



Amir congratulates Qatar's equivalent on rule 'versary Page 2



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## POWERFUL TEMBLORS JOLT JAPAN AND CALIFORNIA WITHIN HOURS

— Details Pages 6 and 7 —

# Kuwait condoles with Venezuela as twin quake toll climbs to 164



Left: A woman walks past a building damaged during an earthquake in La Guaira, Venezuela on Thursday. Center: Rescue workers search through the rubble of a collapsed building after earthquake in Caracas, Venezuela on Wednesday. Right: Residents and rescue workers search through the rubble of a building that collapsed in earthquakes that struck the previous day in Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday, June 25, 2026. (AP)

### Hope fades as rescuers hunt for survivors beneath ruins

**KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (Agencies):** Kuwait on Thursday extended its condolences and solidarity with Venezuela following two powerful earthquakes that struck the South American nation, causing casualties and widespread damage.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Venezuela's Acting President Delcy Rodriguez, expressing his sincere sympathy over the victims of the twin earthquakes. The Amir voiced sorrow over the loss of lives, injuries and the destruction of property and public facilities caused by the disaster. He also prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured and expressed hope that Venezuelan authorities would successfully overcome the effects of the catastrophe.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to Rodriguez, conveying his heartfelt sympathy over the victims and the damage resulting from the earthquakes. He wished the injured a swift recovery.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah likewise expressed his condolences to the Venezuelan leadership, offering sympathy for the loss of life, injuries and material damage caused by the natural disaster, and wishing those injured a speedy recovery.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed the country's solidarity with the friendly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela following the earthquake that struck the capital, Caracas. In a statement, the ministry expressed Kuwait's sincere condolences to the Venezuelan government and the families of the victims, while wishing a rapid recovery for those injured.

The ministry noted that the earthquakes resulted in numerous casualties, including deaths and injuries, in addition to significant damage to infrastructure and property.

Rescue teams raced Thursday to the areas hardest hit by a pair of powerful earthquakes that rocked northern Venezuela, killing at least 164 people, injuring nearly 1,000 and trapping many beneath collapsed buildings.

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### Defense Minister reviews airport development plans

## Kuwait pushes aviation efficiency goals



PACA photo  
Kuwait's Minister of Defense during a meeting with PACA officials on aviation projects and upgrades.

**KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA):** Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Thursday stressed the importance of continuing efforts to develop the civil aviation system and enhance its readiness in accordance with the highest standards of security, safety and operational efficiency.

In a statement for KUNA, the Public Authority of Civil Aviation (PACA) said that the minister reviewed, during a visit to PACA, key projects and development plans currently being implemented at Kuwait International Airport.

The statement added that the visit addressed ongoing efforts to advance the civil aviation sector in line with the State's aspirations and to strengthen the

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, and senior officials during the launch of the national anti-drug campaign, 'A Nation That Protects You,' highlighting Kuwait's efforts in combating drug smuggling.

### Over 80% drop in drug trafficking: Sheikh Fahad

## Kuwait turns tide against drug smuggling

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

**KUWAIT CITY, June 25:** Officials revealed that drug smuggling into Kuwait has declined by more than 80 percent, at the launching of the national drug prevention campaign, "A Nation that Protects You."

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah emphasized that cooperation between the public and private sectors remains one of the key factors behind the success

of national initiatives. He praised the contributions of private institutions in supporting community projects, particularly those related to healthcare and drug control programs.

He made the statement during the inauguration of the comprehensive national awareness campaign against drugs under the slogan "A Nation that Protects You," which coincided with the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

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### Kuwait, Türkiye and UN-Habitat collaborate on training

## Diplomats build AI skills in Kuwait workshop

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, June 25:** The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Kuwait, organized a workshop titled, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Diplomats."

The workshop aimed to develop the skills of diplomats and broaden their knowledge about the responsible, effective and secure use of artificial intelligence technologies in institutional and diplomatic settings.

The workshop was conducted by Dr. Fatima Al-Hasawi and technology expert Qusay Al-Duaij. It focused on the practical uses of artificial intelligence in different fields, such as research and analysis, content development, drafting official



Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez and Head of UN-Habitat Mission Dr. Amira Al-Hassan pose with workshop participants during a group photo following the recognition ceremony at the AI for Diplomats workshop in Kuwait.

correspondence, and supporting decision-making processes. It also stressed the importance of protecting data, verifying the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated outputs, and ensuring that final decisions remain under human supervision and control.

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## Kuwait weekend heat peaks at 47°C

**KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA):** The Meteorological Department has forecasted hot to very hot weather conditions throughout the weekend, with temperatures becoming milder during nighttime hours.

Kuwait is expected to experience active winds that may lead to dust being stirred up in open areas.

Acting Director of the department Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that weather maps and numerical forecasting models indicate that the country will be influenced by an extension of a surface low-pressure system accompanied by hot air mass and northwesterly winds.

Al-Qarawi disclosed that Friday will be hot, with northwesterly to variable winds that will be light to moderate in speed, ranging between eight and 35 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures are expected to range from 44 to 46 degrees Celsius. The sea will be slight to moderate, with waves reaching heights of one to four feet.

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### 2 KDIPA and the test of implementation



### 9 Government commends KFH's support of 'A Nation Protects You' campaign



GCC General Secretariat photo  
Officials pose for a group photo during the GCC-US ministerial meeting in Manama, bringing together GCC foreign ministers and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to discuss regional security and cooperation.

## Hormuz and Iran top agenda at GCC-US meet in Manama

**MANAMA, June 25, (KUNA):** The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said on Thursday that the GCC-US ministerial meeting addressed a wide range of regional and security issues, with a focus on current developments, de-escalation efforts, and ways to strengthen stability across the region.

