Certificate distribution will take place on June 23-25 between 9:00 am and 12:30 pm.

PAAET urged graduates to comply with the regulations governing the distribution process, stressing the importance of presenting their original civil ID through the "Kuwait Mobile ID" application and submitting a clearance form. The graduate must be present in person to receive the certificate, or a representative may do so under a valid power of attorney.

The distribution will include graduates from the colleges of Nursing, Health Sciences, Basic Education, Business Studies, and Technological Studies, according to schedules and locations determined by college and specialization.

Certificates for graduates of the Faculty of Nursing and the Faculty of Health Sciences will be distributed at the administration buildings and designated registration offices from June 23 to 25.

The distribution for graduates of the College of Basic Education has been scheduled over three days according to specialization, at the registration office for male students and the auditorium in Building 6 for female students.

## Reinstate employee, pay KD 5,000, decides court

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court, which obligated the Ministry of Health to pay KD5,000 compensation to a female senior electronics technician, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This followed the annulment of her termination, which was based on her alleged absence from work for 15 days. The court ordered the ministry to reinstate the employee.

The employee, who was surprised by the termination decision, filed a case through her lawyer, Mohammad Al-Sayegh.

Al-Sayegh confirmed to the court that his client worked during the period in question, which prompted her to appeal the decision and request its annulment.

After the issuance of the final ruling, Al-Sayegh filed a claim for compensation on behalf of his client for the damages she suffered as a result of the decision. The court ruled in her favor, ordering the ministry to pay her KD5,000 compensation.

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**Kuwaiti citizen acquitted:** The Misdemeanor Court of Appeals overturned a lower court's ruling that sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to three months in prison with hard labor for assaulting a delivery worker. The court instead acquitted the citizen of the charge, reports Al-Anba daily.

The court explained that a conviction must be based on sufficient and convincing evidence, and that any doubt must be interpreted in favor of the accused. The lower court's judgment relied on investigations indicating that the victim had identified the accused from a photograph. However, the case file contained no evidence that such a photograph was attached to the official report.

Lawyer Hamad Al-Roumi stated that the ruling reaffirmed a fundamental principle of criminal justice - that a conviction can only be based on conclusive and complete evidence.

He stressed that the investigation file contained no record of the accused being questioned, confronted with the victim, or shown any photograph.

## Other Voices

### Story of the wedding ring

By Ahmad alsarraf

I did not keep my wedding ring on my finger for very long. I have recently noticed that it has become rare for men to keep their wedding rings. Perhaps the ring is losing its significance in our societies.

The wedding ring is still considered part of the engagement ceremony, and the custom of transferring it from one hand to the other during weddings around the world is still a tradition. The ring represents a moment when the couple's promises are formalized with a tangible symbol.

Many people see a ring of gold or silver as a symbol of love, unity, and eternity, and as an indication of the nature of the couple's relationship. The date of the engagement or marriage contract is usually engraved inside it.

It is said that the Romans were the first to use wedding rings in a way similar to the modern custom. At that time, marriage was linked more to family alliances and property than to romance.

After the marriage contract is signed and a feast is held, a procession takes the newlyweds to their new marital home, where the bride is carried over the threshold. The groom then presents the bride with a ring, not only as a gesture of love but also as a public declaration of their union and that the bride has become a member of his family.

The Romans initially used copper and iron to make rings, but they later favored gold from around the third century AD onward.

The wedding ring was worn on the ring finger of the left hand, based on the belief that a vein, known as the "vein of love," connected the ring fin-

ger directly to the heart.

This tradition may have originated in ancient Egypt, where rings, with their circular shape, were considered symbols of eternity, representing something with neither beginning nor end.

While the connection between the ring finger and the "vein of love" has not been anatomically proven, the symbolic placement of the ring on the ring finger of the left hand continues to be a common practice.

The Romans were among the first to formalize the use of rings in wedding ceremonies.

Some people believe the wedding ring was inspired by ancient Greek and Egyptian civilizations. After Alexander the Great of Macedon conquered Egypt in 332 BC, the Greeks adopted the custom of giving rings as a token of love. These rings often bore the image of Eros, the Greek god of love, known as Cupid in Roman mythology.

Due to the growing feeling of uncertainty during World War II, marriage rates in the United States rose significantly. Jewelers seized this opportunity to promote men's wedding rings, which had previously been uncommon.

During the war, many soldiers wore wedding rings as a reminder of their wives and families back home. By the late 1940s, approximately 80 percent of American couples exchanged rings at their weddings, compared to only 15 percent at the end of the Great Depression.

Social norms shifted, and marriage became increasingly viewed as an equal partnership rather than an exchange of property. The exchange of rings is still part of the norm to this day.

(This article is adapted in part from a study edited by Nicole Villeneuve in History, 2024.)

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## Plan to improve roads, provide power in urban 'Al-Mutlaa City'

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The acting Director General of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), Eng. Rashid Al-Enezi, announced the signing of three new construction contracts worth a total of KD 29.9 million, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The contracts are part of infrastructure development projects in Al-Mutlaa Residential City and the Affordable Housing Project.

Al-Enezi explained that the agreements aim to develop the main road network and strengthen the electricity supply system, thereby enhancing infrastructure efficiency and supporting urban expansion in new residential areas.

Two of the contracts are in Al-Mutlaa

Residential City and cover the construction, completion, and maintenance of asphalt layers and related works, including paving stones and curbs for sidewalks and pedestrian walkways. They cover road marking works in N9, N10, and N11 suburbs, valued at KD 9.67 million, and in N6, N7, and N8 suburbs, valued at KD 9.74 million. Each contract has a completion period of 730 days.

The third contract, signed under the Affordable Housing Project, includes the supply, installation, and maintenance of three main 132/11 kV transformer stations serving sites MS-05, MS-06, and MS-07. The contract is valued at KD 10.49 million and is scheduled for completion within 730 days.

## Once bitten twice shy ... be on alert, instability to stay

"THE subject of this article is Iraqi and Iranian interference in Kuwait's internal affairs, a problem that has intensified over the decades," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The past two decades have witnessed repeated instances of Iranian and Iraqi interference, particularly following Kuwait's decision to build Mubarak Port and the discovery of the Durra gas field. The Iraqis tried to obstruct the construction of Abdullah Port, even though Kuwait did not interfere in the construction of Iraq's Faw Port. Individuals seeking media attention in Iraq or attempting to gain electoral support have resorted to criticizing Kuwait and demanding control over Khor Abdullah.



Adel Al Kharafi

"What do these Iraqis and Iranians, whether officials or social media activists, want? They continue to view Kuwait through a single lens. Kuwait has not interfered in their affairs, so why do they interfere in Kuwait's affairs? This cannot be tolerated. The recent war also revealed the true face of the Iranian-backed factions that launched terrorist attacks on Kuwait.

"A new phase has begun following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran. All parties, especially the Gulf Arab states, must be cautious of any attempts to exploit its details. The regional situation is expected to remain unstable, which necessitates a new strategy for the Gulf Arab states, one that differs from their approach since 1980.

"The experience of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 has left a legacy of mistrust toward both Iraq and Iran. Iraqi and Iranian interference in the internal affairs of the Gulf states is likely to continue in one form or another. Therefore, there is a need to take serious steps to counter this interference by forming new alliances that are not based on Arab states that abandoned Kuwait and the Gulf states during the last war.

"The Iraqi militias affiliated with Iran must be contained. This requires a sophisticated diplomatic, economic, and security framework that makes full use of available resources and seeks to prevent any aggression, including through preemptive measures.

"The experience of 1990 compels Kuwait to remain vigilant, particularly toward Iraq and Iran, both of which have attacked it more than once.

"I am referring to both Iraq and Iran. Since 1962, when Abdul Karim Qasim attempted to occupy Kuwait, it became clear that this neighbor would not leave Kuwait alone, and Iraq ultimately did so in 1990.

"Since 1980, Kuwait has also experienced difficult relations with its Iranian neighbor, marked by hostile actions that are widely known.

"That is why when we say to you, 'What does it have to do with you?' This is not a casual question, but a very important one, because the war has not ended yet, and the coming days are full of developments. Therefore, from today, everyone must choose their positions - either with us or against us?"

### Also:

"The Middle East is witnessing a profound geopolitical reshaping following the end of the war and recent tensions linked to Iran's regional role. This has had a direct impact on Gulf security and its strategic waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz," political and military expert Brigadier Dr. Mohammad Hijab wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"As the region enters the post-war phase, a dual dynamic is emerging, based on cautious, conditional diplomacy alongside an accelerated Gulf effort to break the geographical dependence on the Strait of Hormuz.

"Gulf-Iranian relations appear to be moving in three main directions. The first is a conditional, pragmatic de-escalation, in which dialogue channels between the two sides are maintained to prevent escalation, while any political or economic cooperation is made contingent on Iran abandoning its destabilizing policies in the region.

"The second path is characterized by cold relations and mutual deterrence. This scenario is based on continued mistrust, with Gulf states increasingly relying on defense alliances and accelerating efforts to develop alternative energy security solutions.

"The third path involves a comprehensive strategic breakthrough, contingent on Iran taking significant steps to reduce tensions with its neighbors and enhance regional stability.

"The most likely scenario is the continuation of a delicate balance between dialogue, caution, and deterrence management.

"The risks associated with the Strait of Hormuz have also pushed Gulf states to accelerate the development of strategic alternatives to reduce dependence on it, including pipelines such as Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline and the UAE's Habshan-Fujairah pipeline, in addition to expanding land-based connectivity projects.

"Despite these efforts, the liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector remains a structural challenge, confirming that current alternatives reduce risks but do not eliminate full dependence on the Strait.

"Therefore, Gulf states must continue investing in alternative infrastructure and strengthening Gulf integration

in transportation and energy projects, along with expanding regional and international partnerships.

"Accordingly, and in light of rapid regional transformations, Gulf coordination has become a strategic necessity. Dealing with Iran requires a more cohesive and unified Gulf position that minimizes internal differences and enhances the ability to manage regional balances."

"Among the reviews that merit careful consideration, analysis, and generalization are those concerning the various sources of the Muslim Brotherhood's wealth in Kuwait and abroad," columnist Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"In general terms, this wealth can be described, metaphorically, as the 'Muslim Brotherhood Holding Group.' This group is not an investment holding company as commonly understood in the world of finance and investment. Rather, it serves as a useful description of the network of parent entities that finance the Muslim Brotherhood, or the giant bank of political Islam, and the source of its funding.

"One of the most notable examples is Al-Taqwa Islamic Bank, which was established in the 1980s by Youssef Nada as a financial empire for the Muslim Brotherhood.

"Before his death, Nada spoke of a meeting that took place during the Iraqi invasion between Saddam Hussein and a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. However, the identity of this representative and the details of the meeting remained unclear and largely undisclosed.

"The active and dominant wing of the international Muslim Brotherhood organization did not disclose the details of the meeting between Youssef Nada, his Kuwaiti associate, and Saddam Hussein.

"Nearly 25 years later, Mubarak al-Duwailah, a leader in the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait, claimed that a message from the organization's Deputy Supreme Guide, Mustafa Mashhour, had been read during the Jeddah Popular Conference. However, this claim contradicts the facts and documents related to the conference, as well as the assertion that the message was among the communications received by the conference or included in its proceedings and official records.

"Following the liberation of Kuwait, the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) emerged as the Kuwaiti branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, asserting that it had separated from the international organization because of its position on the Iraqi invasion. However, many viewed this move as a political repositioning rather than a complete organizational break from the Muslim Brotherhood.

"The international Muslim Brotherhood organization responded to the emergence of the new Kuwaiti entity with notable silence, without any organizational disputes or public objections. This suggested the existence of an implicit understanding or an undeclared arrangement between the two sides, allowing for organizational repositioning and a transition in leadership.

"Following the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, Muslim Brotherhood leader Mubarak Al-Duwailah disclosed, for the first time in a Kuwaiti daily newspaper, details of his efforts to mediate and arrange a meeting between a Hamas delegation and the late Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah in Jeddah in December 1990.

"Despite the legitimate questions surrounding Mustafa Mashhour's alleged message to the Jeddah conference and the reported meeting with the Hamas delegation in Jeddah, neither Al-Duwailah nor any other leaders of the Islamic Constitutional Movement have confirmed these events or presented evidence to substantiate these claims.

"Nearly 36 years after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, these accounts and allegations remain surrounded by ambiguity and uncertainty within the records of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait, lacking conclusive evidence or definitive documentation.

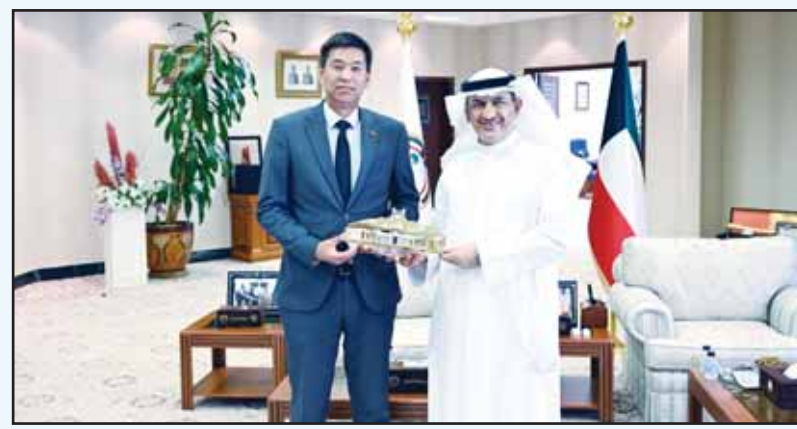
"The undeniable fact remains that these claims have not been substantiated, and their reappearance decades later does not alter the facts. Their repeated circulation raises questions about the continued reliance on ambiguous narratives that appear to conflict with documented facts.

"Undoubtedly, the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait is not marginal enough to be ignored. We have become accustomed to the Muslim Brotherhood's attempts to exploit international and regional events.

"It is therefore regrettable that the relevant documentation and media institutions have either tolerated these claims or failed to subject them to the level of scrutiny they warrant.

"Published documents indicate a connection between the Muslim Brotherhood Holding Group and a wealthy Kuwaiti figure who, since the 1940s, had been influenced by the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. This wealth may continue to represent one of the sources of funding and support for the Muslim Brotherhood Holding Group."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Jahra Governorate photo

Governor of Jahra Hamad Al-Habashi meets Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the State of Kuwait Dr. Nurlan Tokobaev at his office in the headquarters of Jahra Governorate.

## Kuwait and Kyrgyz Republic discuss ways to boost bonds

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Governor of Jahra Hamad Al-Habashi met with Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the State of Kuwait Dr. Nurlan Tokobaev at his office in the headquarters of Jahra Governorate.

During the meeting, they exchanged friendly greetings and discussed several topics of mutual interest, as well as ways to enhance cooperation and communication to further strengthen the relationship between the State of Kuwait and the Kyrgyz Republic.

The Governor affirmed the commitment of the governorate to support coordination with various entities and diplomatic missions, reflecting the depth of the relationship between Kuwait and the friendly nations.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Governor for the warm welcome, praising the progress and development in the governorate, while wishing Kuwait and its people lasting progress and prosperity.

# 80% decline in drugs use

New law proves fruitful: DCGD

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Assistant Director of the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry Colonel Mohammad Al-Aridhi revealed that the Joint Gulf Anti-Narcotics Week will be launched on June 26, coinciding with the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.**

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Al-Aridhi explained that this is part of the unified media strategy adopted by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to raise awareness about the dangers of narcotics and their harmful effects on individuals, families and society as a whole. He disclosed that anti-narcotics agencies in the GCC member states will implement a coordinated awareness campaign featuring educational messages and guidance programs that emphasize the importance of treatment and rehabilitation. He added that the campaign will also focus on the factors leading to drug use, while stressing the vital role of families in protecting young people from addiction.

He affirmed that the new Anti-Narcotics

Law has already yielded positive results despite having been in force for only a short period. He said the statistics showed an 80 percent decline in the quantities of drugs seized, disappearance of certain narcotic substances from the local market, and a remarkable decrease in crimes related to the smuggling, distribution and trafficking of illegal drugs due to the harsh penalties stipulated in the law.

He went on to say that DCGD recorded an increase in reports submitted by families regarding children suffering from addiction. He considers this a manifestation of the growing public trust in legal procedures that allow individuals struggling with addiction to undergo treatment at specialized medical facilities without facing criminal charges or obtaining a criminal record.

He indicated that coordination and information exchange among anti-narcotics agencies throughout the GCC countries are continuous, raising the effectiveness of joint Gulf security efforts to combat drug-related threats and curb the spread of drugs.

He called on everyone to participate in the awareness programs and activities during the Joint Gulf Anti-Narcotics Week, stressing that combating drugs is a shared national responsibility, necessitating collective cooperation and the reporting of violations through the DCGD hotline 1884141 to guarantee public safety and social stability.

## Driving wrong side and carrying drugs & booze

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: A man in his forties with a criminal record was arrested and referred to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) after he was caught driving a car while under the influence in Mangaf, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the suspect, who is a repeat offender, was arrested after being stopped by a patrol for driving against traffic. He was found in possession of narcotics, drug paraphernalia, and a locally manufactured bottle of alcohol.

## Asian dies in hit-and-run near Jahra shopping mall

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: An Asian, in his 40s, died in a hit-and-run accident in front of a shopping mall in Jahra.

A security source revealed that the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report on the accident. He said that upon arrival at the scene, the security officers and paramedics found that the accident resulted in the death of the Asian. His corpse was transferred to the Forensic Department, while the driver, an Arab, was referred to the concerned authorities.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to establish the circumstances that led to the fatal accident.

## ROA okays financial and admin report in meeting

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Retired Officers Association (ROA) recently held its regular general assembly meeting in the presence of the chairman and members of the board of directors, and representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the meeting, they discussed the items included in the board's annual report, and approved the financial and administrative report for 2025/2026 fiscal year.

They also approved the appointment of the association's auditing firm for the current fiscal year and determined its remuneration. The meeting also witnessed the endorsement of the board members for the new term as follows:

■ Major General (ret.) Faisal MUSAED Al-JAZZAF as Chairman of the Board  
 ■ Major General (ret.) Nader Khalil Shaaban as Vice Chairman  
 ■ Major General Eng. Tariq Hussein Al-Dousari as Treasurer  
 ■ Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Rakad Abdullah Al-Dhafaeri as Secretary  
 ■ Major General Dr. Bader Mohammed Al-Ghadouri as board member.

## Car stolen in seconds as owner leaves it running

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: A citizen's brief stop at his home turned into a shocking vehicle theft incident, as his car was stolen moments after he left it running, reports Al-Anba daily.

The incident was reported to Taima Police Station, where an investigator immediately issued a circular to Ministry of Interior patrols describing the stolen vehicle and directing officers to locate and arrest the suspect.

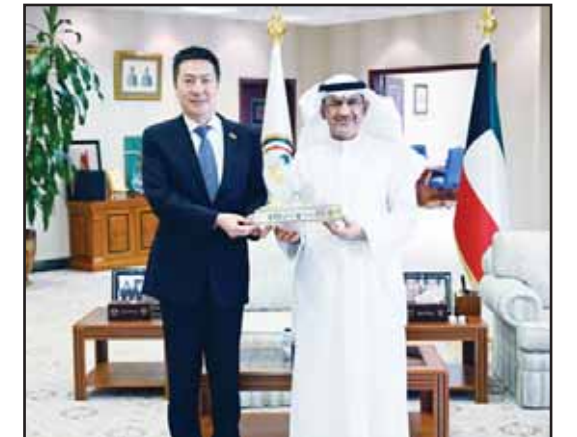
A case of "theft against an unknown perpetrator" was filed, and a search operation was launched to track down the vehicle and its driver.

According to the complaint, the citizen had left his car running outside his residence for a short period. When he returned, he discovered that an unknown individual had seized the opportunity, entered the vehicle, and driven off in an unknown direction.

**Fire engulfs two cars:** Fire engulfed two vehicles that were parked in the parking lot of a shopping complex in Egaila, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to an official statement issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), firefighters from Mangaf Fire Station rushed to the location and brought the fire under control.

