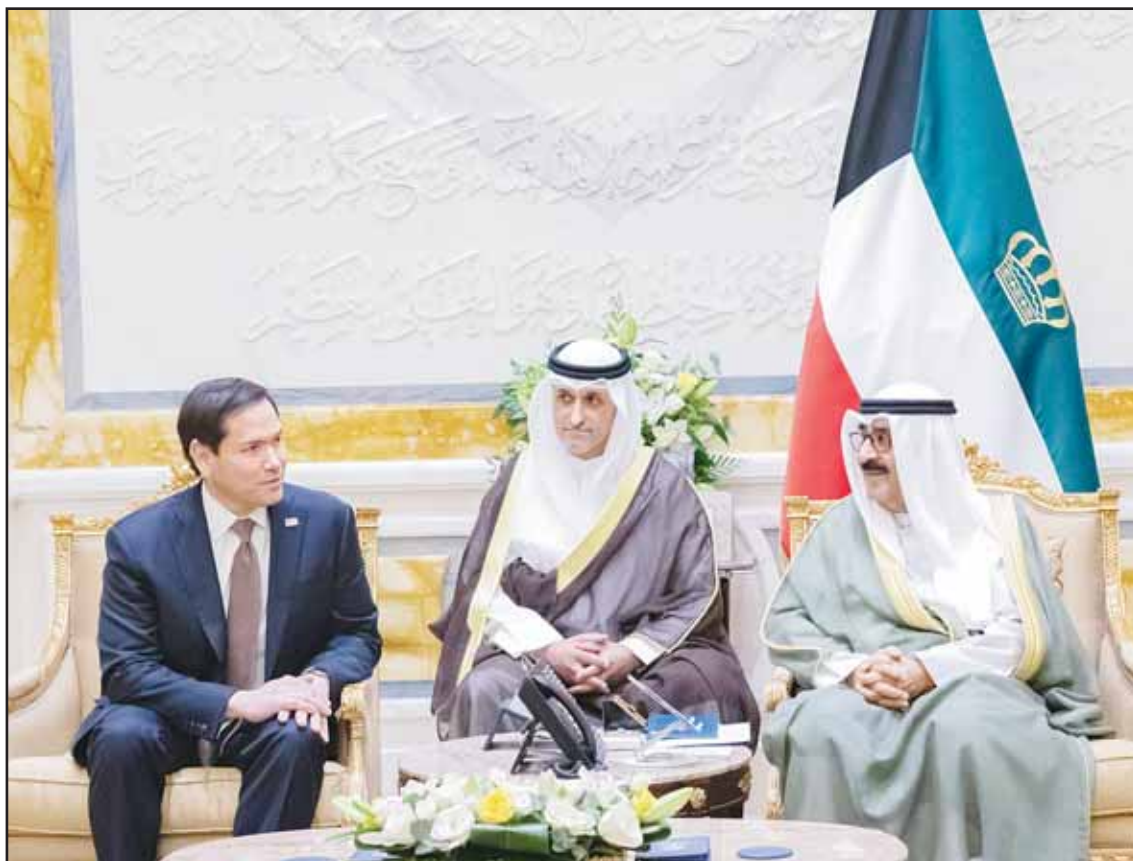




Kuwait stands with Qatar after 'Ras Laffan' tragedy Page 2



Kuwait Amir, US Secretary of State tackle Mideast stability



Amiri Diwan photo
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives visiting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Steven Butler, charge d'affaires ad interim of the U.S. embassy in Kuwait, attend a flag raising ceremony at the embassy in Kuwait City, Kuwait, Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (AP)

US Embassy resumes operations after wartime closure

KUWAIT CITY, June 24, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday visiting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, holding talks over current developments around the Middle East region and bilateral relations.

The US top diplomat, who has embarked on a tour across the Gulf Arab region, conveyed US President Donald Trump's greetings to His Highness the Amir, who reciprocated the well wishes to Trump and the American people.

The bilateral talks centered around Kuwait's historic relations with Washington, in addition

to efforts aiming to propel these ties to greater levels, while current happenings around the Middle East region and the world as a whole was another topic of discussion.

The talks were attended by a number of Kuwaiti state officials, including Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir's office chief Retired Lieutenant General Jamal Al-Theyab and Amiri Diwan undersecretary Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, in addition to Amiri Diwan's undersecretary for foreign affairs Mazen Al-Issa and Kuwaiti ambassador to Washington Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah.

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Major traffic sweep snags rule breakers

KUWAIT CITY, June 24, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior announced that recent traffic campaigns across the country resulted in issuing 17,467 violations, impounding 359 vehicles, and seizing five motorcycles.

The Traffic Sector stated that the operations room efficiently handled 2,465 reports, while recording 1,166 traffic accidents, including 175 that resulted in injuries.

The weekly statistics highlighted violations like speeding, illegal parking, lane drifting, and vehicle infractions, showing that campaigns continue at a very high pace.

It added that 42 individuals were placed in detention, seven juveniles were referred to specialized authorities, and 32 wanted fugitives were handed over to the competent bodies.

The sector confirmed these campaigns will continue daily, featuring an intensified field presence along main traffic axes, strategic locations, and vital checkpoints nationwide.

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Decree-law powers up energy giant

KPC reform aims to sharpen global edge

KUWAIT CITY, June 24, (KUNA): Kuwait issued on Tuesday a decree-law amending certain provisions of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) law, in a move designed to reinforce its commercial operating model and enhance its competitiveness in global energy markets.

The amendments underscore a strategic shift toward a more commercial operating model, explicitly affirming that KPC is to be managed on commercial principles in line with global industry standards, enhancing its operational efficiency and its role as a key economic driver.

The decree also expands KPC's mandate to include investment in renewable energy sources to meet the needs of the corporation and its subsidiaries, reflecting a gradual shift toward diversification and long-term sustainability.

It, however, stipulates that any integration of such energy into the national power grid will remain subject to approval by

the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

In addition, the amendments grant KPC greater flexibility in executing its activities, either directly or through its subsidiaries. They also strengthen the role of the Supreme Petroleum Council by transferring to it the authority to approve borrowing, lending, and guarantees, thereby reinforcing strategic oversight of the sector.

From a governance perspective, the decree introduces clearer provisions regarding the composition and tenure of the board of directors, appointment mechanisms, and the responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer, while maintaining the Minister of Oil as chairman of the board.

Further changes include the transfer of certain operational powers to KPC's board to accelerate decision-making and enhance institutional agility, in line with the fast-paced nature of the oil industry.

The amendments also address financial governance by aligning KPC's fiscal year with state budget regulations and formalizing revenue allocation mechanisms for general reserves.

They prohibit the use of intermediaries, including local and commission agents, in contracting processes, with the aim of reducing costs and enhancing transparency.

Furthermore, day-to-day operational powers have been decentralized to KPC's Board of Directors, allowing it to establish internal regulations for tendering, awarding, and executing contracts for wholly-owned subsidiaries with a view to bypass bureaucratic bottlenecks to match the fast-paced nature of the global oil industry while preserving the Supreme Petroleum Council's focus on macro public policy.

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Oman Air restarts Kuwait route

MUSCAT, June 24, (KUNA): Oman Air announced on Wednesday the resumption of its flights to and from Kuwait starting Thursday through Terminal 4, following a suspension that had been in place since March

due to the conflict in the region.

In a statement announcing the return of its services, the airline said, "We will resume flights to and from Kuwait as of June 25, noting that flights will be operated temporarily through Terminal

4 instead of Terminal 1."

Oman Air suspended flights to several destinations across the region, including Kuwait, in early March following airspace closures in parts of the region due to the war.



Former Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Ali Al-Momen

Kuwait loses prominent military, diplomatic figure Ali Al-Momen

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: Kuwait has lost one of its most prominent military and diplomatic figures - former Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Ali Al-Momen - following a distinguished career in both military and diplomatic service, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The deceased served as Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army, contributing significantly to the development of the military institution and enhancing its readiness during a crucial period in Kuwait's

history. He also played a leading role in humanitarian efforts following the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003, heading the Humanitarian Operations Center and contributing to the coordination and delivery of relief aid to the Iraqi people.

He was later appointed Kuwait's first ambassador to Iraq after the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The daily, deeply saddened by this loss, extends its sincere condolences to the family of the deceased.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Abolhassan Banisadr was betrayed by the revolution he helped ignite

The thinker who helped plan the Shah's downfall was the first victim.

He won the presidential election by a landslide, yet was later removed from office.

Hardliners launched an organized campaign to undermine his authority, and they succeeded.

He escaped by wearing an Iranian air force uniform and shaving his mustache as a disguise.

She placed a sign on her door that read, "My daughter's dowry is \$50,000."

Most men left as soon as they saw the dowry amount.

The widow told the neighbors, "The wholesale price is different from the retail price."

The owl said to the hoopoe, "Because you are known for your honesty, I ruled in your favor."

The hoopoe, "If I am as you say, then this hole belongs to the crow."

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Central System for the Remedy of the Situations of Illegal Residents (CSR-SIR) called on all those registered in its system who have not yet obtained birth certificates for their newborn children to visit the Birth Registration Office at the Ministry of Health to complete the registration procedures and obtain the birth certificates, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

It clarified that for children over five years of age who have not yet obtained birth certificates, parents must contact the Lineage Claims Committee to complete the necessary procedures before obtaining the certificates.

CSR-SIR emphasized the importance of adding newborns to their parents' files within 60 days of the birth certificate being issued, noting that it will take the necessary measures against those who fail to comply.

Shuwaikh substation fault causes brief power outage

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced Wednesday that three 33 kV transformers at Shuwaikh (A) main substation went out of service due to a technical malfunction coinciding with high temperatures and increased electrical load.

This resulted in a power outage in some parts of Shuwaikh, Block Six.

The ministry affirmed that the emergency teams rushed to the site to carry out maintenance work, thereby, restoring power within a few hours.

Meanwhile, the ministry had earlier referred the tender for the supply and installation of a 400 kV overhead line extending from Shagaya solar power plant to Wafra (Z) main substation, with a total value of KD35.962 million, to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for pre-audit and review procedures before awarding the contract to the winning company.

This is one of the strategic projects of the ministry to support the expansion of clean energy use. It will contribute to the

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Prayer Timings

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

Kuwait eyes 'sustainable' med supply through Gulf

KUWAIT CITY, June 24, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi stressed on Tuesday the importance of strengthening Gulf pharmaceutical security, ensuring the sustainable availability of medicines and medical supplies, and supporting Gulf integration in pharmaceutical supply chains and joint health security systems.



Dr. Al-Awadhi

The Ministry of Health said in a press statement that Al-Awadhi participated in a meeting of GCC health ministers held via videoconference to discuss several strategic issues related to enhancing Gulf health and pharmaceutical security and to follow up on decisions issued during the 19th consultative meeting of GCC leaders, held in Jeddah on April 28, 2026.

The ministry noted that the discussions were held within the framework of GCC countries' commitment to advancing regional integration in the

health sector and strengthening the readiness of national healthcare systems in a manner that supports the sustainability of health services and safeguards the security and well-being of Gulf societies.

Health ministers from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states held talks via video link over efforts aiming to ensure sustainable healthcare systems across the six-member bloc, its chief Jassem Al-Budaiwi said on Tuesday.

The "extraordinary" talks, presided over by Bahrain's health minister Dr. Jaleela Hassan, come in line with the directives of Gulf Arab leaders that call for the enhancement and continuity of healthcare services, the Riyadh-based bloc said in a statement.

The talks also covered how far progress has come on a number of key healthcare projects within the bloc, all of which aim to ensure healthcare "preparedness" in times of emergencies, added the statement.

These joint projects are also instrumental in ensuring the "sustainability" of healthcare supply chains at all times, the statement highlighted.

Kuwait stands with Qatar after 'Ras Laffan' tragedy

FM calls for regional stability in call with Iran's Araghchi

KUWAIT CITY, June 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Cabinet expressed full solidarity with Qatar following the explosion at a liquefied natural gas facility in Ras Laffan Industrial City, which resulted in deaths and injuries.

This came during the cabinet's weekly meeting, chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, the Cabinet was briefed on the Crown Prince's meeting last week with the UN Secretary-General's High Representative for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2792 (2025), Mary Yamashita, and her accompanying delegation.

Kuwait's Cabinet was also informed of an Amiri directive assigning His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to head Kuwait's delegation, representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York from September 22 to 28.

The Cabinet was informed by Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah of the outcomes of his talks with Yamashita regarding efforts to follow up on the file of missing Kuwaiti nationals and third-country nationals, as well as the return of Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

The minister reiterated Kuwait's full support for the UN official in carrying out her mandate and advancing efforts to determine the fate of missing persons and recover Kuwaiti property.

The Foreign Minister briefed the Cabinet on diplomatic efforts undertaken by the ministry and Kuwait's missions abroad to monitor regional and international developments.

He also reviewed the outcomes of the GCC foreign ministers' coordination meeting, held on the sidelines of the resumed 165th ordinary session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level in Amman on Monday, where participants discussed regional developments and international and regional efforts aimed at de-escalation and enhancing security and stability.

The Cabinet was further informed of the results of the Arab foreign ministers' consulta-



PM Diwan photo Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

tive meeting and the Arab League ministerial meeting in Amman, which addressed regional developments, efforts to promote security and stability, means of supporting joint Arab action, and other agenda items.

The Foreign Minister also briefed the Cabinet on his bilateral meetings in Amman with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf, Libyan acting Foreign Minister Taher Al-Baour, and Sudanese Foreign Minister Mohieddin Salem Ahmed Ibrahim, during which bilateral relations and regional developments were discussed.

Phone call

The Cabinet was also informed of a phone call between the Foreign Minister and Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani concerning recent regional developments, particularly the outcomes of the first round of high-level talks held in Switzerland under the US-Iran memorandum of understanding with the participation of the United States, Iran, Qatar and Pakistan.

Additionally, the minister briefed the Cabinet on a phone call he received from Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, during which he expressed Kuwait's hope that the US-Iran mem-

orandum would contribute to regional stability, ensure security and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, and help address outstanding issues through sustainable solutions.

He stressed the importance of adherence to international law, the principles of the UN Charter, good-neighborly relations, respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, and refraining from supporting proxies.

The Cabinet was also briefed on several phone calls exchanged with foreign ministers of sisterly and friendly countries, as well as a call from UN High Commissioner for Refugees Barham Salih, during which ways to enhance cooperation with the UN refugee agency were discussed.

On the economic front, the Cabinet reviewed the minutes of the Ministerial Committee for Economic Affairs, including the semiannual report on public-private partnership projects covering the period from October 2025 to March 2026.

It decided to refer the report to the Higher Committee for Public-Private Partnership Projects for appropriate action, considering its findings and observations.

The Cabinet also reviewed some agenda items, reports and ministerial committee minutes, approving several of them and referring others to the relevant committees for further study and recommendations.

Other Voices

Egypt, Kuwait: One blood and unbreakable by strife

By Bassam Al-Qassas

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

WHEN rumors spread and voices seeking sensationalism and discord grow louder, genuine relationships remain far too strong to be shaken by the actions of troublemakers or by an irresponsible statement.



Al-Qassas

The relationship between Egypt and Kuwait is exceptional, extending beyond politics and interests to represent a unique Arab model of sincere brotherhood and a shared destiny.

What unites Cairo and Kuwait was not forged by passing circumstances, but by decades of honorable positions, mutual sacrifices, and deep-rooted trust in the hearts of the two brotherly peoples. Therefore, any attempt to undermine this relationship or cast doubt on its strength is nothing more than a fleeting and discordant voice that quickly fades in the face of historical realities and the profound bonds linking the two sisterly nations.

When Kuwait was subjected to the Iraqi invasion in 1990, Egypt did not hesitate to stand by its brothers in defending legitimacy, justice, and the sovereignty of the Kuwaiti state. Egyptian blood was shed on Kuwaiti soil during the liberation battle, in a historic stance that affirmed that Kuwait's security is an integral part of Egypt's national security. Defending Kuwait was not merely a political stance but a national and moral duty deeply rooted in Egypt's convictions.

In return, Kuwait has always stood by Egypt through various stages and challenges, supporting its economy and contributing to its development projects. It has also welcomed hundreds of thousands of Egyptians who have worked and played a vital role in its growth and development. As a result, the relationship between the two peoples has become a model of human and social solidarity that is difficult to replicate.

Relationship

Today, this relationship is renewed through continuous political coordination between the leaderships of the two countries. This was clearly reflected in the meeting between the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Expatriate Affairs, Dr. Badr Abdel-Aty, and the Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, on the sidelines of the 163rd Ordinary Session of the Council of the Arab League at the ministerial level.

Both sides reaffirmed the depth of the historic ties that bind their countries and peoples. They also emphasized their commitment to maintaining close coordination and consultation on various Arab and regional issues, reflecting the high level of trust, mutual respect, and understanding that characterizes Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations.

These strong ties are further reinforced by the active diplomatic presence of Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait, Mohamed Abou El Wafa, who has built a wide network of relationships at both official and

popular levels over recent years.

Ambassador Abou El Wafa maintains continuous communication with Kuwaiti officials, in addition to his regular attendance at diwanis (traditional Kuwaiti gathering places) and various social, cultural, and national events. He has become a model of a diplomat who is close to the community, and is keen on consolidating the bridges of communication between the two sisterly nations.

Affection

An observer of the Kuwaiti scene can easily recognize the deep affection Kuwaitis hold for Egypt and its people. This was clearly reflected during the Egyptian national team's participation in the FIFA World Cup, when a wave of joy and celebration spread among many Kuwaiti youth following Egypt's victory over New Zealand. This spontaneous reaction underscored that Egypt's success is viewed as a source of pride and happiness in Kuwait, as if it were a Kuwaiti success.

Some individuals constantly try to create artificial distances between Egypt and the Gulf states, misleading public opinion into believing there are deep disagreements or differences.

However, the facts confirm that what unites Cairo, Kuwait, and the rest of the Gulf states is far greater than any attempts to sow discord or division. Egypt has never been a country that seeks confrontation, and Kuwait has never been swayed by campaigns or provocations. The political, popular, and humanitarian capital of both Kuwait and Egypt is capable of thwarting any scheme targeting this relationship.

Amid the unprecedented challenges and successive conflicts facing the region, Egypt continues to play its historical role as a pillar of Arab stability. It strives to support de-escalation and political solutions and rejects the expansion of conflicts. Egypt affirms on every occasion that the security of the Gulf is an integral part of its national security.

Kuwait continues its wise role in supporting stability and joint Arab action, thus strengthening the position of both countries as fundamental pillars of security and stability in the region.

Historical stances have formed the foundation of this relationship. Continuous political coordination, active diplomatic presence, mutual popular affection, and shared joy in successes and achievements all confirm that Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations are not merely a relationship between two states, but a deep-rooted fraternal partnership that transcends immediate considerations and grows stronger with time.

Egypt and Kuwait will always stand above discordant voices and stay stronger than insults, because their relationship is not based on fleeting interests, but on shared sacrifices, history, loyalty, and a common destiny.

No matter how loud, foolish voices will always shatter against the strength of Egyptian-Kuwaiti brotherhood. This shining example of Arab unity stands as a testament that genuine relationships cannot be defeated by discord nor diminished by smear campaigns.

Other Voices

The criminal foundations of a rogue state

By Ahmad alsarraf

FROM the late 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century, Jewish emigration from Germany ceased after their circumstances improved and they gained full equality before the law. They played a role in the economic movement and integrated into society.

When World War I broke out, more than 100,000 Jewish soldiers served their country in Germany, of whom 12,000 were killed.

The majority of German Jews were content with their Jewish identity and maintained unwavering loyalty to Germany. However, Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism, was convinced that the solution to the persecution of Jews worldwide lay in transforming them into a colonial power like other European nations and establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Consequently, it was necessary to deal with those who opposed his idea through exile or extermination.

In December 1909, after Herzl's death, the German Jewish Congress convened.

Some participants expressed their objection to the establishment of a state in Palestine. Anti-Zionism continued to dominate the majority of Jewish communities throughout Germany until the 1930s, while Zionist leaders persisted in their faltering efforts to promote their plan for mass Jewish immigration. By 1929, the membership of the Zionist Organization had declined from 200,000 to 50,000.

The situation in Palestine became increas-



alsarraf

ingly difficult for Zionist Jewish immigration from 1926 to 1933.

With the rise of Hitler's regime in 1933, Zionists feared that escalating persecution of Jews would force them to emigrate from Palestine, especially given the existence of agencies in the United States that had already drawn up plans to resettle them in South America.

Therefore, a drastic and controversial course of action was decided upon. German Zionists signed an agreement with the Nazi authorities, allowing some wealthy Jews to immigrate to Palestine in exchange for money.

Even after the Balfour Declaration of 1917, British authorities restricted Jewish immigration, and Jews found it difficult to acquire sufficient land. Jews were only able to purchase less than two percent of the land in Palestine.

Contrary to popular belief, Hitler's rise to power presented a golden opportunity to bolster Jewish immigration to Palestine, a fact that far outweighed all Zionist propaganda.

Antisemitism was a powerful force, which Zionism exploited like boiling water to generate energy. However, they overlooked, perhaps deliberately, the fate of the rest of Europe's Jews, who faced marginalization, attacks, and murder. This was especially true since the Zionists wanted only the best and brightest young people in Palestine, not children. They considered the remaining millions of Jews mere dust in the wind, destined to disappear.

In reality, the Zionists and the Nazis shared similar ideologies. Both aimed to build an ethnocentric nation-state based on racial purity, a concept widely embraced at the time. Both Zionists and Nazis vehemently opposed the assimilation of Jews in Europe, as Zion-

ism demanded racial purity.

Unlike the German Zionists, who collaborated with the Nazis, most European Jews resisted the fascists, fighting them in Spain and Poland. The Zionists did everything in their power to thwart these efforts. As a result, many Jews lost their lives due to this policy, which sought to deny European Jews any safe havens other than Palestine. Even as late as 1943, when the Holocaust was at its peak, the Zionists continued to prevent Jews from settling outside of Palestine. When a large group of rabbis in Washington attempted to meet with the president to urge him to save European Jews, the Zionist leaders asked the president to refuse to meet with them, and he did.

In April 1944, during the Holocaust, Adolf Eichmann offered the Zionists a deal - he would spare the lives of one million Hungarian Jews in exchange for 10,000 trucks and supplies from the Allies. The proposal was not accepted, as their focus was on Jewish emigration to Palestine, with no regard for the fate of a million Jews.

Eichmann also proposed to the Zionist leader Rezső Kasztner, that he would pay \$1,000 for the release of 1,684 wealthy Jews, including the Kastner family, in exchange for their escape to Switzerland and that Kasztner was to agree not to inform Hungarian Jews that they were to be sent to their deaths in the Holocaust.

As a result, Kasztner was convicted in 1954 and assassinated in March 1957 by members of a far-right militia for collaborating with the Nazis.

In effect, the Zionist-Nazi alliance became part of the ideological foundation of Israel's apartheid and genocidal policies today.



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MoE defers secondment of private school principals

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: Minister of Education, Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, issued a ministerial decree suspending the secondment of principals and assistant principals working in private non-governmental schools (Arab private and model schools), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the decision, the General Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation will be responsible for distributing principals and assistant principals to government schools under the Educational Affairs Sector, based on the actual needs for these positions.