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### Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:15 Asr ..... 15:25  
 Sunrise .. 04:50 Maghrib .. 18:51  
 Zohr ..... 11:51 Isha ..... 20:24

## Other Voices

# KDIPA and the test of implementation

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

Any effort to improve Kuwait's investment environment should be welcomed, especially at a time when countries across the region are competing to attract global capital and high-value projects. What we understand about the proposed amendments being considered by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority suggests a growing recognition that Kuwait needs more flexible and competitive tools in a rapidly changing economic landscape.



Al-Anjeri

In conversations with diplomats and representatives of international economic institutions, I have sensed clear interest in the

reforms currently under discussion. This suggests that these initiatives are attracting attention from international observers concerned with Kuwait's economic future.

One of the most notable proposals is to allow foreign investors to acquire existing Kuwaiti companies, either wholly or partially, rather than limiting market entry primarily to the establishment of new entities. This is a logical step. Many successful investments do not begin from scratch; they start with the acquisition and expansion of existing businesses, supported by fresh capital, expertise, and networks.

The proposed amendments also seek to accelerate decision-making. Relevant authorities would be required to respond to applications within seven working days, with silence deemed implicit approval. Once all required approvals are completed, the investment license would be issued within an additional seven working days. This reflects

an important reality: investors seek clarity, speed, and regulatory predictability.

Kuwait does not need to reinvent the wheel. International organizations and economic institutions have already developed tested frameworks and best practices that can be adapted to the Kuwaiti context, saving time and strengthening investor confidence in the reform process.

Another notable proposal is the establishment of a center for arbitration, conciliation, and mediation. The idea is positive, but its success will depend not on the existence of the center itself, but on the standards governing it. Investors seek procedures they recognize, qualified professionals, and dispute-resolution mechanisms whose outcomes are credible and enforceable.

The overall direction of these reforms is encouraging. Yet, as always, success will ultimately be measured not by the text of the law, but by its implementation.



HH the Amir



Amir of Qatar

# Amir congratulates Qatar's equivalent on rule 'versary

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the 13th anniversary of assuming post.

His Highness the Amir commended the Qatari leader for the various achievements during his reign, wishing him and the people of Qatar evermore progress, development, and welfare.

His Highness the Amir also commended the level of cooperation between the two brotherly countries, expressed desire to further solidify relations.

### Crown Prince congratulates

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a congratulatory cable to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the advent of the 13th anniversary of assuming post.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the Qatari Amir good health, and for Qatar and its people continuous development and progress.

### Prime Minister congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of post assumption.

# KUNA Training Cntr concludes reporter skills course

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): The KUNA Center for Development of Media Skills on Thursday concluded its five-day training program titled "Skills and Professional Duties of a News Reporter," with participation of several Kuwait News Agency staff.

The program focused on equipping participants with essential knowledge and skills required for news reporting, including professional roles, field coverage requirements, and types of reporters.

It also covered news writing standards, accuracy and speed, handling information sources,

crisis and disaster coverage, journalistic ethics, interview techniques, coordination with editorial departments, and administrative and financial aspects of reporting. The course combined theoretical and practical training, enabling participants to address challenges faced by field reporters according to professional standards.

Trainer and KUNA Managing Editor Nawaf Al-Daqbasi said the program aims to enhance participants' capabilities and provide practical skills needed for efficient and professional report-

ing under various conditions.

He added that specialized media training is key to developing national media cadres and keeping pace with rapid changes in the media sector.

Al-Daqbasi noted that the skills gained will positively reflect on participants' professional performance and improve the quality of media output.

Established in December 1995, the KUNA training center is one of the leading media training institutions, offering hundreds of programs aimed at advancing professional media work.

# 'Staff course cornerstone in producing top leaders'

Apply knowledge, skills acquired: Defense Minister

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah affirmed that the Joint Command and Staff Course is a key pillar in preparing military leaders and enhancing their ability to assume responsibilities and make decisions efficiently at various command levels.

The remarks came during his patronage of the graduation ceremony of the 30th Joint Command and Staff Course, attended by senior officials and military commanders.

He urged graduates to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the program, praising the participation of officers from the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard and brotherly and friendly countries as a reflection of strong military cooperation ties.

The minister urged graduates to capitalize on the knowledge and skills acquired during the course and apply them in military service, while continuing to develop their professional capabilities in service of the nation and in support of the armed forces' readiness.

He expressed pride in the graduates' achievements and distinguished performance throughout



Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah honoring the graduates of Joint Command and Staff Course.

the course, praising the participation of officers from the Ministry of Interior and the National Guard, alongside officers from brotherly and friendly countries.

The Defense Minister said that such participation reflects the strength of military cooperation ties between Kuwait and the participating countries.

He also commended the efforts of the leadership and faculty members of Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College in advancing educational and training programs in line with the latest military and academic concepts, contributing to the preparation of scientifically and professionally qualified military leaders.

The statement noted that Sheikh Abdullah presented certificates and awards to the graduates and honored outstanding participants, expressing pride in their accomplishments during the period of study.

For his part, Assistant Commandant of Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College Brigadier General Eng. Bader Al-Zuabi reviewed the college's journey and achievements since its establishment, highlighting its academic and military development that has strengthened its position as a specialized military educational institution dedicated to preparing leaders capable of addressing modern challenges and changes.

He added that the college continues to develop its academic programs, curricula and training methods in line with rapid developments in military and technological fields, including artificial intelligence and information transfer technologies, thereby enhancing officers' capabilities in analysis, planning and decision-making based on sound scientific and professional foundations.

The ceremony was attended by Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Pilot Khaled Al-Shuraian, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Dr. Wael Nasser Al-Sabah, Director General of the Coast Guard Brigadier General Naval Staff Mubarak Ali Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, and National Guard Commander for Military and Security Affairs Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Khuzai, along with a number of senior military officers.