The fire was extinguished without any reported injuries, and the site was handed over to the relevant authorities for further investigation.



Jahra Governorate photo

Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi receives Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait Yang Xin.

## Ways explored to boost Kuwait-China relations

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi met with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait Yang Xin as part of efforts to reinforce cooperation and communication between the two sides.

During the meeting, they exchanged friendly greetings, discussed several topics of mutual interest, and explored ways to further solidify their coordination to serve their shared interests.

The Governor confirmed that he is proud of the deep historical ties between the two friendly countries, indicating that the Kuwaiti-Chinese relations have witnessed remarkable development in various fields over the past decades.

He said China is a vital partner for Kuwait, highlighting the importance of continuing to work towards expanding cooperation in developmental, economic and cultural fields in order to realize the aspirations of the leaders and peoples of both countries to have more progress and prosperity.

He wished the Ambassador success in his diplomatic mission in Kuwait, while confirming the commitment of Jahra Governorate to support all initiatives aimed at improving cooperation and communication between the two countries.

On the other hand, the Ambassador expressed his gratitude to the Governor for the warm welcome, while praising the progress and development that Kuwait is witnessing in different fields. He affirmed that his country is keen on strengthening cooperation and friendship with Kuwait.

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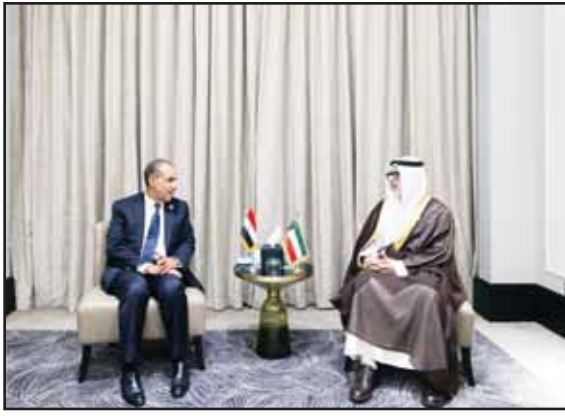
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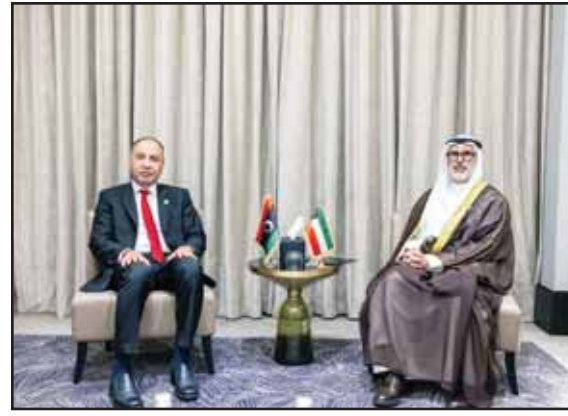
## Kuwaiti FM meets Egypt, Iraqi, Libyan and Sudanese counterparts in Amman



Egyptian counterpart



Iraq counterpart



Libya counterpart



KUNA photos  
Sudanese counterpart

AMMAN, June 23, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Monday with his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty on the sidelines of Arab meetings in Amman.

The meeting took place during the Arab Consultative Meeting and the resumed 165th ordinary session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level, held in the Jordanian capital, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral relations, explored ways to promote cooperation across various fields, and discussed the latest regional developments.

### LIBYA

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Monday with Libyan Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Al-Taher Al-Baour on the sidelines of Arab meetings in Amman.

The meeting took place during the Arab Consultative Meeting and the resumed 165th ordinary session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level, held in the Jordanian capital, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral relations, explored ways to promote cooperation across various fields, and discussed the latest regional developments.

### IRAQ

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Monday with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein on the sidelines of Arab meetings in Amman.

The meeting took place during the Arab Consultative Meeting and the resumed 165th ordinary session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level, held in the Jordanian capital, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral relations, explored ways to enhance cooperation across various fields, and discussed the latest regional developments.

### SUDAN

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Monday with his Sudanese counterpart Mohieddin Ibrahim on the sidelines of Arab meetings in Amman.

The meeting took place during the Arab Consultative Meeting and the resumed 165th ordinary session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level, held in the Jordanian capital, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral relations, explored ways to enhance cooperation across various fields, and discussed the latest regional developments.

## 'Cheating, disqualifications witness decrease in exams'

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education Hamad Al-Hamad confirmed that the Grade 12 exams are proceeding smoothly in all examination centers.

Al-Hamad made the statement on Monday, when he visited Abdulaziz Al-Babtain School in Jahra Educational District to monitor the progress of the high school exams on the fourth day. The students took the Islamic Education exam.

He pointed out the positive indicators reflecting the level of preparation, organization and commitment shown by the students and school administrations. He

affirmed that the ministry is keen to monitor the exams and ensure a suitable environment for students in the examination centers.

He said the initial impressions and student feedback proved satisfaction with the level of the exam, similar to previous exams that witnessed positive reaction and outstanding performance from students.

He revealed an increase in the passing rates for the exams graded so far, emphasizing that the preliminary results are encouraging and reflect the efforts exerted by students throughout the academic year.

He stated that the students'

adherence to examination regulations and procedures decreased cheating and disqualification cases compared to previous years. He asserted that the discipline observed in the examination committees proves the students' level of awareness and responsibility.

He commended the efforts of school administrations and examination committee staff, as well as the organization witnessed in the schools in the district during the examination period.

He revealed that the district includes 24 secondary schools, 10 for boys and 14 for girls, with an estimated total of 7,900 Grade 12

students taking the exams -- 5,400 in the science stream and 2,400 in the humanities stream.

He added that the district also hosts students from several private schools, with six private schools taking their exams in public school buildings. These include four boys schools and two girls schools, totaling about 1,200 students.

He confirmed the commitment of the ministry to implement the directives of Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabai to provide all means of comfort and support for students during the exam period, thus, creating a suitable environment for taking exams.



KUNA photo  
Kuwaiti Ambassador to Australia Malek Hussein Al-Wazzan presented his credentials on to Australia's Governor-General Sam Mostyn as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Kuwait to Australia.

## Al-Wazzan takes charge as Kuwaiti envoy to Australia

KUALA LUMPUR, June 23, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to Australia Malek Hussein Al-Wazzan presented his credentials on Tuesday to Australia's Governor-General Sam Mostyn as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Kuwait to Australia.

The credentials ceremony was held at Government House in the Australian capital, Canberra, according to a statement issued by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Australia.

During the meeting, Ambassador Al-

Wazzan conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, wishing her good health and prosperity for Australia and its people.

He affirmed the strength of the 52-year bilateral relationship between Kuwait and Australia, highlighting Australia's importance as a food security partner and expressing his aspiration to further enhance cooperation in investment and energy.

## Refugees return in record count

Displacement reverses in 10 years

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Acting head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Office in Kuwait Iman Al-Ainawi confirmed that the latest Global Trends report issued by the UNHCR showed a decline in forced displacement worldwide for the first time in 10 years.**

In a press statement, Al-Ainawi disclosed that according to the report, 5.4 million people were forced to flee violence and persecution in 2025, seeking safety outside their countries. The same year witnessed a remarkable acceleration in the pace of refugee returns, as 14.7 million forcibly displaced people returned to their areas or countries of origin, including 4.4 million refugees and 10.3 million internally displaced persons. Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria recorded the highest return rates. She added that the data showed three percent decrease in the number of refugees worldwide in 2025, reaching 41.6 million, while about 46,000 stateless persons acquired citizenship in their host countries during the past year.

She continued "the State of Kuwait is a living example in terms of supporting refugees, as it has been keen on finding lasting and peaceful solutions for refugees around the world and to affirm its solidarity with humanitarian causes through its generous contributions and continuous

support." She explained that about 70 percent of refugees have been living outside their homelands for many years, while a large number of them live below the poverty line. This highlights the need for solutions that go beyond traditional humanitarian aid and give refugees a real opportunity for self-reliance and rebuilding their lives.

She pointed out that the UNHCR has launched a new initiative aimed at reducing the number of refugees suffering from protracted displacement and dependent on humanitarian aid by more than half in the next ten years.

She stressed the need to expand resettlement programs, family reunification, and provide educational and employment opportunities for refugees in third countries.

She added that the number of beneficiaries of resettlement and sponsorship programs decreased by more than half in 2025, compared to the previous year, reaching only 81,800 refugees.

**MoSA seeks list of shops:** The Ministry of Social Affairs has asked the Union of Cooperative Societies to prepare a comprehensive list of shops and investment branches in cooperative societies, as part of its ongoing monitoring of employment conditions and investment activities, and to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations and decisions.

This list should include the type of business, update on procedures for regularizing the status of employees in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 254/2023, employment status of investors, and information about shops or investors found to have violated the regulations.

The ministry underscored the necessity of preparing an updated and detailed list of investment branches in each cooperative society -- small or medium enterprises (SMEs) or other investment activities, indicating that the list should clearly state the contract duration and the name of the investor, institution or operating company for each branch.



Iman Al-Ainawi



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 46.000 / Net
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 102.148 / Net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 53.361 / Net
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 119.173 / Net

Terms & conditions apply

## Kuwait boosts transparency with upgraded reporting platform

# Whistleblowing goes digital as Nazaha tests new Sahel features

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) announced the launch of the pilot phase for three new electronic services through the "Sahel" application as part of its efforts to develop its digital services, these services include submitting whistle-

blower reports of suspected corruption, attaching additional documents to reports, and the report status tracking service.

In a press release issued Tuesday, Nazaha stated that the pilot phase aims to test the efficiency of the services and measure the user experience, in prepa-

ration for the official launch once the evaluation is completed and any necessary improvements are made, thereby ensuring the delivery of high-quality digital services to users.

Nazaha emphasized that this initiative aims to facilitate the reporting and follow-up of suspected corruption

through secure and confidential channels.

The launch of these services coincides with World Whistleblower Day, observed annually on 23 June, in recognition of the vital role whistleblowers play in detecting corruption, contributing to the protection of

public funds, strengthening trust in public institutions, and consolidating the principles of transparency and accountability.

Nazaha affirmed that the report submission service allows users to report suspected corruption electronically with full ease and confidentiality,

while the additional documents attachment service enables whistleblowers to provide Nazaha with any new documents or information supporting a report at any time during its review, thereby helping to complete its elements and enabling Nazaha to perform its role efficiently.

Continued from Page 1

## 16,721 flagged

Moreover, 32 wanted individuals, 25 Residency Law violators and one person without a valid identification document were referred to the concerned authorities. Four individuals were found to be under the influence of drugs and one who was in possession of suspected narcotics were referred to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD).

Meanwhile, the Emergency Police General Department conducted intensive field campaigns from June 14-20.

These campaigns resulted in the issuance of 746 traffic violation citations, arrest of 15 wanted individuals, 771 instances of humanitarian assistance provision, arrest of six individuals who violated the Residency Law, seizure of 10 wanted vehicles, and arrest of three individuals without valid identification.

Eight suspects were referred to the DCGD, along with one individual found to be under the influence of drugs.

Five vehicles were impounded for various traffic violations, while the authorities responded to 126 traffic accident reports and carried out 1,402 security operations.

The department affirmed its commitment to continue its campaigns and field efforts 24/7 to ensure the safety and security of citizens and residents, as well as to instill traffic discipline.

## Adailiya outage

Meanwhile, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) opened bids during its recent meeting for the maintenance of the alarm and fire suppression systems at the Subiya Power Generation and Water Distillation Plant.

Eight companies were accepted and the submitted bid documents will be referred to the ministry for

review and presentation of a recommendation within 30 days.

The tender is part of the efforts of the Power and Water Distillation Plants Sector to carry out the necessary maintenance works in all plant facilities, including the alarm and fire-fighting systems, to enhance safety and security standards for workers.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast very hot weather across the country on Tuesday, with relatively humid conditions expected, particularly in coastal areas.

Winds will be light to moderate, shifting between northwesterly and southeasterly directions at speeds ranging from 15 to 50 km/h. The department also warned of possible dust in open and exposed areas due to occasional active winds.

During the night, conditions are expected to remain warm and relatively humid, especially along the coast. Winds will continue to be light to moderate, blowing from the northwest to southeast at speeds of 8 to 30 km/h.

Temperatures are expected to peak at 51 degrees Celsius during the day, while the minimum temperature is forecast to be around 37 degrees Celsius.

In related news, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has announced exemptions for several essential activities from the midday work ban.

It explained that these exemptions include emergency maintenance, repairs to electricity, water, and telecommunications faults, as well as the operation of airports, ports, and other vital facilities. They also cover emergency road paving and concrete work, urgent road maintenance affecting traffic safety, and the removal of landslides and other sudden hazards. The exemption also applies to any other work identified, provided prior approval is obtained from the Labor Inspection Department.

## Ambassador of

Speaking at the World Cup viewing event organized by the embassy at VOX Cinemas in The Avenues Mall, Velloso pointed out that the large turnout, which included ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, Kuwaiti public figures and members of the Argentinian community, confirms the role of sports in bringing societies closer together and strengthening the values of understanding and cooperation. He expressed his appreciation for the love and support that Kuwaitis give to Argentina and its national team, emphasizing that such emotions contribute to strengthening the friendly relations between the two countries.

He disclosed that the embassy planned this event for some time, anticipating the participation of more than 250 people. He clarified that the objectives of the event include enjoying the sporting atmosphere, celebrating the World Cup, and supporting the Argentine national team.

He added that the love for Argentina is not limited to Kuwaiti fans, as it extends to many expatriate communities in Kuwait, including the Indians, particularly those from Kerala who are keen on following and supporting the Argentine national team.

He stressed that the Kuwaiti society has great passion for football, just like the Argentinians, asserting that this occasion is not just a gathering to watch a football match, but an opportunity to celebrate friendship and close ties between peoples.

## Arab unity

However, he sounded the alarm about the reflections of ongoing conflicts and tensions in the region on security, stability, and development.

For his part, Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi said the gathering comes under critical regional cir-

cumstances that require concerted coordination and collaboration regarding shared issues and challenges.

He stressed that the Palestinian cause would remain top Arab priority, calling for stepping up efforts to stop war on Gaza, deliver humanitarian aid and protect civilian, and ensure a two-state solution.

Addressing the gathering, Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani, who chairs the current session of the Arab League Council, said it is essential for Arab countries to keep working together to address surging challenges in the region.

He also underlined the significance of maintaining Arab unity and promoting pan-Arab action, reiterating his country's support for the Palestinian issues the Palestinian people's legitimate rights.

Al-Zayani said on Monday that the security of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries marks a cornerstone of Arab and regional security.

Al-Zayani made the statement during a joint press conference with his Jordanian counterpart Ayman Al-Safadi and Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Aboul-Gheit following the consultative meeting of Arab foreign ministers and the Arab League Council's meeting at the ministerial level during its ordinary 165th session, held in Amman.

He stressed the significance of safeguarding Arab national security and cementing GCC security and stability.

He added that the consultative meeting of Arab foreign ministers provided a valuable opportunity for the conferees to share views on current challenges and regional issues of mutual concern, contributing to bolstering the Arab position and cementing Arab solidarity and coordination.

The Bahraini minister explained that the meeting addressed major regional developments, primarily a recently signed memorandum of under-

standing between the United States and Iran, which included provisions for halting military operations and reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

For his part, the Jordanian foreign minister said the gathering addressed an array of regional issues, mainly the Palestinian cause, while condemning Israeli occupation's illegitimate measures in the occupied Palestinian territory as undermining the two-state solution.

During the press conference, he remarked that settlement expansion, Israeli occupation measures in occupied Jerusalem and restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people constitute violations that undermine peace prospects.

He reiterated Arab commitment to backing the Palestinian people's right to an independent, sovereign state based on the June 4, 1967, lines, with East Jerusalem being its capital.

Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Aboul-Gheit said that the event reflected Arab awareness of the magnitude of the challenges the region is facing.

He underlined the importance of developing mechanisms for joint Arab action to enhance the ability of Arab countries to tackle regional crises and defend their common interests.

Aboul-Gheit noted that Arab ministers underlined continued Arab coordination and consultation in dealing with regional crises, as well as working to have unified positions that contribute to safeguarding Arab national security and bolstering regional stability.

Also on Monday, The Council of the Arab League at the ministerial level approved the naming of Nabil Fahmy as the Cairo-based Arab bloc's new Secretary-General for a five-year term starting from early July, succeeding Ahmad Aboul-Gheit.

In a press statement, the League announced that the Council adopted the decision during the 165th ordinary meeting in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

The council expressed confidence in Fahmy's diplomatic experience and his ability to pursue efforts to promote joint Arab action and address current challenges.

The council also extended its thanks to the outgoing chief, commending his efforts, wisdom and competence in leading joint Arab action during a period marked by unprecedented regional and international challenges.

## Hormuz security,

The International Atomic Energy Agency has not responded to requests for comment over its possible role. It has been in and out of Iran since Israel's 12-day war in 2025, but has not been granted access to bombed enrichment sites targeted by the U.S.

The U.S. said negotiators have discussed "mechanisms" to ensure that the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for oil transit that Iran effectively blocked during the war, remains open. Ship traffic is increasing but questions remain about who controls the strait.

Data and analytics company Kpler confirmed 39 ships crossed through the strait Monday, after about 92 crossings between Friday and Sunday. Prior to the war, roughly 100 ships a day made the journey.

Meanwhile, violence flared again in southern Lebanon as Israeli soldiers opened fire, killing two people. The reports of violence came after two days of calm following a ceasefire brokered on Saturday. Any renewal of heavy fighting could threaten the broader diplomatic talks, since Iran has demanded that a full truce in Lebanon be part of any comprehensive deal.

Pezeshkian and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday discussed a range of issues, including regional peace and economic cooperation, according to a statement from the presidency in Islamabad.



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Freedom 250 sparking unifying movement across all 50 states

## Trump frontman for own party as rival groups vie to shape America's 250th 'versary

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP) — The complexities of the American story aren't hard to miss.

Just steps into the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the gavel used by Nancy Pelosi when she became the first female speaker of the US House sits next to a red "Make America Great Again" cap. A shirt emblazoned with a pink triangle and "Silence = Death" protesting the government's inaction during the AIDS crisis hangs alongside a campaign shirt for President Ronald Reagan, whose administration was blamed for ignoring the epidemic.

The display is part of a broader exhibit flowing throughout the museum dubbed "In Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness," commemorating the 250th anniversary of American independence. With artifacts ranging from a Revolutionary War-era gunboat to a 1970 Earth Day flag, it's a reminder that the challenges and divides gripping the US in the age

of President Donald Trump, while stark, are not new.

"In some of those contestations, people find the hope and the resiliency to move forward," said Anthea M. Hartig, the museum's director. "History is filled with those moments where we think we're completely falling apart as we did in the Civil War and then we're trying to figure out how to build it back together again."

That unifying theme is being tested as the anniversary celebrations intensify in the coming weeks with Trump once again giving himself central billing. The creation of Freedom 250, an organization aligned with the White House, has come to rival America 250, a bipartisan group founded by Congress a decade ago. The different groups add to a sense that even a milestone anniversary can become the source of division.

The tumultuous aftermath is apparent on the National Mall just out-



President Donald Trump waves as he arrives on Marine One at Joint Base Andrews, Md., Sunday, June 21, 2026, following a trip to Camp David. (AP)

side the museum, where preparations are underway for "The Great American State Fair." A wave of artists including Martina McBride pulled

out of performances at the fair, saying they didn't realize the political overtone of the event. Trump himself is now planning to speak there

Wednesday.

The split screen will return on July Fourth as America 250 holds a concert in Los Angeles hosted by Queen Latifah and featuring performances from Chris Stapleton and The Smashing Pumpkins while the president returns to the National Mall for what he has described as a "Trump rally."

Trump is not the first president to deliver a high-profile July Fourth speech. In 1986, Reagan spoke from New York Harbor marking the 100th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. In 1976, President Gerald Ford delivered an address from Independence Hall in Philadelphia commemorating the bicentennial.