According to the decree, Minister Al-Tabtabaei tasked the Inspection and Audit Office of the Ministry of Education with monitoring compliance in private sector schools with the regulations and systems in force at the ministry, and submitting the necessary reports.

The decree emphasized that all relevant authorities, each within its area of jurisdiction, must implement and adhere to its provisions

from the date of issuance, and that any previous ministerial decrees that conflict with its provisions are hereby repealed.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education confirmed that it has successfully trained and qualified more than 21,000 teachers in the use of artificial intelligence technologies in the educational process as part of the "Google AI for Education" project, in cooperation with Google.

The ministry affirmed that this step represents a qualitative leap.

Project

Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs, Hamad Al-Hamad, stated that the project was launched in 2024 under the directives of the Minister of Education, Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, and included the establishment of the Gemini Education Academy to train teachers in the use of artificial intelligence tools and applications.

Al-Hamad emphasized that employing AI tools in education is a strategic investment in the minds of future generations.

He commended the efforts of the Google team and the Ministry of Education, particularly the Computer Technical Guidance Department.

The Director General of the General Guidance, Curricula, and Research Department at the ministry and Project Director, Mohammed Al-Otaibi, told KUNA that the project has achieved a significant milestone by training and qualifying more than 21,000 teachers in the use of AI technologies in the educational process.

Shaima Al-Turkait, General Manager of Google Cloud in Kuwait, stated that the company aims to expand its reach to include all teachers, totaling 40,000 users, by incorporating middle schools.

Mona Salem, the acting Director of the Computer Technical Guidance Department and Executive Director of the project, confirmed the activation of 25,000 Gemini Education licenses.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Abolhassan Banisadr was betrayed by the revolution he helped ignite

THE thinker who helped overthrow the Iranian Shah was destroyed by the very revolutionaries he had once worked alongside.

In 1979, a young officer in Tehran, standing beside Khomeini in Parisian exile, was planning a revolution against the Shah, writing articles, and gathering international support. His ideas inspired millions, and he became the intellectual face of the revolution after the Shah's fall.

This man won the presidential election by a landslide and dreamed of a moderate, democratic Iran. At one point, he came close to realizing his dream. However, the extremist clerics wanted absolute control and considered him too moderate.

They launched a coordinated campaign to undermine his authority and accused him of treason in the newspapers. Protesters filled the streets, chanting against him until he was ousted.

During this period, his life was in danger, so he went into hiding for several days. On July 10, 1981, he donned the uniform of the Iranian Air Force and shaved his mustache as a disguise. He secretly boarded a Boeing 707 piloted by his loyal pilot, Colonel Behzad Mo'azzi. He fled to France, where he remained, never to return to the country he had helped liberate. He was Abolhassan Banisadr, the first president betrayed by the revolution he had supported.

* * *

The experienced, the widow, and her daughter's marriage

A widow placed a sign on her door that

- The thinker who helped plan the Shah's downfall was the first victim.
- He won the presidential election by a landslide, yet was later removed from office.
- Hardliners launched an organized campaign to undermine his authority, and they succeeded.
- He escaped by wearing an Iranian air force uniform and shaving his mustache as a disguise.
- She placed a sign on her door that read, "My daughter's dowry is \$50,000."
- Most men left as soon as they saw the dowry amount.
- The widow told the neighbors, "The wholesale price is different from the retail price."
- The owl said to the hoopoe, "Because you are known for your honesty, I ruled in your favor."
- The hoopoe, "If I am as you say, then this hole belongs to the crow."

read, "My daughter's dowry is \$50,000."

Her daughter was exceptionally beautiful, and suitors constantly came to her door. But most of them left as soon as they saw the dowry amount.

As time passed, people began accusing the widow of greed and madness. Some said she was not looking for a husband for her daughter, but simply a wealthy man.

However, a young man was deeply in love with the girl and could not stop thinking about her. He decided to raise the money, no matter what it took. He worked tirelessly, day and night, but only managed to collect \$30,000.

The young man told his father about the girl and said, "I've done everything I can, but I still can't reach the amount they want."

His father smiled and said, "Give me the money you have, and come with me to the woman tomorrow."

The next day, they went to the widow's house. The father sat before her and asked her not to interrupt him until he had finished speaking.

He then took out the money and said, "My son wants to marry your daughter, and here is ten thousand dollars as her dowry."

The mother looked at him angrily and wanted to object, but he quickly said, "I told you not to interrupt me until I finish speaking."

Then he said, "And here is another ten thousand as your dowry, so I can marry you."

Immediately, the widow's expression

changed, and she smiled shyly and happily, saying, "Congratulations to us both! Bring the socks, my daughter."

After the news spread, the neighbors asked her in astonishment how she had so quickly changed her condition. She smiled and said, "The wholesale price is different from the retail price."

The young man asked his father about the remaining ten thousand, and the father laughed and said, "Help your mother so she will agree to my marriage."

* * *

The hoopoe, the crow, and the owl

A hoopoe and a crow were arguing over a water-filled hole. Each claimed ownership, so they took their case to the owl, the judge of the birds.

The owl asked each of them to provide proof of the hole's construction. When neither could provide proof, the owl ruled in favor of the hoopoe.

The hoopoe asked the owl why she had ruled, and she replied, "Because the hoopoe is known for his honesty."

Then the hoopoe said, "If what is known about me is true, then I should not act contrary to what I am known for."

This hole belongs to the crow. Maintaining my good reputation is better than having a thousand holes."

Are there any humans like this hoopoe?

Riyadh Road closure of lanes to end on July 29

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The General Traffic Department announced the closure of the fast lane and the middle lane on King Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Road (Riyadh Road), opposite Khaitan towards Kuwait International Airport, starting Wednesday, June 24 until Wednesday, July 29, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The department also noted that the entrance to Abu Dhabi Street from Riyadh Road towards Khaitan, Block 3, has been reopened.

KFF checks on stations securing 'Husseiniyas'

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Director General of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), Major General Talal Al-Roumi, conducted an inspection tour on Tuesday evening of fire stations responsible for securing the Husseiniyas (Shia religious centers), reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Al-Roumi

In an official statement, KFF explained that the visit aimed to assess the readiness of field firefighting teams and ensure the implementation of all safety and fire prevention requirements to guarantee the safety of attendees at the Hussainiyats. Major General Al-Roumi issued directives emphasizing the need for a strong field presence and full vigilance to respond immediately to any emergency. He stressed the importance of adhering to established plans to enhance public safety and the prevention system.

□ □ □

Fire erupts in Salwa cars: Firefighters from Salmiya fire station extinguished a fire that broke out in two cars parked in front of a house in Salwa, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a source in the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the KFF Control Room received information about the fire in Salwa recently and firefighters immediately responded to the scene and found that the fire had started in two cars and damaged two others. An investigation has been launched to determine the cause.

□ □ □

KFF detects farms misuse: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) conducted an inspection campaign in the Al-Wafra agricultural area to identify establishments violating safety and fire prevention regulations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Campaign to clean up Kuwait is in full swing

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: Kuwait Municipality, through the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Departments in various governorates, has stepped up its field inspection efforts, aiming to detect and remove violations and strengthen the monitoring role of the relevant authorities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In Hawally Governorate, the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department reported that an intensive inspection campaign carried out by field teams led to the issuance of 65 citations related to hygiene and road occupancy violations. The campaign also resulted in the removal of 53 abandoned and illegally parked vehicles, in addition to the placement of 361 warning stickers.

Kids taken from 'not home' mom

Kuwaiti speeding at 180 kph arrested

By Jaber Al-Hamoud/Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Family Court of Appeals revoked the custody of a woman over her two children and transferred custody to their father after it was established that she frequently traveled for tourism purposes, leaving the children in the care of others during her absence.

The court ruled that her conduct is sufficient ground for revoking custody, as she failed to meet the legal and practical requirements expected of a custodian.

Attorney Houra Al-Habib, lawyer for the father, stated that the mother is no longer fit to retain custody, considering the children had repeatedly been absent from school for extended periods without a valid reason, and that the mother often traveled without taking them with her.

According to Al-Habib, these circumstances proved the failure of the woman to fulfill her custodial responsibilities and had a negative impact on the children's welfare, stability and educational progress.

She asserted that maintaining custody under such conditions is not in the best interest of the children.

In its reasoning, the court explained

that custody extends beyond providing accommodation, as it includes direct and continuous care, proper upbringing, supervision and attention, as well as the affection and emotional support necessary for a child's healthy psychological and social development.

The court also pointed out that no evidence was presented to establish that the father was unfit to assume custody of his children, while none of the female relatives legally eligible to seek custody submitted a claim for custodial rights.

□ □ □

Speeding Kuwaiti nabbed: Officers from the Jahra Traffic Department arrested a Kuwaiti citizen and impounded his vehicle for driving at a speed of 180 kilometers per hour on Jahra Road recently.

A security source stated that traffic officers uncovered the violation during their routine field campaigns aimed at monitoring roads and apprehending motorists exceeding the speed limit.

The source added that the citizen was immediately stopped, legal procedures were taken against him, and then he was referred to the traffic police station.

The source confirmed that the traffic enforcement campaigns are ongoing in all governorates to monitor speeding violations and other traffic offenses, with the aim of ensuring road safety, protecting motorists and pedestrians, and reducing accidents caused by reckless driving.

Eatery, 'baqalas' in private homes

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), in coordination and cooperation with the General Department of Criminal Investigation at the Ministry of Interior, conducted a campaign targeting several private residences in Jahra Governorate, which resulted in the seizure of three non-compliant food establishments - a restaurant and two grocery stores, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAFN stated in a press release that the raids uncovered several serious violations, most notably the operation and management of food establishments

without the required health licenses, the handling and preparation of food under unsanitary conditions, and the seizure of adulterated food, as well as expired or unfit-for-consumption products.

PAFN reported that the necessary legal measures have been taken against the violators and that the cases have been referred to the competent authorities for further action.

PAFN urged citizens and residents to avoid dealing with unlicensed or unknown-source food establishments due to the potential risks they pose to public health.

Drugs, liquor likely cause of brawl in Kabad livestock pen

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: A Kuwaiti citizen and two Gulf nationals were arrested due to a fight that broke out inside a livestock pen in Kabad, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the investigator at Kabad Police Station also ordered that samples be sent to the forensic laboratory to determine the substance that caused the suspects to behave abnormally.

In addition, authorities ordered the arrest of several other individuals who fled

the scene before police arrived.

The Ministry of Interior's Operations Room had received a report of a brawl at the site, which resulted in injuries among some participants. Patrols were dispatched immediately and found three individuals with minor injuries believed to have been caused by sharp objects.

Preliminary indications suggested that those involved may have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

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Kuwait en route to become trade hub

Economic zones expansion underway

By **Mohammad Ghanem**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) asked the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to issue a tender for a consultancy study regarding updating the feasibility study for the Al-Na'ayem Economic Zone project and a comprehensive feasibility study for the Al-Nuwiseeb Free Zone project.

The CAPT Board of Directors decided in its meeting last Wednesday to postpone making a decision un-

til a letter containing the discussed amendments is received from the entity within five working days.

In a related development, the 2025/2026 Development Plan report included two strategic development projects for the authority -- the Economic Zones Project, which is in line with its commitment to improve the investment environment in Kuwait and increase value-added investment opportunities for local and foreign investors.

This project also reflects the authority's belief in the necessity of coordinating with various government entities involved in development of the country within the Third National Structural Plan 2005/2030.

This will be achieved through the development, planning and implementation of economic zones allocated to the authority by the Kuwait

Municipality for its economic projects.

The report explained that through the establishment of these economic zones, the authority aims to transfer modern technology and technical expertise to Kuwait, create job opportunities, and provide capacity-building opportunities, thereby, transforming Kuwait into a commercial hub. These economic zones are Abdali, Wafra and Na'ayem.

The report added that the second strategic project -- expansion and development of free zones -- includes 50 logistics warehouses and storage plots, four restaurant complexes serving workers, five commercial banks, 50 light factories, two investment complexes for leasing, two medical centers, 500 investment companies, and a tender for three hotels.



KCCI photo

The Kuwait Center for Commercial Arbitration, which is affiliated with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), on Monday held a legal seminar.

'Protecting system to safeguard rights'

'Judicial oversight of Arbitration Awards'

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Kuwait Center for Commercial Arbitration, which is affiliated with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), on Monday held a legal seminar entitled, "Judicial Oversight of Arbitration Awards: Protecting the Prestige of Justice or Weakening the Effectiveness of Arbitration?"

Present at the seminar were the secretary general of the center, consultants, judges, lawyers and experts interested in the commercial and investment arbitration sector.

Consultant Dr. Khaled Mohammad Al-Amira conducted the seminar. He stated that the arbitration system rests on three pillars. First is the existence and structure of arbitration, represented by the agreement on an arbitration clause in the event of a dispute. Second is the arbitration proceedings and the proper procedures before the odd-numbered arbitration panel. Third is the arbitration award and drafting it with a sound judicial mindset based on the

facts of the dispute, evidence and legal justifications.

He emphasized that judicial oversight of national arbitration awards does not aim to diminish the quality of arbitration or consider it inferior to the judiciary, but rather to protect the arbitration system scientifically and technically and to safeguard rights.

The seminar delved into the two arms of judicial oversight:

- First: Oversight through the original action to annul a national arbitration award.

Al-Amira analyzed this as a substantive declaratory action filed within 30 days of the award's announcement before the Court of First Instance (with a deposit of KD50). He explained that oversight here is broad, encompassing verification of general and specific conditions, and monitoring the grounds for annulment stipulated in Article 187 of the Code of Civil Procedure -- whether substantive loopholes, such as the absence or invalidity of the arbitration agreement, or procedural loopholes like the violation of the right to defense or grounds for requesting reconsideration (such as fraud and forgery).

Second: Oversight by appealing an order to enforce a national arbitration award.

Al-Amira discussed the procedural path for enforcement through the jurisdictional courts by submitting a request to the judge of urgent matters (the president of the Court of First Instance).

Meanwhile, the secretary general of the center affirmed that organizing this scholarly event is in line with the ongoing commitment of the center to develop the institutional arbitration framework in the State of Kuwait and keep abreast of the latest judicial practices. He asserted that a stable and complementary relationship between the judiciary and arbitration, and an understanding of the limits of judicial oversight, are considered the foundation for creating a safe, stable and attractive investment environment for the local and foreign investors.

KGAC gets nod to expand border area

By **Inaas Awadh**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Munira Al-Amir, held its 36th meeting for the fourth session, during which it approved the request of Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) to expand the Nuwiseeb border by 1,420,000 square meters in order to accommodate the increasing number of vehicles crossing the border and to improve logistical services.



Al-Amir

During the discussion, the committee looked into the possibility of studying a similar expansion for the Salmi border in the future.

The committee also approved the request of the

Ministry of Interior to reallocate the site of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Coast Guard Base, located on

the northern artificial island along Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway.

Furthermore, the committee approved a request to annex and add state-owned land adjacent to a plot in Sharq, Block Eight.

On the other hand, the committee decided to shelve the proposal of Chairman of the council Abdullah Al-Muhairi to add the sale of cosmetics and beauty products for women's salons to the list of permitted activities.

The committee also noted the Ministry of Interior's letter inviting attendees to the meeting.

Other Voices

Stop misleading people on yoga

By **Nasser Al-Hajeri**

The recent celebration of the International Day of Yoga in Kuwait was a remarkable success. Organized by the Embassy of India in cooperation with local partners, the event attracted more than 2,200 participants from different nationalities, backgrounds, and faiths. It was a public gathering focused on health, fitness, well-being, and community engagement.

Unfortunately, as often happens with successful public events, it also became the subject of misinformation on social media.

In recent days, some commentators have circulated old newspaper headlines and selective excerpts from articles in an attempt to convince the public that yoga is primarily a religious practice and that participation in such activities is somehow incompatible with Islam. Everyone is entitled to their opinion and free to express it. The problem arises when incomplete information is presented without context, creating a misleading picture of reality.

One of the main claims being circulated relies on old reports stating that India's Ministry of Sports declared that yoga was "not a sport." What is often omitted is the reason behind that classification. The discussion was not about whether yoga was a religion. Rather, it concerned whether yoga should be categorized as a competitive sport involving tournaments, medals, rankings, and sporting federations. The debate was administrative in nature, not theological. Moreover, the argument relies on outdated information. In 2020, the Government of India formally recognized Yogasana as a competitive sport and subsequently incorporated it into national sporting competitions and youth games. Yogasana is a competitive discipline in which participants are judged on the precision, balance, flexibility, and execution of specific yoga postures, much like gymnastics evaluates athletic performance through structured routines. Therefore, presenting old headlines without acknowledging

later developments does not provide readers with the full picture.

Critics have also pointed to a social media post from India's Ministry of Ayush that describes Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) as a way of expressing gratitude to the sun. However, citing a single post in isolation does not justify portraying all yoga activities as religious ceremonies. Yoga is practiced today by millions of people around the world for physical fitness, flexibility, breathing techniques, and overall well-being. More importantly, there is no evidence that participants at the Kuwait event were asked to worship the sun, perform a religious ritual, or adopt any religious belief. The event was publicly promoted as a health and wellness activity under the theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing," and that is exactly what those in attendance experienced.

Equally concerning was the false claim that participants gathered in a public garden at noon to pray and give gratitude to the sun. In reality, the event took place at 5:00 a.m., as publicly announced beforehand. Those in attendance participated in a health and wellness activity, not a religious ceremony. Anyone present can confirm this.

It is also worth noting that many Muslims around the world participate in yoga purely as a form of exercise, much as people engage in activities that may have originated in different cultures without adopting the religious beliefs associated with those cultures. Stretching exercises, breathing techniques, and wellness practices do not automatically become acts of worship. Healthy societies thrive on discussion and debate. However, honest debate requires facts, context, and intellectual integrity. Taking old headlines out of context, ignoring relevant details, and presenting personal interpretations as established facts does little to inform the public.

People are free to practice yoga or not practice yoga. They are free to support it or criticize it. But public discussions should be based on what actually happened, not on assumptions, selective quotations, or narratives designed to create unnecessary division.

In an age where misinformation spreads faster than facts, the responsibility to verify information before sharing it has never been more important.



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CITRA, AMAN review emergencies

By **Mohammad Ghanem**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) reviewed its preparedness and procedures with the team working on establishing the National Center for Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management (AMAN). These procedures are aimed at ensuring the readiness of the communications and information technol-

ogy infrastructure in various emergency situations.

This step is part of a series of coordination meetings the team is holding with government entities.

CITRA also presented its coordination and communication mechanisms with relevant parties, as well as its rapid response plans for cybersecurity and technical incidents, thereby enhancing its ability to manage risks and maintain operational readiness.

High-level talks emphasize unified response to regional threats

Kuwait, UAE review military coordination and readiness

ABU DHABI, June 24, (KUNA): UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan discussed on Tuesday with Kuwaiti Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan strengthening bilateral defense ties and regional security developments.

The UAE Ministry of Defense stated via its official account on the 'X' platform that the meeting took place within the framework of long-standing fraternal relations and defense cooperation between the two nations.

The statement added that the meeting addressed several topics of mutual interest and reviewed aspects of military cooperation and coordination between the two sides, in addition to exchanging views on developments and issues related to military and security affairs.



Left: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan with Kuwaiti Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan. Right: Kuwaiti Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan with UAE Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Issa Al-Mazrouei.

Both sides emphasized the vital importance of deepening military cooperation to serve shared interests and reinforce security and sta-



KUNA photos

bility across the region. Also on Tuesday, Kuwaiti Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan and

UAE Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Issa Al-Mazrouei held talks to spearhead joint military and defense cooperation.

The UAE Ministry of Defense stated via its official account on the 'X' platform that the high-level meeting was convened to reinforce the deep-seated military relations and fraternal bonds between the two GCC nations.

The discussions focused primarily on expanding defense cooperation frameworks, optimizing combat readiness, and boosting operational efficiency across both armed forces.

Furthermore, both top military commanders emphasized the necessity of accelerating knowledge-sharing initiatives and exchanging tactical expertise to address shared security challenges and safeguard regional stability.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait Amir,

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Wednesday visiting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, hold talks on bilateral relations and current development in the Middle East region.

The talks highlighted Kuwait and Washington's collective backing for all measures that aim to preserve peace and security around the wider Middle East region, while efforts to bolster bilateral relations was another topic of discussion.

The talks were attended by the head of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah and Kuwait's ambassador to Washington Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah, in addition to other top state officials.

Meanwhile, the US Department of State announced on Wednesday the resumption of operations at the US Embassy in Kuwait after more than three months of closure due to the war with Iran.

A State Department spokesperson said in a statement that "the US Embassy in Kuwait resumed operations effective midnight June 24, 2026, following a suspension imposed after Iranian attacks."

The spokesperson noted that the embassy will immediately provide emergency services to American citizens,

with other offerings expected to be reinstated gradually.

On his part, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted on his X account pictures of his participation in a ceremony marking the raising of the US flag once again at the United States Embassy in Kuwait.

"The American flag: a symbol of liberty, unity and freedom now flies proudly once again over Kuwait City," said Rubio. "Kuwait is an indispensable partner for regional security and stability, the US looks forward to strengthening our partnership across all areas of cooperation," he added.

The US had suspended operations at its embassy in Kuwait in early March following Iranian attacks.

Major traffic

It emphasized achieving the highest safety levels to protect road users, urging all drivers to follow traffic rules and cooperate with police to avoid accidents.

Meanwhile, the Rescue Police executed 1,402 security missions across different governorates, aiming to boost security, enforce discipline, and respond immediately to incoming emergency reports.

The Ministry reiterated that round-the-clock field efforts will persist to safeguard citizens and residents, effectively reinforcing strict traffic compliance throughout all areas of Kuwait.

Shuwaikh substation

efficient transmission of power generated from the Shagaya power station, enhance the reliability of the electrical grid, and increase its capacity to meet the growing demand for electricity.

Upon completion of the SAB procedures, the contract will be signed and work will commence in accordance with the latest international technical standards for high-voltage overhead transmission lines to ensure operational efficiency, sustainability, and compliance with environmental regulations.

KPC reform

The decree also eases certain pre-approval controls to enable faster execution of commercial transactions, supporting KPC's ability to compete in a dynamic global environment.

The decree additionally allows for future adjustments to KPC's capital through a similar legislative mechanism.

It also stipulates that the current board of directors will continue to operate until the end of its term or until a new board is appointed.

Any provisions conflicting with the new amendments are repealed, and the law will come into effect upon its publication in the Official Gazette.