The statement noted that the 30th Joint Command and Staff Course included 118 participants, comprising 59 officers from the Kuwaiti Army, seven officers from the Ministry of Interior, 10 officers from the National Guard, and 42 officers from the armed forces of brotherly and friendly countries. The course also marked the graduation of the first female officer from the Ministry of Interior to complete the program.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah presents certificates of appreciation to fire-fighters.

# 1st Dty PM lauds firemen sacrifices in saving lives

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah on Thursday attended the graduation and oath-taking ceremony of 134 specialist officers commissioned with the rank of lieutenant in the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), in the presence of Fire Force Chief Major General Talal Al-Roumi.

In a statement carried by the Kuwait Fire Force, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef expressed pride in the sacrifices made by fire personnel in saving lives and protecting property, noting that they confront battles whose timing, location and scale

are unknown while placing their trust in Almighty Allah.

He congratulated the graduates and conveyed to them the greetings and congratulations of the political leadership, expressing pride in being among the graduates on this occasion. The minister urged them to uphold the oath they had taken to protect lives and property.

He also called on the graduates to exert further efforts in serving the nation and to continue enhancing their professional competence and performance in carrying out their duties of saving lives and safeguarding property.



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah exchanges mementos in Sweden.

# Kuwait seeks to enhance strategic ties with Sweden

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah paid an official visit to Sweden as part of the ministry's 2025-2030 strategic plan aimed at strengthening international partnerships and exchanging expertise.

The Ministry of Defense said in a statement on Thursday that Sheikh Abdullah held meetings with senior Swedish officials, including State Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Dag Hartelius, State Secretary for Defense at the Defense Ministry, Peter Sandwall, Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces General Michael Claesson, and Director-General of the Swedish Defense Materiel Administration Mikael Granholm.

The talks reviewed bilateral relations and explored ways to enhance cooperation in defense and military fields. The undersecretary also met representatives of defense and security industry institutions.

On the sidelines of the visit, Sheikh Abdullah met Adviser for Military and Security Affairs to Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Major General Pilot Mohammad Al-Mannai, in the presence of Qatar's Ambassador to Sweden Nadia Al-Shaibi.

The meeting addressed issues of mutual interest and reflected the strong fraternal ties between Kuwait and Qatar.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Sweden Mohammad Hayati and members of the accompanying delegation attended the meetings.



Acting Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Mohammad Al-Manai receives the Czech Ambassador to Kuwait Juraj Chmiel in his office.

# KUNA, Czech envoy discuss boost in media cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): Acting Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Mohammad Al-Manai discussed on Thursday with Czech Ambassador to Kuwait Juraj Chmiel ways to enhance media cooperation, particularly in the news sector.

During the meeting, Al-Manai highlighted the media's role in showcasing the strong relations between Kuwait and the Czech Republic and supporting future cooperation across various fields.

He affirmed KUNA's commitment to strengthening ties with fraternal and friendly countries and expanding cooperation and expertise exchange with international news

agencies.

For his part, Ambassador Chmiel praised KUNA's professionalism and the competence of its national staff, commending the agency's coverage of recent developments in the Middle East.

He expressed hope for closer cooperation between KUNA and official Czech media institutions, noting that KUNA serves as the embassy's primary source for official news.

The ambassador also highlighted the growing number of Kuwaiti visitors to the Czech Republic and the contribution of Kuwaiti businesspeople to the Czech economy.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## It is not over until it is over ... threats persist

"IT IS strange that US President Donald Trump declared a ceasefire with Iran, yet did not deter its hostile policies in the region, nor did he even stipulate the complete elimination of Iran's nuclear program," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"In his negotiations with Iran, Trump does not treat it as a defeated country. I urge the reader to consider the following lines to draw a conclusion.

"On June 18, 2007, Harvard history professor Niall Ferguson published an article in an American newspaper describing the state of the Arabs by saying, 'The Arab region needs an effective diplomatic intervention policy. They are lagging behind in an important region. I have been warning for some time that the next major global conflict will begin in the Middle East.'"

"Later, the idea attributed to former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice of dividing and controlling Arab states emerged. Furthermore, revolutions erupted to change the existing regimes in some Arab countries, as if the West were implementing Ferguson's idea of manipulating events in the Arab region to benefit Israel.

"In an interview with Iraqi writer Khalil Al-Dulaimi on Al-Arabiya TV in 2004, he said, 'America, Iran, and Israel are secretly in agreement to destroy the Arabs, and Iran will not be attacked. Even if Iran were attacked, it would be with their agreement. The Persian and American agendas and interests have converged to tear apart Arab unity. If Iran is attacked, it will be in areas agreed upon by the Americans and Israelis to cover up the facts and drain the Arab region. The proof is that Iran facilitated the invasion of Iraq, and America later facilitated the Iranians' entry into Iraq.'"

"In 2019, Iran shot down an American drone in international waters between Oman and Iran. President Trump, at the time, almost launched a military strike against Iran but then backed down. Later came the idea of developing the Palestinian territories and normalizing relations with Israel as part of Trump's plan to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Trump proposed investing about \$50 billion in Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, funded by Gulf states. Trump also said, 'We will not guard the Strait of Hormuz for free. China and Japan import their oil through the strait. Why are we protecting other countries' shipping lanes without financial compensation?'"

"Does the depletion and destruction of the Arab region's resources confirm what writer Khalil al-Dulaimi said? The Los Angeles Times published an article on November 24, 2013, indicating that in mid-March 2013, American officials traveled to the Sultanate of Oman on a highly sensitive diplomatic mission. In the presence of Sultan Qaboos, they met with the Iranian delegation, which included diplomats and nuclear experts. This meeting was the first of five secret meetings held between the two sides in Oman.

"As part of the secrecy, the American negotiators went to Geneva discreetly, and their names were not included in the official negotiating delegation. To avoid being noticed by journalists, the US State Department booked some of them into a different hotel than the official American delegation. President Trump is currently not pursuing a firm policy against Iran.