Their themes emphasized commonality and unity, framing the moment in a broader context that had little to do with the presidents themselves. Reagan joked he "wouldn't even think about trying to compete with a fireworks display" while noting "all the celebration of this day is

rooted in history."

Ford spoke of the "American adventure" as a "continuing process."

"Liberty is for all men and women as a matter of equal and unalienable right," he said. "The establishment of justice and peace abroad will in large measure depend upon the peace and justice we create here in our own country, where we still show the way."

Freedom 250 spokesperson Rachel Reischer said the organization was focused on "signature events and initiatives," including the fair, and is "sparking a unifying movement across all 50 states."

Rosie Rios, the chair of America 250, said her main priority is delivering programming for all Americans, whether that's eight consecutive ball drops that will unfold across the country, student competitions or a massive volunteer effort. As for other organizations that have emerged like Freedom 250, "the more celebrations, the merrier."



Voting booths are set up at a polling location inside St Luke's Methodist Church on June 16 in Oklahoma City. (AP)

## Judge blocks use of federal database to check citizenship, saying it could wrongly purge voters

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP) — A federal judge on Monday ruled that a recently revamped version of a federal tool central to the Trump administration's efforts to nationalize elections can no longer be used.

US District Court Judge Sparkle L. Sooknunan sided with advocacy groups that argued the recent upgrades to the program, called Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE, aggregated Americans' sensitive personal data in a way that could result in voters being wrongly purged from voter rolls.

"All in all, the federal government has knowingly trampled on the privacy rights of American citizens in a manner that threatens the sacred right to vote," Sooknunan said in an order explaining the decision. "This Court cannot stand idly by while that happens."

She said Congress had expressly prohibited the government from centralizing Americans' personal identifying information and that the federal agencies that created the SAVE program "knew that the database violates those statutory

protections."

The decision is a major legal setback for President Donald Trump in his efforts to use federal agencies to encourage a nationwide crackdown on having noncitizens illegally on state voter rolls. The modified SAVE system, which critics had referred to as an unlawful centralized federal database of voter information, had been a key pillar of the second election executive order the Republican president signed earlier this year. The ruling leaves its future uncertain.

"It's amazing how hard the Left will fight to stop us from solving problems they insist do not exist," James Percival, general counsel at the Department of Homeland Security, said of the ruling in a social media post.

DHS referred to his post as its comment on the ruling. The Department of Justice said in an emailed statement that it would "continue to aggressively defend President Trump's immigration enforcement agenda and DHS's use of the SAVE system to verify citizenship."

The executive order seeking to

create a national voter list is among numerous steps Trump has taken during his second term to try to overhaul the way elections are run. He also has tried to force voters to provide documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote, ban mail ballots from counting if they are received after Election Day and prohibit the Postal Service from mailing ballots to people not on an approved list of voters. Most of those steps have been blocked by various courts, in part because the Constitution gives states and Congress the authority to set election rules, but provides no such power to the president.

Voting by noncitizens is already illegal and punishable as a potential felony that could lead to deportation. It also is rare, accounting for just a tiny fraction of those on state voter rolls.

The SAVE program was created under an immigration law mandating that DHS help federal, state and local agencies prevent government benefits from going to noncitizens. At least 25 states used it to check their voter rolls since April 2025, af-

ter the Trump administration significantly expanded its search abilities. Since then, at least 67 million registrations have been scanned through the program, but critics worry it could end up purging valid voters from the rolls.

Anthony Nel was one of those whose registrations were wrongly flagged. The South Africa native became a US citizen more than a decade ago but had his voter registration in Denton, Texas, north of Dallas, canceled temporarily last year after Texas ran its voter file through SAVE. The check wrongly identified him as a potential noncitizen.

"I hope others can see this fight and not take their right to vote for granted," he said in a text message.

The plaintiffs, including the League of Women Voters, the Electronic Privacy Information Center and five unnamed U.S. citizens, had alleged the revamped SAVE program violated Americans' privacy and voting rights. The groups also alleged the Trump administration violated federal privacy laws by ignoring transparency requirements about the changes to the system.

## Pentagon seeks roughly \$80 billion from Congress for Iran war

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP) — The Pentagon has told senators it needs roughly \$80 billion, mostly to cover the cost of the U.S. war against Iran, adding to what is already a sizable military spending boost being sought by President Donald Trump.

The White House Office of Management and Budget has yet to make a formal request to Congress. But Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has been making the rounds on Capitol Hill, including Monday evening. A top deputy defense secretary told senators about the Iran funding request last week, according to two people familiar with the situation but not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the developments.

The push for billions of dollars in Iran war funding comes at a fraught political moment. Lawmakers are skeptical of the deal Trump struck with Iran to bring an end to the war, and wary of next steps. The White House has requested a remarkable \$1.5 trillion for the Pentagon - a nearly 50% increase over the current fiscal year's funding levels.



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks in the Oval Office of the White House during an executive order signing about quantum computing with President Donald Trump, on June 22 in Washington. (AP)

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said he's expecting a supplemental spending request from the administration for the war, and when it arrives, "we'll work through it and see where the votes are."

"We need to make sure we're doing everything we can to replenish, resupply a lot of our munitions that have been depleted - not only just with what's happening with Iran, but prior to that," said Thune, R-S.D.

Deputy Defense Secretary Stephen Feinberg spoke to several senators about the proposal in calls last week and he notified congressional committees that the \$80 billion request had been sent to the Office of Management and Budget. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

However, the funding package will almost certainly run into trouble from lawmakers who refuse to support Trump's decision to go to war and are reluctant to give the Pentagon more money at a time of high costs of living for Americans at home.

In addition to the Iran funding, Republicans hope to secure about \$1.1 trillion through the regular appropriations process, which typically requires support from both parties for approval. Then, they hope to secure an additional \$350 billion through a mostly party-line vote later this summer.



Romanian lawmakers raise their hands at the start of a joint parliament session ahead of a vote of confidence for the new government team led by Romanian Prime Minister designate Adrian Vestea, in Bucharest, Romania on June 22. (AP)

### Romanian lawmakers reject new government

Romanian lawmakers late on Monday rejected a new government proposed by Prime Minister-designate Adrian Vestea, who had hoped to bring an end to the country's protracted political crisis.

The vote in Parliament failed - with 189 votes for and 23 against - and more than half of lawmakers abstained. It needed at least

233 to pass. The outcome caps a monthlong political crisis that started when a no-confidence vote toppled the previous government in May.

Romanian President Nicusor Dan said he designated Vestea, a longtime member of the National Liberal Party, or PNL, to try to form a government based on his past administrative experience. Vestea

was Dan's second prime ministerial nomination after his previous pick, Eugen Tomac, failed to present a cabinet within 10 days.

The failed confidence vote against Vestea's proposed cabinet is expected to deepen a period of instability and turmoil, as the country currently faces one of the largest budget deficits in the European Union. (AP)

Strong front-runner to replace UK's Starmer

## Burnham prepares for Labour leadership race

LONDON, June 23, (AP) — Andy Burnham, Britain's newest lawmaker and likely its next prime minister, was meeting Labour colleagues on Tuesday in preparation for a leadership contest in which he may be the only contender.

Burnham is the strong front-runner to replace Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who announced Monday that he will step down within weeks after two years in office marred by missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with party and public.

Burnham, a former Cabinet minister who served since 2017 as mayor of Greater Manchester, won a special election last week for a seat in Parliament with the express aim of challenging Starmer for the leadership.

Burnham's chances got a big boost on Monday when former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who was considered his main rival, announced his support.

Britain's parliamentary system allows governing parties to change leaders - and thus prime ministers - without the need for a national election. The next general election does



Andy Burnham, (front left), is sworn-in as an MP in the House of Commons in London, England on June 22. (AP)

not have to be held until 2029.

Nominations for the Labour leadership will open July 9 and close a week later. If Burnham is the only contender, he could be prime minister by July 17. If there is a contest, the winner should be in place by the time Parliament returns from its summer break on Sept. 1.

Burnham was a popular mayor of Manchester, overseeing a period of rapid regeneration for the city where the Industrial Revolution was forged, and has pledged to repeat his signature brand of "Manchesterism" on a national scale.

### North America

**N. California library shooting kills 2:** A shooting at a library in Northern California on Monday left two people dead and a suspect is in custody, according to police.

Police responded to a 911 call soon after 5 pm in which the sounds of gun shots and people screaming could be heard coming from inside the Chico branch of the Butte County Library, **Billy Aldridge**, the city's chief of police, said during a news conference.

Once officers were inside the library, the suspect fled out of the back, he said. Additional law enforcement behind the library took the suspect into custody, according to Aldridge. (AP)



Aldridge

**Firefighters deliver conflicting testimony:** Firefighters delivered conflicting testimony Monday during the federal arson trial for the man accused of sparking the deadly Palisades Fire in Los Angeles last year, with one saying he heard fireworks before the blaze started and the other saying he did not.

The government has accused Jonathan Rinderknecht,

29, of sparking a brush fire in the coastal Pacific Palisades neighborhood on Jan. 1, 2025, that they say ultimately reignited and became one of the most destructive wildfires in California history.

Prosecutors have spent the duration of the trial painting Rinderknecht as a vengeful, mentally unstable arsonist who was angry at society. They brought expert witnesses who testified the fire cause was "incendiary," or caused by an open flame. Rinderknecht's attorney Steve Haney has repeatedly posited that investigators missed one simple explanation: fireworks. (AP)

**Gunman kills Montreal officer:** A suspect armed with a long gun opened fire Monday at a Montreal hotel, killing a police officer before officers returned fire, killing him, police said. A civilian also died but it wasn't immediately clear who fired that shot.

Police Chief Fady Dagher said a second officer was seriously injured in the shooting in the city's Côte-des-Neiges neighborhood but is in stable condition.

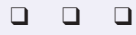
The chief said it was the first time in 24 years that a Montreal police officer had been killed in the line of duty. "It's a very, very sad day. It's a nightmare," he told reporters. (AP)

## Asia

**China's Liaoning aircraft carrier task force completes training:** A task force of the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning concluded its far-sea combat training and returned safely to its home port on Monday, the Chinese navy said.

During the training, the task force operated in multiple sea and air spaces, including the South China Sea and the Western Pacific, planning and organizing activities such as carrier-based aircraft tactical flight drills and task force search and rescue exercises.

Based on the requirements of far-sea actual combat, it planned and organized drills including air supremacy and air defense operations, sea strikes, support and cover operations, far-sea comprehensive rescue and live-weapon use. (Xinhua)



**Japan PM Takaichi faces backlash:** Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said Monday that repeatedly responding to questioning over a smear campaign scandal involving her election team was cutting into her time for prime ministerial duties, a response that drew widespread criticism.

Japan's weekly magazine Shukan Bunshun has recently published a series of reports, citing evidence including emails and audio recordings, alleging that Takaichi's campaign team instructed an IT firm to use artificial intelligence to create and spread defamatory videos attacking rival candidates during last year's ruling Liberal Democratic Party leadership race and the February general election.

During a session of the House of Representatives Budget Committee on Monday, opposition Centrist Reform Alliance lawmaker Yuichi Goto pressed



A cask containing spent fuel from Kashiwazaki-Kariwa is transported to an interim storage in Mutsu, Aomori, northern Japan on Sept 26, 2024. (AP)

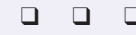
Takaichi on her camp's connection to the alleged activities. (Xinhua)



**Japan completes 20th ocean discharge of N-tainted wastewater:** The 20th round of ocean discharge of nuclear-contaminated wastewater from Japan's crippled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant was completed, the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (TEPCO), said on Monday.

The latest release began on June 1 and ended on Saturday afternoon. A total of 7,927 tons of nuclear-tainted wastewater was discharged, containing approximately 1.3 trillion becquerels of radioactive tritium, according to TEPCO.

The discharge was completed one day behind schedule after the operation was suspended twice. The interruptions, on June 10 and 13, were caused by a valve malfunction in a water storage tank and a brief lightning-induced outage affecting two power transmission circuits, respectively. (Xinhua) (Xinhua)



**Thailand accepts Cambodia's UNCLOS conciliation notice:** Thailand has formally accepted Cambodia's notification to enter into compulsory conciliation proceedings under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding their long-standing maritime boundary dispute, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Monday.

During a press briefing, Maratee Nalita Andamo, acting director-general of the Department of Information under the ministry, said Thailand's response last Friday, submitted following Cambodia's initial transmission on June 2, officially marks its entry into the proceedings.

Maratee said the Thai government has emphasized that its primary objective is to limit the process solely to the delimitation of the overlapping maritime boundary under UNCLOS. (Xinhua)

Over 40 shells found in school shooting: police

## Offshore typhoon threatens 2 northern Philippine provinces with possible flooding

MANILA, Philippines, June 23, (Agencies): Philippine authorities on Tuesday warned of possible flooding in low-lying villages, landslides and rough seas in the country's two northernmost provinces as a powerful typhoon roared offshore.

Typhoon Mekkhala was last tracked over the Pacific before midday, about 375 kilometers (230 miles) northeast of Aparri town in Cagayan province with sustained winds of up to 175 kph (110 mph), the country's weather agency said.

Mekkhala was moving northwestward at 10 kph (6 mph) and was not expected to make a landfall, but the typhoon's wide rain and wind band could batter the eastern coasts of Cagayan and Batanes, an island province further north, Philippine officials said.

The first of a five-step tropical cyclone wind warning was hoisted over the northeastern coastal areas,

prohibiting boats from heading out to sea. Disaster-mitigation personnel were placed on alert in vulnerable villages and towns.

The typhoon was forecast to pass nearest to the coast of Batanes on Wednesday, about 275 kilometers (170 miles) offshore, before heading past Taiwan's east coast and then blowing toward Japan's southern main island of Kyushu on Saturday.

The Philippines is battered by about 20 typhoons and storms each year. The country also is often hit by earthquakes and has more than a dozen active volcanoes, making it one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

### Also:

**MANILA:** More than 40 shells were found at the scene of a school shooting in **Tacloban City** in the central **Philippines** on Monday morning,



A police vehicle enters San Jose National High School a day after a shooting incident inside the school in Tacloban city, central Philippines, on June 22. (AP)

according to local police. Eastern Visayas Regional Police

Director Brigadier General **Jason Capoy** said the shooting occurred at

around 9 a.m. local time while classes were ongoing at the school.

Capoy said the two alleged gunmen, 15-year-old and 14-year-old students of the school and close friends, used a 9mm Glock pistol and a .38-caliber revolver in the attack.

Among the seven injured victims were four females and three males, he said.

In a statement, Philippine National Police Chief General **Jose Melencio Nartatez** confirmed that 10 people were victims in the shooting, including the three who were killed.

Emergency responders rushed the wounded to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Video footage posted on social media showed several gunshots ringing out inside a classroom as students and teachers ducked for safety and sought cover.

An investigation is underway to

determine the motive and circumstances surrounding the shooting.



**MANILA:** A 10-year-old boy was killed and two other children were injured after an unexploded 40mm mortar projectile they found in a river exploded in **Cotabato** province in the southern **Philippines** before noon on Monday, local police said.

Police said the victims were swimming in a river in the municipality of Arakan when they discovered the unexploded ordnance.

According to investigators, the children struck the projectile with a rock, triggering an explosion.

The 10-year-old boy died from injuries sustained in the blast, police said. The two injured victims were an eight-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy. They were taken to a hospital for treatment.

## S. Sudan to hold first-ever election in December after repeated delays

JUBA, South Sudan, June 23, (AP): Authorities in South Sudan on Monday set the date of Dec. 22 for the country's first general election since independence in 2011.

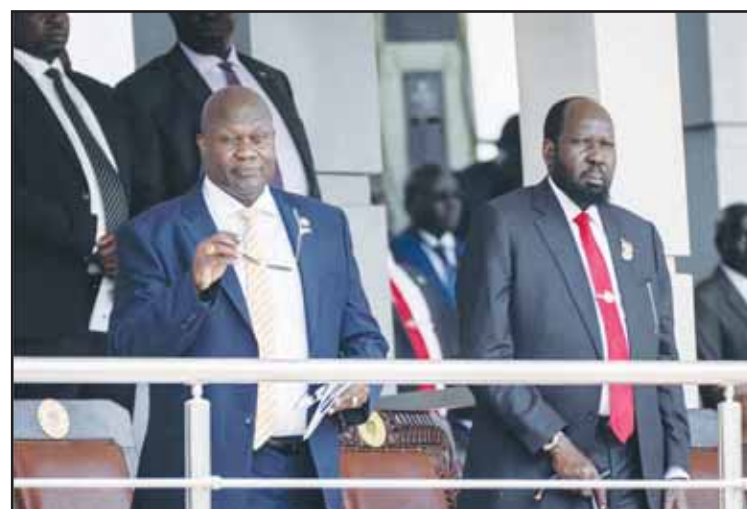
Elections have been repeatedly postponed amid recurring armed conflict. There is also a long-standing political dispute between President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar, who was suspended as the country's first vice president last year after he faced treason charges.

While the National Elections Commission says preparations for the election are underway, the opposition and some observers note legal issues and logistical hurdles.

Machar's group, known as Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition, or SPLM-IO, said unresolved disagreements with Kiir's administration make the pursuit of elections a dangerous matter.

"Anyone coming to register voters and campaign in territories controlled by the mighty SPLM-IO, you will be a prisoner of war," Nathaniel Pierino, acting chairperson of the group, said in a post on Facebook. "Be reminded, the country is at war."

While Kiir is expected to be a presidential candidate in December's



South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, (right), and Vice President Riek Machar, (left), attend a mass led by Pope Francis at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan on Feb 5, 2023. (AP)

election, it remains unclear if Machar, who still faces criminal charges, would be allowed to stand.

South Sudanese government troops have been fighting opposition forces since a 2018 peace deal broke down over a year ago. While fighting persists in some remote areas, Machar is under house arrest in Juba,

the capital, occasionally appearing in a cage to answer charges his group says are politically motivated.

A UN inquiry has found that South Sudan's leaders are "systematically dismantling" the 2018 peace agreement, signed to end a civil war and return Machar to a unity government with Kiir.

## Afghan Taliban to hold rare, closed-door talks with EU officials on deportations

BRUSSELS, June 23, (AP): A delegation from the Afghan Taliban is traveling to Brussels on Tuesday for closed-door talks with European Union staff, expected to focus on deportations, said a Taliban official.

Afghans make up one of the largest groups of migrants seeking asylum in the European Union, but a growing number of governments in the 27-nation bloc want to speed up and increase deportations for those whose claims are rejected or who commit crimes in their host countries.

Afghan authorities have imposed draconian restrictions on rights, particularly for women and girls, since the Taliban seized power in the country in 2021 in the wake of the chaotic withdrawal of US-led forces.

Rights groups said Tuesday's meeting undercuts the EU's human rights obligations and could endanger people in Europe and Afghanistan.

"Any engagement with the Taliban needs to prioritize protecting human rights and accountability - not deporting people to danger there," said Fereshta Abbasi, a researcher at Human Rights Watch. "EU countries are undermining their credibility by condemning Taliban abuses and pursuing accountability on one hand, while cooperating with the Taliban to forcibly return Afghans on the other."

With not a single EU nation recognizing the Taliban, the meeting in Brussels symbolizes a small crack in the group's diplomatic isolation since seizing power five years ago.

The five-person delegation in Brussels from the Taliban - a government that none of 27 EU nations recognizes - includes Abdul Qahar Balkhi, a New Zealand-born spokesperson for the Taliban's foreign ministry, said a Taliban official speaking on condition of anonymity.

Belgian Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot said that while Belgium doesn't recognize the Taliban, it would comply with EU requests to



Migrants, most of them from Afghanistan, rest at an old school used as a temporary shelter on the island of Kythira, southern Greece on Oct 7, 2022. (AP)

grant the Taliban visas.

"Belgium cannot confer legitimacy on a regime accused of serious human rights violations," he said in a statement referring to Belgium's hosting of the EU institutions. "Making a meeting possible in the framework of our host-state policy does not amount to recognition, does not amount to legitimacy, and does not constitute an invitation by the Belgian government."

Members of the Taliban delegation were issued visas after security screening with limited territorial validity, giving them 24 hours in Belgium and no access to other countries in the Schengen border-free travel zone.