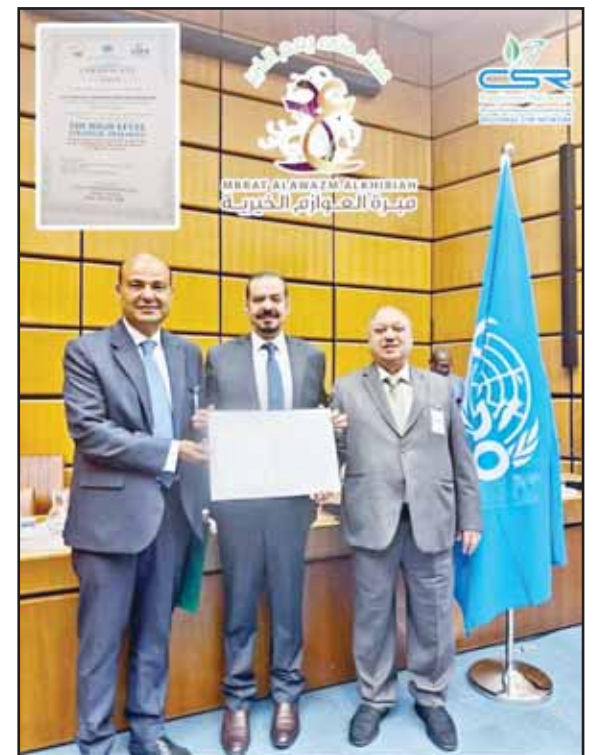
Kuwaiti charity chief Al-Bseis receives global award for humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: An international certificate of appreciation was awarded to Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation and United Nations Ambassador for Community Partnership Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis in recognition of his contributions to the high-level strategic dialogue on the role of the private sector in supporting industrial recovery in Syria, Palestine and Sudan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event was held at the Vienna International Centre (UNCIL) in Vienna, Austria, and was jointly organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Union of Arab Chambers and the Regional Network for Social Responsibility.

This recognition was in appreciation of the active participation of Al-Bseis in advancing sustainable development initiatives, strengthening community partnerships, and contributing to international dialogues on supporting recovery, resilience and development in countries facing challenges and crises.

The Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation affirmed that this international recognition reflects the distinguished role of the State of Kuwait and its charitable and humanitarian institutions. It also highlights Kuwait's continuous presence and meaningful contributions to international forums about development, humanitarian action and social responsibility.



Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation and United Nations Ambassador for Community Partnership Hamad Zaid Saud Al-Bseis with the award.



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INTERNATIONAL

Mamdani proves power in NY races, ousts 2 incumbents from Congress

NEW YORK, June 24, (AP): New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani's slate of fiery progressives swept establishment-backed Democrats in the state's congressional primaries on Tuesday, ousting two sitting congressmen in a resounding show of force for the democratic socialist leader of America's largest city, who is fighting to reshape the Democratic Party in New York and beyond.

US Rep Adriano Espaillat, who leads the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and is in his fifth term, was defeated by Mamdani's most polarizing pick, Darializa Avila Chevalier, a democratic socialist who once helped organize pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University.

US Rep Dan Goldman, a two-term incumbent, was beaten by the Mamdani-backed former city Comptroller Brad Lander, a fixture among New York progressives who has often shown sympathy to the democratic socialist movement. And another Mamdani ally, democratic socialist state Assembly Member Claire Valdez,



New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani celebrates with Democratic congressional candidate Darializa Avila Chevalier and organizer Carmen Rojas during an election night watch party on June 23, in New York. (AP)

defeated the handpicked successor of retiring US Rep Nydia Velazquez.

Tuesday's primaries represented a major political gamble for the 34-year-old mayor, whose strength is surging, and a potential headache for Democratic lead-

ers, who fear that Mamdani and his loyalists may push the party too far left ahead of November's midterm elections - when voters across the nation will decide which party controls Congress for the last two years of Trump's final term.

Top court sides with WH on immigration case dealing with green card holders

WASHINGTON, June 24, (AP): The Supreme Court sided with the Trump administration Tuesday in an immigration case dealing with the government's power over green card holders accused of crimes.

The 6-3 decision centers on an immigration officers' 2012 decision to put lawful permanent resident Muk Choi Lau on immigration parole when he returned from a short trip to China because he had been accused of a counterfeiting crime.

Lau argued that the officer overstepped their authority, and the decision wrongly allowed the Department of Homeland Security under then-President Barack Obama an easier path to removal after he pleaded guilty to selling counterfeit clothes in New Jersey.

The high court disagreed. "Border officers did not have the burden to establish by clear and convincing evidence that Lau had committed a crime involving moral turpitude," Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in the opinion.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented, writing that the decision to put Lau on immigration parole effectively sentenced him to "im-



The US Supreme Court is photographed on June 8, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

migration limbo" before he'd been convicted of any crime.

"I worry that the Court has now handed the Government a massive blank check," she wrote in the dissent joined by her two liberal colleagues.

The liberal group Alliance for Justice echoed that concern, saying the

ruling could provide an expanded path for revoking green cards.

But Advancing American Freedom, a group founded by former Republican Vice President Mike Pence, called it an important case to allow the removal of people who "abuse the privilege of being granted lawful permanent resident status."

Vote poorly timed and meaningless: US president

Senate for first time OKs war powers resolution in rebuke to Trump over Iran conflict

WASHINGTON, June 24, (AP): The Senate for the first time approved a war powers resolution Tuesday seeking to block US military action against Iran, as lawmakers warily watch President Donald Trump's efforts to resolve a conflict that the administration launched on its own and now needs Congress to fund.

It was the 10th time the Senate has tried to stop the war, and the outcome, on a vote of 50-48, was a stunning turnaround from past efforts. While the resolution is largely symbolic, and does not carry the full force of law, it reflects the growing concerns from a number of Republican lawmakers in both the House and Senate over both the war and the deal Trump struck with Iran to end it. The House approved the resolution earlier this month.

Trump responded angrily Tuesday night on his Truth Social platform, calling the vote "poorly timed and meaningless" and saying it "provided aid and comfort" to Iran.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said, "Time after time, the vast majority of Senate Republicans sided with Trump and his war instead of the American people."

Schumer said Americans have paid the price for "Trump's historic blunder in Iran. It'll go down in the history books as one of the worst foreign policy forays America has ever made."

In the past, as many as four GOP senators have voted for the war powers resolutions, and they did so Tuesday - Republicans Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana. One Democrat, Sen John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, voted against.

Trump bashed the four Republicans as losers, saying, "These senators have made my job more difficult."

On this vote, the absence of two Republicans, including Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who was admitted to the hospital recently for an undisclosed matter, left the GOP without a full majority to halt the effort. Sen. Dave McCormick, R-Pa., also missed the vote.

The vote comes as the Pentagon is seeking \$80 billion from Congress mostly for the Iran war as it backfills munitions and stockpiles.



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., speaks to reporters at the Capitol in Washington on June 23. (AP)

Trump himself is headed to the Capitol on Wednesday to meet with GOP senators after Vice President JD Vance was overseas working to negotiate with Iran to end its nuclear ambitions - which had been among the stated rationales for the war.

The president is not pleased with the Republicans who have been critical of the deal he struck with Iran, according to one GOP senator granted anonymity to discuss the private dynamics.

The terms of the Iran deal are spelled out in a memorandum of understanding that Trump signed last week, starting a 60-day clock for the sides to reach

a broader agreement over ending Iran's nuclear program.

But Republicans have particularly objected to the \$300 billion fund to help Iran rebuild, which is far greater than the \$1.7 billion then-President Barack Obama refunded the country under his administration's 2015 Iran deal.

"I believe President Trump is getting very poor advice on Iran," Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said last week on his podcast after the deal was made public. Over and again, Democrats have been forcing votes on the Iran war, almost since the U.S. and Israel launched missile strikes on Iran on Feb. 28.

Nearly each week they're in session, the Senate Democrats have put forward war powers resolutions, but they have failed to amass the majority needed for passage in the narrowly split chamber, where Trump's Republican Party holds the majority. Trump would almost certainly veto any measure that passed.

The House pushed its own version to passage earlier this month, with four Republicans joining all Democrats in approving the war powers resolution, over the objections of House Speaker Mike Johnson and the GOP leadership.

While the House- and Senate-passed resolution does not go to the president for his signature, passage stands as a powerful, if symbolic, statement from Congress and a rebuke of the administration's military actions.

Sen. Tim Kaine, the Democrat from Virginia who has led his party's efforts, said the pause in warfighting, as Trump's team works to shore up a fragile ceasefire, provides the perfect time for Congress to step back and assess "what should the next chapter be."

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is on Capitol Hill this week, seeking roughly \$80 billion in supplemental funding to shore up defense supplies in the aftermath of the Iran war, which is drawing scrutiny when many Americans are reeling from high gas prices and costs of living.

The Pentagon early on had estimated the war cost \$11.3 billion during its first week, and senators said experts put the overall price tag of Operation Epic Fury higher, at some \$100 billion.

The Defense Department's funding request is part of a broader beef-up of military money the White House wants as part of its budget request this year.



From left: Czech Republic's Premier Andrej Babis, Poland's Premier Donald Tusk, Hungary's Premier Peter Magyar and Slovakia's Premier Robert Fico arrive for a press conference to conclude the one-day summit of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries in the Royal Castle in Godollo, northern Hungary on June 23. (AP)

Leaders of 4 Central European countries meet in Hungary

GODOLLO, Hungary, June 24, (AP): The leaders of four Central European countries signaled the revival of their regional alliance on Tuesday as they met in Hungary to repair relations that had fractured over the pro-Russian stance of former Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán.

The prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia were meeting for the first summit of the Visegrad Four regional group in more than two years after Orbán's approach to the war in Ukraine caused fault lines among the informal bloc's other members, particularly Poland.

Hosting Tuesday's summit at the Grassalkovich Castle in Gödöllő, a suburb of Budapest, was Hungarian Prime Minister Péter Magyar, who since succeeding Orbán in May has spoken repeatedly about the importance of breathing new life into the group.

Magyar said at a news conference following a one-hour meeting with his counterparts that he had proposed developing a high-speed rail line linking the four countries' capitals, and that the prime ministers had also discussed finding common ground on energy security, agricultural policy and illegal immigration.



Passengers wait for a train at a platform in the central train station in Frankfurt, Germany on June 24, following the nationwide service disruption on the Deutsche Bahn network. (AP)

Trains across Germany briefly halted after communication system issue

BERLIN, June 24, (AP): Scheduled work to replace a part triggered a communications outage on Germany's railway that brought all trains to a halt, stranding travelers across the country, the network operator said Wednesday as it faced criticism and questions over the embarrassing chaos.

The main railway operator, federal government-owned Deutsche Bahn, apologized for the abrupt halt in services late Tuesday, when all trains in Germany ground to a stop. Service resumed gradually about two hours later, after midnight.

Long lines formed at information desks as travelers tried to figure out how to reach their destination and where to spend the night.

Deutsche Bahn said it was offering taxi and hotel vouchers and, where possible, putting trains in place for would-be travelers to sit in while they waited. But passengers complained of a lack of information, hotel rooms

were not available everywhere, and some travelers' journeys stretched through the night.

The outage was the result of a problem with the GSM-R digital communication system used for internal communication on the railway network.

Deutsche Bahn said trains were running "largely seamlessly" on Wednesday morning, though there may still be some delays.

The head of the operator's DB InfraGO infrastructure division, Philipp Nagl, said that the cause appeared to have been "the scheduled swap of a technical component." He did not elaborate.

"We are analyzing with the highest priority how exactly this led to the fault," Nagl said in a brief statement, adding that the company apologizes to its customers for the disruption.

Burnham inches closer to power in Britain

LONDON, June 24, (AP): Andy Burnham took a step closer to becoming Britain's next prime minister without a contest on Wednesday when Cabinet minister Darren Jones, touted as a possible rival, said he would not run.

Meanwhile Keir Starmer, seeking to secure a legacy before he leaves office, faces the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session in Parliament before flying to Berlin to meet European allies for talks on Ukraine and the Middle East.

Starmer announced his plan to resign on Monday and will be out of office within weeks once the governing Labour Party picks a new leader.

Jones, a Starmer ally, had been encouraged to run so that Burnham faces a test of his ideas and policies in front of Labour lawmakers and members. Others argue that a leadership contest will only focus attention on the party's internal divisions and extend a period of political uncertainty.

Jones told Sky News that running for the leadership is "not something that I'm going to do."

But he cautioned Burnham against veering too far to the left in economic policy, a concern of some in the business and financial worlds. Burnham is expected to choose a new Treasury chief to replace Starmer appointee Rachel Reeves. Jones said it must be someone "that can reassure the markets, reassure the trade unions and reassure the parliamentary Labour Party, and by extension the public."

Burnham is expected to make a speech next week outlining some of his economic plans.

Starmer is leaving after two years in office marred by missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with his party and the 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 leadership of the Labour Party and the country.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, a fire rages in a multi-story building after Russia's air attack in Druzhkivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine on June 24. (AP)

Ukraine hits Russia gas plant

Ukrainian forces struck a major natural gas processing plant and two key satellite communications centers in their latest nighttime attack on Russia, Ukraine's General Staff said Wednesday.

The operation was part of Ukraine's aerial campaign targeting energy facilities and military industries that has intensified as Kyiv builds bigger and better long-range weapons to defeat Russia's all-out invasion, now in its fifth year.

The overnight attack hit the Orenburg Gas Processing Plant, which is part of a complex that also houses the only helium plant in Russia, the General Staff said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app. The attack set the complex on fire, it said.

Orenburg is located more than 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) behind the front line that snakes along eastern and southern Ukraine, it said.

The plant is one of the largest gas complexes in the world, according to the General Staff. It produces helium, used in liquid-fuel rocket engines and guidance systems, and ethane, a key component in producing solid rocket fuel and gunpowder, among other things, it added. (AP)

Europe

Lithuanian government steps down: Lithuanian Prime Minister Inga Ruginienė and her cabinet stepped down Tuesday after changes to the ruling coalition, setting the stage for the Baltic country's third prime minister in two years and an incoming government that has pledged to pursue a more pragmatic relationship with China after years of strained ties.

Ruginienė's government collapsed after the center-left Social Democrats ended their coalition agreement earlier this month with the scandal-ridden populist Nemuno Aušra party as one of its former leaders

faces allegations of antisemitic rhetoric. (AP)

Sturgeon ex-husband sentenced: The estranged husband of Scotland's former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was sentenced Tuesday to five years and three months in prison for embezzling more than 400,000 pounds (\$540,000) from the Scottish National Party to fund a luxury lifestyle when he was its chief executive.

Peter Murrell, 61, admitted using party funds to buy a high-priced motorhome, a Jaguar electric SUV, luxury goods such as Bremont watches and household items that included two toilet seats. He was given credit for time served. (AP)

South Korean officials, experts say vessel was likely built with Russian assistance

N.Korea's Kim claims progress on nuke-armed navy as new warship placed into service

SEOUL, South Korea, June 24, (AP): North Korea has commissioned a 5,000-ton destroyer that leader Kim Jong Un touts as a symbol of the country's growing naval and nuclear capabilities, state media reported Wednesday, as Pyongyang seeks to expand its ability to project military power at sea.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim told a commissioning ceremony Tuesday at the western port of Nampo that warships such as the Choe Hyon show that the nuclear armament of his navy is progressing as planned.

KCNA said the Choe Hyon was formally placed into service with North Korea's navy after the ceremony and will be tasked with defending the country's western coast.

Since unveiling the ship in April 2025, Kim has portrayed the Choe Hyon as a major step toward expanding his military's operational reach and preemptive strike capabilities. KCNA has said the warship is equipped with a range of systems, including anti-aircraft and anti-ship weapons as well as nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles.

South Korean officials and experts say the vessel was likely built with Russian assistance amid deepening military ties between the countries, but some analysts have questioned whether it's ready for active service.

North Korea has put the Choe Hyon through a series of tests in recent months ahead of its deployment, including launches of what it described as nuclear-capable cruise missiles from the vessel.

"It has clearly become a thing of the past when our navy existed as a force for defending the sea off our land," Kim said in a speech at Tuesday's ceremony. "It is rising into a full-fledged service equipped with strategic means as the program of equipping the Navy with nuclear weapons is following its



In this photo provided June 24, 2026, by the North Korean government, North Korean destroyer Choe Hyon is seen during its commissioning ceremony at a port in Nampo, North Korea on June 23. (AP)

planned course unerringly."

After years of spurring ballistic missile development, Kim has shifted his focus more toward naval capabilities, including the ongoing construction of a nuclear-

powered submarine. Naval capabilities were also a key focus when Kim outlined his five-year military goals at February's Workers' Party congress, which included calls for intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of underwater launches.

Kim, following a missile test aboard the Choe Hyon in March, claimed that his efforts to arm his navy with nuclear weapons would "constitute a radical change in defending our maritime sovereignty, something that we have not achieved for half a century." State media didn't elaborate on what Kim meant, but some analysts say North Korea may be preparing to formally declare a maritime boundary that could encroach on waters controlled by rival South Korea.

As inter-Korean tensions worsen, Kim has repeatedly said he does not recognize the Northern Limit Line in the western sea, drawn by the US-led UN Command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The poorly drawn sea boundary has been the site of several deadly skirmishes in past years.

North Korea unveiled in May 2025 a second destroyer in the same class as the Choe Hyon, but it was damaged during a botched launch at the northern port of Chongjin, prompting a furious response from Kim. The country later said the ship, named Kang Kon, was relaunched in June after repairs, but outside experts have questioned whether it's fully operational.

Kim during Tuesday's speech said Kang Kon will also be entering service soon. North Korea also has separate plans to build a larger, 10,000-ton destroyer.

Since his nuclear diplomacy with US President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019, Kim has accelerated the expansion of his nuclear arsenal and deepened ties with Moscow and Beijing. While maintaining a hard-line stance toward South Korea, he has left the door open to renewed talks with Washington, repeating Pyongyang's demand that the United States drop denuclearization as a precondition for reviving negotiations.

Mexico, like US, extends birthright citizenship to kids born on its soil

TIJUANA, Mexico, June 24, (AP): Vivianne Petit Frere's brightly painted Haitian restaurant sits blocks from the towering US border wall in Tijuana.

Called Lakou Lakay, the name in Haitian creole means "home," and it reflects her family's deepening roots in their adopted homeland where her granddaughter was born two years ago, automatically making her a Mexican citizen.

Like the United States, Mexico extends citizenship to children born within its borders.

President Donald Trump insists the US is the only nation to do so as he seeks to deny birthright citizenship for children whose parents are living in the country illegally or have temporary legal status.

The US Supreme Court is expected to weigh in soon on the constitutionality of his birthright citizenship order. Trump signed it on Jan. 20, 2025, the first day of his second term, amid his Republican administration's broad immigration crackdown.

In April, Trump posted on Truth



Vivianne Petit Frere walks with her granddaughter Alexca at a playground on June 22, in Tijuana, Mexico. (AP)

Social: "We are the only Country in the World STUPID enough to allow 'Birthright' Citizenship!"

In fact, about three dozen countries, mostly in the Americas, guarantee automatic citizenship to children born on their territory - among them, Canada, Honduras, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela and of course, Mexico.

Petit Frere fled Haiti in 2019. She traveled from Brazil and walked through the Panamanian jungle to Mexico chasing the so-called American Dream with the intention of crossing the border and settling with relatives in Florida. But she soon learned that was an illusion, while Mexico opened its doors.

Philippines temporarily blocks gaming app used by suspect in deadly school shooting

MANILA, Philippines, June 24, (AP): Philippine authorities said Tuesday they will temporarily block an online gaming app that one of two students blamed for a deadly school shooting has avidly used, to assess whether it played a role in fostering such violence. Three students were killed and 20 others were wounded when the two suspects, aged 14 and 15 and armed with a handgun each, opened fire Monday at the San Jose National High School in central Tacloban city.

The Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center said its decision to block Gorebox was prompted by an ongoing police investigation which showed that one suspect was an avid user of the app, adding that this will allow authorities to determine "whether the platform played any role in the actions of the suspects."

The decision would be enforced starting Tuesday, undersecretary Aboy Paraiso of the cybercrime center said in a statement.

"We cannot ignore possible online influences that may have contributed to this tragic incident," Paraiso said, without specifying how long the app will be blocked.

The gaming app was launched in



In this photo provided by the Tacloban City Police Office, police stand outside the San Jose National High School after the area was cordoned off following a shooting incident inside the school, in Tacloban city, central Philippines on June 22. (AP)

2023 and has been marketed as "a physics-driven sandbox game where creativity meets unrestrained destruction," the center said.

Paraiso did not say what action might be taken if a government assessment concludes that the app promotes violence among users.

"Beyond this temporary ban, we are reinforcing our monitoring efforts to identify online spaces that

may pose risks to young users and to ensure that appropriate interventions are made immediately," Paraiso said. "Our priority is the safety and well-being of Filipino children exposed to the internet."

Crimes involving the use of firearms are prevalent in the Philippines, partly due to the proliferation of unlicensed firearms, but school shootings are relatively rare.

EU observers back Colombia vote count amid challenge to results

BOGOTA, Colombia, June 24, (AP): A European Union mission that observed Colombia's presidential election underscored Tuesday the transparency and efficiency of the country's vote count process, which President Gustavo Petro has repeatedly questioned after results did not favor his preferred successor.

The independent mission deployed about 150 observers for Sunday's runoff election, whose results show conservative outsider Abelardo de la Esparilla leading by 1 percentage point, or nearly 251,000 votes, with all but a fraction of the votes counted. The mission also observed May's first-round vote.

"We have not observed any irregularities," mission chief Esteban González Pons, said referring to the counting process. "And as far as we have observed, Colombian legislation has been followed."

Petro and his protégé, progressive candidate Iván Cepeda, are challenging the results. Petro also claimed fraud after Cepeda did not win last month's election outright.

Cepeda on Sunday said his campaign would challenge the results of more than 30,000 voting stations and would not recognize results until a recount is finished. Electoral authorities are expected to complete the recount this week.

More than 26 million people voted in the runoff, setting a historic record. Of those, over 426,000 people



A campaign banner of presidential candidate Abelardo de la Esparilla hangs outside his party's headquarters in Barranquilla, Colombia on June 22, the day after the presidential election runoff. (AP)

chose a third, no-name option on the ballot that allows voters to express dislike of both candidates. About 29,000 people cast blank ballots.

The polarizing election was marked by people's fears of a renewed internal conflict. Both candidates pitched voters widely different strategies to prevent the South American country from experiencing the nonstop merciless violence, such as car bombs, kidnappings, disappearances and forced displacements, that Colombians lived with in previous decades.

Sunday's winner will begin a four-

year term Aug. 7. The lead-up to the runoff saw an increase in verbal attacks between the candidates in addition to accusations of fraud, vote-buying and intimidation. Petro also took issue with the software used to tally votes.

"It surprises us, and continues to surprise us, that the President of the Republic is denouncing irregularities that the candidates haven't denounced," González Pons told reporters after presenting the mission's preliminary report. "It seems pointless to point this out, but he's not a candidate."



Presidential candidate Roberto Sanchez of the Together for Peru party, center, walks with supporters during a protest against presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori of the Popular Force party in Lima, Peru on June 19. (AP)

Presidential candidate won't accept Peru's runoff vote unless overseas ballots tossed

LIMA, Peru, June 24, (AP): Presidential candidate Roberto Sánchez said Tuesday that he'll refuse to recognize results of Peru's June 7 presidential runoff if officials count ballots cast by Peruvians overseas that he alleges were processed improperly.

With 99.72% of votes counted, Sánchez trails conservative candidate Keiko Fujimori by just 40,000 votes and is expected to lose the election, once authorities finish processing tally sheets. More than 18 million Peruvians participated in the runoff.

Sánchez, a former commerce minister who is popular in rural areas and among Peru's Indigenous population, would win the election if votes cast by Peruvians living abroad are discarded, according to data published by election authorities.