"Writer Amitai Etzioni, in The National Interest, believes that America and Europe are pursuing a policy of appeasement toward Iran." Etzioni believes that this policy is failing, and therefore Iran will continue its provocations. Currently, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is forming small, clandestine cells in Iraq to attack Gulf states. These cells are said to consist of Iraqi fighters operating in small groups. They have launched attacks from desert areas in southern Iraq using drones against Kuwait and other Gulf countries. Therefore, increased security along Kuwait's northern border is urged."

Also:

"The 65th anniversary of Kuwait's Independence Day on June 19, 1961, comes 62 years after the 1899 treaty with Britain, marking Kuwait as an independent state," Kuwaiti writer **Tariq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"National Independence Day, declared by the late Amir Abdullah Al-Salem on that historic and immortal day, embodied a powerful impetus for building Kuwait's renaissance and progress politically, economically, and socially. The initiative to nationalize the nation's wealth was then carried out, after which Kuwait embarked on strengthening its Arab identity under the umbrella of the Arab League. Kuwait secured its national sovereignty by joining the United Nations, thus completing its leading, pioneering political role.

"The journey toward the future, development, and prosperity was completed with Kuwait's accession to international and regional organizations and bodies. Kuwait began to occupy its prestigious position among developed nations and succeeded in consolidating its standing, capabilities, and expertise in various fields thanks to a cadre of qualified citizens.

"In the early 1960s, Kuwait successfully nurtured many educated national talents and sought to train them across all scientific fields. Science and technology were essential to leading the march of renaissance and civilizational development and keeping pace with progress. The State of Kuwait has achieved unprecedented successes after 65 years of independence, thanks to the wisdom and sagacity of its rulers and successive leaders, who have contributed to elevating its status and advancement across generations.

"Today, we renew our pledge of allegiance to our rulers who have established the principles of justice and preserved independence, governance, and national sovereignty, ensuring the continuation of the march of renaissance, reform, stability, prosperity, and well-being for generations to come. We must all support these national efforts and achievements so that the words of the father of independence, the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, remain etched in the memory of history and the people, from the generation of the 1960s onward."

□ □ □

"To be honest, I did not bother to follow the uproar surrounding Dr. Al-Awadhi (may God have mercy on him), nor did I try to find out his name or what he said in detail, because the commotion surrounding him was preceded by much controversy over other topics," Kuwaiti writer **Dr. Zaid Al-Jalawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"I believe that the human body is equipped with a divinely ordained, innate protection system that technology companies have tried to emulate in some of their products, but they will never reach its efficiency.

"This system means that if the body is exhausted, it seeks rest, and if it is hungry, it seeks food. If the body takes more than it needs, this divine protection system signals it to stop. Those who suffer from a deficiency in their sense of satiety may faint if they eat more than they need.

"If a person is thirsty, they seek water and drink until they are quenched. If a person stays awake for a certain period, drowsiness overcomes them and they fall asleep. If a person gets enough sleep, they wake up involuntarily.

"If a person remains bedridden, they are afflicted with psychological and physical illnesses. Hunger forces a person to seek work in order to obtain food. If the body's self-protective system malfunctions, we recognize it through loss of appetite and a reluctance to engage with those around us, until the will to live is lost.

"When a bone breaks, the surrounding tissue swells to protect it until it heals. Loss of balance and many other symptoms are sent by the body as warnings and signals. An increase in these signals beyond the normal level may indicate a malfunction in the brain's signaling system, a condition known as obsessive-compulsive disorder.

"Russian security services conducted investigations into gender reassignment surgeries, revealing that a group of surgeons, in collusion with psychiatrists and media figures, encouraged such procedures. Not everything is a matter of chance; sometimes, someone is manipulating events behind the scenes.

"This message suggests that strong intellectual immunity is crucial for protecting both our bodies and our mental state. There are many hidden factors behind the noise emanating from around us. The 'Tayyibat' diet is somewhat similar to Mao Zedong's policy of expelling birds in China because they ate fruit. When the birds were eliminated, the fruit spoiled due to the worms they had been feeding on.

"In short, God created everything in due measure. The body needs eggs, chicken, and other foods. Baked goods have been a companion to humankind since the beginning of history and are indispensable. However, some people's fear of death leads them to raise issues related to the afterlife, such as the idea of immortality that preoccupied the pharaohs. The goal is to strive to maintain optimal health. Our organs will eventually cease functioning, not necessarily because of disease, but because their lifespan is nearing its end.

"My Syrian friend's father passed away at the age of 120. When I asked him about the cause of death, he said he had not suffered from any illnesses, but simply that his life had come to an end and all his vital organs had ceased functioning. Many of those who are overly concerned with their health suffer from an obsession with death and a desire for immortality. I would like to remind you that the Holy Quran has given us commandments that we should heed. One of these is in Surah Al-A'raf, verse 31 - 'Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant. Indeed, Allah does not like the extravagant.' Another verse to remember is - 'For every nation is a term appointed. So when their term comes, they will not precede it by an hour, nor will they delay it.' (Surah Ar-Ra'd, verse 38)."

- Compiled by **Simi K. Kutty**



Farwaniya Governorate photo  
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

## Call to address vital needs of Kuwaitis and residents

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: The Farwaniya Governorate Council on Wednesday held its fourth meeting at the headquarters of the governorate, presided over by Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah who also serves as Chairman of the council.

The meeting tackled several items in the agenda, with council members representing various government agencies, appointed members, and the secretary of the council in attendance.

During the meeting, the Governor underscored the importance of strengthening coordination among relevant entities to support development initiatives and improve the quality of services provided to

citizens and residents throughout the governorate.