Since neither Belgium nor the EU officially recognizes the Taliban government, the meeting will not take place on official buildings or sites belonging to either. The European Commission has declined repeated requests to provide additional information.

A spokesperson for the European

Commission said Monday that the meeting is in response to pressure from a clear majority of the 27 EU nations - 20 of whom signed a letter in October calling for stronger migration policies including a ramping up of deportations.

"They had asked the Commission to coordinate such technical contacts on returns," said spokesperson Markus Lammert. "Member states are looking into ways to return persons who have committed serious crimes and who are possibly a security threat."

The first EU-Taliban meeting was held in Afghanistan in January when the Commission sent a mission to Kabul. It also maintains staff there.

The October letter was drafted in part by Belgian Migration Minister Anneleen Van Bossuyt, who said that "we have sent a clear and powerful message to the European Commission: we can no longer afford a standstill. It is high time for a firm and joint approach, so that Europe can regain control over migration and security."

## Armed group in Nigeria kills at least 20 and exchanges gunfire with police

ABUJA, Nigeria, June 23, (Agencies): An armed group killed at least 20 people in a community located in the north-central region of Nigeria, police said Monday.

The attack occurred Sunday in the Kawel community located in the Bokkos area of Plateau state, police spokesman Alfred Alabo said in a statement.

Police officers quickly arrived at the scene and exchanged gunfire with the assailants, forcing them to retreat, Alabo said. No arrests were reported. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in a region that has experienced a recurring pattern of violence.

"The remains of the victims have since been released to their families for burial, as the families declined autopsy," Alabo said.

Plateau State Gov. Caleb Mutfwang instructed the government's emergency management and humanitarian agencies to provide immediate relief and support to victims and families, spokesperson Joyce Ramnap said in a statement.

An insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has killed thousands of people and displaced millions over the years, according to the United Nations. Armed gangs are also active in the northwest and north-central parts of the country.

A nighttime attack in March, killed 20 people in Gari Ya Waye community in Plateau.



Police officers gather at the scene of a gunmen attack in Gari Ya Waye community in the Jos North, Nigeria on March 30. (AP)

### Also:

**KIGALI:** Rwanda has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting and supporting refugees through inclusive policies that promote dignity, self-reliance and opportunity.

In a message marking World Refugee Day which was observed on June 20, the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management said in an X post on Saturday that Rwanda continues to ensure that refugees are not only protected but also empowered to contribute to their communities and shared development through enhanced socio-economic inclusion, access to services, livelihoods and sustainable solutions.

"Together with partners, we remain committed to keeping the promise of safety alive and leaving no one behind," the ministry said.

The post was released days after Rwanda received a new group of 173 asylum seekers evacuated from Libya by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The ministry said the group comprises individuals of different nationalities, including Sudanese, Eritrean, Somali, Ethiopian and South Sudanese nationals.

Since September 2019, Rwanda has received more than 3,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Libya, of whom 2,623 have been successfully resettled in third countries.

## Bangladesh PM to visit China

BEIJING, June 23, (Xinhua): At the invitation of Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Tarique Rahman will pay an official visit to China from June 24 to 26, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson announced on Monday.

Spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a daily press briefing that it will be Prime Minister Rahman's first visit to China since he took office, adding that during the visit, President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, will meet or hold talks with him respectively, during which they will have in-depth exchanges of views on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of common concern, and point out the direction for the development of bilateral relations.



Tarique Rahman, Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, takes oath as Prime Minister of Bangladesh from President Mohammed Shahabuddin, left, at the National Parliament in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Feb 17. (AP)

## Kuwait oil price plunges to \$85.07 pb

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 59 cents to reach USD 85.07 per barrel on Monday, compared to USD 85.66 pb on Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corpora-

tion (KPC) on Tuesday.

In global markets, Brent crude decreased by USD 2.67 to reach USD 77.90 pb, and West Texas Intermediate decreased by USD 1.99 to reach USD 73.86 pb.

## Kuwait Finance Minister heads delegation to OPEC Fund Forum

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): The Minister of Finance, Dr. Yaqub Al-Rifaai, headed Kuwait's delegation participating in the fifth edition of the OPEC Fund Development Forum, held on Tuesday in the Austrian capital, Vienna.

The Ministry of Finance said in a press statement that the forum's opening session featured a recorded address by Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen, who highlighted the role of the OPEC Fund over the past five decades in supporting sustainable development and promoting international cooperation.

He stressed the importance of international partnerships in addressing global challenges and supporting the transition toward more sustainable and resilient energy systems.

The ministry noted that this year's forum carried special significance as it coincided with the golden jubilee marking 50 years since the establishment of the OPEC Fund for International Development in 1976.

The event served as a high-level international platform to discuss key global development and economic challenges and explore ways to mobilize financing and strengthen de-

velopment partnerships in support of sustainable development efforts.

Forum sessions addressed several priority issues, including enhancing development financing, investing in sustainable infrastructure, supporting food and energy security, strengthening South-South cooperation, and developing human capital to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

The ministry said Kuwait's participation reflects its active role in supporting international development efforts and underscores its strategic partnership with the OPEC Fund for International Development, which is based on a long record of cooperation and contributions to financing development projects around the world.

The Kuwaiti delegation included Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and Kuwait's Governor to the OPEC Fund, Waleed Al-Bahar, Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Services Saad Al-Allati, Acting Director General for Economic Affairs Saad Al-Rashidi, and Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to international organizations in Vienna, Talal Al-Fassam.

## Strait of Hormuz's future is unsettled even as more ships venture through

NEW YORK, June 23, (AP): Ship traffic has picked up in the Strait of Hormuz since Iran and the U.S. signed an interim deal to end a war that constricted global oil supplies and fueled inflation, but questions surrounding control of the vital waterway and whether vessels will be charged tolls to cross it could interfere with negotiations to forge a lasting peace.

Tehran and Washington clashed over the Strait of Hormuz again this past weekend. Citing Israel's latest attacks on Lebanon, Iran declared that it reclosed the strait. The U.S. was quick to contest that. Maritime tracking data showed that dozens of ships passed through on Saturday and Sunday, though far fewer than the daily average before the war.

President Donald Trump suggested the U.S. might impose its own tolls on strait crossings if a final deal with Iran was not reached during the countries' 60-day negotiating period. Passage was free before the war, but Iran last month established a new governmental authority to collect money from ships and has said it still expects vessels to register with the Persian Gulf Strait Authority.

No one country owns the Strait of Hormuz, which borders both Iran and Oman. Last week's memorandum of understanding allowed Iran to manage the strait for now while holding discussions with Oman and six other Gulf states "to define the future administration and maritime services" of the waterway. Iran agreed not to charge transiting vessels tolls for 60 days.

Legal experts and maritime associations have repeatedly stressed that a toll regime would upend decades of international trade precedent involving the world's waters. If the U.S. and Iran cement a final deal, analysts say it could take months for the flow of oil, natural gas, fertilizer and other commodities to return to prewar levels.

**Here's a closer look at the status of the Strait of Hormuz:**

Data and analytics company Kpler said its tracking confirmed 71 ships traveled through the strait between Friday and Sunday, with a peak of 35 crossings Saturday. In contrast, about 100 to 130 vessels a day made the journey before the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran in late February, and Tehran responded with its own attacks and effective closure of the waterway.

As part of the provisional Iran-U.S. framework, Iran said it would conduct demining work within 30 days and remove "technical and military obstacles" to shipping. Iran's lead negotiator and parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, told Iranian state media Monday that his country would manage the strait in accordance with international maritime law.

The main central route of the Strait of Hormuz is still mined and remains closed. Ships have been using the smaller northern route, which goes through Iranian waters, and the southern route, which goes through Omani waters. But "caution is still clear" in the many vessels either sticking to Iran's prescribed route or trying to conceal their positions and identities by keeping their transponders off, Kpler said.

Early in the war, Iran threatened to attack ships that tried to use the Strait of Hormuz without its approval and began vetting vessels in a pay-to-pass scheme that shipping analysts dubbed the "tollbooth." Iran also demanded in early April the right to collect tolls as a precondition for relinquishing its chokehold on the strait.

Although the Trump administration imposed sanctions on the Persian Gulf Strait Authority late last month to oppose what Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described as Tehran's attempt to extort global maritime trade, the president on Saturday sug-

gested the U.S. could impose its own tolls for "services rendered as the Guardian Angel to the countries of the Middle East."

The administration has not provided details on how the U.S. would apply any charges on ships if talks with Iran do not yield a completed agreement. Shipping analysts have expressed surprise at how much control over the strait the initial agreement gave Iran.

"Almost all the power goes into Iran to determine the arrangements going forward in the future. This is what we really need clarity on," said Philip Belcher, marine director of Intertanko, a trade group for independent tanker owners, said Thursday.

Collecting tolls in the strait could violate an enduring principle of international maritime trade: freedom of peaceful navigation. The concept was codified by the United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea, which took effect in 1994.

The treaty provides ships the right of unimpeded "transit passage" through more than 100 straits worldwide, including the Strait of Hormuz. It only applies to natural waterways, so authorities can charge fees for ships to traverse man-made waterways such as the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal.

Oman is among the more than 170 countries that have ratified the U.N. convention, but the U.S. and Iran are not. Maritime associations have argued that all nations remain subject to the treaty's provisions.

James Kraska, a U.S. Naval War College professor of international maritime law, notes that the U.S. and Iran are both members of the International Maritime Organization, the U.N. agency that oversees safety and security measures in international shipping. Both countries also are parties to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, a treaty that governs standards for building and operating ships.

In straits like Hormuz, fees can only be applied at established ports of entry or for services specifically requested by a ship, such as specialized navigation aid through hazardous areas, according to Kraska, who is also a visiting professor at Harvard Law School.

"If Iran wants to apply those to everybody, then it has to adjust the traffic separation scheme rules, and that can only be done through the member states of the International Maritime Organization," he said.

"You can't impose fees for a ship exercising its right of transit passage," Kraska added. "So the bottom line is, no - fees in this context are just not lawful."

Countries sometimes have joined forces to share the costs of maintaining a strait, he noted. For example, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore worked with the International Maritime Organization and later other countries to develop such an agreement for the Strait of Malacca, but it involved negotiated contributions from the states using the passage, not fees on individual ships.

Conditions in the Strait of Hormuz have escalated or deteriorated quickly over the course of the war. While the outlook for shipping has improved since the U.S. and Iran pledged to extend their ceasefire, "there is a degree of nervousness around the situation," said Marcus Baker, the global head of marine, cargo and logistics at insurance brokerage and risk management company Marsh.

"As far as the insurance position is concerned, there's a good deal of support for ship owners that are trying to move out" during this period, but the interim deal between Iran and the U.S. does not include language for keeping the strait toll-free beyond the negotiating window, Baker said.

"We'll see what the next six weeks brings us," he said.

# Business

Expand access to global private credit markets

## ABK Wealth Management partners with Barings

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: ABK Wealth Management, the asset and wealth management arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, has entered into a strategic partnership with Barings, a US\$481 billion\* global alternative asset manager with deep expertise across credit markets. This partnership will expand access for Kuwaiti investors to innovative Kuwaiti dinar (KD)-denominated investment solutions in global private credit markets.

Demand for KD-denominated investment solutions in the global private credit markets has continued to grow among Kuwaiti investors seeking to capture the attractive income potential of global private credit markets while managing currency risk. Barings' private credit platform is supported by a global, deep origination network, underpinned by long-standing relationships.

The partnership further strengthens ABK Wealth Management's position as a leading provider of sophisticated investment offerings in the local market and enables it to serve a broader client base. By combining Barings' global credit expertise and deep origination network with ABK Wealth Management's well-established reach and deep understanding of the Kuwaiti investor base, this collaboration represents a meaningful step forward in making institutional-quality credit investment solutions accessible to a wider audience of local and regional investors.

Sherif ElRafie, CEO of ABK Wealth Management, said, "Our partnership with Barings is a cornerstone of our commitment to bringing the finest global investment solu-



Sherif ElRafie, CEO of ABK Wealth Management



Bryan High, Head of Global Private Finance at Barings

- Deposit rating upgraded from Baa2 to Baa1
- Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) upgraded from ba3 to ba2
- Local and Foreign Currency Counterparty Risk Rating upgraded from Baa1 to A3

tions closer to our clients. It reflects our ongoing commitment to continuously raise the bar in terms of investment quality and product innovation. Through Barings' deep credit expertise and ABK Wealth Management's track record in delivering alternative and income-generating strategies, we will be in a unique position to advise investors on private credit investment solutions that are precisely calibrated to their return objectives and risk tolerance."

Bryan High, Head of Global Private Finance at Barings, said, "We

continue to see strong demand for access to opportunities global private credit markets, and working

with trusted partners such as ABK Wealth Management is central to meeting those needs. Partnerships play an important role in how we deliver our capabilities across the GCC, allowing us to combine global expertise with strong local insights and relationships. Through this collaboration, we are well positioned to bring Barings' global private credit capabilities to investors in Kuwait in a way that aligns

with local market dynamics and client objectives."

Through this partnership, ABK Wealth Management continues to strengthen its position as a trusted provider of sophisticated investment solutions, offering clients access to globally diversified opportunities supported by institutional expertise, disciplined risk management, and tailored investment structuring.

About ABK Wealth Management  
ABK Wealth Management is the investment arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) and a leading provider of wealth management and investment solutions in Kuwait. The company offers a comprehensive range of services, including discretionary portfolio management, investment advisory, alternative investments, capital markets solutions, and financial planning, serving high-net-worth individuals, family offices, institutions, and corporate clients. Guided by a client-centric approach and backed by the strength and heritage of ABK, ABK Wealth Management is committed to delivering tailored investment strategies, innovative solutions, and long-term value creation across regional and global markets.

**About Barings**

Barings is a \$481 billion\* global alternative asset manager that partners with institutional, insurance and wealth clients and supports leading businesses with flexible financing solutions. The firm, a subsidiary of MassMutual with a minority investment from MS&AD, seeks to deliver excess returns by leveraging its global scale and capabilities across credit, real assets, capital solutions and emerging markets.

Bid to enhance share liquidity

## Action Energy Co. appoints KIC as Market Maker



AEC CEO (left) and KIC CEO (right), during the signing.

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Action Energy Company K.S.C.P. (Listed on the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait: ALFTAQA), Kuwait's leading local partner for integrated upstream services, owner and operator of one of the youngest rig fleets in the region, today announced the signing of a market maker agreement with Kuwait Investment Company (KIC).

This step builds on the strong investor reception to Action Energy Company's (AEC) initial public offering, and aims to enhance trading liquidity for shareholders.

Under the agreement, KIC will enter paired buy and sell orders on AEC's shares during trading sessions, within a defined price spread and minimum order size, and at no less than a specified percentage of

total monthly trading value. These arrangements are expected to enhance liquidity and support continuous supply and demand for the "ALFTAQA" share. In May 2026, AEC signed a market maker agreement with National Investments Company (NIC), reflecting the Company's ongoing commitment to deepening liquidity and supporting an orderly market for the "ALFTAQA" share.

## Kuwait stocks close in red amid moderate trading

KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Tuesday's trading session in negative territory, with all major indices recording losses amid moderate trading activity.

The General Index declined by 33.07 points, or 0.38 percent, to settle at 8,709.66 points. A total of 290.5

million shares changed hands across 21,677 transactions, with a total value of KD 81.9 million (approximately USD 266.6 million).

The Main Market Index edged lower by 15.46 points, or 0.18 percent, closing at 8,719 points. Trading volume reached 142.1 million shares through

10,024 transactions, valued at KD 26 million (around USD 84.6 million).

The Premier Market Index recorded a steeper decline, falling 38.54 points, or 0.42 percent, to 9,159.67 points. A total of 148.3 million shares were traded in 11,653 transactions, with a value of KD 55.9 million (approximately

USD 182 million).

Similarly, the Main 50 Index dropped by 20.15 points, or 0.21 percent, to close at 9,680.91 points. Trading activity stood at 120.2 million shares executed through 7,771 transactions, totaling KD 21.6 million (about USD 70.3 million).

## Decision fatigue: Why do we feel tired before the day even begins?

By Hala Al-Humaidi

Many people think fatigue comes only from physical effort or long working hours. However, there is another kind of exhaustion that can be just as draining: decision fatigue.

A person might wake up after a full night's sleep and still feel mentally tired before the day even begins. The reason is not always an overwhelming workload, but rather the sheer number of decisions they have to make. Every day, we make dozens, sometimes hundreds, of choices. Some are simple, like deciding what to wear or what to have for breakfast, while others involve work, family, or finances. As these decisions pile up during the day, our mental energy slowly runs out, making later decisions harder and often less effective.

Psychologists call this phenomenon decision fatigue. It happens when a person's ability to think clearly and make good choices declines because their mental resources are worn down. That's why people are often more impulsive at the end of the day, more likely to delay important decisions, or more inclined to choose the easiest option instead of the best one.

The problem has grown even more serious in modern life because of the overwhelming number of choices we face. In the past, options were



Hala Al-Humaidi

fairly limited. Today, though, we constantly encounter countless alternatives in nearly every area of life - from products and services to digital content and career paths. While having many choices might seem like a good thing, it can also become a quiet mental burden that steadily drains our energy.

Social media adds to decision fatigue too. People are constantly exposed to new information, opinions, and options that call for some kind of evaluation or reaction. This nonstop flow of content keeps the brain active even during times meant for rest and recovery.

Common signs of decision fatigue include feeling overwhelmed by simple choices, putting off important decisions, getting irritated by too many questions or options, and making quick decisions without enough thought. Over time, this can harm work performance, personal relationships, and even healthy habits.

To lessen decision fatigue, experts suggest simplifying daily life whenever possible. Creating routines for repeated tasks, setting clear priorities, and making key decisions during times of peak alertness can help save mental energy. Cutting down on digital distractions and allowing time for mental breaks can also boost focus and restore energy levels.

In the end, the issue is not always how much work we do, but how many decisions we make. Managing our mental energy has become just as important as managing our time. Every decision takes a bit of our attention, and learning to protect that energy might be the key to a calmer, more productive, and more satisfying life.

# Kuwait Finance House, Ministry of Social Affairs sign MoU to foster sustainable community and development partnership

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) and the Ministry of Social Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in implementing social and developmental initiatives. This partnership establishes an integrated institutional framework that supports sustainable development efforts and enhances the quality of services provided to beneficiaries in Kuwaiti society.

The MoU was signed by the KFH Group Chief Legal Officer, Fawaz Al-Enezi, and the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial, Administrative, and Co-op Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Dr. Sayed Issa. The signing took place in the presence of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah; KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan; and Head of Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh.

Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, emphasized that the MoU reflects successful cooperation between state institutions and the private sector to serve the community and achieve development goals. She added that it translates national plans into impactful programs and initiatives, confirming that KFH is a prominent development partner and a role model in community service.

"We are proud of our partnership with KFH, which over the years has established itself as one of the most prominent national institutions supporting social and developmental work in Kuwait. We look forward to expanding our cooperation in a way that benefits Kuwaiti society," the Minister added.

KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan, noted that the MoU reflects the bank's commitment to building strategic partnerships with state institutions. He emphasized that sustainable development is a shared responsibility requiring alignment between the public and private sectors. AlShamlan stressed that strengthening cooperation on development initiatives is vital to achieving a lasting positive impact and reinforcing the values of partnership and social responsibility.

"We consider the partnership an institutional platform to maximize the societal im-



Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.



KFH Group CEO Khaled AlShamlan



Fawaz Al-Enezi



Minister Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Khaled AlShamlan, and Dr. Sayed Issa after signing the memorandum of understanding.



Fawaz Al-Enezi signed the memorandum of understanding in the presence of Khaled AlShamlan and Yousef Al-Ruwaieh.



Minister Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Khaled AlShamlan, and Dr. Sayed Issa.



Minister Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and a delegation from Kuwait Finance House headed by Khaled AlShamlan.



Minister Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Khaled AlShamlan, Dr. Sayed Issa, Fawaz Al-Enezi, and Yousef Al-Ruwaieh after signing the memorandum of understanding.

part of our joint initiatives, invest in Kuwaiti society, and support national priorities that strengthen social and economic efforts and advance the sustainable development goals in line with Kuwait Vision 2035."