Sánchez's campaign has filed a petition to reject overseas ballots, arguing that Peruvian consulates abroad did not use a government-provided app to scan tally sheets as required by law.

Peru's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement that, in late May, it had obtained authorization from electoral

officials to conduct voting at consulates without scanning tally sheets, but by sending them directly to the capital, Lima, to be processed after voting ended.

The ministry said the change was made because of problems with the scanning app during the first round. Sánchez's campaign argues that the procedural change created opportunities for fraud, an allegation denied by both Peru's national elections agency, ONPE, and the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

"Under these conditions of transgression of the rules, we will not recognize the government of Miss (Keiko) Fujimori," Sánchez said Tuesday.

More than 307,000 Peruvians living abroad voted in the June 7 runoff between Sánchez and Fujimori, with 65% of them supporting Fujimori, according to ONPE.

Fujimori has not commented on Sánchez's request to annul the overseas votes.

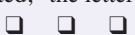
The conservative candidate, who campaigned on a tough on crime platform, won an overwhelming majority of votes cast by Peruvians living in the United States, Argentina and Japan, where her paternal grandparents were born.

Africa

Niger becomes 3rd country to leave ICC: Niger has formally left the International Criminal Court, accusing the judicial body in The Hague of selective justice.

The west African country submitted a letter to the United Nations on Monday, triggering the withdrawal process from the court's foundational treaty, the Rome Statute.

"While the court had raised great hopes among peoples who cherish peace and justice, it has been misused and exploited," the letter said. (AP)



Kenya to charge students with murder: Prosecutors in Kenya have prepared murder charges against students accused of starting a dormitory fire in May that killed 16 girls at a secondary school, officials said Tuesday.

The May 28 fire tore through a dormitory housing 202 students at the Utumishi Girls School in central Kenya, and students were forced to flee through a single doorway when the school matron failed to open an emergency exit.

Police later arrested nine suspects, and said they started the fire by setting a mattress ablaze near an exit. (AP)



Sudanese soldiers from the Rapid Support Forces unit patrol during a rally for Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, in Garawee town, north of Sudan, on June 15, 2019. (AP)

Fears grow for civilians as RSF closes in on Sudanese city

CAIRO, June 24, (AP): Paramilitary attacks on a strategic city of a half-million people in central Sudan have raised international alarm that another round of mass violence against civilians is being planned as the country's war surges into its fourth year.

"We must not allow the horrors of El Fasher to be repeated in El Obeid," a spokesman for UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a statement.

More than 6,000 people were killed in three days last year when the Rapid Support Forces seized el-Fasher in an attack that UN experts said bore the "hallmarks of genocide."

The UN Security Council has said it is alarmed by reports of "substantial" reinforcements by the RSF around el-Obeid in North Kordofan. The United States, Britain and some other European countries have warned of "escalating atrocity risks."

RSF deployments around el-Obeid suggest preparations for an offensive to retake it and whether the city ultimately falls depends on several factors, experts told The Associated Press.

The RSF didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Kuwait oil price dips to \$84.59 pb

KUWAIT CITY, June 24. (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by USD 1.48 to reach USD 84.59 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 85.07 pb on Sunday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corpora-

tion (KPC) on Wednesday. In global markets, Brent crude decreased by 82 cents to reach USD 77.08 pb, and West Texas Intermediate decreased by 65 cents to reach USD 73.21 pb.

Business

Based on its customer-focused strategy

NBK continues to strengthen its premium banking services with comprehensive financial solutions & exclusive benefits

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: In line with its commitment to meeting the aspirations of its diverse customer base and providing a comprehensive banking experience that meets the highest standards of quality and innovation, National Bank of Kuwait continues to strengthen its leadership in premium services through the development of a suite of financial solutions and banking services tailored to its various service segments, including Premium, Thahabi, and Elite customers.

These services include access to dedicated Relationship Managers and priority service, as well as advanced investment solutions through NBK Wealth and NBK Invest, offering clients diverse opportunities to efficiently manage and grow their wealth.

These packages reflect the Bank's commitment to providing added value to its clients through a comprehensive suite of services that combine advanced financial solutions, wealth management services, and exclusive benefits to meet their diverse financial needs at every stage



Ebraheem AlAbdulla

AlAbdulla: We follow a comprehensive approach to developing our banking services to keep pace with customer needs and market developments.

Our premium banking service segments are carefully designed to meet customer needs and enhance their wealth growth opportunities.

of their lives

NBK's services also extend to international banking programs and solutions, including mortgages outside Kuwait and cross-border services, catering to clients who wish to manage their finances internationally.

The Bank also offers preferential

rates on loans and deposits, a wide range of banking products, and exclusive credit card benefits, including travel offers and lifestyle privileges through strategic partnerships with leading local and international brands.

As part of its commitment to enhancing the digital customer experi-



ence, NBK also provides seamless and advanced banking experience through its NBK Mobile Banking App, which allows customers to manage their accounts and conduct transactions easily and securely anytime, anywhere.

On this occasion, Ebraheem AlAbdulla Associate Vice President

– Segments commented: “At NBK, we are committed to following a progressive strategic approach in developing our services and products based on understanding market dynamics and the evolving needs of our customers, as well as providing flexible and innovative banking solutions that keep pace with the vari-

ous stages of their financial lives”.

AlAbdulla added: “We continuously strive to enhance the customer experience, ensuring we deliver value-added services that empower them to manage and grow their wealth efficiently and achieve their long-term goals”.

Finally, AlAbdulla emphasized that the premium service packages have been carefully designed to meet the diverse needs of customers, combining excellence in everyday banking services, wealth growth opportunities, and exclusive benefits, further reflecting NBK's leadership and market position.

Based on its vision of innovation and digital transformation, and part of its ongoing commitment to simplifying and streamlining services to meet evolving customer needs, NBK will continue to offer comprehensive banking experiences across its global network, while raising the bar for customer service excellence by expanding its portfolio of investment products, all within a comprehensive, customer-focused approach.

Affirming on robust capital and liquidity

Moody's affirms Warba's ratings with a stable outlook

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: Moody's Ratings (Moody's) has affirmed the key credit ratings of Warba Bank, maintaining a stable outlook on all ratings. The rating action reflects the bank's financial position, operational efficiency, and capacity for sustainable growth amid regional and global market shifts.

Key Ratings Breakdown:

According to the bank's regulatory disclosure, Moody's affirmed the following ratings:

Long-Term Deposit Rating: Affirmed at Baa1.

Counterparty Risk Ratings (CRR) (Local & Foreign Currency): Affirmed at A3/P-2.

Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) & Adjusted BCA: Affirmed at ba2.

Outlook: Stable.

Analytical Insight: Moody's noted that Warba Bank's long-term deposit rating continues to benefit from a high probability of systemic government support, given the bank's systemic importance within Kuwait's Islamic banking sector.

Capital Adequacy and Asset Quality:

The rating agency highlighted



Shaheen Al-Ghanem

CEO Shaheen Al-Ghanem: The affirmation reflects the bank's asset quality, capital strength, and focus on sustainable growth

that Warba Bank's ba2 standalone credit profile is supported by solid capitalization levels and a strong capacity to absorb potential shocks. This performance is underpinned by stable asset quality and the continued build-up of precautionary provisions.

Moody's emphasized that the bank's conservative credit policies and effective risk management framework have stabilized financial indicators despite cyclical economic headwinds affecting

various business sectors.

Liquidity Profile and Funding Structure:

The report underscored Warba Bank's robust liquidity metrics, noting a stable funding structure backed by a resilient core deposit base. This liquidity profile provides an additional safety margin against potential funding pressures while positioning the bank to capitalize on upcoming credit and investment opportunities.

Executive Commentary:

Commenting on the affirmation, Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem, Chief Executive Officer of Warba Bank, stated:

“Moody's affirmation of our ratings with a stable outlook reflects confidence in Warba Bank's financial strength, business model resilience, and ability to generate sustainable growth across varying economic cycles.”

Al-Ghanem added: “This assessment confirms the success of our strategy, which prioritizes asset quality and the maintenance of strong capital and liquidity metrics. Moving forward, the bank will continue to optimize operational efficiency and adhere to global risk management and corporate governance frameworks to support the local economy and deliver long-term stakeholder value.”

About Warba Bank:

Warba Bank is a leading Islamic bank in Kuwait with a strong focus on Sharia-compliant digital banking. With one of the largest shareholder bases in the country, the bank delivers innovative financial products and services, reinforcing its position as a digital-focused financial institution.

Main market outperforms

Boursa Kuwait edges higher

KUWAIT CITY, June 24. (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Wednesday's session marginally higher, with the general index edging up 1.09 points, or 0.01 percent, to close at 8,710.75 points. Trading activity remained solid, with 279.2 million shares changing hands through 20,682 transactions, valued at KD 83.4 million (approximately USD 256 million).

The Main Market outperformed, with its index rising 72.16 points, or 0.83 percent, to 8,791.16 points. The segment recorded 123.3 million shares traded across 9,505 transactions,

totaling KD 21.9 million (around USD 67.2 million).

In contrast, the Premier Market index declined 13.96 points, or 0.15 percent, to settle at 9,145.71 points, despite accounting for the bulk of trading value at KD 61.5 million (approximately USD 227.5 million) from 155.8 million shares traded in 11,177 deals.

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index posted a modest gain of 1.47 points, or 0.02 percent, to close at 9,682.38 points, with 99.6 million shares traded through 6,790 transactions worth KD 17.2 million (about USD 52.8 million).

Minister backs Kuwaiti talent abroad

OPEC Fund marks 50 years as Kuwait reaffirms support

KUWAIT CITY, June 24. (KUNA): Minister of Finance and member of the Ministerial Council of the OPEC Fund for International Development Dr. Yaqub Al-Rifai headed Kuwait's delegation to the 47th Ministerial Council meeting of the OPEC Fund for International Development, held on Wednesday in Vienna, Austria.

The Ministry of Finance said in a press statement that the meeting, attended by Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Waleed Al-Bahar, comes within the framework of efforts to strengthen international cooperation in addressing global economic challenges and supporting sustainable development paths in developing countries.

The ministry added that the Ministerial Council discussed a number of strategic issues related to the future direction of the Fund and its development priorities, in addition to reviewing its financial and operational results for 2025. Participants also examined ways to enhance the Fund's ability to respond to economic and development challenges amid rapidly changing global conditions and the pressures they place on development and economic stability.

The statement noted that Al-Rifai congratulated the OPEC Fund on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, describing it as a significant milestone in the institution's development achievements.

He affirmed that Kuwait, as one of the founding members of the OPEC Fund for International Development, takes pride in its continued contribution to supporting the Fund's development mission and strengthening its institutional capabilities since its establishment.

Al-Rifai renewed Kuwait's commitment to supporting the Fund's efforts and enabling it to further enhance its role in addressing global development and economic challenges, while expanding the impact of its programs and initiatives in support of sustainable development and beneficiary countries.

The statement added that Kuwait endorsed a proposal submitted by Saudi Arabia to conduct

an independent review of the structure and mechanisms of the Board of Governors, with the aim of strengthening institutional governance, improving decision-making efficiency and aligning operations with international best practices adopted by multilateral financial and development institutions.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Al-Rifai also held talks with President of the OPEC Fund for International Development Dr. Abdulhamid Al Khalifa on ways to enhance cooperation between Kuwait and the Fund in capacity-building, developing national competencies and exchanging technical expertise.

The statement added that the meeting discussed expanding opportunities to benefit from the Fund's programs and initiatives in support of Kuwait's development priorities and strengthening the presence of national cadres in international financial institutions.

Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqub Al-Rifai met on Wednesday with Kuwaiti professionals working at the OPEC Fund for International Development on the sidelines of his participation in the 47th Ministerial Council meeting of the Fund, currently being held in the Austrian capital, Vienna.

Al-Rifai said in a press statement that the Kuwaiti government places great importance on empowering national talent and supporting its presence in international institutions, considering it a key pillar in enhancing the country's standing and showcasing its expertise at the global level.

He praised the distinguished professional contributions made by Kuwaiti employees in supporting the Fund's operations and advancing its development objectives.

Al-Rifai also stressed the importance of maintaining direct communication with national talents and learning about their professional experiences and achievements, noting that such engagement helps strengthen the presence of Kuwaiti cadres at various levels within international institutions and opens broader opportunities for future generations of Kuwaitis.

Trump administration touts Iran deal as payday for US farmers, but Iran denies it

WASHINGTON, June 24. (AP): U.S. President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance say their interim deal to end the war with Iran will deliver a financial windfall to American farmers.

But the Iranians deny it. And in the absence of more details, sanctions experts are flummoxed over exactly how billions of dollars' worth of Iranian assets would make their way to the American heartland from the escrow accounts where they've been locked for years by U.S. sanctions.

A tentative agreement reached last week would reopen the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas once passed, and allow Iran to start selling its oil freely again during a 60-day period when the two countries will continue negotiating key issues. The memorandum of understanding also promised to unfreeze Iranian assets.

Trump's deal has come under fire for failing to address the reasons the president cited for going to war with Iran on Feb. 28, including curbing Tehran's nuclear ambitions, its missile program and its support for militant groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Lashing back at critics Tuesday on his Truth Social media platform, Trump said U.S. farmers would get a payday: The U.S. Treasury Department, he wrote, would release the Iranian assets “into escrow, controlled by the U.S.A., and will be used for the purchase of food and medical supplies, exclusively from the United States, including Corn, Wheat, and Soybeans from our great American farmers. These are things that are desperately needed by Iran.”

Vance, who spoke about the



Vice President JD Vance speaks to members of the media after the U.S. and Iran held high-level talks at the Bürgenstock Resort in Obbürgen, near Lucerne, in Switzerland, Monday, June 22, 2026. (AP)

proposal after high-level talks in Switzerland, and Trump say that any frozen funds and assets held outside of Iran will be used to buy U.S. crops.

But the Iranians deny that's part of the deal. A spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Esmail Baghaei, said any agricultural purchases would be based on “prices and quality,” not terms dictated by Washington.

“It is interesting that the philosophy and goal of the war, which was the destruction of the Iranian civilization and the collapse of Iran, has become enriching American farmers,” Baghaei said.

Iran's ambassador in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, rejected Vance's contention that the U.S. and Qatar would dictate how Iran uses unfrozen funds. “Iran is the only country

who decides what to do with those assets,” he told reporters.

A U.S. official dismissed the contradiction, asserting that Iranian leaders were speaking to their domestic audience. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record.

Joseph Glauber, a research fellow emeritus at the International Food Policy Research Institute, said Iran was unlikely to abandon its other trade partners on food.

Iran's major suppliers include Brazil, India, Turkey, the European Union, Canada, Australia and Argentina, he said. Trump's demand to buy from the U.S. would “create some hard feelings with some of our competitors.”

Under previous sanctions, the U.S. has required that money for-

foreign countries spend on imports from Iran - such as South Korean purchases of oil and Iraqi purchases of Iranian electricity - be locked in escrow accounts and typically released only if the Treasury approves and if the proceeds go toward “non-sanctionable” items such as food and medicine.

On Monday, the U.S. Treasury approved the sale of Iranian oil, petrochemicals and petroleum products through Aug. 21. It did not mention any escrow accounts.

Richard Goldberg of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, who coordinated efforts to put diplomatic pressure on Iran in the first Trump administration, said in a post on X that he would welcome “a clarification that Iran is actually restricted to only buying U.S. agricultural products.”

Richard Nephew, senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy, said it's unclear what the new U.S.-Iran agreement actually means for releasing restricted Iranian assets.

Could the U.S. require that the assets be used to buy American farm products?

“Well, we can try!” Nephew, who helped design Iran sanctions in the Obama and Biden administrations, said by email. “All you really need to do is to tell a foreign bank that they can move the money but only to a U.S. bank to buy soybeans or whatever.”

Banks do not have to comply, he said. If they refuse, the U.S. could sanction them as well.

But it's rare for the U.S. to conduct itself that way, he added, “in part because we don't usually like to give the impression that we treat national security issues as a cash grab.”

Company holds executive pitching & innovation program for senior talent from KNPC and KIPIC at its Shuwaikh HQ

Zain showcases expertise to support leadership development in Kuwait's oil industry



Zain's Innovation Ambassadors led the program sessions.



Focus areas included digital transformation leadership and innovation tools for strategic problem-solving.



The program targeted promising leaders in the oil sector.

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: Zain Kuwait held a specialized training program titled 'Executive Pitching & Innovation Tools for Strategic Problem-Solving' for a group of senior talent from Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), reflecting its role as an active national partner in strengthening the innovation ecosystem and promoting knowledge exchange between Kuwait's vital sectors.

The sessions aimed to build bridges of knowledge and innovation with aspiring leaders from the oil industry.

Held over two days at the company's Shuwaikh HQ, it was led by Zain Innovation Ambassadors in cooperation with the Talent Management team from KNPC's Training and Career Development Department. 20 engineers and senior supervisors from the fourth cycle of the Kuwait Oil Sector Talent Management Program attended the session.

Designed specifically for participants of the Talent Management Program, the session focused on executive communication, strategic pitching, and leadership in the era of



Group photo of the trainees.

digital transformation. It also explored how innovation tools can be used to analyze institutional challenges and develop practical solutions that can be applied within large organizations.

Throughout the program, Zain shared its practical expertise in corporate innovation and strategic leadership, drawing on its leading experience in

adapting to rapid developments across the telecom and technology sectors. The sessions also highlighted future-oriented thinking, building more agile business models, and transforming ideas into impactful initiatives that create tangible value for the workplace and institutional performance.

The program featured a mix of thought leadership sessions,

interactive experiences, and group work on real strategic challenges. Participants were introduced to several executive pitching models, including executive briefing pitches, innovation pitches, change management pitches, business case pitches, and elevator pitches. These models were applied to practical scenarios that simulated decision-making environ-

ments within organizations.

The step served as a practical model of collaboration between the private and oil sectors in the field of human capital development. Zain provided participants with a professional platform to exchange ideas, test modern leadership tools, and build new capabilities that help them gain decision-maker buy-in, present initiatives with clarity and con-

fidence, and link proposed solutions to their strategic and operational impact.

This initiative comes as an extension of Zain's ongoing efforts to support innovation, develop national talent, and promote a culture of knowledge and expertise sharing with major national institutions.

It also aligns with the company's purpose of achieving "Better Lives.

Lasting Connections.", reflecting its belief that equipping national leaders and talent with fresh tools for thinking, influence, and decision-making contributes to institutional transformation and supports the development of a more future-ready and sustainable environment.

Zain continues to support programs and initiatives that help develop the skills of national talent, enhance their leadership and digital capabilities, and open new horizons for cooperation between Kuwait's vital sectors, particularly in areas related to innovation, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and solving strategic challenges that contribute to improving institutional efficiency and competitiveness.

Crude oil prices recede on US-Iran fragile peace deal

By KAMCO Invest

Crude oil prices reached levels last seen at the start of the US-Iran war last week led by the interim peace deal announced between the US and Iran. The key announcement of the deal was reopening of the Strait of Hormuz after roughly four months of war. Brent settled around USD 80.57/b on Friday, down 7.7% on the week but still roughly 30% higher year-to-date, as traders weigh the reopening against persistent risks.

These risks materialized soon over the weekend with Iran declaring the closure of the Strait of Hormuz citing ceasefire violations in southern Lebanon, while still sending negotiators to talks in Switzerland.

On the other hand, the war between Russia and Ukraine escalated with increasing attacks on Russian oil infrastructure, deep inside its territory.

Meanwhile, the US-Iran deal sent conflicting signals for the oil market that led to increasing uncertainty and volatility. Iran said that ships need its permission, mandatory (currently free) insurance, and must follow its prescribed route and could face future tolls, while Western naval forces (JMIC) say the southern Omani route is open day or night, and the US recommends transiting dark. A reported mine near Oman's coast, lingering mines mid-strait, and slowed tanker traffic add to caution.

On the demand side, the war has significantly and indirectly led to demand destruction, prompting forecasters to slash 2026 estimates. The IEA cut its full-year outlook by about 1.7 mb/d since January and now sees a demand contraction of 1.1 mb/d.

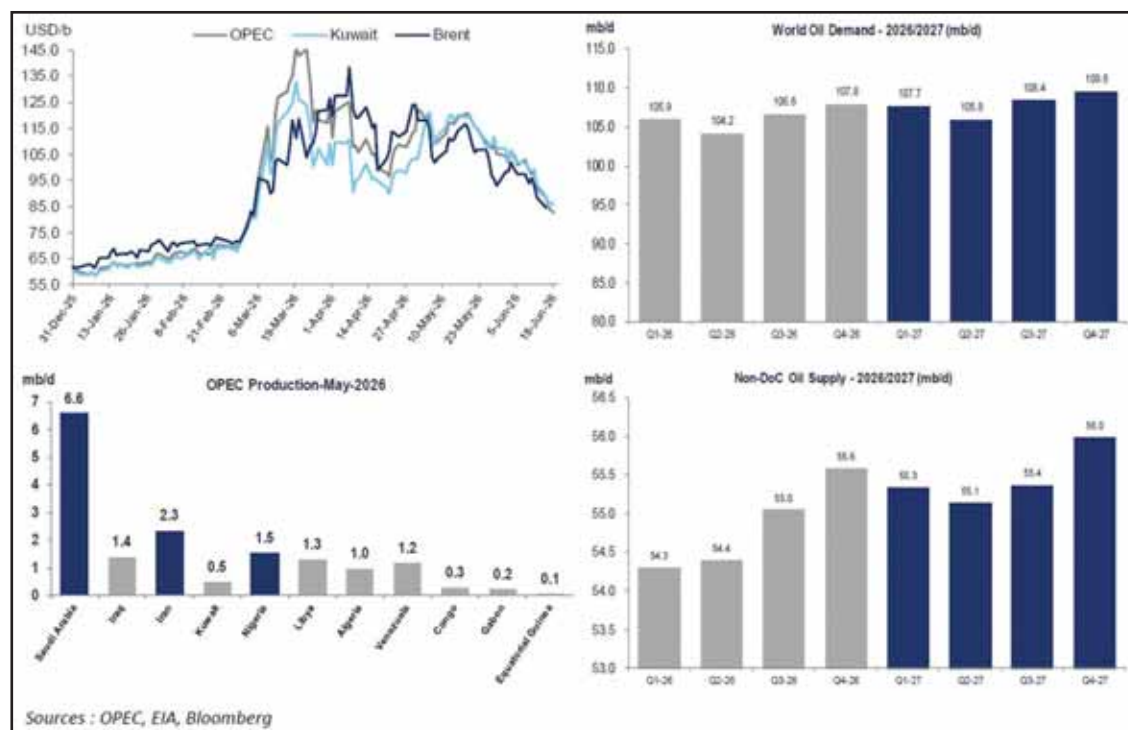
The EIA has slashed its forecast by nearly 2 mb/d, and even OPEC trimmed its projection for a second straight month. China helped absorb the shock by importing fewer barrels and tapping commercial reserves, while Asian refiners cut runs. However, analysts expect a sharp rebound: the IEA projects a return to growth of 1.1 mb/d in Q4 and 2 mb/d in 2027, driven by seasonal summer/driving-season demand, falling prices, and pent-up Chinese buying. Asian refiners are already inundated with cargo offers, though they may not immediately need the incoming wave having secured near-term barrels.