The council reviewed reports and topics about services and development, followed up the implementation of recommendations issued in previous meetings, and discussed the most pressing needs and concerns of residents in order to address them in coordination with the competent authorities.

The Governor praised the efforts of the council members and its committees, while expressing his appreciation for the cooperation and support provided by government institutions in realizing the objectives of the council and in better serving the community.

# Truant PAAAFR staff in soup

Top notch in manipulation of attendance record

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: **Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij referred a report to the Public Prosecution about the suspected forgery and manipulation of attendance records involving several supervisory employees at the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Fulaij explained that this action is part of ongoing efforts to reinforce institutional integrity and the principles of governance, transparency and accountability. She added the move also complements the oversight and reform initiatives of the ministry.

She stated that the decision was based on indicators, observations and documented evidence, which warranted submission to the competent investigative authority for legal action.

She underscored the importance of maintaining the integrity of legal procedures and ensuring that investigations are conducted with complete impartiality. She added that three supervisory employees at PAAAFR were sus-

pected as a precautionary measure for a period of three months, pending the completion of the investigations.

She also affirmed the commitment of the ministry to apply the highest standards of transparency and institutional oversight. She stressed that all reports on suspected violations are referred to the concerned judicial authorities in accordance with the legal frameworks.

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**Acquitted in drugs case:** The Criminal Court overturned its ruling to sentence a defendant to two years in prison with hard labor and fine him KDI,000 in absentia, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The court acquitted the defendant of the possession of psychotropic substances for personal use and public intoxication based on the arguments presented by his lawyer, Attorney Ali Al-Anzi.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with possessing derivatives of the psychotropic substance benzodiazepine with the intent to use, in addition to the charges of public intoxication and disturbing public order.

The case was referred to the court, which previously issued a two-year prison sentence against the defendant in absentia.

During the appeal proceedings, Al-Anzi argued that the procedures related to the search, collection and testing of the defendant's urine sample are invalid. He contended that the

measures were taken by an authority lacking the jurisdiction to undertake such actions, emphasizing that offenses involving narcotic and psychotropic substances fall exclusively within the jurisdiction of the prosecution.

He asserted that the collection of the urine sample constituted a search procedure intended to detect the presence of narcotic or psychotropic substances, so it should have been carried out in accordance with the legal procedures governing such procedures.

The defense relied on judicial precedents and legal principles, stating that evidence obtained through procedures conducted in violation of jurisdictional rules is inadmissible. Accordingly, the defense requested the exclusion of the laboratory test results and any evidence derived from those procedures, a position that the court accepted.

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**Health body raided:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that the emergency inspection teams from the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, raided a health institute that was found to be in violation of Ministerial Resolution No. 32/2026, which bans cash transactions for certain activities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The inspectors also recorded other violations committed by the establishment.



KUNA photo  
Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas receives Security Attaché at the French Embassy in Kuwait Colonel Jean-Eroy Mignard.

## Kuwait & France seek to boost bilateral relations

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas met with Security Attaché at the French Embassy in Kuwait Colonel Jean-Eroy Mignard to discuss several topics of mutual interest, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement Thursday, KNG revealed that Al-Barjas warmly welcomed the French Security Attaché and conveyed to him the greetings of the KNG leadership. The meeting focused on ways to strengthen relations between the two parties.

## Trio jailed as traffic brawl turns violent near market

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: The Ordinary Misdemeanor Circuit at the First Instance Court sentenced three defendants to six months in prison with hard labor and acquitted two others in connection with a public brawl that took place in front of a shopping mall in Sulaibikhat, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The court discovered that the public brawl happened after a traffic-related dispute between one of the complainants and one of the defendants. The disagreement escalated into a verbal confrontation and then developed into a physical altercation.

According to the results of investigations carried out by the Criminal Investigation Department at the Interior Ministry, as well as evidence obtained from CCTV footage, the three convicted defendants arrived at the location, waited for the complainants to leave the shopping mall and assaulted them. The investigations and video recordings did not reveal any evidence indicating that the complainants initiated the assault or engaged in exchange of physical blows.

Attorney Abdulmohsen Al-Qattan, who represented one of the defendants, stated that the court's decision to acquit his client was based on the contents of the case file, results of the investigations of the Criminal Investigation Department and CCTV footage, all of which confirmed that his client was not involved in the brawl.

## GCC comes together to combat drug trafficking

RIYADH, June 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's General Administration of Customs on Wednesday participated in a joint meeting bringing together GCC anti-narcotics agencies, the GCC Customs Union Authority, and border guard and coast guard officials at the GCC General Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh.



Al-Harbi

Kuwait was represented by Director of Customs at the Northern Ports and Failaka Island Saleh Musleh Al-Harbi.

Participants discussed ways to enhance cooperation and coordination among relevant authorities to combat drug trafficking and curb its spread, given its threat to the security and stability of Gulf societies, particularly young people.

The meeting also addressed the exchange of expertise and information among member states, as well as mechanisms to strengthen preparedness and enhance monitoring at border crossings and maritime ports to counter smuggling attempts and safeguard the security of GCC countries.

Participants also stressed the important role of customs administrations as a first line of defense in protecting society, alongside their economic responsibilities. The meeting concluded with a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening joint action and developing anti-drug efforts across the GCC.

□ □ □

**Ties reviewed:** Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Mansour Al-Omar on Wednesday received Saudi Ambassador to Tunisia Mohammad Al-Buraithen at Kuwait's Embassy.

The meeting came within the framework of a courtesy visit paid by the Saudi ambassador following the commencement of his duties in Tunisia.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the distinguished relations between the two brotherly countries and discussed issues of mutual interest.

Ambassador Al-Omar congratulated Ambassador Al-Buraithen on assuming his new post and wished him success in carrying out his diplomatic duties in Tunisia.