Al Shamlan highlighted KFH's

- **Al-Huwailah:** KFH is a prominent development partner and role model in serving the community
- **AlShamlan:** Sustainable development is a shared responsibility requiring collaboration between the public and private sectors
- **Al-Ruwaieh:** Strategic partnership set to maximize societal impact and support sustainable development

partnerships with government bodies, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, which have yielded tangible results. These joint efforts have been particularly impactful in relieving debtors, empowering youth and individuals with disabilities, raising community awareness, and protecting

the environment.

Meanwhile, Head of Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh explained that KFH continues to act as a development partner for government agencies via high quality community initiatives. He stressed that social responsibility remains an integral part of the bank's strategy.

Al-Ruwaieh added that the MoU aligns with KFH's firm commitment to social responsibility and its role as an influential national development partner. He stressed that cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs reflects the efforts to advance sustainable, high-quality initiatives that serve various segments of society.

He noted that KFH continues to support national youth awareness initiatives, including the anti-drug campaign "A Nation Protects You". Launched under the patronage of His Excellency the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, the campaign backs the Ministry of Social Affairs in protecting youth and enhancing community security.

Al-Ruwaieh explained that KFH prioritizes empowering people with disabilities through specialized training and "Partners in Employing Them" campaign. He noted that the number of employees with disabilities across KFH Group increased to 260 during 2025 from 244 in 2024.

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that KFH continues environmental initiatives under the Keep It Green umbrella. These include the national campaign "This Is Your Role" to clean and beautify vital squares alongside the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the bank contributed to planting over 12,000 trees with the Green Vision Volunteer Team since 2021 and recorded over 3,000 volunteer hours cleaning beaches, islands, and green spaces.

These initiatives earned KFH numerous local, regional, and international accolades. Notable recognitions include a special honor from the Council of Ministers of Labor and Social Affairs in the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR award from Global Finance magazine, solidifying its position as a leading global Islamic financial institution.

## Warsh's gamble: A quieter Federal Reserve could mean volatile markets, higher rates

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP): The Federal Reserve has for decades moved steadily from a remote, opaque government agency that shared little about what it did or why to a more transparent institution willing to explain how it makes decisions and what it thinks about the economy.

But in his first press conference last Wednesday, new chair Kevin Warsh began to reverse some of those steps. Warsh, like many economists, thinks the financial markets have become too dependent on Fed guidance, and that such direction is more effective in financial crises or economic downturns.

Warsh's changes to the Fed's communications represent something of a return to former chair Alan Greenspan's circumspect approach. Greenspan died at 100 on Monday. He is the only former chair Warsh praised at his swearing-in last month.

As chair, Warsh has rapidly delivered on his promise to slash the Fed's communications. He sharply cut the central bank's post-meeting statement and underscored at the press conference the removal of the guidance it formerly gave to financial markets about the Fed's next interest-rate moves. Yet such an approach carries the risk of more violent swings in stock and bond prices, analysts say, and ultimately could lead to higher interest rates for consumers and businesses.

"Forward guidance in general has served to suppress volatility and anchor market expectations," said George Pearkes, global macro strategist at Bespoke Investment Group. "And that has led to lower borrowing rates, relative to alternatives."

Still, the impact on consumers is likely to be modest, Pearkes added, with mortgage rates perhaps a quarter-point higher than they would be otherwise.

Such swings could be a sign of things to come. Previous chairs have signaled the Fed's next moves clearly enough that financial markets have largely anticipated the central bank's actions. But Warsh appears to be following Greenspan, whose oracular comments often kept investors guessing.

Yet Greenspan, who served as chair from 1987 to 2005, also ushered in several changes that made the Fed more transparent. He began the practice of issuing statements after each Fed meeting to announce its interest-rate decision. He also began publicly releasing the minutes of each meeting and the full transcripts, after a five-year delay, though those moves came in response to pressure from Congress.

The first statement was issued Feb. 4, 1994, and said the Fed would increase its key rate for the first time in five years. The move caught investors off-guard and the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged



Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh speaks during a news conference following the Federal Open Market Committee meeting, Wednesday, June 17, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

2.4% that day.

The paring back of Fed communications is part of a larger package of potential reforms to the central bank's operations that Warsh signaled Wednesday. He announced that the Fed will set up five task forces to examine the Fed's communications, its balance sheet, how it analyzes and gathers economic data, the impact of AI on productivity and jobs, and the frameworks it uses to analyze inflation.

Warsh said the communications task force would consider changes to the quarterly economic projections the Fed issues as well as look at other recent innovations, including press conferences. Former chair Ben Bernanke was the first to hold them, though he did so only after every other Fed meeting. Warsh's predecessor, Jerome Powell, shifted to holding them after every meeting.

Such steps were a sharp contrast with the 1990s, when Greenspan never explained a Fed decision, on the record, to reporters. Warsh could ultimately dial back some of the Fed's increased transparency.

"This is a big change in how the Fed has conducted itself since the (2008-2009) global financial crisis," Matthew Luzzetti, chief U.S. economist at Deutsche Bank, said. "Since then there has been a one-way train to greater communication, more transparency, and more for-

ward guidance. Warsh has now put that train in reverse."

Previous Fed chairs, starting with Bernanke, have seen a clear benefit to more communication: It helps guide the markets in the direction the Fed wants. Fed officials control a short-term interest rate, but the rates that affect the economy - such as the yield on the 10-year Treasury - are heavily influenced by investors' expectations for inflation and economic growth. By telegraphing their next moves, policymakers can cause those longer-term rates to change even before the Fed adjusts its own benchmark rate.

Yet Warsh's view is that financial markets have become too dependent on Fed guidance. Instead, he wants investors to gauge where the Fed may move next by examining economic data and making their own judgments, which the Fed can then consider as part of their assessments of where the economy is headed.

"Financial market prices are probably the most important source of information to guide central bankers," Warsh said at Wednesday's news conference.

David Andolfatto, an economics professor at the University of Miami and former economist at the St. Louis Fed, said he agreed with Warsh that forward guidance has flaws. It can be easily upended by unexpected events, he said, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine or the Iran war.

But the chair should set out guidelines for how the Fed will react to unexpected events, Andolfatto said, or to challenges such as the persistent inflation it is grappling with now, yet Warsh so far hasn't done so.

"I'm with him on dispensing with forward guidance, but you have to replace it with a contingency plan," Andolfatto said. "It's not enough to say, trust me, we'll keep inflation at target."

Ironically, Warsh's decision to drop forward guidance may empower the other 18 members of the Fed's rate-setting committee, Pearkes said. Those officials - six members of the Fed's governing board, plus the presidents of the 12 regional Fed banks - frequently give public speeches, and their remarks will get even more attention as financial markets seek clues about what the Fed may do next.

A big challenge to Warsh's approach will come if there is a sharp financial downturn or economic crisis, as occurred during the COVID pandemic. In those circumstances, economists said, forward guidance can play an important role calming markets.

"Whether it will stand the test of time and he will behave this way for five years is a very different question, but one that we're going to have to wait for events to unfold to get an answer to," Pearkes said.

Valid for accounts opened digitally until June 30

# NBK launches an exclusive offer for new customers: KD 50 & chance to become a millionaire with Al-Jawhara account

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has launched an exclusive offer for new customers, enabling them to open an Al-Jawhara account seamlessly through the NBK Mobile Banking App, without the need to visit a branch, while receiving KD 50.

This offer reflects NBK's commitment to delivering a seamless and advanced digital banking experience, enabling non-customers to join the NBK family and start benefiting from the advantages of the Al-Jawhara account within minutes. The initiative further enhances access to innovative savings solutions while keeping pace with customers' evolving expectations and fast-paced lifestyles. The offer is available until June 30, 2026, subject to terms and conditions.

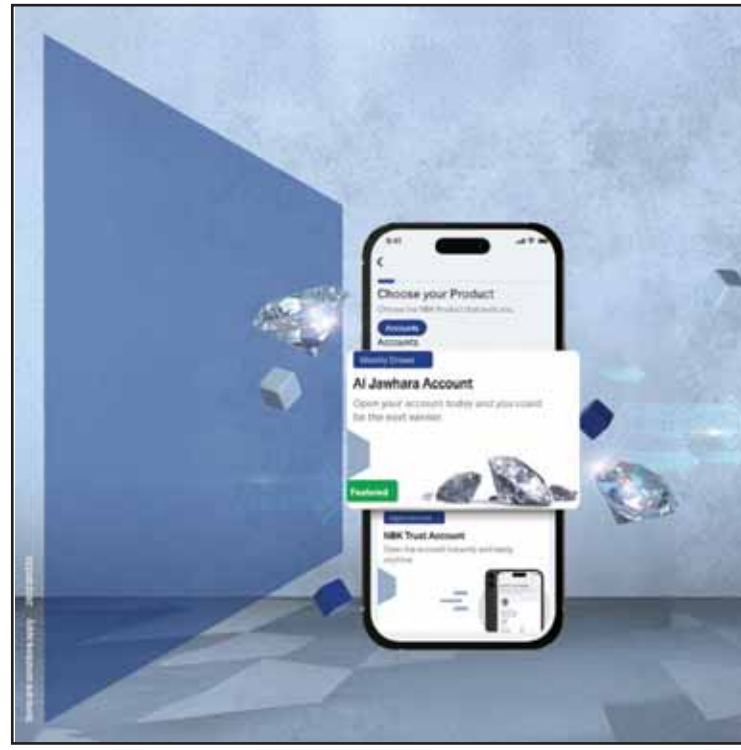
Commenting on the offer, Head of Liabilities Products **Ashwaq Abu-Hadida** said: "At NBK, we are committed to providing a wider segment of customers with the opportunity to benefit from the Al-Jawhara account, which combines the advantages of saving with the excitement of winning, while giving customers the chance to achieve their financial aspirations through participation in draws offering rewarding cash prizes of up to KD 1 million."

"This offer reflects our commitment to deliver-



Ashwaq Abu-Hadida

**Abu Hadida:** The offer underscores NBK's commitment to delivering tangible value to its customers from the very outset of their banking journey



NBK Mobile Banking App

ing meaningful value to customers from the very first moment. Non-customers can now join NBK and open an Al-Jawhara account easily through the NBK Mobile Banking App, without the need to visit a branch, while also receiving KD50. This enables new customers a chance in Al-Jawhara draws from the outset, further encouraging a culture of saving," Abu-Hadida added.

Through this offer, NBK underscores its commitment to delivering innovative banking solutions that elevate the banking experience and empower individuals to achieve their financial goals, while continuously enhancing its digital services to offer a seamless, efficient, and rewarding banking journey.

The total value of Al-Jawhara account prizes amounts to KD 5 million annually. The prize structure includes a weekly draw of KD 20,000, a monthly draw of KD 125,000, and the grand prize of KD 1 million, which is awarded through three draws held each year.

As for Al-Jawhara Junior, which is designed for customers under the age of 21, monthly draws offer seven cash prizes, including KD 1,000 for three winners and KD 500 for four winners. In addition, one winner receives a cash prize of KD 10,000 with each Al-Jawhara grand prize draw.

Donating reusable water bottles

## AU launches water drive to support day laborers

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: As part of its ongoing commitment to corporate social responsibility and meaningful community engagement, the Australian University (AU) organized a water distribution drive to support day laborers across Kuwait during the summer season. Conducted over three days, the initiative brought together AU staff and students in a collective effort to promote wellbeing and recognize the contributions of workers serving across the country.

Volunteers visited multiple locations to distribute reusable metal water bottles to laborers working outdoors, offering a gesture of appreciation while helping them stay hydrated amid rising temperatures.

This initiative forms part of AU's broader efforts to create a lasting and positive social impact through meaningful outreach and volunteerism. By encouraging participation in

community centered initiatives, AU continues to strengthen the values of empathy, generosity, and responsible citizenship while reinforcing the importance of collective action in supporting the wider community.

Commenting on the initiative, Ms. May Al Musallam, Senior Manager of Public Relations and Marketing, stated: "At AU, we view corporate social responsibility as a meaningful responsibility that extends beyond giving back; it is about cultivating a culture of service, empathy, and social awareness among our students and employees. Through this initiative, we sought to recognize the dedication and hard work of day laborers while encouraging our community to contribute in ways that create a tangible and lasting impact. We are proud of the enthusiasm demonstrated by our volunteers and remain committed to initiatives that enrich lives and strengthen community connections."



Group photo of the AU volunteers.

**'Failure is not an option'**

## Merz vows pension reform

BERLIN, June 23, (AP): German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pledged Tuesday to push through a proposed reform of the country's creaking pension system that would include raising the retirement age gradually in line with life expectancy, declaring that "failure is not an option."

Merz's coalition of center-right and center-left parties took office just over a year ago with pledges to reform and turn around Germany's sluggish economy, Europe's biggest. It has since become deeply unpopular, in part because of perceptions that it has squabbled but so far achieved little.

Germany's economy returned to modest growth last year after shrinking for two years in a row. The government expects underwhelming growth of 0.5% this year, a figure that has been pushed down by the fallout from the war in Iran.

The country of 83.5 million people already faced increasing competition from Chinese companies, higher energy costs following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and issues including U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs and trade threats. On top of that, it has deeper problems such as high production costs, lagging private investment and increasingly costly health and pension systems, caused by an aging population.

On Tuesday, a government-mandated panel of experts and politicians delivered 33 recommendations to stabilize the pension system. The aim is to prevent the level of pensions from falling and ward off the

need for a big long-term increase of the levy employees pay into the pension system. They currently contribute 18.6% of gross wages.

Germany has long faced the problem that "fewer and fewer contributors have to finance pensions for more and more retirees," Merz said. "Doing nothing is not an option."

The panel's central proposals include introducing market investments as an element of individuals' pension insurance to relieve financial pressure on the system, based on a model used in Sweden.

Germany moved two decades ago to raise the regular retirement age from 65 to 67, implementing the change gradually. The commission proposed going beyond that to raise it in line with life expectancy starting in 2031. The life expectancy in Germany is 78.5 years for men and 83.2 years for women, according to the national statistics office.

The commission's co-chairperson, Constanze Janda, said the change would affect the retirement age "moderately," and that it would increase by about six months over 10 years if life expectancy continues to rise as it is now.

In the mid-2010s, Germany started allowing people who have paid pension contributions for 45 years to retire at 63 without a financial hit. The panel proposed scrapping that financial provision and raising the minimum retirement age to 64.

It also said that the age at which people can start reducing their working hours ahead of retirement should be raised from 55 to 58.

Reinforcing talabat's CSR efforts and commitment to community wellbeing

## talabat, LOYAC launch Food Aid Initiative in Kuwait



talabat - LOYAC Food Aid Distribution Initiative

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting communities across Kuwait, talabat, the leading everyday app in Middle East & North Africa (MENA), launched a food aid distribution initiative in collaboration with LOYAC. In line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, the initiative aimed to support 300 families in need across Kuwait through the distribution of food aid baskets filled with a variety of essential food items and household staples.

"As a people-first company, we continue to place the wellbeing of our communities at the center of our CSR efforts and at the top of our priorities," commented Amal Bukhamseen, Manager of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait. "Through this initiative and our collaboration with LOYAC, we

- The initiative supported 300 families across Kuwait
- All essential food supplies provided through talabat mart

aim to support families across Kuwait by improving access to essential food supplies while contributing to broader efforts that elevate the everyday quality of life for our society."

On her part, Lulwa AlSharrah, Specialist at the Community Empowerment Department at LOYAC, said: "We greatly value our growing partnership with talabat, whose continued commitment to community-focused initiatives reflects the power of collaboration in creating meaningful impact.

We are proud to contribute to an initiative that helps ensure essential food support reaches families in need across Kuwait while supporting stronger and more resilient communities."

Volunteers and representatives from both organizations supported the packing and distribution of the food baskets, while all items were supplied by talabat mart. The baskets included a variety of essential food staples to help meet the needs of these families.

It serves to note that talabat continues to champion partnership-driven CSR initiatives that expand the reach of its efforts and create meaningful impact across the communities it serves. By working alongside trusted partners, the company aims to address pressing social needs and support the wellbeing of individuals and families across Kuwait.

## Britain's economic woes fuel discontent with Brexit a decade after historic vote to leave EU

LONDON, June 23, (AP): Simon Boyd's firm makes prefabricated steel structures on the south coast of England and ships them to customers as far away as Ghana and Barbados. Mike Hawes represents Britain's carmakers as the head of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

The business leaders were on different sides of the debate when Britain voted to leave the European Union in 2016. But 10 years later they are both frustrated by Brexit.

A decade ago, backers promised that Brexit would be the key to a bright new future where, freed from the edicts of EU bureaucrats, Britain would regain control of its laws and its borders and the economy would boom. But the reality failed to live up to the hype as Britain struggled to adjust to life without unfettered access to the 27-nation free trade bloc and its market of 450 million people.

Economic growth is anemic, taxes are high, public services are creaking and successive governments have been unable to stem the flow of migrants who wash up on the English Channel coast in inflatable boats. As a result, it's not exactly a happy anniversary.

"No, it's not delivered everything that was said it would deliver on the tin, but it is delivering," Boyd told The Associated Press. "It's very sluggish. You only need to look at the statistics to see that."

Boyd, the managing director of REIDSteel, which employs about 130 people at a plant in Christchurch, England, still stands behind his decision to support Brexit, but blames lackluster results on politicians who weren't committed to delivering. Britain has also experienced unexpected challenges over the past 10 years, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, Boyd said.

The Brexit vote quickly increased costs for businesses as they prepared for an uncertain future during years of negotiation over the U.K.'s new relationship with the EU. Then, when Britain finally left the bloc on Jan. 31, 2020, new rules governing trade in goods and services made it more expensive and time-consuming to do business with European partners.

Creon Butler, who leads the global economy and finance program at Chatham House, a London-based think tank, said there were long-term consequences to leaving the European single market. "Whatever was promised, whatever one hoped

for, (you have) to accept that it has been a major loss of wealth and prosperity for us through the choice we made to leave," he said.

"That's a decision the British public have made, and they're entitled to make it, but it does make us poorer," he added.

By most measures, the British economy today is weaker than it would have been without Brexit, according to a recent report published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The report, compiled by researchers in Britain, Germany and the U.S., compares the performance of the U.K. economy to 33 other countries, including its European neighbors, the U.S., Canada and Japan.

Brexit has reduced Britain's gross domestic product, a broad measure of economic output, by 6% to 8%, investment by 12% to 13% and productivity by 3% to 4%, the researchers concluded.

Britain's carmakers were early and outspoken opponents of Brexit, arguing that increased red tape surrounding shipments of parts and finished vehicles would damage an industry built on a network of interlinked factories in multiple European countries.

Those concerns reduced investment in the U.K. auto industry because international carmakers were less likely to see Britain as an attractive way into the European market. As a result, the industry is hoping that international trade deals will help boost demand for its products.

"We have been able to move with the times, so to speak, but undoubtedly it's putting us at more cost into the industry, more pressure," Hawes said. Brexit supporters trumpeted the freedom to negotiate its own trade agreements as one of the primary benefits of leaving the EU, and Britain has since signed dozens of deals with countries ranging from Australia to India to the United States.

But EU countries still account for 41% of Britain's exports and half its imports, according to the latest government figures. During more than 50 years as a member of the EU and its predecessors, many British businesses also came to rely on Europe as a source of cheap labor, especially after the bloc's eastward expansion in 2004.

That pipeline dried up after Brexit ended the free movement of labor, one of the bloc's founding principals.

The owners of Britain's curry restaurants, an integral part of communities from Aberdeen in Scotland to Aberystwyth in Wales, have been especially hard hit by the loss of Eastern European workers who went home rather than deal with burdensome new visa requirements. And they're furious because the industry backed Brexit after assurances it would lead to more visas for South Asian cooks, something that hasn't happened.

"We feel betrayed," said Oli Khan, president of the Bangladesh Caterers Association UK, who serves up tandoori lamb chops, vegetable biryani and chili paneer at his restaurant in Stevenage, north of London.