On the supply side, a massive restart is underway by producers in the Gulf region. Nearly 80 million barrels are stored on around 40 supertankers in the Persian Gulf ready to cross the Strait of Hormuz, with around 100+ laden tankers stuck inside. Market watchers indicate that around 90% of the affected crude oil production would be back by year end.

Iran has already shipped around 20 million barrels from Chabahar and resumed Kharg Island loadings after the US lifted its naval blockade. Iraq ordered five major fields with plans to raise output to 3 mb/d, and Kuwait aims to exceed 2 mb/d within a week. The UAE is selling tenders and expanding Hormuz-bypass pipelines, and ADNOC told buyers to resume loadings. OPEC oil production (excluding the UAE) reached 16.7 mb/d during May-2026.

Oil Prices

The global oil market remained volatile last week dropping 7.7% during the week after the US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding to reopen the Strait of Hormuz following a four-month wartime closure. This interim peace agreement initially drove optimism and pushed crude down below the USD 80/b level for the first time since the first week of March-2026 at USD 79/b a sharp decline from previous wartime peaks. However, Brent futures rebounded to trade just above USD 80 per barrel (with WTI crude tracking near USD 77.54/b) due to a sudden slowdown in Persian Gulf tanker traffic and delays in permanent peace negotiations sparked by escalating military clashes in southern Lebanon that led Iran to close the



Strait of Hormuz. In addition, the actual available crude oil on floating storages in the region as well as the speed at which the producers in the region ramp up output would determine the direction of crude oil prices in the coming months. A number of producers have already announced plans to increase output in the coming weeks.

Crude oil traded 35% below its wartime peak yet still roughly 30% higher YTD since full normalization will take months. While global prices are expected to moderate as the critical shipping corridor gradually normalizes, the immediate trend remains caught in a stop-and-start pattern as traders balance the potential influx of regional supply against ongoing maritime risks, logistical constraints, and newly proposed Iranian transit controls.

In terms of monthly price trend, average crude oil price change remained mixed during May-2026. Average spot Brent crude oil price declined for the first time after three consecutive months of gains and reached USD 107.8/b during the month vs. USD 121.4/b last month, registering a fall of 11.2%. On the other hand, average OPEC reference basket price witnessed a gain for the fourth consecutive month and was up 5% to reach USD 114.6/b vs. USD 109.1/b during the previous month, while Kuwait export grade crude prices witnessed a bigger gain of 12.3% to average at USD 118.7/b during May-2026 as compared to USD 105.7/b during the previous month.

World Oil Demand

Global oil demand forecasts for 2026 reflect a stark divide between major energy agencies as they assess the fallout from months of geopolitical disruptions and high fuel prices in the Middle East. The International Energy Agency (IEA) and the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) both project a sharp contraction, predicting that global oil demand will decline by roughly 1.1 mb/d in 2026, dropping the total down to around 103.3 mb/d for the IEA and 102.9 million b/d for the EIA. The IEA attributed this substantial downgrade to intense consumption pullbacks across Asia and Europe following the prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Conversely, OPEC remains the outliers regarding the immediate near term; while the group recently trimmed its 2026 growth forecast for a second consecutive month due to slowing regional and Indian consumption, it still projects that global de-

mand will actually expand by 970,000 b/d to reach a total of roughly 106.1 mb/d.

Looking ahead to 2027, the major forecasting bodies strongly converge on expectations of a strong, synchronized demand rebound fueled by restoring energy supply corridors and softening crude prices. The IEA anticipates the most aggressive structural recovery, forecasting global liquid fuels consumption to surge by 2.5 mb/d to a total of 105.3 mb/d. The IEA similarly expects a return to growth of approximately 2 mb/d, which would lift global demand to 105.3 mb/d. OPEC aligns with this optimistic longer-term trajectory, raising its own 2027 outlook to predict robust growth of 1.73 mb/d. This broad 2027 expansion is expected to be anchored heavily by non-OECD demand centers, with strengthening industrial activity in India and China leading the global sequential normalization. Longer term, in its World Oil Outlook 2026, OPEC projects that global oil demand will experience robust, uninterrupted growth through the middle of the century, climbing to 124.1 mb/d by 2050 with no demand peak in sight. This trajectory marks an increase of approximately 19 mb/d from 2025 levels, heavily driven by a 23% expansion in overall global energy demand fueled by population growth, rapid urbanization, and rising living standards in developing economies. Geographically, long-term growth is almost exclusively concentrated in non-OECD nations projected to rise by 26.9 mb/d with India, Africa, and the Middle East serving as the primary anchors.

World Oil Supply

World oil supply continued to decline during May-2026 after a sharp fall during the previous two months. Data from IEA showed that world oil supply declined by an additional 0.6 mb/d during May-2026 to reach 94.5 mb/d following a 1.8 mb/d decline in April-2026. This was also 13.6 mb/d below the pre-war levels. The decline was mainly led by a fall in production from the Gulf countries due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Global oil supply forecasts for 2026 highlight a significant contraction due to the severe geopolitical conflict in the Middle East, though the degree of impact varies across forecasts. The IEA outlines the steepest decline, forecasting that global oil supply will drop by 3.9 mb/d to an average of 102.4 mb/d in 2026, largely because a significant volumes of crude

remained stranded inside the Persian Gulf during the four-month blockade. The US EIA takes a slightly less severe stance for the year, expecting total non-OPEC supply and OPEC NGLs to grow by roughly 1.4 mb/d, bolstered by robust expansion from South American producers like Brazil, Guyana, and Argentina, while keeping US crude output steady at 13.6 mb/d. Meanwhile, OPEC's assessments project a more stable outlook, forecasting non-OPEC supply growth of 0.63 mb/d to reach 54.83 mb/d in 2026, with an estimated call on OPEC+ crude hovering around 43 mb/d.

In contrast, forecasts for 2027 point toward a steep supply expansion as regional infrastructure recovers and production targets adjust. The IEA projects a sharp 8 mb/d surge in global supply to 110.3 mb/d, fueled by the steady restoration of Middle East exports following the US-Iran peace accord alongside an increase in OPEC+ output targets. The EIA also predicts a substantial 1.5 mb/d supply increase for 2027, driven primarily by non-OPEC+ countries and an upward revision in US crude production to 13.8 mb/d. OPEC remains closely aligned on the expansionary path for 2027, estimating that non-OPEC supply will grow by an additional 0.62 mb/d to reach 55.45 mb/d, while the call on OPEC+ crude is expected to rise to 43.6 mb/d.

OPEC Oil Production & Spare Capacity

OPEC crude oil production continued to see decline during May-2026 reaching multi-decades low levels during the month as the Strait of Hormuz continued to remain blocked by Iran and the US that resulted in limited output from the region and significantly hampered exports. Average group output declined by 1.2 mb/d during the month and stood at 16.3 mb/d (excluding output from the UAE), according to data from Bloomberg. Within the group, Iran witnessed the steepest decline of 710 tb/d with output averaging at 3.1 mb/d during May-2026 followed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia also with significant m-o-m declines. These declines were partially offset by higher output in Venezuela and Iraq that reported an increase of 40 tb/d each during May-2026 followed by Equatorial Guinea and Gabon with marginal increase in production during the month. Data from the IEA and OPEC secondary sources also showed decline in output from the group. As per the IEA, OPEC production declined by 0.87 mb/d to 16.37 mb/d during May-2026 but showed a sharper decline in production in Iran with average production of 2.3 mb/d in May-2026 vs. 3.36 mb/d in output during the previous month. As per the IEA, output from Gulf countries was 13.6 mb/d below the pre-war levels during May-2026.

OPEC secondary sources showed that production declined by 264 tb/d with average production reaching 16.7 mb/d. As per OPEC secondary sources, oil production in Iran dropped by nearly 546 tb/d during the month to reach an average of 2.33 mb/d. On the other hand, most of the other gulf producers showed higher production during the month. As per OPEC, oil production in Saudi Arabia increased by 157 tb/d during the month to reach 6.9 mb/d Iraq, Venezuela and Kuwait also reported higher crude oil production during the month.

Meanwhile, the OPEC+ is pursuing a "business-as-usual" unwinding of its voluntary production cuts, though the increases are largely symbolic while the Iran war and Strait of Hormuz closure prevented producers from physically delivering the extra barrels. After pausing increases for Q1 2026 on seasonal grounds, the OPEC+ have approved consecutive monthly quota hikes (roughly 206 tb/d for May-2026 and 188 tb/d for June-2026). At their most recent meeting, the group agreed a fourth monthly output rise and reaffirmed the importance of adopting a cautious approach and retaining full flexibility to increase, pause or reverse the phase-out of the voluntary production adjustments.

Zour refinery upgrades target higher output, lower emissions

KNPC strengthens operations with advanced refinery technologies

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 24: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) has implemented advanced technological programs in its three refineries – Abdulrahman, Ahmadi and Zour -- to raise refining efficiency, say reliable sources.

Sources disclosed that the company implemented the "Digital Operator Monitoring" program for the Mina Abdullah refinery units through its Information Technology Department, resulting in savings of more than KD1 million, with an estimated annual savings of more than KD650,000.

Sources said the company will implement the program at Ahmadi and Zour

refineries once it achieves a qualitative leap in the collection of field operations data, in addition to its role in providing highly accurate analyses.

Sources confirmed that KNPC implemented the digital prevention system to mitigate risks at the Zour refinery and boost production in a bid to prevent the malfunctions that plagued the refinery last year. Sources indicated that the malfunctions last year led to three percent decrease in refining rates, pointing out that the digital prevention system plays a vital role in measuring equipment efficiency and detecting corrosion or rust invisible to the naked eye.

Sources added that KNPC is focusing on developing its corrosion defense system, as part of a comprehensive defense strategy befitting one of the world's

largest and most modern refineries.

Meanwhile, the newspaper obtained a copy of an official report, stating that the permanent replacement of fuel gas with liquefied natural gas (LNG) at Zour refinery using nitrogen eliminated fuel gas flaring in the flare collection line, thus, reducing losses and greenhouse gas emissions. This replacement is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 8,380 tons annually.

The report added that the company completed initial cleaning operations for all four types of crude oil supply lines through meticulous planning and effective coordination with all the relevant parties.

More than 70% of Mideast companies prioritize AI to elevate cybersecurity defense, BCG report finds

DUBAI, June 24: A recent report from Boston Consulting Group (BCG) reveals that Middle East organizations are emerging as global frontrunners in the race to combat AI-powered cyber threats, with the region demonstrating exceptional commitment to cybersecurity investment, talent acquisition, and the deployment of advanced defensive technologies.

With the recent emergence of Anthropic's Claude Myths, an AI model reportedly capable of outperforming humans at hacking and cybersecurity tasks and uncovering vulnerabilities that have lain dormant for decades, regulators and finance ministers globally are now grappling with the implications of such capabilities. In this rapidly evolving threat landscape, the Middle East's proactive approach to cyber defense positions the region to meet this new generation of threats head-on.

The report based on a global BCG survey of 500 senior leaders, titled AI Is Raising the Stakes in Cybersecurity, examines how AI is reshaping the cyber threat landscape while offering powerful new tools for organizational defense. At a time when AI-enabled attacks are producing multimillion-dollar losses worldwide, including a notable \$25 million deepfake CFO fraud and AI-powered ransomware attacks that have shut down critical hospital operations, the findings underscore an urgent need for enterprises to transform their defensive postures.

More than 70% of organizations in the region stated they have experienced a suspected AI-enabled cyber-attack in the past year. At the same time, the Middle East has the highest percentage of companies prioritizing AI to improve cyber defenses at 70%, reflecting a forward-looking approach to security. However, budgets have yet to fully align with this vision. While 56% of companies in the region have moderately increased their cybersecurity budgets (between 25%-75%) over the past

year, none of the surveyed companies stated a significant budget increase (more than 75%). For comparison, this figure reaches 3% and 4% in other emerging markets such as Africa and Latin America, respectively.

The region's leadership in deploying mature cybersecurity capabilities is important. The report finds that 32% of Middle East firms now operate advanced, widely adopted, and proven cybersecurity solutions, the highest proportion of any global market surveyed.

This positions the region as a benchmark for other markets seeking to close the widening gap between offensive capabilities and defensive readiness.



Shoaib Yousuf

Demand for cybersecurity talent in the Middle East further reflects the region's commitment to building robust defenses, 64% of firms report strong demand for cybersecurity professionals, as organizations seek to close capability gaps and establish the human expertise necessary to deploy and manage sophisticated AI-powered security tools. The report identifies several AI solutions that have the potential to strengthen organizational cybersecurity, including deepfake blocking technologies, Security Operation Center alert prioritization systems, behavior analysis detection tools, and fake account identification capabilities.

"The timing of these findings is critical. We are now operating in an environment where AI-enabled attacks are scaling faster than traditional security measures can respond, passive defense is no longer viable," said Shoaib Yousuf, Managing Director & Partner at BCG. "The Middle East invested ahead of the

curve, treating cybersecurity as a board-level strategic priority rather than a technical issue. That foresight is now proving essential, and the gap between prepared organizations and those still building foundational capabilities will only widen."

The report emphasizes that addressing AI-enabled cyber threats requires unprecedented collaboration between CEOs and Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs). CEOs must prioritize cybersecurity and AI at the board level, while CISOs should accelerate deployment of high-impact, AI-enabled use cases. In practice, organizations should consider the following actions:

1. Establish board-backed accountability and funding for AI-enabled cyber risks: Elevate cybersecurity to the board agenda with clear ownership, measurable targets, and sustained investment. AI-enabled threats evolve rapidly—leadership must treat cyber resilience as a strategic priority, not a technical afterthought.

2. Deploy AI as a core defensive capability: Embed AI across security operations to accelerate threat detection, incident response, and anomaly identification. AI-powered tools help teams prioritize alerts, spot sophisticated phishing, and detect suspicious behavior before attacks escalate.

3. Secure AI systems themselves: Protect AI models, data pipelines, and training environments from manipulation and adversarial attacks. Implement strong governance, continuous monitoring, and rigorous testing to ensure AI systems remain trusted and resilient.

4. Build agility through multi-vendor architecture: Avoid single-vendor dependency, which creates blind spots and systemic risk. A flexible, multi-vendor approach enables rapid integration of new capabilities and maintains resilience when one layer is compromised.

AI stock slump raises the question if investors are just taking profits or getting very nervous

WASHINGTON, June 24, (AP): Technology companies are spending big to incorporate artificial intelligence into their businesses and to build huge data centers. Investors who had jumped on the bandwagon appear to be having second thoughts.

Proponents of artificial intelligence see it as the next great revolution for the global economy. The revolution won't come cheap. Just four companies – Alphabet, Amazon, Meta Platforms and Microsoft – plan to spend up to \$720 billion this year, primarily on AI data centers.

This week, investors are looking at the huge sums being spent and questioning whether AI can produce the profits and productivity necessary to make all the investment worth it. Critics have been talking about the possibility of a bubble in AI investment. On Monday, Amazon and Alphabet fell about 5%.

On Tuesday, several companies that make the chips needed for the data center buildup – Nvidia, Micron Technology, Broadcom and Lam Research – led the market lower.

At first, Microsoft, Alphabet and other so-called hyperscalers turned to cash on hand to fund the AI expansion. But they're increasingly relying on the markets to raise cash.

Alphabet, the parent company of Google, said earlier this month that it's raising \$80 billion in cash to help pay for its investments by selling shares of its stock. Overall, Alphabet is planning to spend as much as \$190 billion this year – more than all the stock of The Walt Disney Co. is worth, and Alphabet is forecasting its spending on investments next year will "significantly increase."

In March, Amazon sold \$54 billion of bonds in the U.S. and Europe as it plans to spend around \$200 billion this year on AI investments.

Elon Musk's rocket maker SpaceX was on a three-day skid heading into Tuesday. It regained some lost ground, but ended trading slightly below the closing price on its first day

of trading on June 12. Musk acknowledges that SpaceX will have to spend heavily to fulfill its plans of sending AI data centers into space, and the company has announced that part of an upcoming bond offering will fund its AI buildout.

Chip companies have benefitted as the demand for memory chips and processing power for AI data centers and other projects has led to a supply shortage and a surge in prices. Investors have bid up the share prices of these companies now in anticipation of big profits down the road. By one measure, which compares a company's stock price to its earnings per share, these companies might look expensive.

Marvell Technologies lost money for five straight years before turning a profit of \$2.7 billion in the fiscal year ended in January, thanks to gains in its data center business. The stock has more than tripled so far this year and its price-to-earnings ratio has gone from about 30 at the start of 2026 to near 100.

Some data storage companies have seen even more eye-popping gains. Sandisk shares have soared more than 700% year to date and its P/E ratio stands at 68. Whether Sandisk shares are overvalued will depend on whether it meets Wall Street's lofty expectations for the next 12 months – earnings per share of \$188.05 per share compared with \$29.16 per share for the 12 months ended March 31. When the current stock price is compared to the forecast, the price-to-earnings ratio falls to around 11.

The current price-to-earnings ratio for the S&P 500 is around 25.

On Tuesday, investors unloaded at least some of their holdings in these stocks. Sandisk sank 13.6%, while Marvell lost 9.4%.

The sell-off also took a bite out of exchange-traded funds, or ETFs, that invest heavily in tech stocks. The Invesco QQQ Trust Series ETF was down 3.3%, while iShares Semiconductor ETF slumped 7.9%.

While some investors may have doubts that companies going full throttle on AI infrastructure spending will ultimately be able to generate profits to justify their investment, it's likely some of the selling this week may be investors pausing to pocket some of their gains after the stock market's recent string of all-time highs.

"With no clear catalyst driving the move lower, we believe today's pullback likely reflects profit-taking following a strong rally from the March lows," said Brock Weimer, an investments strategy analyst at Edward Jones.

Big Tech gains have powered major stock indexes on record-setting runs this year. Within the S&P 500, the tech sector alone is up nearly 27% just over the last three months and roughly 17% for the year. In Asia, South Korea's Kospi has nearly doubled so far in 2026.

Heavy selling on Tuesday triggered a halt in trading in the Kospi, which set the stage for the wave of tech stock selling when trading opened in U.S. markets. Wedbush analyst Dan Ives wrote in a research note Tuesday.

Overall AI enterprise demand in Asia is "showing no cracks in the armor, which continues to make us very bullish on owning the tech AI winners over the coming year," he added.

Still, tech companies' race to invest in the expansion of AI infrastructure could ultimately be sowing the seeds of future oversupply, according to Philip Straehl, chief investment officer at Morningstar Wealth.

"Periods of elevated capital investment have historically not translated into strong outcomes for investors, leaving us cautious on the outlook," Straehl wrote in a report last week.

He expects that the rapid expansion of AI computing power will weigh on pricing, hurting companies' returns and eventually result in a pullback in investing. Semiconductor companies are "particularly exposed to this dynamic," Straehl wrote.

Beijing cites market scale, not subsidies

Li Qiang: China tech rise is 'opportunity,' not threat

HONG KONG, June 24, (AP): China's Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday defended the country's technological advancements as an opportunity for the world rather than a threat.

Li also said the country's heavy state subsidies were not the main reason for the rapid rise of its high-tech industries, at a time when Western officials have complained that China's state support for industries from artificial intelligence to electric vehicles has provided an unfair competitive edge.

China's No. 2 leader made the remarks in his speech at the opening plenary of the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting of the New Champions, known as the "Summer Davos," held this week in the northeastern Chinese coastal city of Dalian.

He acknowledged there have been growing global concerns about China's technological innovations, with some pointing to the term "China Shock 2.0," as they see the nation's high-tech boom as a threat to many advanced economies.

Instead, that should be seen as "China Opportunity 2.0," he said.

"From the global development perspective, 'China Opportunity 2.0' means there'll be broader access to advanced technologies and more widely shared benefits," Li said.

"China's emerging technologies and products are bringing to the world not shocks, but opportunities," he added. "Not threats, but empowerment."

China's tech advancements and growing exports of EVs, solar panels, chips, batteries, AI and robotics have offered affordable options to global markets, but have also raised criticisms among governments concerned about issues such as oversupply. Some are taking protectionist measures.

Li also dismissed claims that the rise of China's high-tech sectors was because of massive government subsidies.

U.S. and European policymakers have raised concerns over Chinese state subsidies creating unfairness to their industries, while a June report by the 38-country Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, said huge state subsidies, including those in China, can distort global markets and

create unfair competitive advantages.

"There are some people who say that Chinese products are competitive mainly because the Chinese government's subsidies," Li said in his speech. "That's not true. The Chinese government is not that wealthy."

China's large domestic market, which allows the mass and fast deployment of new technologies among its population of 1.4 billion, and huge corporate investments are among the key factors in its robust tech advancements, he said.

Li also name-checked Chinese tech giant Huawei, which has faced Western restrictions, and robotics company Unitree, both of which have risen quickly in size and market share, as examples of China's innovation success.

Beijing earlier voiced its opposition to an expansion this month of the Pentagon's list of Chinese military-linked companies to Unitree and other tech firms, preventing them from landing U.S. defense contracts. The list also includes Huawei.

Hormuz GPS disruptions raise alarms

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

□ □ □

By Zak Kassas

The Ohio State University

Few people want to get lost when traveling. But if there are places where being lost feels especially unsettling, they tend to be the sea, desert and sky. These environments share a defining feature: the absence of distinctive visual cues. Where horizons blur, landmarks disappear and every direction can look deceptively similar. Knowing where you are depends on information that you cannot see for yourself.

For most of human history, finding your way in such environments required skill, judgment and constant attention. Satellite navigation marked a fundamental shift. The advent of GPS has made navigation almost effortless: Press a button and voilà, location and heading appear instantly.

GPS's great strength is that under benign conditions, it works remarkably well in precisely the environments where being lost would be most dangerous. Civilian systems routinely achieve meter-level accuracy. This accuracy, however, masks a growing vulnerability.

GPS

Over the past few years, deliberate GPS interference has surged worldwide, disrupting maritime and aviation operations at an unprecedented scale. I'm an electrical engineer who studies alternative methods of electronic navigation. My lab and others around the world are developing these alternatives as backup for when GPS is unavailable or unreliable.

Jamming overwhelms weak satellite signals with noise or radio frequency signals, blocking GPS position and time altogether.

Spoofing is more insidious: Counterfeit signals surreptitiously replace authentic ones, misleading GPS receivers about location and timing while appearing to crews and automated systems to operate normally.

Interference arises from three sources: military activity, criminal exploitation and accidental misuse. In conflict zones, GPS disruption has become a routine tool of warfare, used to protect assets, degrade surveillance and counter drones. This activity is well documented across Ukraine, the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. It routinely spills over to affect civilian ships and aircraft, and civilian life.

Accidental GPS jamming has caused serious disruption at international airports by making it difficult for aircraft and air traffic controllers to track traffic in and out of the airports. Intentional GPS spoofing was even used in a highway heist to steal US\$1 million worth of restaurateur Guy Fieri's tequila.

System

Making matters worse, spoofed GPS data does not remain confined to a single system. Ships use the Automatic Identification System to broadcast their locations and to see what other ships are nearby to avoid collisions. The system broadcasts a ship's GPS position information along with the ship's name, course and speed, classification and call sign.

GPS spoofing effectively corrupts Automatic Identification System signals, sending false position information to nearby vessels, shore authorities, insurers and commercial tracking services. This activity can create fleets of "ghost ships" that appear real to others navigating nearby.