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**'Success is not what you achieve - it is the peace of mind you keep,' says Dr. Alkhateeb during a Kuwait TV 2 interview**

# In the age of AI, human judgment remains irreplaceable

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: In a world increasingly obsessed with achievement, status, and technological advancement, lawyer, legal strategist, and executive educator Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb believes many people are chasing the wrong definition of success.

Speaking during a recent appearance on Kuwait Television's English-language program "Hala Kuwait" with presenter Yousef Alsalem, Dr. Alkhateeb shared lessons drawn from more than two decades of legal practice, leadership development, executive education, and professional advisory work.

His conclusion was both simple and unexpected. "Earlier in my life, I thought success meant winning a case, reaching a goal, or achieving something material," he said. "Today, I believe success is peace of mind."

The statement became the defining theme of a discussion that explored leadership, personal growth, artificial intelligence, governance, professional development, and the future of Kuwait.

According to Dr. Alkhateeb, many people mistakenly assume that successful individuals are simply the smartest, most talented, or most fortunate.

"In reality, the people who consistently succeed are usually the people who possess discipline, clarity, continuous learning, and the ability to stay focused on what matters most," he said.

He explained that one of the most influential lessons he encountered through years of legal practice and executive education— including leadership and performance-development initiatives inspired by the teachings of internationally recognized success expert Brian Tracy—was that lasting success extends far beyond external achievements.

"True success is measured by peace of mind, meaningful relationships, personal growth, purpose, and balance," he said.

Dr. Alkhateeb noted that while professional achieve-

ment remains important, it should not come at the expense of health, family, personal fulfillment, or inner stability.

"A person may achieve great professional success yet still struggle to find happiness," he observed. "Peace of mind comes when there is balance."

The discussion also examined the role of leadership during periods of uncertainty.

Drawing on both professional experience and recent global events, Dr. Alkhateeb argued that the true test of leadership is revealed during difficult times.

"People do not follow titles," he said. "They follow vision."

According to him, effective leaders create calm, clarity, and confidence when others become distracted by fear, uncertainty, and confusion.

"When challenges arise, people need direction," he said. "They need someone who focuses on solutions rather than problems."

He pointed to Kuwait's ability to maintain stability and public confidence during recent regional tensions as an example of how strong leadership, institutions, and communication can help societies navigate uncertainty without panic.

The interview also explored the rapidly changing relationship between technology and professional life.

While acknowledging the transformative impact of artificial intelligence, Dr. Alkhateeb emphasized that technology should be viewed as a tool rather than a replacement for human judgment.

"Every generation experiences a transformative technology," he said. "We witnessed electricity, computers, the internet, and now artificial intelligence."

He shared a practical example involving a client who relied on AI to prepare a contract, only to discover that the technology had failed to identify a critical licensing

issue that could have resulted in serious legal consequences.

"The technology produced the document," he said. "But it could not exercise professional judgment."

According to Dr. Alkhateeb, this illustrates an important lesson for professionals across all sectors.

"Technology can support expertise," he said. "It cannot replace wisdom, ethics, experience, or accountability."

Looking ahead, Dr. Alkhateeb expressed strong optimism about Kuwait's future.

Describing Kuwait as a land of opportunity, he praised the country's talented youth, entrepreneurial spirit, and growing potential in innovation, technology, governance, and professional services.

"Kuwait possesses tremendous talent, creativity, and energy," he said. "Our greatest asset is not technology. It is not infrastructure. It is not any single industry. Our greatest asset is our people."

He encouraged young professionals to pursue areas where passion meets opportunity, particularly in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, governance, and innovation.

"Continuous learning is no longer optional," he said. "The future belongs to those who adapt, learn, and continue developing themselves."

Throughout the discussion, Dr. Alkhateeb repeatedly returned to the importance of values and governance as foundations for sustainable success.

"No matter how skilled a person becomes, long-term success requires a strong foundation of values," he said. "Governance is ultimately about trust."

Concluding the interview, Dr. Alkhateeb offered a message that connected leadership, success, technology, and personal growth.

"Success is not simply about what you achieve," he said. "It is about who you become, the lives you impact,



Dr Fawaz K. Alkhateeb during his interview on KTV2

the values you uphold, and the peace of mind you enjoy along the way."

As artificial intelligence reshapes industries and societies continue adapting to unprecedented change, his message serves as a reminder that while technology may transform how people work, the foundations of success remain deeply human.

## Ministry of Finance wins GBM's Deal of the Year award

DUBAI, June 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Finance won on Thursday the Deal of the Year award in the debt markets category at the Global Banking and Markets (GBM) Middle East Awards 2026 in Dubai.

This award comes in recognition of the successful management of its sovereign bond issuance, which attracted strong investor interest and highlighted Kuwait's solid financial fundamentals and ability to access global markets on competitive terms.

The ministry said in a statement to KUNA that the award reflects the advanced position achieved

by its Public Debt Management Department in efficiently and professionally managing sovereign financing plans in line with international best practices, contributing to stronger confidence in the national economy and reinforcing Kuwait's presence in regional and international capital markets.

The statement quoted Director of the Public Debt Management Department Faisal Al-Muzaini saying that the achievement is the result of integrated institutional cooperation among all relevant entities.

He praised the role of the Kuwait Investment

Authority in the issuance process and its efforts to develop public debt instruments, diversify funding sources and enhance the efficiency of managing financial obligations in support of the public interest and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Al-Muzaini also commended the role of the Central Bank of Kuwait in local issuances, noting that its contributions had a significant impact on supporting the financing strategy and improving the efficiency of issuance operations in line with the State's approach to managing public debt on sound institutional and professional foundations.

## Amir congrats Mozambique Pres. on Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Mozambique, Daniel Chapo, on his country's Independence Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the President good health and his country more progress and prosperity.

Crown Prince congratulates Mozambique

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Mozambique, Daniel Chapo, on his country's Independence Day, and wished the President good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Mozambique, Daniel Chapo, on his country's Independence Day.