In an effort to mitigate some of the problems caused by Brexit, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has begun talks with the EU about rebuilding a closer relationship as he seeks to energize the country's stagnant economy.

Starmer won't finish them, however. On Monday, he said he is stepping down.

Starmer's move comes as a survey by the Ipsos polling firm, the Policy Institute at King's College London and the think tank UK in a Changing Europe suggests that frustration with Brexit is growing.

The survey of 2,245 Britons aged 18 and older carried out in May, found that 48% said Brexit was going worse than they expected, up from 28% in March 2021. Some 9% said it was going better than expected and about one in three said it was going as expected.

But Boyd said the most important survey is still the one that took place on June 23, 2016, when 51.9% of those who cast ballots - or 17.4 million people - voted to leave EU.

He continues to believe that Britain has a brighter future outside the EU.

Brexit hasn't delivered on its promise because politicians, large corporations and other entrenched interests worked to thwart the will of the people, Boyd said. This resulted in a Brexit deal that kept Britain too closely tied to the EU and unable to realize its potential as an entrepreneurial nation filled with creative, hardworking people, he said.

And there's no going back, he said. "Imagine if we were to rejoin ... today. The conditions upon which we would be allowed back in would be akin to us re-boarding the Titanic on the condition that we surrender our life vests first," he said. "Need I say any more?"

# MILAN

## FASHION



A model wears a creation as part of the Shinyakozuka Spring/Summer 2027 collection, presented in Milan, Italy, Monday, June 22, 2026. (AP)

Heat meets restraint on Milan's runways

# Summer recut

**I**n complicated, heavy times, Milan designers went lighter - if not in materials, then in silhouette.

Amid economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and a sweltering Milan Fashion Week, designers largely stripped things back for next summer, embracing clean lines and pared-down looks. Prada led the way, with co-creative directors Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons arguing for simplicity and familiar clothes reimagined through proportion and fabrication.

That didn't mean dressing for the heat was straightforward. Milan's runways were filled with leather and knits for the next summer season, suggesting that fashion's elite may need generous air-conditioning, mountain escapes or higher latitudes to wear some of the looks.

Key trends from Milan Fashion Week menswear Spring-Summer 2027 collections that closed on Monday include the embrace of luxury materials, sartorial ventilation and lighter tailoring, while a few defiantly chose bling over restraint.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of the season was the persistence of leather.

Prada's leather combinations were inspired by the universality of jeans, featuring slim five-pocket pants matched with cropped flat-pocketed jackets that functioned as shirts. Other designers

used woven and perforated techniques to make leather more breathable, even as temperatures climbed.

In Milan, luxury and practicality were often in tension.

After years of oversized silhouettes, menswear is once again embracing the body.

Designers broadly agreed that a well-dressed man still wears a suit. The challenge was how to survive the heat. The response was ventilation, with dress shirts left unbuttoned. Some were rendered transparent. Or they were simply done away with.

Long trousers remained dominant, but there was a shift toward closer-to-the-body dressing. Dolce & Gabbana pushed the idea furthest with microshorts that showcased muscular legs, while some brands exposed torsos.

Tailoring remained central to Milan collections, but in lighter, more relaxed forms.

Designers softened construction, opened necklines and experimented with fabrics and construction that allowed more airflow. The result was tailoring designed for rising temperatures without abandoning formality. U.S. designer Thom Browne, now under Zegna ownership, returned to Milan for the first time since 2008 with layered suiting that drew heavily on summer-friendly

seersucker and pleated skirts for men, long a brand hallmark.

The message from Milan was clear: the suit isn't going anywhere, but it is adapting.

While much of Milan embraced restraint, some designers doubled down on decoration.

Philipp Plein presented a crystal-encrusted denim ensemble that takes days of handwork to complete. Dolce & Gabbana also leaned into embellishment, including beaded accents that recalled coral.

If Prada's vision was reduction, these designers unapologetically offered maximalism and glamour.

A lighter Milan calendar created opportunities for emerging designers to gain attention alongside the industry's biggest names.

Martin Quad made his Milan debut with unusual tailoring tricks that got him noticed in his native Copenhagen, while Domenico Orifice embraced leather and richly woven textiles for his co-ed collection.

Japanese designer Shinya Kozuka's Shinyakozuka label made its Milan debut with one of the most poetic and summery collections of the season, epitomized by a bare-chested model in a billowing sheer coat in teal worn baggy white trousers. (AP)



A model wears a creation as part of the Martin Quad Spring/Summer 2027 collection presented in Milan, Italy, Friday, June 19, 2026. (AP)



A model wears a creation from Prada's Spring/Summer 2027 men's collection presented in Milan, Italy, Sunday, June 21, 2026. (AP)



Models wear creations from the Dolce & Gabbana Spring/Summer 2027 Men's collection presented in Milan, Italy, Saturday, June 20, 2026. (AP)

## Variety

**TUCSON:** A ransom note related to the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie, the mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie, said the 84-year-old had died, CNN and other news organizations are reporting, citing law enforcement sources.

Some media outlets had previously reported receiving ransom notes tied to the case in the days after Guthrie's disappearance in early February from her home in the foothills just outside Tucson.

CNN reported Monday that one of notes revealed that Nancy Guthrie was dead - and those who kidnapped her did not mean to kill her, but she died shortly after her disappearance.

CNN said it knew the contents of one such note, and that a Tucson TV station had received two notes.

CNN and the station agreed to hold off on sharing the contents of the notes publicly so any future communications with the kidnapper or kidnapers could be authenticated, CNN reported.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department declined to comment on the note's contents. The FBI didn't respond to a request for comment. And the Guthrie family didn't make any immediate social media posts or any public comments about the notes Monday. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** A judge found Monday that a man charged with murder in the stabbing of actor James Handy is not mentally competent for criminal court proceedings.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Maria Cavalluzzi ruled that 44-year-old Michael Gledhill cannot understand the case against him and cannot rationally assist his lawyer in his own defense.

Handy, the 81-year-old actor whose credits include "Jumanji" and "Top Gun: Maverick," was in a relationship with Gledhill's mother, and was found stabbed in the chest and lying unconscious outside her home on June 3, police and prosecutors said. He was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Gledhill was arrested after telling police he was the person they were looking for. Officers had responded to the home after a 911 caller said, "I am the son of man, I just killed the man of sin," police said. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Comedian Carlos Mencia has pleaded not guilty to 12 felony charges alleging he failed to report or pay taxes on more than \$8 million in earnings.

The 58-year-old Mencia appeared behind glass in a custody area of a Los Angeles County court at his arraignment on Monday, when a judge also reduced his bail from \$250,000 to \$50,000.

Mencia had been in jail since his arrest on Thursday. Court documents show that he has now posted bail, but it's not clear whether he has been released.

Emails seeking comment from an attorney representing the comedian were not immediately answered.

He was charged with six felony counts of failure to file personal income tax with the intent to evade taxes - one each for the years 2019 to 2024 - and six similar counts for corporate taxes. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Linda Cohn, who has hosted more episodes of "SportsCenter" than anyone, is retiring after 34 years at ESPN.

The prolific anchor announced Monday that June 30 will be her last day after she covers the NHL draft with fellow longtime co-host John Buccigross.

Cohn has hosted more than 5,500 editions of "SportsCenter." She will make her final appearances at 6 p.m., 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. ET Friday.

"Linda Cohn is a legend and a major part of the history of ESPN," ESPN president of content Burke Magnus said in a statement. "She has brought enthusiasm, personality and her love of sports to our audience for more than 30 years and her contributions to ESPN both in front of and behind the camera would make a very long list. We wish her all the best in her retirement and sincerely thank her."

Cohn started her career in Patchogue, New York, as a news anchor, writer and sports reporter at WALK-AM/FM in 1981. She started at ESPN in Bristol in 1992 and moved to Los Angeles in 2009 to co-host the 1 a.m. "SportsCenter." She's been working on special projects since that show was moved back to Bristol in 2025. (AP)

Joseph McGrail-Bateup's 122.4-decibel 'now' sets Guinness record

## Canberra town crier breaks world record for loudest voice

MELBOURNE, Australia, June 23, (AP) — Joseph McGrail-Bateup, an Australian professional air conditioner cleaner and honorary town crier, has been recognized as the world's loudest person.

Guinness World Records last week acknowledged the 58-year-old Canberra resident recorded the loudest ever shout by an individual. He yelled "now" at 122.4 decibels.

That broke the previous record of 121.7 dB set by Northern Ireland schoolteacher Annalisa Flanagan in 1994. She had yelled an ear-piercing "quiet."

That is in the noise range of a chain saw, a jet aircraft taking off and an ambulance siren at close range.

The record attempt was not something McGrail-Bateup could train for, he said Tuesday.

"There's no way that you can actually practice for it. You have to just keep it for the day, especially with the world record attempt," McGrail-Bateup said.

"It took me seven attempts just for one word, which was the word 'now,' and my voice was shot for the next couple of days as well. It was husky. It was terrible. So no, you can't really practice for it. But it's a lot of fun when you're doing it," he added.

McGrail-Bateup considered himself the world's loudest man rather than the loudest person, he said. There was no previous record for the loudest man.

"I'm pleased that she (Flanagan) gets to keep her record. So she's still the loudest woman in the world and I'm the loudest male in the world," McGrail-Bateup said.



In this image taken from video, Joseph McGrail-Bateup demonstrates his loud voice in Canberra, Australia, Tuesday, June 23, 2026, after being recognized by Guinness World Records as the world's loudest person. (AP)

McGrail-Bateup said he stumbled upon Flanagan's record when searching Guinness World Records unsuccessfully for feats in the realm of town crying.

He became competitively loud when he was appointed the official town crier of the national capital Canberra in 2017. It's an hon-

orary and part-time role established by the local government which he considers "a bit of fun." His town crier name is Lord Joseph.

He makes announcements at community events, school fetes and car shows.

With the job came membership of the Ancient and Honorable Guild of Australian Town Criers, a competitive professional organization dedicated to preserving members' historic and ceremonial roles.

He won a 2024 guild competition with the loudest "Oyez, Oyez, Oyez," at 98 dB. That was a command for silence and attention before an Australian town crier makes a proclamation.

He experimented with several words for his world record attempt before settling on "now."

His shout was recorded May 2 in a Canberra radio studio by a professional acoustic engineer and with witnesses present. The files were sent to Guinness World Records, which announced the record Friday.

It's the second time McGrail-Bateup has broken a world record. In 2019, he broke a speed record for an archer shooting 10 arrows. His time of 60.03 seconds shaved a fraction of a second off a record that had stood since 2015.

Nine months later, a 7-year-old boy shattered McGrail-Bateup's record by 11.4 seconds.

McGrail-Bateup wasn't interested in attempting to regain the archery record or in keeping his shouting record.

"If someone beats me, that's fantastic," he said. "Records are meant to be broken."

## Obituary

From rock to R&B, his vision shaped the sound of modern music

## Legendary music executive Clive Davis dies at 94

NEW YORK, June 23, (AP) — Clive Davis, the record company lawyer who became one of the music industry's most powerful figures, launching or resurrecting the careers of such superstars as Janis Joplin, Whitney Houston, Carlos Santana and Alicia Keys, has died, his family confirmed. He was 94.

Davis died in his Manhattan apartment, weeks after being hospitalized for an upper respiratory issue, his publicist Aliza Rabinoff said.

"To the world, our father was the iconic music legend whose vision, instincts, and relentless pursuit of excellence shaped the soundtrack of countless lives. He discovered, mentored, and championed the greatest artists in modern music history, leaving an indelible mark on culture that will endure for generations," the statement read.

Many artists mourned his passing on Monday. Carlos Santana called him "a visionary." Michael Bubl  said the music executive "believed in people and their dreams." Patti Smith thanked Davis for a half century of "love and support."

Unlike other record moguls whose influence waned as they got older, Davis' might only seemed to grow, spanning multiple genres and labels. Into his later years, he was directing the careers of everyone from Barry Manilow to "American Idol" winners Carrie Underwood and Kelly Clarkson. And his exclusive pre-Grammys gala, held the Saturday night before the Sunday award show every year since 1975, continued to be an institution.

"Clive's talent has always been seeing and hearing what other people don't," former President Barack Obama said in a video message played at this year's gala.

Clive Jay Davis was born on April 4, 1932 in Brooklyn, New York, where he grew up in the Crown Heights neighborhood. His father was an electrician and traveling salesman. He attended New York University and then Harvard Law School, eventually landing a job as an in-house lawyer at Columbia Records.

Davis always had a knack for business, and by 1967, became president of the company, just seven years after being hired as an attorney. He cited attending the Monterey International Pop Festival that year as pivotal; it eventually led him to bringing Bruce Springsteen, Chicago, Neil Diamond and many other groups to the label - bringing a counterculture spirit to a company that had resisted rock 'n' roll.

Davis took big swings in the music industry, particularly in his support for Black artists, beginning when he signed Gamble and Huff's Philadelphia International Records in 1971.

In 2015, the NAACP recognized Davis for his groundbreaking work by presenting him with the Vanguard Award. And last summer, Davis was presented with the Apollo Theater's Apollo Legacy Award and inducted onto its Walk of Fame.

His success stories were staggering, with Houston a crowning achievement and devastating tragedy: Davis signed her to his Arista record label when she was just a teen and turned her into America's reigning pop princess.

Houston racked up multiple No. 1 hits and became one of the top-selling artists in pop history before drug abuse hobbled her career. She died in a Beverly Hills hotel room in 2012, hours before she was to appear at Davis' annual pre-Grammy Awards gala. He had been convinced she was turning her life around.

"Maybe I should have been more skeptical," Davis wrote in his 2013 memoir, "The Soundtrack of My Life," "but I've always been optimistic, and I felt hopeful. It felt like old times."

He also launched the career of multi-platinum, multiple-Grammy winner Keys - and was quick to note other talents he signed, including Joplin and Billy Joel, Blood Sweat & Tears and other "all-timers," as he so often put it. "I signed Patti Smith, the great Renaissance woman ... I signed Lou Reed ... I signed the Grateful Dead," he proudly touted in an interview with The Associated Press in 1999.

He also signed the then-up-and-coming producer Sean "Diddy" Combs to a label deal with his Bad Boy Records. Under Davis, the label would have some of its biggest successes, most notably with late rap icon the Notorious



In this file photo, Barry Manilow, left, and Clive Davis attend Clive Davis' 90th birthday celebration in New York on April 6, 2022. (AP)



In this file photo, Music producer Berry Gordy, right, appears with Clive Davis during Davy's pre-Grammy party in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Feb. 10, 2007. (AP)



In this file photo, Carlos Santana, left, and producer Clive Davis pose with their Grammys at the 42nd Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, on Feb. 23, 2000. (AP)



In this file photo, Music producer Clive Davis, left, appears with singer Whitney Houston at the pre-Grammy gala in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Feb. 13, 2011. (AP)

B.I.G. That was long before the hip-hop mogul Diddy would be incarcerated, convicted of violating the federal Mann Act, which bans transporting people across state lines for any sexual crime.

Davis didn't simply have an eye for new talent - he also knew how to keep veterans relevant, decades after their first hit. Aretha Franklin, whose legend was made at Atlantic Records, flourished in her later years at Arista, as did Luther Vandross, who made his last albums for another Davis label, J Records.

It was Davis who conceived of the 1999 album "Supernatural," which paired guitar god Santana with some of the day's hottest talents. The record won a record-tying eight Grammys and gave Santana more success than he had ever enjoyed in his decades-long career.

And he had middle-aged star Rod



In this file photo, Clive Davis, left, and Jennifer Hudson arrive at a Grammy Gala & Salute to Industry Icons with Clive Davis honoring David Geffen in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Feb. 12, 2011. (AP)



In this file photo, Sony Music Entertainment's Chief Creative Officer and famous hitmaker Clive Davis posing for a portrait in his office in New York on Feb. 18, 2013. (AP)



In this file photo, Bobby Brown, left, and Whitney Houston appear with music producer Clive Davis, right, at a pre-Grammy party in New York on Feb. 24, 1998. (AP)



In this file photo, Clive Davis, left, appears with Aretha Franklin at Aretha's 69th birthday party, in New York, Friday, March 25, 2011. (AP)



In this file photo, Dionne Warwick, left, and Clive Davis arrive at the Pre-Grammy Gala And Salute to Industry Icons in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Feb. 9, 2019. (AP)

he thinks the public will connect," raved Manilow, who had worked with Davis since he was a budding singer at Columbia Records.

Davis also had his struggles. Though he became president of Columbia Records in 1967 after joining the label in 1960 as a lawyer, by 1973 he was gone in a bitter fallout. The label accused him of mismanagement of funds and he was fired. Although Davis says he was later cleared, it wasn't the end of his problems; he later was indicted on tax evasion charges, pleaded guilty to one count and had to pay a \$10,000 fine.

However, Davis would declare victory: He says Columbia gave him the money to start Arista to resolve the dispute, and the label would become a huge success with artists like country superstars Brooks & Dunn, sassy R&B group TLC, Babyface, Houston, Franklin and others.



In this file photo, Alicia Keys, left, and Clive Davis attend the "Hell's Kitchen" Broadway musical opening night performance in New York on April 20, 2024. (AP)



In this file photo, Record producer Clive Davis, left, and rock singer Rod Stewart arrive at Davis' pre-Grammys gala in New York on Feb. 22, 2003. (AP)

## HEALTH/SCIENCE



Fanaco Lake is dry and cracked in Castronovo di Sicilia, central Sicily, Italy on July 17, 2024. (AP)

## Mexico, Italy and others see up to 2 more months of heat stress than in 1970s: study

WASHINGTON, June 23, (AP) — Mexico, Kenya, Italy and other nations around the world are experiencing one to two more months of heat stress than they were several decades ago, new research published Monday says, and some areas even more so. Regions previously untouched by heat stress are now feeling it, too.

Extreme feels-like temperatures, heat stress days and tropical nights have all become dramatically more frequent, long and severe over the past six decades as the planet's warming intensifies — a result of the burning of fossil fuels coal, oil and gas — according to a new study published in the journal Nature Climate Change on Monday.

The researchers went beyond just temperature, which is frequently studied, and used feels-like temperatures, to understand more of the impact on people. They assessed heat stress on individual humans, influenced by temperature, humidity, wind speed and more. They used

what's called the Universal Thermal Climate Index to analyze those factors and model the human body's response to the environment.

The combination of heat and humidity can be dangerous for humans, because humidity impacts how sweat evaporates, and that's a cooling mechanism. Heat waves that are humid can be more fatal than dry heat waves as humans don't cool down as easily.

Past studies have looked at the extent to which human-driven climate change has sent temperatures soaring, especially in recent years. One study says people globally suffered an average of 41 extra days of dangerous heat in 2024. Some research says that the world is on track to add nearly two months of superhot days each year by the end of the century.

Here, researchers looked at heat stress at three levels: strong (index temperatures of greater than or equal to 32 degrees Celsius, or 89.6 degrees Fahrenheit); very strong (index temperatures of greater than or equal

to 38 degrees Celsius, or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit); and extreme (index temperatures of greater than or equal to 46 degrees Celsius, or 114.8 degrees Fahrenheit).

Places that might see around 50 more days per year of at least strong heat stress compared with the 1970s include parts of Southern Africa, such as in Namibia and Angola; Eastern Africa, including parts of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda; and parts of Mexico and Central America.

In Southern Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey, some areas will see up to 40 additional days with strong heat stress compared with the 1970s. Much of Southern Europe is seeing almost a full month of additional strong heat stress days from decades ago.

In the US, much of the country sees 15 or more days of at least strong heat stress, and southern parts, including Texas and Florida, are seeing close to 25 or more days with very strong heat stress. Those heat stress seasons are also lasting longer.

Beinao-1 system features implantable unit surgically placed inside patient's head

## Brain to regain: Chinese health-tech innovators strive to restore lost functions

BEIJING, June 23, (Xinhua) — More than five years into the paralysis of his lower body due to a road accident and having endured two and a half years of futile traditional treatment, Zhiping (pseudonym) could hardly believe he'd be walking again.

But he is walking now, one year after a multi-target combined surgery, by just imagining the movements in his head.