Criminals use GPS interference to block or alter Automatic Identification System information to evade oversight. Illegal fishing fleets, oil smugglers, sanctions evaders and maritime sand thieves have been repeatedly linked to falsified or disrupted Automatic Identification System and GPS signals.

GPS interference is not new, and the U.S. government warned about it decades ago, but the scale of its impact has significantly accelerated over the past few years. GPS spoofing and jamming incidents affecting civil aviation increased by about 500% from January to August 2024.

Maritime authorities reported hundreds of ships affected daily, with groundings and collisions in 2024-25 publicly linked to interference of GPS and other satellite navigation systems, including in the Baltic Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.

The consequences have claimed lives. In December 2024, Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243 was struck by a Russian air-defense system, killing 38 people after the flight was diverted due to GPS interference. At sea, GPS interference in the Strait of Hormuz has caused oil tanker collisions.

Disruption has also forced runway

closures, mass flight diversions and emergency procedures at Newark Liberty, Dallas-Fort Worth and Denver international airports.

Even senior officials are not immune: In 2025, GPS jamming forced an aircraft carrying the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to make an emergency landing.

Recent incidents in the Strait of Hormuz during the U.S.-Iran war mark a decisive escalation in the risk posed by GPS interference. The strait sits at the intersection of intense geopolitical conflict and one of the world's most critical maritime choke points. Around 20% of global petroleum trade transits these narrow waters each day, alongside dense commercial traffic. There's little margin for navigational error. Here, even modest mistakes in position or timing can rapidly escalate into collisions, groundings or environmental disasters.

The Iran war has led to sustained spoofing across the Persian Gulf. Ships have reported positions via Automatic Identification System that place them on land or otherwise miles from their true locations without triggering alarms.

In the confined waters of the Strait of Hormuz, where ships pass one another in close proximity, GPS interference erodes situational awareness precisely where it matters most.

Crucially, interference in Hormuz is persistent rather than episodic. Reports show jamming and spoofing used systematically over extended periods, not merely as short-term responses to specific incidents. This pattern suggests that GPS disruption has become routine practice rather than a niche capability in electronic warfare.

Once normalized in one of the world's busiest sea-lanes, such practices are difficult to contain geographically. The result is a navigation environment in which people can no longer fully trust position, timing and identity at sea. The consequences extend far beyond the confines of the Persian Gulf.

Signals

The normalization of GPS disruption exposes a deeper issue: Modern navigation resilience has been built around the assumption that GPS signals are usually available and trustworthy. As that assumption erodes, attention has shifted from hardening GPS toward security through diversification. This means drawing navigation information from fundamentally different signals.

For a backup to satellite navigation, several countries, including the U.K., France, Saudi Arabia, Russia, South Korea and China, are deploying or modernizing long-range radio navigation, or LORAN, a system that dates back to World War II.

Another alternative that has gained increased interest over the past decade or so is using signals never intended for navigation, referred to as signals of opportunity. In contrast to dedicated navigation systems, such as long-range radio navigation, this approach uses existing infrastructure and preserves scarce radio spectrum. A particularly fruitful type of signal to exploit is terrestrial cellular.

My lab has demonstrated this type of navigation with ground vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, high-altitude balloons and aircraft, including in GPS-jammed environments. We developed specialized receivers that exploit signals from existing LTE and 5G cellular networks.

We have demonstrated sub-meter accuracy on UAVs, near-lane-level accuracy on ground vehicles, and meter-level accuracy on aircraft and high-altitude balloons, without cooperation from cellular network providers.

Another approach leverages the rapid proliferation of constellations of low Earth orbit communication satellites. Compared with GPS signals from medium Earth orbit, low Earth orbit satellites offer stronger signals, are numerous, transmit in a much wider swath of the spectrum, and their signals are more resilient to wide-area disruption.

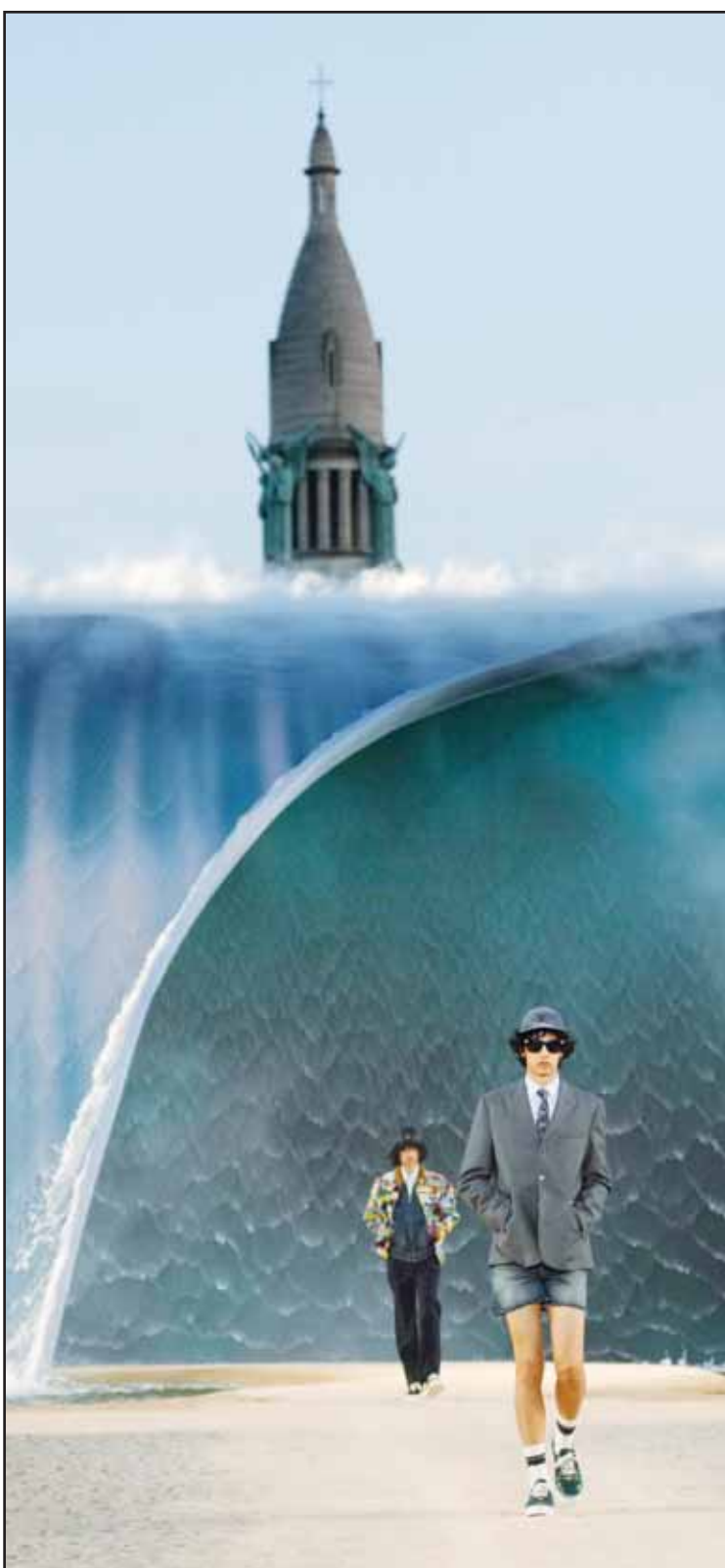
We demonstrated meter-level positioning accuracy exploiting signals transmitted by Starlink satellites. We then developed receivers that can passively listen to signals emitted from multiple low Earth orbit satellite constellations.

Since then, my lab has demonstrated navigation with low Earth orbit satellites across the U.S. In our latest experiment, we successfully navigated a vessel in the Arctic seas, off the coast of Greenland.

These results point to a pragmatic solution: Navigation resilience will come from a diversity of techniques. We and others are already demonstrating the technologies to do so. Whether they are put into practical use is now a matter of policy, regulation and timing. (AP)



Louis Vuitton surfs into summer 2027 with Pharrell at the helm



Pharrell Williams sent Louis Vuitton's dandy surfer at star-filled Paris Fashion Week over a giant curling wave Tuesday, closing the opening day of menswear shows with a glass-walled camper, a moonlit set and a collection that put clothes ahead of spectacle.

A moon rose overhead, stars were visible above the runway, and beneath them came the wave: a barrel built tall enough to swallow the show. It rose from a sandy outdoor set, spraying mist into the heat and giving the evening's surf fantasy a practical appeal.

The front row had its own stars. Jeremy Allen White, Charles Melton, Future, Missy Elliott, Lola Young, Coco Jones, Quavo, Victor Wembanyama, Jackson Wang, BamBam and Finn Bennett were among the guests.

Out of the wave walked Williams' surfer - sun-bleached, salt-worn and tailored for somewhere between shore and city.

For Louis Vuitton's spring-summer 2027 men's collection, surfing supplied the wardrobe: wetsuit textures, patched outerwear, weathered denim, beaded bombers, logoed surfboards and tailoring loosened by travel.

Since arriving at Vuitton, Williams has returned often to the dandy: elegant but easy, polished but relaxed.

This season, he sent him to the beach - or at least to the kind of beach reached after the boardroom, with luggage and cashmere in tow.

A silver camper, reimagined as a glass-walled habitat and parked among dunes, framed the Vuitton man on familiar house terrain: travel. Vuitton began with trunks, after all.

The clothes worked best when the surf references were handled lightly. Technical wetsuits met tailoring fabrics, including functional diving pieces marked with Vuitton's Monogram.

Weathered jackets looked already lived in. Hoodies came sun-faded and salt-softened, with gilded LV drawstrings.

Denim and coats had shibori-like indigo effects. Bomber jackets were weighted with dense ropes of beadwork.

Williams' trompe l'oeil effects also returned, with surfaces made to mimic other surfaces and casual pieces revealing more handwork up close.

Several pieces leaned into the after-surf wardrobe: robe-like coats, soft jackets and easy layers with the comfort of a towel thrown over cold shoulders.

The new flat-soled skate shoe brought the collection back to Williams' older world: skateboarding, Billionaire Boys Club, Ice Cream and Nigo.

That gave the surf theme a sharper edge, and an obvious commercial engine.

Williams' Vuitton has always known how to stage an event. His debut turned the Pont Neuf into a gold Damier runway.

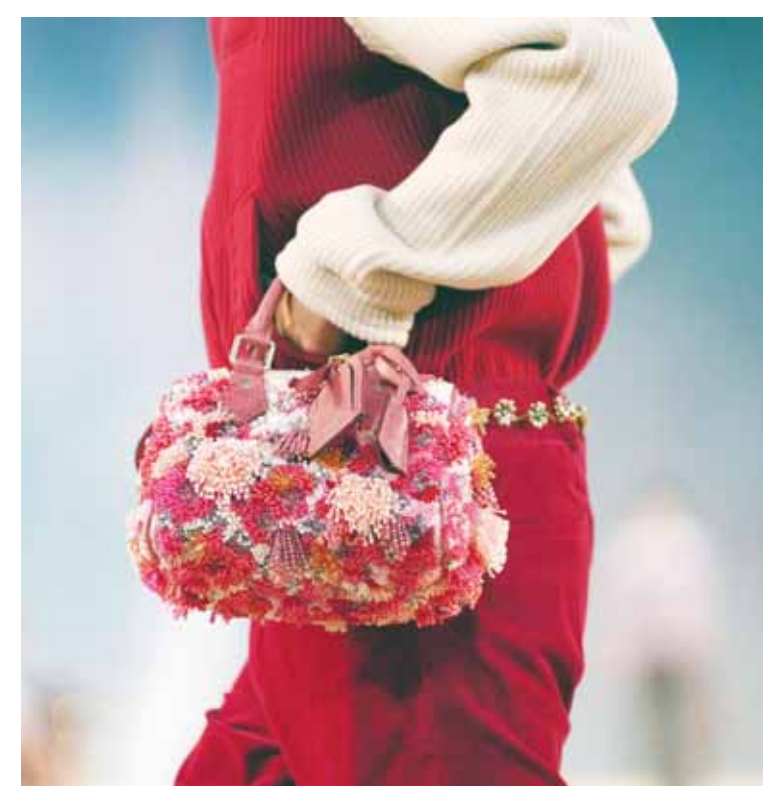
Other shows have brought games, houses, orchestras, choirs and front rows built for the camera.

Tuesday had plenty of production: a cinematic prelude with surfers Mikey February and Julian Wilson, a soundtrack featuring Quavo, Williams and Angélique Kidjo, and live performances by L'Orchestre du Pont Neuf and the Voices of Fire choir.

But the set did not overwhelm the clothes. The wave was huge. The collection held its own.

Vuitton said it would support Coral Gardeners, with plans to help out-plant 1,000 corals and restore 250 square meters of reef habitat in French Polynesia in 2026.

Williams took his bow as the wave still towered behind him. (AP)



Ella Langley, Drake, Zara Larsson, BTS, and others all share the spotlight

The 2026 summer soundtrack has many voices, no leader

NEW YORK, June 24, (AP): What is 2026's song of the summer?

There's no easy answer. Algorithmic division is certainly a factor in why there isn't an obvious pick this year. Where have the songs like "Despacito" in 2017 or "Old Town Road" in 2019 gone? Last year, some even wondered if Alex Warren's "Ordinary" - a ballad, not a banger-qualified, a departure from the usual up-tempo, feel-good hits.

Whatever your summer mood or flavor, The Associated Press has found a song to soundtrack the season, collected in a Spotify playlist.

Ella Langley broke out just last year with the throwback, spoken-word track "You Look Like You Love Me," featuring Riley Green, but it's her breakup banger "Choosin' Texas" that has made her a cross-over country star. Not only has it spent more time at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 than any other song this year, it also has some of the most distinctive lyrics of the year. "He always loved 'Amarillo By Morning,'" she sings in a particularly melancholic verse, referencing the George Strait classic. "I should've taken that as a warnin'." Indeed.

Past champion: "Luther," Kendrick Lamar and SZA (2025)

For the better part of 2025, Drake mostly made headlines for his feud with Kendrick Lamar. It's safe to say he lost that war, but he's clearly not going anywhere; he's still one of the most streamed artists of all time. "Janice STFU" is the undeniable hit

off May's "Icecream," with its familiar Lykke Li interpolation and moody production.

Past champion: "Nokia," Drake (2025)

It's the title of a 2018 romantic drama starring Bella Thorne and a term used to describe regions around the Arctic Circle. But in 2026, the phrase "Midnight Sun" belongs to Swedish pop star Zara Larsson. It's the title of her last album and lead single, the inescapable Eurodance-pop "Midnight Sun," with an elastic vocal performance. Last month, she released "Midnight Sun: Girls Trip," a collection of remixes featuring everyone from Shakira and Robyn to Kehlani and rapper JT and, of course, PinkPantheress.

Past champion: "Breakfast at Tiffany's," Deep Blue Something (1995)

She's the "Wor\$T Girl in America," if her cheeky album title is to be believed, but also one of pop's great new provocateurs. At the album's center is her buzzy electro-pop opus "DANCE..." perfect for those who've been patiently awaiting her mainstream rise - and those who need a good excuse to hit the dance floor.

Past champion: "Bad Girls," Donna Summer (1979)

Earlier this year, hitmaker Bruno Mars returned with his first new album in 10 years, anchored by the feel-good, disco-pop-soul single "I Just Might." The throwback tune is a funky reprieve from slow or boring



In this file photo, Ella Langley performs during Amazon Music Country Heat at Country Radio Seminar on Wednesday Feb. 28, 2024, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

days - and one that will be heard on wedding dance floors for the foreseeable future.

Past champion: "Red Red Wine," UB40 (1983)

There's a long tradition of the song of the summer arriving at the top of the year - looking at you, "drivers license" and "Boy's a Liar PT. 2." This year, the title goes to Tame Impala's "Dracula" - particularly the remix with Blackpink's Jennie. "Run from the sunlight, Dracula," they harmonize, in a vocal melody inescapable on TikTok and in the real world.

Past champion: "NUEVAYoL," Bad Bunny (2025)

explosive bridge.

Past champion: "Hollaback Girl," Gwen Stefani (2005)

So long, "BRAT." The contemporary pop landscape's preeminent party girl is in for a bumper of a summer. "SS26," one of the first tracks released from Charli xcx's forthcoming "Music, Fashion, Film," is shockingly minimalistic, with little more than distorted guitar riffs and production that sounds like a simple Casio keyboard preset. It's rock music, as she's promised - but done her own way.

Past champion: "Rhinestone Cowboy," Glen Campbell (1975)

"On the highway with my significant lover (I love)," the singer-songwriter-rapper Don Toliver declares with ease in the chorus of "E85." "High octane, more fuel for your consumption." If there is an image more primed for the hot summer months than rolling down the freeway on a trip with a loved one, we have yet to see it.

Past champion: "Mi Gente," J Balvin and Willy William (2017)

The game-changing K-pop boy band BTS returned after a nearly four-year musical hiatus with "ARRANG." The comeback was led by "Swim," a reserved, alt-pop track that brings a kind of intimacy to their stadium-sized output. The "Swim" here is metaphorical - as is the "dive" in its chorus - of having a crush, but the aquatic language works in conjuring dreamy, pool-side imagery, too.

Past champion: "Break My Soul," Beyoncé (2022)

In the lead up to her career-best album, "You seem pretty sad for a girl so in love," Olivia Rodrigo released "The Cure." It marked a giant step forward for the young songwriter, with dreamy guitars, orchestral strings and most impactful of all: its

Past champion: "Waterfalls," TLC (1995)

British rapper Dave and Nigerian singer Tems team up for the Afroswing single "Raindance," a sweet, sexy song about wanting to lock things down. "Hold me close, don't tell me goodnight / Are you down to get me?" the pair dreamily duet on the second verse. "Tell me when you're ready, I'm ready."

Past champion: "Nineteen," Tegan and Sara (2007)

This summer is all about soccer, so, of course, we had to include one of the official songs for the 2026 FIFA World Cup: "Dai Dai." The Colombian superstar Shakira and Afrobeats icon Burna Boy team up on an energetic, undeniably global pop track. It exists at the intersection of all their strengths: Afrobeats and Latin rhythms, separate, complementary verses and a strong chorus about unity.

Past champion: "The Final Countdown," Europe (1986)

Look, there's no shortage of great songs from Kacey Musgraves' latest album, "Middle of Nowhere." A case could be made to include "Mexico Honey" or "Dry Spell" here, but what about a song with norteño accordions and slide guitar that doubles as a cheeky punchline to a fight? The capital-c country "Horses & Divorces" brings musicians' feud to an end over a shared love of drinking and Willie Nelson. What could be sweeter?

Past champion: "Girl, so confusing," Charli xcx and Lorde (2024)

Cutting repeat offending through creativity

South African prisons open inmate art galleries

JOHANNESBURG, June 24, (AP): When most people think of prison, they picture steel bars, locked gates and lost freedom. But at a correctional facility in Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city, visitors are greeted by something unexpected: an art gallery.

The exhibition of inmates' artwork is part of the country's effort to reduce repeat offending through rehabilitation programs behind bars. The Department of Correctional Services has opened nine prison arts-and-crafts galleries since 2023, aiming to help inmates develop skills, earn income and prepare for life after release.

Inside Leeuwkop Correctional Facility, artwork created by 34 inmates is on display for visitors, offering a glimpse into stories of culture, memory and personal transformation in a country struggling with one of the world's highest crime rates. Inmates also have chances to see each other's work.

"I get a peaceful and healed mindset when I do my art," one inmate, Freddy Mongkoai, told The Associated Press. "It encourages me to be strong and present. I can focus, so it gives me peace of mind."

Mongkoai, 51, has served nearly two years of a 12-year sentence for murder after taking part in an act described as vigilante justice. He joined the prison's art program in October. Since then, he has experimented with painting and papier-mâché sculpture.

His latest piece is a replica of the FIFA World Cup trophy.



An artwork by Bongumusa Mondo is displayed as part of the "Restorative Making" exhibition at the Leeuwkop Correctional Centre, in Johannesburg, South Africa. (AP)



Lebohng Molefi paints during an exhibition of inmates' artworks at the Leeuwkop Correctional Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, Monday, June 22, 2026. (AP)

Estimates of recidivism rates in South Africa vary from source to source, depending on how repeat offending is defined, reaching as high as 95%.

South African prisons are notorious for high levels of violence due to overcrowding, gang activities, administrative failures and underfunding. Correctional officials say repeat offenders contribute significantly to the overcrowding.

Against that backdrop, the correctional department says programs such as the arts and craft initiative can help reduce reoffending.

"As they leave here to serve parole and finish their sentences, this is the

most effective way of making it a point that they don't do crime again," said Makgothi Thobakgale, national commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services.

The Leeuwkop gallery showcases different levels of artistic experience and offers insight into the lives of the artists. They range from Mongkoai's striking grayscale portrait of a woman carrying firewood on her head and a baby on her back to a simple pencil drawing bearing the message "STOP GBV," referring to South Africa's soaring levels of gender-based violence.

Mongkoai said the work, one of his favorites, reflects a childhood story

about a woman believed to live on the moon, part of the folklore that influenced his upbringing in Limpopo province.

"The elders would tell us that there is a woman carrying firewood on her head and a baby on her back, while being followed by a dog, on the moon," he said. "That is my favorite because it reminds me of my childhood."

Inmates frequently create artwork focused on the theme of home and family, according to Unathi Mahlati, a senior program officer at Just Detention International-South Africa, which has partnered with the correctional department on the program since 2024.



Eisa Davis appears at the 2016 Lucille Lortel Awards for Outstanding Achievement Off-Broadway on May 1, 2016, in New York, left, and Lin-Manuel Miranda appears at the Kennedy Center Honors in Washington on Dec. 3, 2023. (AP)

Miranda, Davis bring album to stage

'Warriors' brings hip-hop, Salsa & Ska to Broadway next spring

NEW YORK, June 24, (AP): Lin-Manuel Miranda and Eisa Davis are turning their concept album "Warriors" into a full-length Broadway show.

The story - originally a 1965 novel that was made into a cult, dystopian 1979 film - follows a street gang called the Warriors as they make their way from the Bronx to their home turf of Coney Island in Brooklyn while being hunted by rivals gangs and cops. It will be the first full musical from Miranda since "Hamilton."

The musical of "Warriors" is expected to begin previews next March and open next April at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. "Warriors" will be directed by Jenny Koons with a book by Miranda and Davis. No casting was announced.

"Musicalizing such a vibrant world for the concept album has been a thrill, and now we're coming out to play on

Broadway at the Lunt-Fontanne. We can't wait," Miranda and Davis said in a statement Tuesday.

Miranda and Davis released their album in 2024, keeping the bones of the story but making strategic changes in genres, like making the Warriors all women. The album had an astonishing list of artists playing various parts: Ms. Lauryn Hill, Nas, Busta Rhymes, Billy Porter, Ghostface Killah, RZA, Marc Anthony, Colman Domingo, Cam'ron, Shenseea and Joshua Henry, among them.

The album included the sounds of salsa, ska, afro-rock, boy band, pop, old-school rap and even K-pop. Spanish and Korean mixes with the English. It has the song "We Got You," a seductive R&B tune delivered by a male gang wearing cardigans, and "Quiet Girls," a feminist anthem.