### Amir congratulates Slovenia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar on her country's national day.

His Highness the Amir wished the President good health and her country more progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar on her country's national day.

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

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar on her country's national day.

# Food security tops agenda

## Minister seeks national database

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij discussed on Thursday with Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Kuwait Yerzhan Yelekeyev ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in food security as one of the key pillars of sustainable development.

In a statement for KUNA, Al-Fulaij said that the two sides reviewed opportunities to develop partnership and exchange expertise and successful experiences in a manner that supports food systems and enhances their sustainability.

She pointed out that the meeting, held at the headquarters of the Environment Public Authority (EPA), also discussed mechanisms for cooperation in agricultural production and food supply chains to ensure food stability and availability.

Al-Fulaij added that a number of issues of mutual interest related to strengthening

food security were also addressed, supporting the national efforts of both countries and contributing to the achievement of their development goals and long-term food sustainability.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij on Thursday has directed affiliated authorities establish an integrated national database that supports decision-making and enhances environmental transparency and disclosure.

This came in a statement for KUNA after her meeting with senior officials from authorities under her supervision, namely the Environment Public Authority (EPA), the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources, and the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, to discuss the launch of the pilot phase of the government sustainability reporting system.

Al-Fulaij affirmed that the initiative would strengthen governance and environmental performance measurement in line with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards, support the State's efforts to develop environmental sustainability indicators and improve Kuwait's standing in relevant international indices and reports.

She pointed out that the system would also enable the measurement of the actual impact of environmental initiatives and projects, positively reflecting on the efficiency of natural resource management and improving environmental quality in Kuwait.



Dr. Al-Fulaij

## Overtime system back in Sept

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: The employee overtime system in the public sector will be reinstated in September, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the resumption of assigning overtime duties to employees will be governed by regulations and specific conditions.

Employees welcomed the move, viewing it as a measure that will enhance productivity, speed up the completion of clients' transactions, and provide additional financial incentives through overtime al-

lowances.

Sources disclosed that any ministry or government agency wishing to reintroduce overtime work must submit a request to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and obtain approval.

They added that the decision will coincide with the conclusion of the three-month period, during which official working hours were reduced by one hour per day as part of efforts to ease pressure on the electrical grid and promote energy conservation during the summer season.



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## LOCAL

### Kuwait pushes

position of this vital sector and its role in supporting Kuwait's air transport system.

PACA President Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah received the Defense Minister upon his arrival at the authority's headquarters, along with a number of PACA officials.

### Kuwait weekend

Friday night is expected to be warm, with northwesterly to variable winds that will be light to moderate in speed, ranging from six to 30 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures are expected to range between 32 and 34 degrees Celsius. The sea will remain slight to moderate, with waves between one and three feet high.

Regarding Saturday's weather, Al-Qarawi said conditions will be very hot and relatively humid in coastal areas. Winds will be northerly to variable and light to moderate in speed, ranging between eight and 30 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures are expected to range from 45 to 47 degrees Celsius. The sea will be slight to moderate, with waves between one and three feet high.

He added that Saturday night will be warm, with northerly to variable winds that will be light to moderate in speed, ranging from six to 28 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures are expected to range between 33 and 35 degrees Celsius. The sea will remain slight to moderate, with waves between one and three feet high.

### Kuwait turns

The event was held at The Avenues Mall, with representatives of several government agencies and public institutions in attendance. Among those present were Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Rabab Al-Osaimi, Head of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Dr. Essam Al-Rabeean and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Nasser Al-Muhaysen.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stated that numerous hospitals, medical departments, and community initiatives have been completed with the support of private sector entities, including Kuwait Finance House (KFH) and Zain. He affirmed that national companies provide support whenever called to do so, thereby, helping improve the services offered

to society.

He added that whenever government officials approach company executives or banking officials regarding projects that serve the nation, they respond by contributing millions of Kuwaiti dinars. He stressed that without the support of the private sector, many of these achievements would not have been possible.

He described the Anti-Narcotics Law as a distinguished legislation and its impact is becoming increasingly evident. He pointed out that the volume of drugs entering the country declined by more than 80 percent, while market prices for various narcotics have risen by 200 to 300 percent as a result of intensified controls and security measures.

He confirmed that the Ministry of Interior strengthened security at the borders, indicating that no drug shipments have entered Kuwait through land borders for more than six months due to the implementation of advanced security systems.

He added that no drug shipments have been recorded through sea routes for more than a year, thanks to modern security technologies and the efforts of the Coast Guard, Drug Control General Department (DCGD) and Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC).

He said the drug traffickers continue to develop new smuggling methods, including the use of papers soaked with narcotic substances. "However, the vigilance and preparedness of security agencies enabled authorities to detect and thwart such attempts," he stressed.

He confirmed that the government remains committed to the strict enforcement of the law, emphasizing that the severe penalties stipulated in the law send a clear message to drug dealers that violations will be dealt with firmly and without leniency.

He added that there are currently no death row inmates in prison. He explained that public announcements regarding the implementation of death sentences serve as a general deterrent and reinforce respect for the law. He said executions often took a long time to be carried out in the past, whereas today no death row inmates remain in prison.

He then indicated that the strict enforcement of the law is a clear message to drug traffickers that the execution of death sentences will not be delayed for more than three months.

In addition, Director General of the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard said the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which falls on June 26 annually, serves as a global call for unified action to combat drug abuse and trafficking.

According to Qabazard, the oc-

casation highlights the importance of strengthening international cooperation and raising public awareness on the serious risks and harmful consequences that drugs pose to individuals, families and society as a whole. He stressed that the DCGD remains committed to implementing extensive awareness and educational campaigns each year through a variety of social media platforms. He said these efforts aim to reach the broadest possible audience and protect young people from the dangers of addiction. He added that the department continuously coordinates with government institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups to develop and carry out joint awareness initiatives and preventive programs.