It was made possible by the world's first simultaneous implantation of the Beinao-1 intelligent brain-computer interface (BCI) system and a spatiotemporal spinal cord stimulation system.

Zhiping underwent the surgery at Xuanwu Hospital of Capital Medical University in Beijing in May last year and stayed there to practice using motor imagery — imagining lifting his legs — to control a spinal cord stimulation device and a lower-limb exoskeleton.

Five months later, as the muscle strength in his waist and legs improved, Zhiping began to independently control the movement of both thighs, lift his lower legs, and walk with the aid of special braces and crutches. As of now, his condition has improved from a complete spinal cord injury to an incomplete spinal cord injury, according to the hospital.

Jointly developed by the Chinese Institute for Brain Research (CIBR) in Beijing and NeuCyber NeuroTech (Beijing), Co., Ltd, the semi-invasive Beinao-1 system features an implantable unit surgically placed inside the patient's head, with electrodes positioned on the outer surface of the dura mater without penetrating or damaging brain tissue.

"Don't be mistaken by its incredibly thin and soft design — this electrode array can build a communication bridge between the brain and the outside world," said Zhang Lei, director of the Instrumentation Core at the CIBR and general manager of NeuCyber NeuroTech, as he displayed a chip-shaped device placed inside an artificial brain.

To date, nearly 30 human implantations of Beinao-1 have been completed. The longest implantation has remained in place for more than one year, with a cumulative safe operating time of 65,000 hours in human subjects. The system has demonstrated stable performance, helping patients with limb paralysis regain motor function, while enabling patients with aphasia to decode and output nearly 100 commonly used Chinese words.

"Zhiping's case challenged the long-held medical belief that functional deficits caused by chronic spinal cord injuries are irreversible," said Zhang.

Medicine innovators have also turned to brain-related products to restore body functions for patients with diseases such as epilepsy. The GA002 injection, an innovative drug developed by a team at the CIBR and translated by the gene therapy company GenAns Biotechnology Co., Ltd., is one of them.

Having just received approval to begin clinical trials in late May, the drug targets drug-resistant epilepsy by delivering an engineered inhibitory receptor to neurons within the epileptic focus in the brain.

It is the world's first gene therapy based on the principles of chemogenetics for this indication and is at the forefront internationally. "It shows that China is increasingly capable of developing original innovative drugs," said Yu Tao, deputy general manager of the company.

Moreover, leveraging optogenetics technology, the company has independently developed GA001, an injectable therapy that can effectively improve vision in patients blinded by retinitis pigmentosa. More than 10 patients have received the treatment to date, all of whom have achieved varying degrees of visual recovery.

The breakthroughs came against the backdrop of growing national efforts to build up the BCI sector and the innovative medicine industry.

The BCI sector was designated a future industry in this year's government work report. It was also included in the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) as the country aims to cultivate it into a new engine of growth.

More specifically, a guideline issued by seven authorities last August laid out short-term targets for the innovative development of the sector, including achieving key breakthroughs in BCI technologies with an advanced technology system, industrial system and standards system, by 2027, and significantly enhancing the innovation capacity of the industry with its overall strength ranking among the world's leaders by 2030.

In the meantime, biomedicine was designated a pillar industry for the first time in the government work report earlier this year, indicating a potential shift from a research hotspot to tangible public benefits for innovative drugs.

The growth has been palpable. According to an April think tank report forecasting the commercialization of the BCI sector, the total funding raised by Chinese BCI companies in the first quarter of 2026 had already surpassed the amount raised in all of 2025. It predicts that China's BCI market could exceed 5 billion yuan (about 734 million US dollars) in 2026 and surpass 15 billion

yuan by 2030.

In medicine, the total value of outbound licensing transactions involving Chinese innovative drugs in the first quarter of 2026 exceeded 60 billion US dollars, nearly half of the full-year 2025 total, marking explosive growth across the industry.

Further development is advancing nonstop. Within this year, Beinao-1 is expected to complete enrollment for all of its registration clinical trials and will apply for medical device registration next year, whereas Beinao-2, a high-performance invasive BCI system based on a different technological approach, has entered the large-animal testing stage and is scheduled to begin clinical validation by the end of this year.

Also developing its own invasive BCI system, the Beijing-based medical technology company BCIFlex unveiled a 1,000-channel BCI system in March, with a key innovation: stretchable, flexible electrodes that address the problem of electrode threads being pulled out due to relative movement between brain tissue and the skull.

Drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese paper-cutting art, the company converted tensile loads on the electrodes into bending and deformation, thereby minimizing relative motion between the electrodes and brain tissue, reducing implantation-related damage, and enabling high-quality, long-term stable acquisition of neuronal signals at the single-cell level, according to Mueyesser Sulayman, marketing manager of BCIFlex.

Noting that the product has just entered Good Clinical Practice (GCP) clinical trials, she added that the company plans to apply the product in the future to patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) to help them replace or restore lost motor functions.

For Yu Tao and GenAns Biotech, their future endeavors could extend to tackling depression, which he described as a lack of response to normal reward stimuli. For example, drinking iced Coca-Cola on a hot day would normally bring pleasure, but patients with depression remain indifferent to such events, as their corresponding brain regions that should have been activated are not activated.

"The approach is to regulate key nodes or brain regions related to emotion, achieving activation where activation is needed and inhibition where inhibition is required," Yu said, revealing that relevant drug formulation may be completed within a year or two.

### WHO warns funding cuts threaten HIV fight in Asia-Pacific

## UN chief urges solidarity to end threat of AIDS by '30

NEW YORK, June 23, (Agencies) — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday warned of unprecedented disruption of funding for the efforts to end AIDS as public health threat by 2030.

"A special shout-out for our partners and civil society who are on the front lines daily, and deep appreciation to my sister, Winnie Byanyima (executive director of UNAIDS), and her great team for the work that they do every day," he said.

Guterres's remarks were delivered by Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed to the opening plenary of the High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS.

"In the 45 years since the first case of AIDS was reported, the world has demonstrated uncommon resolve and solidarity. It wasn't easy.

"The early days of the response were marked by a wall of barriers, misunderstanding, lack of knowledge and science, discrimination and stigma, and — perhaps most deadly of all — political hesitancy," he noted.

"AIDS-related deaths have been

reduced by 70 percent since their peak in 2004 — and by 54 percent in 2010.

"HIV prevention and treatment services have reduced new infections by 40 percent in the same period.

"Today, more than 32 million people living with HIV are receiving life-saving antiretroviral therapy.

"And we now collectively benefit from the public health lessons that were learned in the fight against HIV.

"As my recent report demonstrates, we remain far from achieving the targets we established in the 2021 Political Declaration.

"At the end of 2024, 9.2 million people in need still lacked access to HIV treatment — and 1.3 million acquired HIV.

"Most tragically, 630,000 lives were lost in AIDS-related deaths.

"Funding cuts are directly affecting prevention efforts, and the community systems that are so essential to the response.

"Meanwhile, financial constraints and rising debt burdens in develop-

ing countries are diverting funding away from the HIV response.

"And shrinking civic space and regression in human rights protections are placing hard-won gains at risk.

"This is a meeting that is taking place to find solutions, and once again summon the political will to accelerate and finish the global HIV fight —," the Secretary-General went on.

"I urge countries to keep their promise under the Sevilla Commitment: to unlock financing; address unsustainable debt with new tools and solutions; and reform today's unfair and outdated global financial system so developing countries can receive the resources they need — and the voice and representation they deserve.

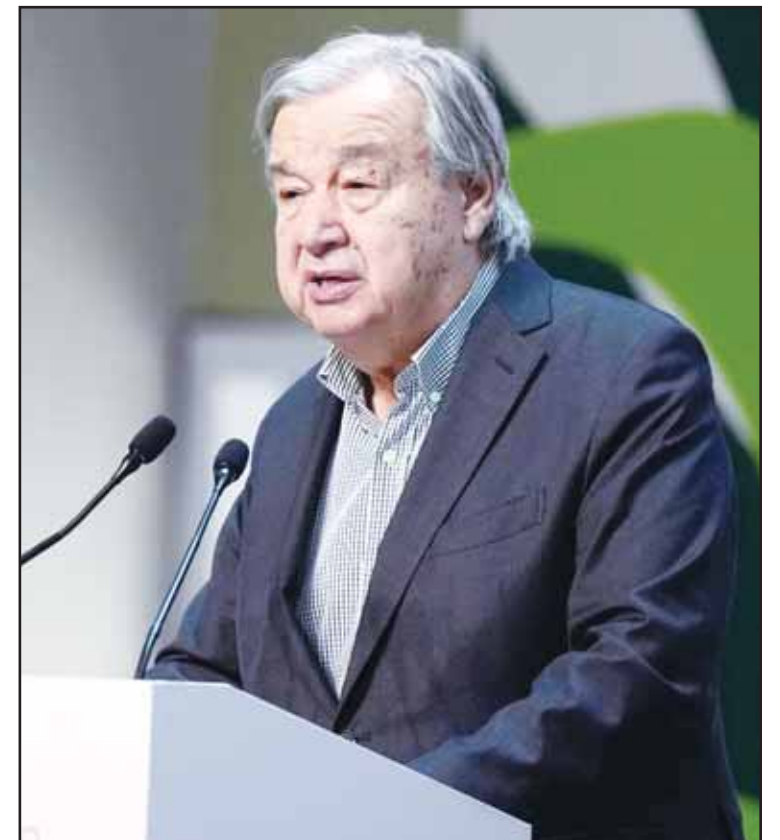
Also:

**MANILA:** The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Western Pacific on Friday warned that disruptions in global funding could undermine efforts to curb the spread of HIV in Asia and the Pacific, home to the world's second-largest HIV epidemic.

The WHO regional agency said about 7 million people in the region are living with HIV, with an estimated 280,000 new infections and 120,000 AIDS-related deaths recorded annually. Countries including Fiji, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea are experiencing some of the world's fastest-growing HIV epidemics.

The agency said the financing landscape has changed drastically, as global development assistance has fallen sharply and international support for HIV continues to decline. Around 76 percent of HIV prevention spending in the region still comes from external sources, leaving outreach and community-led services for key populations exposed as international support declines.

It advocated that governments take responsibility for replacing external funding, integrating HIV into universal health coverage and primary healthcare, strengthening national systems and data, addressing societal barriers to services, and accelerating access to innovation.



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres speaks at COP30 on Nov 20, 2025 in Brazil. (AP)

## Quarantine comes to an end for last of hantavirus ship passengers in Nebraska

OMAHA, Nebraska, June 23, (AP) — The last eight American passengers who endured 42 days in a specialized hospital quarantine unit after exposure to an unusual hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship that killed three people have left the Nebraska facility.

US Department of Health and Human Services officials on Monday confirmed the end of the quarantine.

"Through close collaboration among federal, state, and local partners, HHS helped protect the American people, contain potential risks, and bring this response effort to a successful conclusion," HHS spokesperson Emily Hilliard said in an email.

More than 120 people were evacuated from the MV Hondius in Spain's Canary Islands early last month — including the 18 Americans who wound up in the National Quarantine Unit in Omaha — though most were from other countries.

In addition to those people evacuated by health officials in full protective suits, at least 30 other passengers had left the ship earlier before the outbreak was documented. That in-



This photo provided by Angela Perryman shows her on South Georgia Island in April 2026. (AP)

cluded seven Americans, who were allowed to monitor for any symptoms at home. When the ship eventually docked in the Netherlands, 25 crew members and two medical personnel were on board and had to quarantine.

The World Health Organization

didn't immediately respond Monday to questions about the status of all the other people who had to quarantine around the globe. A total of 13 cases of the virus, including the three who died, were identified among people who were on the ship.

## Sri Lanka to launch 3-day national dengue control program

COLOMBO, June 23, (Xinhua) — Sri Lanka will launch a three-day national dengue control program from June 24 to 26, covering 600 Grama Niladhari divisions, the lowest grassroots administration body, the President's Media Division said in a statement on Monday.

The decision was taken at a discussion held at the Presidential Secretariat on Monday afternoon on short-term and long-term plans to control the spread of dengue, which authorities said has been increasing rapidly due to the southwest monsoon season.

The meeting was chaired by Minister of Health and Mass Media Nalinda Jayatissa and Secretary to the President Nandika Sanath Kumaranayake. Authorities decided to issue circulars outlining short-term dengue control measures to be carried out by state institutions, schools and local government bodies.

**Human anthrax:** A human case of anthrax has been confirmed in Uvs province in western Mongolia, according to the country's National Center for Zoonotic Diseases



This 2003 photo provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a female Aedes albopictus mosquito acquiring a blood meal from a human host. Dengue, a tropical illness caused by a virus, is spread by Aedes mosquitoes, a type of warm weather insect that is expanding its geographic reach because of climate change, experts say. (AP)

(NCZD) on Monday.

Preliminary epidemiological investigations indicate that the patient, a resident of Tes soum (administrative subdivision) of the province, was likely infected after coming into

contact with a dead sheep last week.

A joint response team comprising specialists from relevant organizations is currently conducting field investigations in the affected area, the NCZD said in a statement.

'Best Player' awards celebrated excellence and supported growth of Kuwaiti football

# Dawri Zain's standout players recognized



Waleed Al-Khashti awards Al-Kuwait's Yousef Nasser



Hamad Al-Musaibeeh awards Al-Arabi's Sulaiman Abdulghafour live on KTV3



Al-Khashti and Al-Musaibeeh with a group of honored players at Zain's HQ

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Zain Kuwait recognized a number of the most outstanding players in the Dawri Zain Premier League with its "Best Player of the Round" awards for the current 2025/2026 season. This came as part of its ongoing partnership with the Kuwait Football Association and in continuation of its efforts to contribute to the growth of the Kuwaiti football experience and elevate its presence across the local and regional sports scenes.

The players were recognized at different stages throughout the current season, including at Zain's HQ in Shuwaikh and during the live broadcast of the popular Bil Center program on Kuwait TV Sports. This initiative reflects Zain's belief in the important role of the local private sector in supporting and developing local sports, and in taking them to new levels.

Zain presented the Best Player of the Round award, valued at KD 500, to Kazma's Nasser Faleh for rounds six and fifteen, Qadsia's Abdullah Al-Awadhi for round eight, Al-Arabi's Sulaiman Abdulghafour for round nine, and Al-Kuwait's Yousef Nasser for rounds ten, twelve, and nineteen (the Cham-

pionship Group's first round).

Al-Kuwait's Mohammed Daham was also honored for round eleven, Al-Nasr's Talal Jazea for rounds thirteen and fourteen, Al-Nasr's Ali Hasan for round sixteen, Al-Salmiya's Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli for round seventeen, and Qadsia's Yousef Al-Haqan for round eighteen. The winners of the remaining rounds will be honored soon at Zain's upcoming Excellence Awards ceremony.

Before the start of the current season, the Kuwait Football Association formed a technical committee comprising former international players with extensive experience to set the technical criteria and standards for selecting the winners of Zain's incentive awards. The committee includes Mohammed Al-Failakawi, Committee Chairman; Samir Dashti, Vice Chairman; Adel Yousef; Hussein Hakem; and Nawaf Al-Khalidi.

For the fourth consecutive season, Zain continues to fulfill its promise to support athletes, players, and fans through its incentive awards, presenting the largest prize pool in the history of the local league, with a total exceeding

KD 60,000 in a single season. This comes as part of the company's efforts to encourage promising athletic talent, motivate players to deliver their best, and present the league in the best possible light to Kuwaiti fans.

Zain's awards this season include KD 10,000 for Player of the Season, KD 5,000 for Top Scorer (professionals), KD 5,000 for Top Scorer (locals), KD 5,000 for Best Goalkeeper, KD 3,000 for Best Coach, KD 2,000 for Rising Star of the Season, and KD 500 per round for Player of the Round.

Zain's annual Excellence Awards ceremony is set to be held soon, bringing together a selection of Kuwaiti sports stars, media figures, and prominent sports personalities, in the presence of senior officials from the Kuwait Football Association. The ceremony will honor the winners of the main award categories mentioned above, celebrating an initiative that has contributed to the league's strong performance in recent seasons, raising the level of play, adding more excitement and energy, and offering a renewed experience for fans and football lovers.

## Al Shabab set for handball return

## Asian Clubs Championship postponed as AHF issues strict transfer warning

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: The Asian Handball Federation has postponed the 29th edition of the Asian Club Championship for league champions, which was scheduled for November, after Uzbekistan withdrew from hosting the tournament.

The federation will decide on a new host country in the coming period, while a revised date will be announced later. The competition could potentially be held in August if another nation submits a successful hosting bid.

In parallel, the Asian federation issued a circular to all member associations emphasizing strict adherence to regulations governing domestic player transfers. It warned against completing internal transfers without official notification and without following approved procedures through the relevant channels.

In an official letter dated June 22, 2026, the federation noted that some associations had carried out internal player transfers without complying with established regulations, describing this as a violation of Asian Handball Federation rules.

It explained that any internal transfer counts toward the three-transfer limit allowed per player each season, stressing that breaches will be subject to penalties under the disciplinary regulations of both the Asian and International Handball Federations.

The federation further warned that sanctions could be imposed on national federations, clubs, and players involved, urging all member associations to strictly follow official procedures to ensure proper governance of player registration and transfers.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that Al Shabab Club is



Kuwait's defense battles an opponent in the air during a tense handball clash.

planning to revive its first handball team and return to the Kuwaiti league next season after a three-year absence since 2023.

The move is part of the club's strategy to reactivate the sport and rebuild its presence in domestic competitions. Preparations are underway at the technical and administrative levels to facilitate the anticipated comeback.

If confirmed, Al Shabab's return would add strength to the league, given the club's history and potential to enhance the competitive level, with supporters eager to see the team back in action.

## Expanding ties with top clubs

## Salisbury Club cooperation promotes sports professionalism: Al-Jalahma

KUWAIT CITY, June 23: Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma said yesterday that cooperation between the Public Authority for Sport and English club Salisbury represents an important step in promoting a culture of professionalism among young athletes.

In a press statement following his meeting with players selected for a professional training experience at Salisbury, Al-Jalahma highlighted that the initiative is part of a talent discovery and development program implemented by the Authority in partnership with the English club. The program aims to give promising players the opportunity to train in advanced professional environments and gain valuable technical and physical experience.

He stressed that the initiative reflects the state's commitment to supporting young talents and aligns with its vision of building a generation capable of creativity and excellence across various fields through structured development programs.

Al-Jalahma added that the sports authority places strong emphasis on empowering young athletes and is keen to expand international part-



Ali Al-Hamad, the president of the English football club Salisbury, presented a commemorative plaque to the Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma.

nerships with reputable clubs and institutions, providing Kuwaiti youth with real opportunities for growth in line with global standards.

He further noted that the program is part of broader efforts to prepare athletes capable of competing and representing Kuwait honorably in

regional and international competitions.

The minister also congratulated the selected players on successfully passing the selection stages, saying their achievement reflects their strong potential and deserving talent.

## Move awaits league approval

## 'Antetokounmpo heads to Heat'

MIAMI, June 23, (AP): Giannis Antetokounmpo wants more championships. So do the Miami Heat.

And the Heat finally have another superstar.

Ending a marathon watch for the next great Miami get, the Heat landed Antetokounmpo - a two-time NBA MVP and 10-time All-Star - from the Milwaukee Bucks on Monday night in exchange for a massive haul of players and draft picks.

The terms, according to a person who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the move had yet to receive the required league approval: Antetokounmpo and Bobby Portis are heading to Miami for Wisconsin native Tyler Herro, Jaime Jaquez Jr., Kel'el Ware and Kasparas Jakucionis. Milwaukee also gets at least four picks, including the No. 13 selection that will be made in Tuesday night's NBA draft.

It ends a wild back-and-forth in the final days of the saga, with the Bucks considering offers from both Miami and Boston for Antetokounmpo - who led Milwaukee to the 2021 NBA title, was on the NBA's 75th anniversary list of its greatest players ever, is a nine-time All-NBA selection and is coming off an injury-shortened season in which he averaged 27.6 points per game.