Arijle in Serbia recognizes 'Raspberry Capital' status

ARILJE, Serbia, June 24, (AP): Serbia's town of Arijle is known as the Balkan country's "raspberry capital," with its fame reaching beyond borders.

Arijle and its surroundings yield berries that are exported as far as the United States and Japan. Serbia is among the top three exporters of raspberries globally.

"We are born, we live and we die with raspberries," said Mileta Pilcevic, who heads a local association of raspberry producers. "Arijle is unique in the world. You can't find a smaller place with such big concentration of raspberry production."

The hilly landscape has ideal climate for raspberry cultivation. The berries from Arijle are grown without chemicals and picked by hand for high quality.

Producers say the work is demanding. Increasingly unpredictable weather and unstable purchase prices have brought uncertainty to the business in recent years.

The raspberry fields have been run mostly as family businesses through generations. With its roughly 17,000 residents, the municipality some 170 kilometers (around 100 miles) from the capital of Belgrade accounts for about a fifth of Serbia's raspberry exports.

The fields on average yield around 15,000-20,000 tons annually.

Pilcevic said a raspberry field takes at least two years to mature. The fruit is sensitive and requires constant care to develop the smell, taste and aroma that are globally recognized.



A raspberry picker at work on a hillside near the town of Arijle, Serbia, Friday, June 19, 2026. (AP)

"Nothing must be done with machines or chemicals," Pilcevic said.

Early summer is the picking season, and many people come to the town as seasonal workers to help, including from other countries. Pilcevic said some come from India and elsewhere in South Asia.

Local resident Nada Marinkovic said everything must be cleared by hand of weeds and grass. The actual picking "is only hard because of the sun."

Around 90% of Serbian raspberries are exported frozen while the rest end up in markets across the country. Some producers offer direct sale of their fruit and natural juices online.

The frozen raspberries are used mainly in Europe for food processing, retail fruit, jams, yogurt and bakery products.

This year's yield is expected to be 20-30% lower than normal, a consequence of last year's drought.

Archaeologists say Søften links production to trade

Huge Viking textile hub unearthed in Denmark

SØFTEN, Denmark, June 24, (AP): Archaeologists have discovered a huge Viking Age textile production site in Denmark that dates back more than 1,000 years and underlines the sophistication of Viking society.

Experts from the Moesgaard Museum said this week that the sprawling 100,000-square-meter (more than 1 million-square-foot) site features an area for processing flax as well as more than 80 pit houses - semi-buried huts that were used as workshops and dwellings in Viking times.

It's located in Søften, 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of Denmark's second-largest city, Aarhus, on the Jutland peninsula. The site dates back to the late Iron Age and early Viking Age, sometime between A.D. 600 and 950.

Archaeologist Liv Stidsing Reher-Langberg, who led the 10-month dig, said that "we have a clear focus on textile production, which makes this settlement different from other kinds of settlements of this period."

"We have spindle whorls, we have weight looms; that tells us about what has been going on in the pit houses," said Reher-Langberg, adding that archaeologists had also discovered silver coins, glass beads and pottery.

Experts found separate areas for production and crafts, plus a single residential home, which suggests work was overseen by a powerful individual with control over resources and production.

Reher-Langberg said that, over the last three decades, people with metal detectors had unearthed several silver coins in the area. A trial excavation 1½ years ago, before the start of construction work on a new road and industrial area, then piqued archaeologists' interest.

"We could see in the trenches that it just keeps on going, with these houses and pit houses and textile production features," Reher-Langberg said.

Moesgaard Museum historian Kasper Andersen said that the discovery at Søften is "another piece in the puzzle" to understanding the local economic, cultural and political structure



Moesgaard Museum archaeologist Liv Stidsing Reher-Langberg holds a Viking Age weight loom unearthed in Aarhus, Denmark. (AP)



Moesgaard Museum archaeologist Liv Stidsing Reher-Langberg holds a Viking Age silver coin unearthed in Aarhus, Denmark. (AP)



An aerial shot shows an archaeological site in Søften near Aarhus, Denmark. (AP)



Weight looms and spindle whorls unearthed are pictured in Aarhus, Denmark. (AP)

at the time.

During the Viking era, Aarhus - then known as Aros - functioned as a center for royalty and international trade. And last year, archaeologists discovered another Viking site in Lisbjerg, just 4 kilometers (2½ miles) away, that was likely home to members of the nobility.

Goods and resources were likely brought from the countryside and settlements like Søften, before entering an extensive international trade network, Andersen said.

"When you have a production site of this scale, it cannot be only because of the local area. It needs to be understood as part of a greater network, a much bigger international perspective," Andersen said.

Reher-Langberg hopes future carbon dating and pollen analysis might answer some lingering questions, for instance about what kind of textile production went on at the site.

During the Viking Age, considered to run from A.D. 793 to 1066, Norsemen known as Vikings undertook

large-scale raids, colonization, conquest and trade throughout Europe, even reaching North America.

Andersen said that the discovery at Søften shows that Vikings were "not just simple, uncivilized, barbaric hordes, rambling about Europe."

"To have a place like Søften, you need a very well-organized society with a production line, and you also need a market to have the production," he said. "The textiles from Søften go into a market that's much bigger than just the local area."

Temperatures rise even higher

European heat wave triggers health warnings from London to Milan

LONDON, June 24, (AP): Large parts of western Europe were baking Wednesday as a "heat dome" brought extreme conditions that many forecasters warned could present a risk to life.

A day after France recorded its hottest-ever day, the UK was set to see its highest ever June temperature, prompting the national weather forecaster to issue a "red heat health" alert for much of central and southern England, as well as Wales.

This is only the second such warning ever issued by UK authorities following July 2022, when temperatures exceeded 40 degrees C (104 F) for the first time ever. The temperature is set to fall short of 40 degrees C on Wednesday but could breach that level - not long ago considered as unimaginable - on Thursday.

"Red warnings are reserved for the most severe events and we're expecting severe and significant impacts from this heat wave, with health impacts likely for many, even beyond those who are normally more vulnerable to the heat," said Mark Sidaway, deputy chief forecaster for

the UK Met Office.

Authorities in France, Italy and Spain have also issued warnings about the risks of extreme heat for tens of millions of people.

Records are being broken across Europe, seemingly every year, and authorities are struggling to adapt their societies to the realities of the new heat environment. Many of the buildings, work places and transport networks just aren't fit for purpose as human-caused climate change leads to increasingly extreme weather. U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years are likely to shatter more heat records.

"Heatwaves are becoming more frequent, longer and hotter with climate change, as a direct result of the fossil fuels we are releasing as a society," said Hayley Fowler, a professor at the Centre for Climate and Environmental Resilience at Newcastle University in the northeast of England. "We can expect to have to cope with more and more of these types of events in the years to come."

France has borne much of the brunt of the current heatwave. On



A drugstore sign shows the temperature 43 degrees Celsius (109.4 degrees Fahrenheit) in Rennes, western France on June 22. (AP)

Tuesday, the average of temperatures measured at 30 weather stations was 29.8 C (85.6 F), the latest in a series of never-before-registered highs heaped on Europe's largest country.

Unsurprisingly, many of the country's major attractions, including the

essential travel in areas covered by the red warning.

Network Rail, which operates Britain's railroad network, warned of "significant disruption" across England and Wales as it imposes speed restrictions to minimize the risk from heat-related issues such as buckled tracks and sagging overhead electric wires.

Eurostar, which connects the UK to continental Europe under the English Channel, said it canceled four trains planned between London and Paris on Wednesday and Thursday "due to expected adverse weather."

Italy's Health Ministry issued "red alerts" for 16 cities on Wednesday with major cities such as Rome, Milan, Florence and Turin affected. The "bollino rosso" red alert signals emergency conditions that can affect not only vulnerable people but also healthy adults.

Temperatures could reach highs of 41 C (105 F) in Florence and 38 C (104 F) in Milan, while Rome and Naples are forecast to remain below 36 C (96.8 F).

Italy has been roasting in high

temperatures for days. Fashion journalists sweated through runway shows in Milan's fashion capital earlier this week. Many fashionistas who were on hand to see the menswear offerings for Spring-Summer 2027 snapped up battery operated fans with misters in subway kiosks.

One designer, Philipp Plein, had to change his venue just four hours before the show due to an air conditioning malfunction, while others provided hand-held fans, misters and even big umbrellas as protection against the sun and heat for outdoor shows.

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 or, in some cases, simply done away with.

Even the British decided it was too hot for unneeded layers of clothing. Male journalists covering the UK's tradition-bound Parliament will be allowed to remove their jackets in the press gallery of the House of Commons on Wednesday.

French health ministry confirms Ebola virus in patient who worked in Congo

PARIS, June 24, (Agencies): A positive case of Ebola virus has been identified in France in a patient traveling back from Congo, the French Ministry of Health said Wednesday.

The individual, who has not been identified, returned from a humanitarian mission in one of the virus transmission zones in Congo and was taken into care at a specialized facility in France. The person is in stable condition, the ministry said.

The Congolese health ministry said Wednesday there are 1,094 confirmed cases of Ebola, including 277 confirmed deaths. The Ebola outbreak caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus does not yet have any vaccines or treatment.

Officials admit there could be far more cases they don't know about and the peak of the outbreak, which was declared May 15, could still lie ahead.

All precautionary measures, including the patient's isolation, were taken upon their arrival in France, the health ministry said, adding that their transfer to a hospital was carried out under secure conditions to prevent any risk of contamination.

"An in-depth epidemiological investigation is underway to identify



Health workers tend to an Ebola patient at the Rwampara Treatment Center in Ituri, Congo on June 18. (AP)

individuals who may have been in contact with the patient," the ministry said, adding that a regional health agency will closely monitor them during a 21-day home isolation.

Also:

DAKAR: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) said on Tuesday that it is strengthening preparedness and prevention

measures to reduce the risk of Ebola virus disease being imported into West Africa.

"Even though the risk assessment shows that West Africa remains relatively spared at this stage, we must remain vigilant," said Mamadou Diarrassouba, executive director of the ECOWAS Regional Center for Surveillance and Disease Control, at the opening of a meeting of experts on Ebola preparedness and response strategies in Dakar, the capital of Senegal.

According to Diarrassouba, ECOWAS member states have activated their contingency plans and strengthened surveillance at airports, border posts and other strategic points of entry following the Ebola virus disease outbreak currently reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.

He recalled that the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa showed that, in health security, "preparedness costs less than response," stressing the need to act early to save lives.

The 2014-2016 outbreak, the deadliest Ebola epidemic on record, mainly affected Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, killing more than 11,000 people and placing severe strain on health systems in the region.



A Falcon 9 SpaceX heavy rocket lifts off from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral Fla on Feb 6, 2018. (AP)

SpaceX launches Starfall demo mission to test new re-entry vehicle

US space company SpaceX launched its Starfall Demo mission on Tuesday, marking the debut of a new uncrewed re-entry vehicle aimed at enabling future commercial in-space manufacturing and rapid cargo delivery through space.

The mission lifted off aboard a Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida at 6:53 a.m. U.S. Eastern Time (10:53 GMT).

SpaceX confirmed the deployment of Starfall into low-Earth orbit.

The mission includes a demonstration of a new vehicle that will enable affordable, routine access to the microgravity environment for scientific research and in-space manufacturing, according to SpaceX.

After demonstrating controlled flight, the spacecraft is expected to splash down in the Pacific Ocean.

According to filings with the US Federal Aviation Administration, the mission aims to enable point-to-point delivery of critical cargo through space on rapid timelines, and create a self-sustaining commercial in-space manufacturing market by offering access to microgravity and vacuum, loiter on orbit, and safe return from orbit as a service at scale. (Xinhua)



The Douglas County Google Data Center complex is visible on March 6 in Lithia Springs, Ga. (AP)

AI companies should release environmental impact, commit to clean energy: UN chief

LOS ANGELES, June 24, (AP): United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Tuesday called on artificial intelligence companies to release information about the carbon pollution they create, along with the water and land used to power their operations.

While urging action in an address at London Climate Action Week, Guterres proposed the AI Environmental Transparency Initiative, arguing AI companies should measure and disclose the impact of their increasingly in-demand technology - impact which has been cited by opponents as reasons to curb the rapid growth of data centers. These companies have faced mounting pressure, both from governments and locally in areas with data centers that support AI, for increased transparency and more standardized reporting across the industry.

Guterres said AI companies should also commit to powering their facilities with electricity produced with renewable technologies, such as wind and solar, by 2030.

"No more hidden costs," Guterres said at Europe's largest independent climate conference. "No more shifting the burden onto those least able to bear it. It is time to come clean."

Many major tech companies have vowed to power their operations using cleaner sources, some by the end of the decade. Some plan to do so especially using solar and nuclear,

including tech giants Amazon and Google.

But the race to deploy AI has complicated those commitments and sent soaring greenhouse gas emissions, which come from the burning of fuels like oil, coal and gas, and heat the planet. Regulatory barriers have also hindered climate-friendly projects.

Currently, coal sources about 30% of the electricity consumed by data centers globally, according to the International Energy Agency. Renewable energy - primarily wind, solar and hydro powers - supplies about 27%, natural gas, 26%, and nuclear, 15%. Renewables are expected to meet just half of that demand over the next five years.

As AI booms, many, including Guterres, have touted its ability to accelerate climate solutions. It could improve energy efficiency, and reduce pollution and emissions.

At the same time, the environmental footprint of data centers already rivals some of the world's largest countries, according to a U.N. report released earlier this month.

That report also said the water, energy use and pollution associated with AI will double in just four years. Data centers needed to fuel AI accounted for about 1.5% of the world's electricity consumption in 2025, and will account for nearly 3% of the world's projected electricity use by 2030.

"Despite these obvious concerns,

communities are often left in the dark about the environmental impact of the infrastructure rising around them," Guterres said in his remarks.

The UN chief has long urged the world to take serious climate action, and will once again convene leaders at the annual Conference of Parties, this year in Turkey, to negotiate plans.

On Tuesday, addressing AI was just a number of steps he said needed to be taken to keep the world below the warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial times, a goal set during the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Last year was the first time that the three-year temperature average broke through that threshold.

"Every major emitter must accelerate action," Guterres said. "And every country must over-deliver on its commitments."

He called for cutting methane, a powerful greenhouse gas responsible for around one-third of global warming and significantly more potent than carbon dioxide, though comparatively it lingers for less time in the atmosphere. He also called for a reduction in dependence on coal, oil and gas.

Guterres noted in his remarks positive developments in renewable energy, as scale drives down the costs of the technologies and adoption increases.

No maps, no insurance: Michigan floods expose lack of info in many rural areas

ONAWAY, Mich., June 24, (AP): Tom and Diane Peterman tried to buy flood insurance when they moved to their retirement home on the shores of Black Lake 14 years ago but were told it wasn't available. John Solum was told he wasn't in a flood zone when his family bought a 1940s-era cabin there.

Then came this spring's historic and devastating floods across northern Michigan - in some areas, for the first time anyone can remember - swamping homes, pushing dams to the brink of failure and washing out roadways. Dozens of counties were under a state of emergency.

Black Lake was so high that floating ice broke apart decks and crashed through windows.

"We've never seen anything like that. Never," said Solum, who experienced flooding often when he lived in Houston. Knee-high floodwater forced them to tear out flooring, dry-wall, furniture, bedding and appliances.

Across Michigan, thousands were left without financial protection after record April rains fell on top of record March snowfall. Worse, many had no idea they were at risk despite years of increasingly heavy precipitation.

Their experience exposes vulnerabilities across the country, experts say, because flood plain maps don't cover all areas. What's more, the federal government's mapping method is arguably outdated and does not account for actual risks as climate change increases the odds of more extreme weather.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency develops and updates maps that determine who's in a flood plain and must buy insurance, and to help communities plan. But it hasn't developed maps in many less-populated areas, including some Michigan counties that experienced unprecedented flooding.



A home is surrounded by water from recent floods at Black Lake on April 29 in Grant Township, Mich. (AP)

time summer and retiree destination is ringed by small cabins and some larger homes.

Another issue: FEMA's maps are based on risks of rivers, streams and other waterways overflowing their banks. But they don't account for flooding caused strictly from increasingly heavy rainfall that overwhelms stormwater infrastructure in urban areas and inundates rural towns where there's nowhere for the water to go.

First Street, a company that researches the financial implications of climate change, found more than twice the number of properties at significant flood risk nationwide after incorporating that rainfall data into its own models and by mapping the whole country, including smaller streams that FEMA does not.

That includes four times more properties in Michigan.

"I couldn't believe it when we first started building our model how different we were from FEMA," said Jeremy Porter, chief economist at First Street, who says federal maps are "missing a whole source of flooding."

FEMA uses that extra rainfall data to help set insurance rates, experts said. But it's unclear whether it's

proceeding with an effort to incorporate it into flood plain mapping.

The General Accounting Office, a federal watchdog agency, raised concerns five years ago that FEMA's flood hazard maps didn't reflect the best available climate science or heavy rainfall.

FEMA declined an interview request, but said in a statement that 95% of the U.S. population lives in areas with maps, which are "snapshots in time." It did not respond to questions about whether this year's flooding adds urgency to mapping less-populated areas or whether it's updating its mapping methods.

Michigan experienced "truly a monumental flood" that in many areas exceeded what is known as a 100-year flood, meaning it has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year, said Matthew Occhipinti, the state's National Flood Insurance Program coordinator.

But it wasn't a fluke, experts said. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture for longer periods, which can lead to heavy rain or snow when enough builds up. And this spring, an "extraordinarily warm" Gulf of Mexico set the stage for both snow and rain in the upper Midwest, said Richard Rood, a University of Michigan climate scientist.

Kuwait continues medal surge in Egypt



The bronze medal-winning relay team poses together for a group photo while celebrating at the Arab Athletics Championships.



The bronze medal-winning relay team stands together on the field at the Arab Athletics Championships, celebrating while holding the Kuwaiti flag.



Talal Al-Rashoud celebrates after winning gold in the U-23 hammer throw at the Arab Athletics Championships.



Hamid Nabil, the U-16 sprint silver medalist at the Arab Athletics Championships, is seen celebrating alongside officials.



Mohammed Khan, the bronze medalist in the U-23 hammer throw at the Arab Athletics Championships, celebrates after his victory.



Rida Bouhamad celebrates with his coach after winning gold in the U-16 hammer throw at the Arab Athletics Championships.

Redha and Talal Al-Rashoud take gold as team adds 5 medals at Arab Athletics Championship

CAIRO, June 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's athletes added five more medals to their tally at the Arab Athletics Championships for the U-16 and U-23 categories, currently being held at the Suez Canal Authority Stadium in Ismailia, Egypt.

The latest achievements raised Kuwait's total medal count to 11 in the championship, which features participation from 14 Arab countries.

Kuwait Athletics Federation Board Member and Head of the Media Committee, Farouk Al-Shaer, told KUNA that athlete Redha Bouhamad won the gold medal in the U-16 hammer throw competition after producing a personal-best throw of 57.19 meters.

Al-Shaer added that Talal Al-Rashoud captured gold in the U-23 hammer throw event with a personal-best mark of 66.87 meters, securing qualification for the upcoming Asian Championships.

In the same event, Mohammed Khan claimed the bronze medal with a

throw of 58.48 meters.

On the track, Hamid Nabil earned the silver medal in the U-16 600-meter race after setting a new personal best. Nabil later joined Talal Al-Yaqout, Fahd Al-Dhafeeri, and Mohammed Nasser to win bronze in the 4x75-meter relay race.

Egypt is hosting the third edition of the Arab U-23 Athletics Championships alongside the inaugural Arab U-16 Athletics Championships in Ismailia through June 24.

Utah drafts Peterson No. 2

Wizards select Dybantsa as top pick in NBA draft

NEW YORK, June 24, (AP): AJ Dybantsa is on his way to Washington and ready to start working as soon as he gets there.

That's not until Wednesday. Tuesday was a night for the NBA's No. 1 draft pick to party. "Obviously this night is just a celebration of all the hard work I've done in the past, and so now I'm going to celebrate," Dybantsa said.

So were a record number of one-and-done college stars who followed him, a trio of national champions from Michigan and fans of both New York teams on what sounded like an even more festive NBA draft than usual.

The Wizards started it by selecting Dybantsa, a forward who led the nation in scoring in his one season at BYU. He averaged 25.5 points, highlighted by a 43-point effort that broke BYU's freshman scoring record, and was the first of a record-tying eight straight college freshman taken to begin the draft.

That matched the record set last year. Morez Johnson Jr. at No. 9 was the first non-freshman.

"I think down the road we can continue to do this," Dybantsa said. "They are comparing us to a certain amount of draft classes. Obviously we have to see how that plays out and how we do in the league, but if we talk it into existence, I think that would be pretty special."

At 6-foot-9 and 217 pounds, Dybantsa has drawn comparisons to Kevin Durant, who happens to be his favorite player. Durant grew up in the Washington area, and Wizards fans can only hope Dybantsa can live up to the comparisons.

They certainly hope he will be better than center Kwame Brown, the pick Washington made in 2001, the first time it had the No. 1 selection after the NBA changed draft formats to eliminate territorial picks in 1966. The Wizards took John Wall in 2010 the other time, and he did turn into an All-Star.

Dybantsa - who was called by his full name, Anicet Dybantsa Jr., in tribute to his father - appeared to say a quick prayer after his name was announced, then went on stage to greet Commissioner Adam Silver and slipped on a black Wizards hat that matched nicely with his black suit.

Dybantsa beat out fellow freshman Darryn Peterson of Kansas, who was taken at the No. 2 pick by Utah. While some thought Peterson had the most talent in the class, the guard missed 11 games during the season because of injuries and illness, potentially creating some questions that Dybantsa didn't have.

Cameron Boozer, the college player of the year in his one season at Duke, was taken at



AJ Dybantsa arrives for the first round of the NBA basketball draft Tuesday, June 23, 2026, in New York. (AP)

No. 3 by Memphis. Caleb Wilson, another freshman forward from rival North Carolina, went to Chicago with the next pick.

Those players were the expected top four throughout the pre-draft process, though there was certainly a case for Peterson to go first with his promise. Or for Boozer, with his body of work after he put up 22.5 points, 10.2 rebounds and 4.1 assists per game for Duke, where his father, Carlos, also played before becoming a two-time NBA All-Star.

The uncertainty was expected to begin at No. 5. The Los Angeles Clippers acquired the rights to it after a trade with the Indiana Pacers and used it on Illinois guard Keaton Wagler. The host Brooklyn Nets then went with Louisville guard Mikel Brown Jr.

Darius Acuff Jr. to Sacramento at No. 7 and Kingston Flemings to Atlanta at No. 8 continued the run of scoring guards before Dallas went back to the bigs - and created a reunion in the process - by taking Morez Johnson Jr. from Michigan. Johnson was congratulated by national champion Michigan teammates Yaxel Lendeberg and Aday Mara, who were also in the green room, and then hugged his old and new coach. Dusty May left the Wolverines to coach the Mavericks on the eve of the draft.

Sabalenka looks to rebound from Paris collapse

Serena makes audacious return at Wimbledon

LONDON, June 24, (AP): This is the real deal now.

After initially returning in doubles, Serena Williams is ramping up her tennis return with singles, too.

At Wimbledon, of all places.