There has been no secret that this is what Miami has sought, because this is what Miami usually seeks. The Heat pulled off similar moves by landing Shaquille O'Neal in 2004 (helping lead to the 2006 NBA title) and by getting LeBron James and Chris Bosh to play alongside Dwyane Wade in 2010 (leading to four NBA Finals runs in four seasons together, along with the 2012 and 2013 NBA titles).

Now, it's Antetokounmpo's turn. At 31, the Heat clearly believe he still has many good years left - and it's generally presumed that by making this deal they'll give the Greek superstar a massive extension later this year.



In this file photo, Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo (34) dribbles the ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Miami Heat in Miami. (AP)

He was a perennial MVP candidate in Milwaukee, getting votes for that award in nine consecutive seasons before 2025-26 when too many missed games left him ineligible.

He has averaged 24.1 points and 9.9 rebounds per game in his career, with 10 consecutive seasons of averaging at least 22.9 points - with three years in there of averaging more than 30 points per game.

Only seven active players have more points in their careers than Antetokounmpo, who has totaled 21,531 to this point.

Antetokounmpo had been mentioned in trade talks countless times in recent years, with the Bucks always insisting - with words and actions - that they had no interest in trading their best player and one of the best players in the history of the franchise.

But this time, it seemed different.

The Bucks, who fired Doc Rivers as coach after the season, don't have a roster that would be considered a championship contender. By trading Antetokounmpo, they can essentially start over with four players (and the Heat were high on all of them) along with draft capital.

## Griner sets blocks record in Sun win over Sky

UNCASVILLE, Conn., June 23, (AP): Brittney Griner scored 14 points and became the WNBA's career blocks leader, Olivia Nelson-Ododa had 11 points and 15 rebounds, and the Connecticut Sun beat the Chicago Sky 92-63 on Monday night for their third win of the season.

Griner recorded her 878th career block, and fourth of the game, in the third quarter to pass Margo Dydek's mark that had stood since 2008.

Charlisse Leger-Walker added 13 points, seven rebounds and five assists for Connecticut (3-15), which improved to 2-7 at home this season. Leila Lacan added 12 points and Aaliyah Edwards scored 11.

Kamilla Cardoso had 16 points and 14 rebounds for Chicago (4-12), which has lost six straight games. Azura Stevens scored 11 and Sydney Taylor added 10. Skylar Diggins moved to seventh on the WNBA's career made free throws list.

### Dream 94, Tempo 7

In Atlanta, Rhyne Howard scored 20 points, Allisha Gray and rookie Madina Okot each added 18, and Atlanta beat Toronto for their fourth straight victory.

Gray and Okot each scored 16 points in the first half to help Atlanta build a 59-41 lead.

Howard's fifth and final 3-pointer gave Atlanta a 71-54 lead with 5:21 left in the third quarter. The Dream led by as many as 23 in the game.

Jordin Canada had 11 points and 13 assists for her second straight double-double, and Angel Reese also finished with 11 points for Atlanta (12-4). Okot, who eclipsed her previous best of 14 points, finished 7 of 9 from the floor to go with seven rebounds off the bench.

Marina Mabrey had 23 points for Toronto (8-9), and Isabelle Harrison scored 21 to go with 10 rebounds. Temi Fagbenle added 10 points off the bench.

Atlanta is 8-2 in its last 10 games to sit atop the Eastern Conference.

### Fever 86, Mercury 77

In Indianapolis, Caitlin Clark had 24 points and nine assists, Kelsey Mitchell scored 22 points, and Indiana overcame a 13-point, first-quarter deficit to beat Phoenix.



Dallas Wings guard Azzi Fudd moves the ball against Seattle Storm guard Flau'jae Johnson during the second half of a WNBA basketball game in Seattle. (AP)

Indiana scored just six points in the first quarter, tied for its fewest in any quarter since 2018 and its fewest in the first since 2016. The Fever responded with a 35-point second quarter - the second-most they've scored in a quarter this season - to tie the game 41-all at the break. Clark scored 15 in the second quarter.

The Fever outscored Phoenix 30-11 in the third and held off a late charge in a chippy fourth that saw six technical fouls handed out between the two teams. Myisha Hines-Allen was ejected after picking up her second technical foul.

Clark and Mitchell made 16 of Indiana's 27 field goals, including six 3-pointers.

Monique Billings finished with 14 points and 10 rebounds for her first double-double of the year for Indiana (10-7), which snapped a two-game skid. Aliyah Boston was held to

eight points on 2-of-9 shooting. Clark was the most consecutive 20-point, five-assist games in WNBA history with six.

### Wings 112, Storm 110, OT

In Seattle, Paige Bueckers scored 27 points, Azzi Fudd added a career-high 26, including the go-ahead basket with 13.2 seconds left in overtime, and Dallas beat Seattle.

Bueckers, who scored 17 of the Wings' final 24, netted her 1,000th career point in overtime to cap her night and put Dallas ahead 109-108. She tied Elena Delle Donne for the fourth-fastest in WNBA history to reach the milestone at 52 games.

Fudd followed with a go-ahead layup that put Dallas up 111-110 before Jessica Shepard stole the ball, and Aziaha James capped the scoring with a free throw to end it.

Dallas finished with a WNBA record 48 made field goals.



# Messi crowns legacy with scoring record as Mbappé, Haaland dazzle on blockbuster day

Argentina, France and Norway reach round of 32

**ARLINGTON, Texas, June 23, (AP):** Scoring goals and breaking records is what Lionel Messi does, and he is already doing that again in his sixth World Cup.

The Argentina captain has the World Cup scoring record all to himself after another standout performance, one that began with frustration after missing a penalty kick and ended in pure elation with another victory.

Messi, who many consider the greatest player of all time, scored both goals in his team's 2-0 victory over Austria. That gave him 18, six days after his first-ever hat trick in the tournament had matched Germany striker Miroslav Klose's previous record for World Cup goals. Later Monday, Kylian Mbappé matched Klose's mark of 16 with two goals in France's 3-0 win over Iraq.

The first goal against Austria came in the 38th minute and two days before his 39th birthday, and amid the concern of an ailing father back at home. It was the sixth consecutive World Cup game in which Messi has scored - joining France striker Just Fontaine and Brazil great Jairzinho as only players to do so.

Ballon d'Or awards as the best player in Europe.

Argentina advanced to the knockout round by winning its first two Group J games. Messi also scored all the goals in a 3-0 win over Algeria in Kansas City.

Messi added his 18th World Cup goal in the waning seconds of stoppage time when he shot one through several defenders after his first attempt was turned away by goalkeeper Alexander Schlager.

"I have no more words to talk

about Leo," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said through an interpreter.

As the ball went into the net on the record 17th goal, Messi ran toward a corner and thrust his right arm into the air to celebrate the mark with the decidedly pro-Argentina crowd among the 70,649 fans in the sold-out home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys.

"Someone who is 39 years old and can score two goals, and five goals overall at the beginning of the World Cup, well, that makes a difference," Austria coach Ralf Rangnick said through an interpreter. "We knew that he is on a level of his own, and Lionel Messi showed us today that he's one of the best, and he is the best."

Neither rain, nor lightning, nor a swampy field - and certainly not overmatched Iraq - could stop Kylian Mbappé.

Yeah, it got a bit messy on the pitch.

Weather aside, this game - as so many do for France - belonged to Mbappé as he tries to keep pace on the World Cup career goals list with new record holder Messi.

Mbappé scored twice to move into a tie for second in World Cup goals with 16, and France played through the tournament's first rain delay to beat Iraq 3-0 and advance to the knockout stage.

"I'm only thinking about helping my team," Mbappé said. "By helping my team, I score goals, and when you score goals, of course, you get closer to that kind of level."

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé also scored for Les Bleus, giving fans who stuck out a rainy night in Philadelphia a reason to cut loose.

Mbappé scored in the 14th and

54th minutes to cap a momentous and soggy 100th international appearance for one of the best players in the world. Fans of all ages wore his jersey, either walking around Philadelphia earlier in the afternoon or in the rows of seats at Lincoln Financial Field, which had a sellout crowd of 68,234.

Erling Haaland and Norway rowed their way into the World Cup's round of 32.

Haaland scored twice to raise his World Cup goals total to four, and the Vikings clinched advancement to the knockout rounds with a 3-2 win over Senegal that was more of a slog than a sail.

"It's my specialty to score goals," Haaland said. "I'm just really good at scoring goals."

After the final whistle, Norway's players and staff gathered tightly in a 10-row formation just inside the penalty area at MetLife Stadium's north end, facing their red-shirted supporters, Haaland sitting in front as teammate Martin Ødegaard banged on a bongo drum. They alternated with the fans performing the Viking Row - chanting "Ro!" while mimicking oarsmen.

"It was fun," Norway coach Ståle Solbakken said through an interpreter. "We will not be rowing after the World Cup but this can be a gimmick during the tournament."

Marcus Pederson had put the Vikings ahead in the 43rd minute after replacing an injured teammate, and Haaland kept up his incredible goals streak in the 48th and 58th minutes to build a 3-1 lead.

"He's very efficient," Senegal coach Pape Thiaw said through an interpreter.

Haaland ran onto Martin Ødegaard's pass and put a left-footed shot past the outstretched left hand



This combo of photo shows, France's Kylian Mbappe, left, Argentina's Lionel Messi, center, and Norway's Erling Haaland in action during the World Cup soccer tournament. (AP)

of goalkeeper Édouard Mendy, capping an end-to-end counterattack for a 2-0 lead.

For his second goal, Haaland tunneled through the defense and 8 yards out raised his weaker right foot to volley in Patrick Berg's pass. Haaland raised a hand to an ear to inspire the Norway supporters.

Haaland has 24 goals in his last 12 international games - scoring at least once in every match - and 59 goals in 52 international appearances. The 25-year-old striker joined England's Harry Kane in 2018 as the only players in the last 50 years with two

goal games in both of their first two World Cup appearances.

He is second in the Golden Boot race, one behind Messi and tied with Mbappé. Haaland nearly got another in first-half stoppage time, hitting a post after Mendy lost control of the ball.

"He did miss an open goal. He could have scored even four," Solbakken said.

Ismaïla Sarr got both goals for the Lions of Teranga, in the 53rd minute and in the third minute of second-half stoppage time.

"If we had just played slightly

worse, then we would be in trouble," Solbakken said.

Making its first World Cup appearance since 1998, Norway (2-0) is assured of advancing from Group I along with France. The Vikings need to beat Les Bleus on Friday for first place and what would appear to be an easier path in the knockout bracket.

Senegal is 0-2 in a World Cup for the first time and needs a win over Iraq (0-2) to have any chance of advancing as a third-place team.

"We've got everything left to play for," Thaw said.

## Jordanians out of contention for the knockout rounds

# Algeria rallies past Jordan for first World Cup win since 2014

**SANTA CLARA, Calif., June 23, (AP):** Algeria scored off two corner kicks in the second half to rally from an early deficit and defeat Jordan 2-1 to bolster its chances of advancing to the knockout round of the World Cup.

Second-half substitute Nadhir Benbouali headed in a corner kick in the 69th minute and Amine Gouiri provided the game-winner in the 82nd to give Algeria its first win at the World Cup since 2014.

"We deserved to win this game," Algeria coach Vladimir Petkovic said. "It certainly gives us a lot of confidence and belief ahead of our next match."

The Jordanians had taken the lead for the first time at a World Cup on a first-half goal by Nizar Al Rashdan but couldn't withstand the continual pressure from Algeria in the second half.

This marked the first time Algeria had ever won a World Cup game after conceding the first goal. The Algerians had seven losses and two draws previously when that happened.

Now, after bouncing from a 3-0 to Argentina in its opening game, Algeria can finish second in Group J - and clinch a spot in the knockout round - with a win on Saturday against Austria.

"The three points are the most important thing," midfielder Ibrahim Maza said. "I think we have more confidence to go to the next game.



Jordan goalkeeper Yazeed Abulaila (1) makes a save as Algeria's Nadhir Benbouali (12) attacks during the World Cup Group J soccer match between Jordan and Algeria in Santa Clara, Calif., near San Francisco. (AP)

We will fight even more than today."

Jordan is out of contention for the knockout rounds following a second straight loss. It opened with a 3-1 defeat to Austria but put up a strong effort in its first appearance on soccer's biggest stage.

"We didn't see a big gap of difference when it comes to skills, except for the corner kicks and the set pieces," Jordan coach Jamal Selami said. "I was proud of the performance of my players. Yes, sad results. We were hopping for better results but I'm happy with my players."

Momentum clearly swung after

Benbouali equalized when Riyad Mahrez's corner kick found him in the middle of the box and he sent a header into the corner that Yazeed Abulaila couldn't stop.

Algeria kept up the attack and took the lead when Gouiri got a touch on a ball in the box that deflected off Abulaila and into the net, setting off an Algerian celebration with their fans just behind the goal at Levi's Stadium.

"The team was a lot better in winning the tackles and winning balls in the second half," Petkovic said. "We made a lot fewer mistakes and that ultimately paid off."

if two or more teams are tied on points.

The steps to determine the final placings if a tiebreaker is needed will be deployed in the following order:

- Head-to-head results between the teams concerned.
- Goal difference in the games between the teams concerned.
- Highest number of goals scored in those games.
- Overall goal difference in all group games.
- Overall highest number of goals scored in the group.
- The fewest number of red or yellow cards (including team officials) received during the group phase.
- FIFA ranking.

Coaches, players and fans will be assessing what's required to make the cut as one of the eight best third-placed teams. This is where goal difference is likely to be crucial.

The third-placed teams with the highest number of points advance, but if teams are level on points, goal difference is the primary tiebreaker, followed by goals scored, disciplinary record (red and yellow cards) and finally FIFA ranking.

## 'Qualification in our hands'

# Saudis stand between Cape Verde & history

**MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., June 23, (AP):** Here's something that very few could have reasonably expected coming into this World Cup: Cape Verde controls its own destiny with one match left in group play.

That's right. With a win on Friday against Saudi Arabia, the tiny nation of about 500,000 people and about 15 million new Instagram followers will be headed to the round of 32. Even a draw might be - should be - enough to earn a spot in the knockout round.

The Blue Sharks were long shots entering the World Cup; some books had them at no better than 12% to advance from the group stage. They're currently favored to move on.

"It's in our hands," defender Roberto Lopes said. "We have to go and take it."

A pair of draws - first against Spain to begin group play, then rallying for a 2-2 result against Uruguay on Sunday - has Cape Verde still searching for its first win in its initial World Cup appearance. Still, the team is in an ideal position.

Spain leads Group H with four points. Uruguay and Cape Verde are next with two points each, while Saudi Arabia is last with one point. The top two teams from each group advance to the round of 32 along with the top eight third-place teams in the 12 groups.

A win over Saudi Arabia by Cape Verde would give it five points; it would then be mathematically certain to be no worse than second in the group. A draw would give the team three points; that, combined with a Spain win over Uruguay, would also assure a second-place finish in group play.

"One game at a time," Cape Verde backup goalkeeper CJ dos Santos said. "This is just another challenge for us."

There is a real chance that if Cape Verde beats Saudi Arabia, its reward would be a round of 32 game against Lionel Messi and defending World Cup champion Argentina.

And the interest in that game would be overwhelming, if it happened. On one side, there would be Messi, the biggest draw in the sport and possibly the biggest draw right now in any sport. On the other, there would be a team that the world seems to have adopted - the improbable story, replete with a 40-year-old goalkeeper whose mother needed help just to obtain a visa and fly to the U.S. to watch her son play on soccer's grandest stage.



Uruguay's Brian Rodriguez (18) leaps over Cape Verde's Steven Moreira (22) during the World Cup Group H soccer match between Uruguay and Cape Verde in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

More than half of the team was born somewhere other than Cape Verde; Kevin Pina, who scored against Uruguay, spent part of his youth living in Massachusetts, which has the largest concentration of the Cape Verdean diaspora in the U.S.

That stems from how in the 1800s, Cape Verdeans found work on American whaling vessels in the Atlantic and eventually settled in port cities in states like Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

"We come from a country of immigrants," Cape Verde coach Bubista said. "We want every child and every young person to feel proud to represent their country. We want our success to make them want to represent Cape Verde."

At Luanda Restaurant in Brockton, Massachusetts, Cape Verde's first World Cup match became an afternoon of nervous cheering as customers gathered around televisions; some fans even brought laptops so they could work remotely from the restaurant without missing the game against Spain.

Every save by 40-year-old goalkeeper Vozinha - whose stardom has risen immeasurably during this tournament - drew louder reactions inside the restaurant. Owner Amélia Gonçalves said she tried to work while screaming, laughing and nearly crying, noting that Vozinha's story resonates with the Cape Verdean community.

"If you work hard, it's possible," Gonçalves said.

# World Cup enters permutation season as last-32 race tightens

**ATLANTA, June 23, (AP):** The World Cup has reached that stage when mental gymnastics come into play to determine who's in, who's out and what's needed to advance to the next round.

This year's supersized tournament, up from 32 teams to 48, has changed the format of the competition and how teams are separated by tiebreakers in the group phase.

For instance, there's an extra knockout round of 32 teams, where as previously the group phase was immediately followed by a round of 16.

There are also lifelines for teams to advance if they miss out on the top two places in their respective groups.

Here's what to know about qualification for the round of 32.

The expanded tournament means there are more groups and more games than ever before at a World Cup. By the time the group phase is completed 72 matches will have been played to eliminate 16 teams.

The top two in each of the 12 groups advance automatically and then there are places for the eight best third-placed teams.

It is the first time since 1994, when only 24 teams competed, that there has been a lifeline for third-placed teams.

For the first time at a World Cup, FIFA will prioritize head-to-head results

## World Cup Fixtures

**Qatar vs Bosnia 22:00**

**Canada vs Switzerland 22:00**

**Thursday**

**Morocco vs Haiti 01:00**

**Brazil vs Scotland 01:00**

**Mexico vs Czechia 04:00**

**South Korea vs South Africa 04:00**



Argentina's Lionel Messi, center, scores his side's second goal during the World Cup Group J soccer match between Argentina and Austria in Arlington, Texas. (AP) — See Page 15

# Sports

## Amir receives Kuwait Club after historic victory



Amir Diwan photos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr. Tareq Hamad Al-Jalahma, Kuwait Football Association President Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, Kuwait Club Chairman Khaled Ali Al-Ghanem, along with board members and players of Kuwait Club.



Crown Prince Diwan photos

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Dr. Tareq Hamad Al-Jalahma and the board members and players of Kuwait Club.

### Crown Prince urges team to build on AFC Challenge League success

**KUWAIT CITY, June 23, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday, in the presence of Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, Kuwait Football Association President Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf Al-Sabah, Kuwait Club Chairman Khaled Al-Ghanem, along with board members and players of Kuwait Club.

The reception was held to mark Kuwait Club's victory in the AFC Challenge League title.

His Highness the Amir congratu-



lated the team on the achievement and praised their outstanding performance in the final, which secured the continental crown. He emphasized the importance of continued effort and teamwork to achieve further sporting success, wishing the club continued progress and greater contributions to Kuwaiti sports at re-

gional and international levels.

The attendees expressed their appreciation for His Highness' continued support and encouragement, noting that it serves as a strong motivation to achieve further accomplishments and enhance Kuwait's sporting presence regionally and internationally.



The meeting was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Director of His Highness the Amir's Office retired Lt. Gen. Jamal Al-Theyab, Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Abdulaziz Meshal Mubarak Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Undersecretary for

Foreign Affairs at the Amiri Diwan Mazen Issa Al-Issa.

In a separate reception on the same day, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, Kuwait Football Association President Sheikh

Ahmad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, Kuwait Club Chairman Khaled Al-Ghanem, board members, and players of Kuwait Club.

The Crown Prince congratulated the team on winning the AFC Challenge League title, describing the achievement as a valuable addition to Kuwait's sporting record and to Kuwait Club in particular.

He praised the efforts of the technical, administrative staff, and players, urging them to continue striving to raise Kuwait's flag in regional and international competitions.

For their part, the attendees expressed their gratitude for the reception, affirming that continued leadership support serves as a strong incentive to achieve further success.

The meeting was also attended by Minister of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officials.