All eyes will be on the 44-year-old Williams when she competes in the first round of the grass-court Grand Slam, which starts Monday.

While she has played two doubles warmup matches recently, Williams hasn't contested an official singles match in nearly four years.

ESPN commentator Mary Joe Fernandez called it "a sign of confidence" that Serena is prepared to enter the sport's most prestigious tournament without having played a singles match in so long.

"But if anybody can do it," Fernandez said, "it's Serena."

Added fellow ESPN commentator Patrick McEnroe, "I would call this Serena being Serena. It's very Serena-like to do something audacious like this and I didn't think for one minute she was coming back to play doubles (only)."

Williams has accepted wild card invitations for both singles and doubles (with sister Venus) from the All England Club.

Williams made her return this month by playing two doubles matches with two different partners. She won with Victoria Mbooko at Queen's Club and lost with Karolina Muchova at the Berlin Open.

Williams' powerful serve and returns were on display but it remains to be seen how well she can cover the entire court and how much stamina she has for singles.

With 23 Grand Slam singles titles - seven of them at Wimbledon - and 14 more in doubles (all with Venus as her partner), nobody is questioning her qualifications, experience or aura.

"Hopefully she'll be able to be competitive right off the bat," McEnroe added.

Serena also swept the singles and doubles (with Venus) titles at the 2012 London Olympics, when the tennis competition was held on the hallowed grass of the All England Club. And she was the runner-up four times in singles at Wimbledon.

Serena will learn who her first-round opponent is on Friday when the singles draws for Wimbledon are held. Then her opening match will be either next Monday or Tuesday.

"No one's going to want to face her," said Fernandez, who coached Williams as Fed Cup captain and on the U.S. Olympic team. The Williams sisters' opening doubles match will come later in the opening week.



Jannik Sinner of Italy returns a shot during a practice session ahead of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, in London. (AP)



United States' Serena Williams serves the ball during a practice session ahead of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, in London. (AP)

Despite her resume, Serena is by no means the favorite for the trophy.

Among the top contenders are top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, 2022 champion Elena Rybakina and freshly crowned French Open champion Mirra Andreeva, who at 19 is 25 years younger than Serena.

Sabalenka is looking to bounce back from a crushing defeat at Roland Garros, where she let a big lead slip away and didn't win a game in the third set of a loss to Diana

Shnaider in the quarterfinals.

Rybakina is known as one of the game's best servers and her game adapts well to grass.

Andreeva reached the quarterfinals in London last year and will have more confidence after her performance in Paris.

Iga Swiatek is the defending champion and moves well on grass.

Since Serena has no ranking and won't be seeded, she could potentially face any of the top players in the opening round.

With Carlos Alcaraz still sidelined with a right wrist injury that also kept him out of the French Open, Jannik Sinner is favored to defend his title - even after the top-ranked Sinner's stunning second-round meltdown in a Paris heat wave.

"It's Sinner and then it's everyone else," McEnroe said. "That's the bottom line on the men's side."

French Open champion Alexander Zverev has never been past the fourth round at the All England Club and lost his opening match a year ago.

Sinner's biggest challenger could be 39-year-old Novak Djokovic, who like Serena is a seven-time Wimbledon champion. A 24-time Grand Slam champion overall, Djokovic has reached the semifinals or better in his last seven appearances at the All England Club.

"He's so comfortable on the grass," Fernandez said. "This is for me is where he has his best chance to win another major."

So with a combined age of 83, Serena and Djokovic could be ready for a repeat of 2015, when they won Wimbledon in the same year.



Croatia keeps knockout hopes alive; Panama crashes out

Modric makes 200th international appearance

TORONTO, June 24, (AP): There wasn't much open space in Panama's back line as it tried to keep its World Cup hopes alive.

But just four minutes after Croatia coach Zlatko Dalić subbed on an extra forward in the second half, Josip Stanišić validated his coach's decision, finding some room on the right and making his move.

Stanišić lifted an exceptional curving cross onto the boot of Ante Budimir, who tapped it into an open net in the 54th minute, lifting Croatia to a 1-0 win on Tuesday night.

Croatia remains in contention for the knockout round ahead of its third and final group-stage match against Ghana on Saturday. Panama was eliminated and is still seeking its first World Cup point in two appearances.

"This was very difficult and I didn't expect that it was going to be such a difficult match, to be honest," Dalić said. "We didn't react

the best, and perhaps it could be due to the pressure because we really needed these three points."

Three minutes after Budimir scored, the Vatreni nearly added another goal when 40-year-old Luka Modrić - making his 200th international appearance - passed ahead to Marco Pašalić on a breakaway, but Panama goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera blocked Pašalić's shot.

"I was quite surprised by the quality (of Panama)," Dalić said.

Modrić, the 2018 Ballon d'Or winner as the best player in Europe, has led Croatia to World Cup finishes of runner-up (2018) and third place (2022). He got a postgame tribute from his teammates after his milestone cap.

Croatia players donned black T-shirts that bore Modrić's image and read "200" in gold, with the zeros linked to resemble the mathematical symbol for infinity. They took a lap around the pitch together.

"Everybody knows what he means to us," defender Marin

Pongračić said. "He's our captain, he's our leader, and he's the biggest legend of Croatian football, and we are witnessing him, and just him as a person, how humble he is. What a mindset, what a mentality."

Panama had three straight chances in the 67th minute to knot things up, after Cristian Martínez slid to keep the ball in play in the corner. Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livaković then made a trio of dazzling saves; on the third, he just managed to get a hand on the ball and send it over the net.

"These are the kind of matches where you get the feeling that you're dominating, that you might score a goal," Martínez said. "But then they have one chance and they score. These aren't teams that need much to score a goal."

Group L will be decided on Saturday, with England and Ghana tied at four points and Croatia with three. England will face Los Calaneros in East Rutherford, New Jersey, while Ghana and Croatia will play in Philadelphia.



Croatia's Mario Pasalic, left, and Panama's Yoel Barcenas (11) vie for the ball during the second half of a World Cup Group L soccer match, in Toronto. (AP)

Norway's big striker Haaland the biggest threat

Messi, Mbappe romping through World Cup in dazzling display of history-making goals

LOS ANGELES, June 24, (AP): Lionel Messi has been mesmerizing, Kylian Mbappe has been, well, magnifique.

Two of the biggest stars of the World Cup are setting records with history-making goals in a sizzling start that has even the most casual soccer fans in the U.S. taking notice.

Messi has five goals in Argentina's first two matches, setting the record for most career World Cup goals with 18. Mbappe has scored four times for France, ranking him tied for second in career goals with 16.

"Leo always scores," Mbappe said. "He'll always score. If I want to look at what Leo's doing, I'll have to do even more."

They are not alone in hitting the back of the net. Norway's Erling Haaland already has four in his country's first two games at the World Cup since 1998. And Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo finally broke out with two scored against Uzbekistan on Tuesday to raise his career World Cup total to 10.

But Messi and Mbappe are the maestros making this World Cup their personal symphony. It's one they've been writing since the 2022 final in Qatar, when Messi scored twice and Mbappe three times before Argentina finally won on penalty kicks in a title game for the ages.

There should be plenty of music still to come from both. Argentina and France have already clinched spots in the elimination rounds, and both are among the favorites to win the whole thing.

Messi has scored most of his World Cup goals at an age when most top scorers would be well past their prime. He has scored 12 World Cup goals since he turned 35, and will turn 39 on Wednesday, three days before Argentina plays its final group stage match - against Jordan.

Messi, the former Barcelona icon who now plays for Inter Miami in Major League Soccer, still possesses exquisite touch and passing in traffic, and energy and stamina that carry him through an entire match.

His second goal against Austria came late in the match. Messi passed to teammate Julián Álvarez, whose shot was blocked. Messi chased the rebound and slid the shot through two defenders to seal a 2-0 victory.

"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," Austria coach Ralf Rangnick said.

At 27, Mbappe is in his physical prime with the speed and power to chase Messi's record, not just in this tournament but likely for years to come.

He was just 19 when he led France to the 2018 World Cup title in Russia. With his goal against Croatia, he joined Pele as the only two teenagers to score in a World Cup final.

Mbappe scored four goals in the 2018 tournament and has been on a charge ever since. The Real Madrid



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, near Dallas. (AP)

forward's speed haunts defenders and his power shooting with both feet can overwhelm a goalkeeper.

He was the Golden Boot winner as the top scorer with eight goals in 2022. His 16 career World Cup goals match Miroslav Klose of Germany, one ahead of Brazil great Ronaldo.

Mbappe scores at a much higher rate than Messi. His 16 goals have come in 16 matches since 2018. Messi has played in 28 matches across six tournaments dating back to 2006.

"I've always scored goals in the World Cup, so it's not something I'm thinking about or that I'm worried about," Mbappe said.

Norway's big striker could be the biggest threat to Messi and Mbappe as the World Cup's top goal scorer if Norway can stay in the tournament long enough.

The 25-year-old Manchester City star has been one of the top strikers in Europe for several years and scored two goals in each of Norway's two victories.

Norway will meet Mbappe and France on the pitch Friday. Both teams have already advanced to the next round, and the winner of the match wins the group.

"We're through (to the next round), which is incredible," Haaland said. "So I couldn't care too much about that game now. They (France) are probably going to win against us, they're probably going to win the whole tournament."

Norway coach Stale Solbakken says Haaland is the player who can push the team deep into the tournament.

"He is the best striker," Solbakken said. "He's not playing for France or Argentina. He scores for Norway."

Mbappe disagreed. Only he didn't point at himself. "It's clear," Mbappe said. "(Messi) is the best in the world."

'More entertainment for fans'

Infantino says FIFA will analyze using hydration breaks at future World Cups

ATLANTA, June 24, (AP): FIFA will consider keeping hydration breaks for future World Cups despite backlash to the extra stoppages in play at this year's tournament.

Gianni Infantino, the soccer body's president, defended the decision to introduce breaks - which come midway through each half - at this World Cup and said they may be providing more entertainment for fans.

He said FIFA would analyze what it will do in future tournaments "based on this experience." But after criticism that the breaks were a stealth way to insert advertising or American-style timeouts, Infantino suggested the stoppages have been positive.

"Maybe the coach can reassess certain situations, correct certain mistakes. The players get a little rest and come back in full speed. Well, is that bad necessarily? Maybe it's good," Infantino told SNTV. "And we see as well the intensity of the games. We've never seen 90 minutes in a tournament like this played in such an intensity."

"Until the last second of the match, players attack and so on," he continued. "And maybe, maybe not, but maybe it's also a bit thanks to this little break that the players have and after they can go back on the field and show what they can do."

The World Cup has certainly delivered in terms of



FIFA President Gianni Infantino attends the World Cup Group D soccer match between the United States and Paraguay in Inglewood, Calif., near Los Angeles. (AP)

entertainment, with goals scored at a record pace and big performances from soccer greats like Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappé and Erling Haaland. There have also been shocks provided by debutants Cape Verde and Curacao, despite fears the expansion of the tournament from 32 teams to 48 would dilute the quality.

But the biggest criticism has been the introduction of hydration breaks for all matches regardless of venue or location.

Loud jeers have greeted the stoppages, around 22 minutes into each half, especially at games played in stadiums with roofs and air conditioning, such as Atlanta.

Infantino said it was necessary for sporting equity. "If we were to use hydration breaks only in those matches where it was too hot and not in the other matches, we would give an advantage or a disadvantage to some of the coaches or some of the teams," he said. "Why would the coach have the opportunity to influence the game in one match just because it's hot and in another match where it's a bit less hot, he wouldn't have this opportunity?"

Infantino also insisted FIFA was making no extra money as a result of networks cutting to commercials because contracts had been signed before the decision to introduce hydration breaks.

World Cup Diary

Deschamps leaves camp after mother's death:

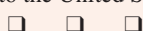
France coach Didier Deschamps will return home from the World Cup following the death of his mother and will miss his team's final group game against Norway, the French football federation said.

The FFF said Deschamps learned of his mother's death on Tuesday morning and that he is going back to France to attend her funeral.

"At this incredibly painful time, we wish the head coach great strength and assure him of everyone's support," the FFF said, adding that assistant coach Guy Stéphan will take temporary charge of the squad - including for Friday's game in Massachusetts - until Deschamps returns.

The federation did not say when Deschamps was

expected to return to the United States. (AP)



Álvarez says he wants out of Atletico:

Argentina forward Julián Álvarez wants out of Atletico Madrid. Álvarez spoke after Argentina's 2-0 win over Austria at the World Cup in Arlington, Texas.

"The best thing for everyone is a transfer," the 26-year-old player told ESPN. "I don't think it's the right time to talk about this, but I can't hide either. I have to be honest, and I spoke with people at the club, the ones I needed to talk to."

Not long after his comments were published in Spain, images of some Atletico fans burning the player's jersey were posted on social media. (AP)

Fan

Zone



Supporters bring passion, color and energy to the stands as they cheer on their nations during FIFA World Cup matches. From waving flags and singing anthems to celebrating goals and dramatic moments. (AP)



Croatia's Luka Modric (10) waves to the crowd after defeating Panama during a World Cup Group L soccer match, in Toronto. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

Ronaldo roars back with brace as Portugal routs Uzbekistan



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (7) makes an attempt to score during the World Cup Group K soccer match between Portugal and Uzbekistan in Houston. (AP)

We lost 5-0 because I made mistakes: Cannavaro

HOUSTON, June 24, (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo rebounded from a lackluster start to his sixth World Cup and led Portugal to a dominant victory over Uzbekistan on Tuesday, renewing hope that the team is a contender for the title.

Ronaldo scored two goals to help Portugal roll to a 5-0 win and move on from its disappointing performance in the opening 1-1 draw with DR Congo.

"We improved," Ronaldo said in Portuguese. "It's life, sometimes you will have challenges and the main goal is always to improve and that's what we did."

The 41-year-old Ronaldo became the first player to score in six World Cup tournaments, adding another impressive accomplishment to his storied career. He was named man of the match.

Portugal has four points in Group K. Colombia moved back atop the group with six points when it beat

DR Congo 1-0 in Guadalajara, Mexico, late Tuesday night.

Some critics questioned if Ronaldo should remain in the starting lineup after a forgettable performance against DR Congo. But coach Roberto Martinez stuck with the superstar and his decision paid off almost immediately with Ronaldo putting the team up 1-0 in the sixth minute.

Martinez said the veterans on his team used their experience to calm the group and keep the negativity from impacting them on Tuesday.

"The discipline, the way we executed the game was fantastic," Martinez said. "And I think that shows you that the maturity in that dressing room allowed us to use the noise in a positive way. But easily in another dressing room it could have been fatal."

Ronaldo said it was a difficult week, one that was especially tough on him and his coach because most of the criticism went toward them.

"But it's always like that, it doesn't matter, because it's been 23 years on the job and when things go well, 'Cristiano is good,' when things go bad, 'Cristiano is a retired

player, is old," he said. "It will always be like that. But we responded well today, me and my teammates, which is what we wanted."

Ronaldo put João Cancelo's cross into the net with his right foot to make his latest mark on history. He then made his signature SIUUU celebration before running toward the bench and celebrating with his teammates.

Ronaldo got another in the 39th minute when he got a pass from Bruno Fernandes and scored with his right foot just inside the near post to make it 3-0. Nuno Mendes had made it 2-0 off a free kick in the 17th minute.

Portugal took a 4-0 lead on an own-goal in the 60th minute. Rafael Leão, who entered the game in the 83rd, extended the advantage to 5-0 in the 87th minute. He crouched down, smiled and posed for the camera after his score.

Uzbekistan midfielder Azizjon Ganiev looked to have scored in the 30th minute, but it was overturned after a video review showed Abbotbek Fayzullaev fouled João Cancelo just before the play.

Uzbekistan coach Fabio Cannavaro, whose team is playing at the World Cup for the first time, took responsibility for the loss.

"We lost 5-0 today because I made mistakes, not them," said the coach, who captained Italy to the 2006 World Cup title.

While Martinez kept Ronaldo as a starter, he did make two changes to the lineup. He benched midfielder Bernardo Silva for João Félix and started defender Rúben Dias, who sat out the opener with an injury, over Tomas Araujo.

Ronaldo had a great chance to score in the fourth minute when he took a cross from Mendes and just missed with his right foot as he slid to the grass. He shook his head and made a hand gesture indicating it was close. But it wasn't long before he scored put Portugal on top.

He had a chance for a hat trick at the end of second-half injury time, but his shot was just off.

Uzbekistan plays on Saturday night in Atlanta against DR Congo. Portugal faces Colombia on Saturday night in Miami Gardens, Florida, to determine the group winner.

Muñoz scores winner

Colombia breaks DR Congo wall

GUADALAJARA, Mexico, June 24, (AP): Daniel Muñoz helped Colombia break through DR Congo's stingy defense and advance to the knockout stage of the World Cup with a 1-0 win.

Muñoz scored in the 76th minute after the Colombians had been held back by a strong performance from DR Congo goalkeeper Lionel Mpsi, who made five difficult saves in the first 20 minutes.

Mpsi had no chance to stop Muñoz's left-footed strike from inside the area after the ball deflected off a defender. It was Muñoz's second goal in the tournament.

DR Congo twice came close to equalizing in stoppage time, with Colombia goalkeeper Camilo Vargas making a superb save off a long-range strike by Nathanael Mbuku and then stopping a header by Chancel Mbemba off the ensuing corner kick.

Colombian star forward Luis Díaz had two goals called back in quick succession late in the second half, one for a foul in the 79th minute and another for offside in the 80th.

DR Congo had opened its first World Cup in 52 years with a surprising 1-1 draw against Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal.

Colombia has six points from two matches in Group K, two ahead of Portugal and five clear of DR Congo. Portugal routed Uzbekistan 5-0 behind a pair of goals by Ronaldo earlier Tuesday in Houston.

Colombia needs a draw against Portugal on Saturday to win the group. That result would also be enough to send Portugal to the knockout stage.

Colombia, which did not qualify for the 2022 World Cup, is ranked 11th in the world, third best among South American teams behind Brazil and Argentina. Los Cafeteros opened with a 3-1 win over Uzbekistan. DR Congo, ranked 47th, had its World Cup preparations affected because of an Ebola outbreak.

Many DR Congo fans were prevented from traveling for the tournament because of restrictions tied to Ebola.

One fan who missed the first game because of quarantine requirements was Michel Nkuka Mboladinga, who gained fame during the Africa Cup of Nations for posing as a statue of DR Congo's assassinated independence hero Patrice Lumumba. He made it to the game in Guadalajara, maintaining his statue pose throughout the match.

Colombia had never been involved in a scoreless draw in 23 World Cup appearances.

Playmaker James Rodríguez joined Colombia greats Freddy Rincón and Carlos Valderrama with 10 World Cup appearances.



Colombia's Luis Suarez (25) and DR Congo's Axel Tuanzebe (4) battle for the ball during the World Cup Group K soccer match between Colombia and DR Congo in Zapopan, near Guadalajara, Mexico. (AP)

World Cup Diary

Doku to rejoin team: Belgium forward Jérémy Doku was expected to rejoin the team at the World Cup training facility on Tuesday following the birth of his first child, a boy named Praise.

Doku missed Belgium's 0-0 World Cup draw against Iran on Sunday because of a respiratory illness, but was cleared to fly to London so he could be with his wife. Ahead of Tuesday's training session, center back Arthur Theate said Doku would join the team, but he was not present for the portion of practice that was open to the media. Doku missed training on Monday.

"We are very happy to have him (back), of course," Theate said. "He's an important player, important part of the group, also, in terms of everything. So, I hope he can help us the best way for the next game."

Belgium plays New Zealand on Friday at BC Place, a match that could determine whether the Red Devils advance into the knockout round. Belgium played to draws in each of its first two games. (AP)

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Almiron gets one-game suspension: Paraguay midfielder Miguel Almiron has been given a one-match suspension after he was the first player to be sent off at the World Cup for covering his mouth.

FIFA confirmed on Tuesday that Almiron will miss Paraguay's final group game against Australia on Thursday. World soccer's governing body said the decision was not subject to appeal.

Almiron made history when he was issued a red card for covering his mouth during a confrontation with Turkey's Mert Mulder late in the first half of Paraguay's 1-0 win last Friday.

Under new rules, players are not allowed to cover their mouths to disguise what they are saying during confrontations, with infringements leading to an instant dismissal.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino pushed for the legislation after a high-profile incident in a Champions League game between Real Madrid and Benfica last season. (AP)

World Cup Fixtures

Ivory Coast vs Curacao 23:00

Germany vs Ecuador 23:00

Friday

Japan vs Sweden 02:00

Tunisia vs Netherlands 02:00

Australia vs Paraguay 05:00

US vs Turkiye 05:00

FOXBOROUGH, Mass., June 24, (AP): England and Ghana coach Carlos Queiroz have met before at the World Cup, with the result being quite a bit different.

This time, Queiroz's team earned a point that could end up being enough for a spot in the round of 32.

England dominated possession on Tuesday but came up empty on several late scoring opportunities in a rain-filled 0-0 draw.

"Our plan was to block and frustrate them from the first minute," Queiroz said. "We did it."

Four years ago at the World Cup in Qatar, Queiroz was coaching Iran when his team faced England and lost 6-2.

England, which has not lost to an African country at the World Cup in nine meetings, outshot Ghana 19-1 but failed to capitalize on multiple chances in the closing minutes.

"Frustrated a little bit with how they defended, how they set up," England midfielder Jude Bellingham said. "They got exactly out of the game what they played for. Couldn't quite break them down, even with all corners, all the possession, all the shots on goal from distance."

Both teams won their opening matches at this year's tournament,



Ghana's Jerome Opoku (18), Ghana's Gideon Mensah (14) and England's Noni Madueke (20) battle for the ball during the World Cup Group L soccer match between England and Ghana in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston. (AP)

with Ghana beating Panama 1-0 and England defeating Croatia 4-2. Now both still have work to do in Group L before securing a spot in the knockout round at the first 48-team World Cup.

England ended up losing to France in the quarterfinals at the 2022 tournament. Ghana hasn't made it to the knockout round since reaching the quarterfinals at the 2010 World Cup

in South Africa.

But with the expanded tournament this year, the best eight third-place teams will advance, giving both teams a good chance heading into their final group matches.

England will next play Panama on Saturday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Ghana will take on Croatia at the same time in Philadelphia. The Three Lions had a chance to

take the lead in the 86th minute when Nico O'Reilly's header hit the crossbar. Harry Kane gathered the rebound but couldn't get enough on it with his left foot and shot high.

Ghana's best chance came in the 78th when Abdul Fatawu outfought England midfielder Eberechi Eze for the ball and raced down the sideline. He fed the ball to Prince Adu, but he was challenged from behind by Ezri Konsa before he could get off a shot. Adu wanted a penalty but didn't get it.

"It was a clear penalty, if not a red card," Queiroz said. "We have no doubts about that."

England coach Thomas Tuchel said they were a bit surprised with how Ghana was aligned, defending in a 4-5-1 formation. He called Ghana's efforts one of the most physical that he's seen in the tournament.

"They defended with a lot of determination. A lot of discipline," Tuchel said.

Tuchel added he doesn't believe England was too dependent on Kane, the striker who won the Golden Boot at the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

"He was not involved as much as we would like to, but it was so narrow," Tuchel said. "It was difficult to find space. The little moments that he had were just so unlucky."