He confirmed that the new Anti-Narcotics Law has had positive outcomes since its implementation, particularly the decline in drug trafficking and smuggling cases. He said the legislation allows drug users to seek treatment before legal proceedings are initiated against them, encouraging many families to come forward and seek assistance for their children by enrolling them in treatment and rehabilitation programs. He stressed that all reports received are treated with the highest level of confidentiality and privacy. He added that the rising number of reports received reflects increased public awareness on the dangers associated with drug abuse, as well as greater trust in the measures adopted by the country to address the issue.

He asserted that these achievements have been made possible through the guidance of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef and the continuous support of Ministry of Interior Undersecretary Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib.

### Diplomats build

Dr. Amira Al-Hassan, Head of the UN-Habitat Mission in Kuwait and the GCC countries, stated that the organization of the workshop is in line with the vision of the United Nations on harnessing artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity and to achieve sustainable development. She asserted that this objective must be realized within frameworks that uphold governance, transparency and accountability.

On the other hand, Ambassador of Turkiye to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sönmez pointed out that smart technologies are an integral component of modern diplomatic work and knowledge management. She emphasized the need to enhance the capabilities of diplomatic personnel to use these technologies effectively and re-

sponsibly. She said the partnership between the Turkish Embassy, UN-Habitat and Kuwaiti experts creates new opportunities for cooperation between Kuwait and Turkiye in the areas of artificial intelligence and digital transformation.

Participants were also introduced to a range of practical applications of artificial intelligence, including the preparation of summaries, drafting official correspondence, organizing meetings, conducting preliminary translations, and producing awareness and informational content.

### Hormuz and

In a statement during the meeting held in Manama under the chairmanship of Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani, Al-Budaiwi noted the participation of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and GCC foreign ministers, including Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He said discussions emphasized that any future understandings or arrangements must take into account the interests of GCC states in a way that preserves their security and stability. He added that such arrangements should be grounded in international law, respect for state sovereignty, good neighborliness, and non-interference in internal affairs, contributing to broader regional stability.

Al-Budaiwi affirmed that GCC states welcomed diplomatic initiatives aimed at reducing tensions and strengthening security, particularly efforts related to safeguarding maritime routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, ensuring freedom of navigation and adherence to international law in support of regional and global prosperity.

He added that GCC and US officials also reviewed several regional developments and their implications for Gulf security, along with ongoing diplomatic and political efforts to address them.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, addressing the meeting, stressed that freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz is a fundamental principle that cannot be compromised, reiterating that Iran will never obtain a nuclear weapon.

Rubio underscored the importance of the long-standing strategic partnership between the United States and GCC countries, noting that cooperation over decades has been built on shared goals of security, stability, and prosperity.

He said recent regional challenges had tested the partnership, but had also demonstrated the strength of coordination and mutual support among allies. Rubio added that the

region is entering a new phase in which priority should be given to economic development and improving living standards rather than escalating arms competition.

He expressed Washington's willingness, alongside regional partners, to pursue diplomatic engagement with Iran and work toward agreements that produce tangible and positive outcomes. However, he stressed that any agreement must be realistic, enforceable, and fully respected by all parties.

Rubio reiterated that freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz remains non-negotiable, describing it as an international waterway where no party has the right to impose restrictions or fees that could disrupt global maritime order.

He further stressed that any agreement with Iran must include clear and verifiable safeguards to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon, reaffirming US commitment to diplomatic efforts conducted in coordination with regional partners.

He also emphasized that Washington would ensure that no understandings reached would come at the expense of GCC security, stability, or prosperity, adding that the United States remains committed to strengthening its alliances and pursuing lasting peace in the region.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani said Gulf security is indivisible, stressing the importance of continued coordination among GCC states and with international partners.

He noted that the region is undergoing a sensitive period requiring deeper cooperation to address emerging challenges and reinforce stability. Al-Zayani said recent Iranian attacks had tested the region but also demonstrated the resilience of Gulf states and their institutions.

He welcomed the memorandum of understanding signed between the United States and Iran through mediation efforts, expressing hope that commitments would be upheld in support of regional security.

He also praised Oman's announcement of a safe maritime corridor in the Strait of Hormuz, describing it as a positive step toward protecting navigation and global trade flows.

### Kuwait condoles

Wednesday evening's 7.2- and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes were among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century and could be felt throughout the region. Damage was particularly bad in the coastal region of La Guaira, which is north of Caracas, the capital.

The country's main airport was damaged and closed, while build-

ings were evacuated in places as far away as Brazil's Amazon, about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Caracas.

Television broadcasts Thursday showed rescue workers using power tools to work their way into piles of rubble where buildings once stood. Panicked residents of the capital were sent pouring into the streets, and after the quakes many people walked among the debris searching for the missing among collapsed buildings and toppled electric poles.

In La Guaira, Cristian Carreño stared stunned at his charred apartment building tilting precariously to one side.

"I lost everything. Everything," he said. "There are people still inside, I imagine, that couldn't get out. It's incredibly devastating."

Offers of help poured in from around the world, including from the United States, which seized Venezuela's then-president Nicolas Maduro at the beginning of the year in a surprise military operation.

Acting President Delcy Rodríguez, who gave the latest death toll early Thursday, said authorities were shifting rescue teams from other parts of the country to La Guaira. Officials were trying to make the most of the daylight hours to speed up efforts to rescue people believed to remain trapped under the rubble, she said.

Footage on state TV showed three children, covered in dust but alive, pulled from the rubble in La Guaira state, where a large number of buildings collapsed and which Rodríguez described as a "disaster zone."

"Dozens of buildings have collapsed there ... and we are currently carrying out intensive rescue operations to save lives," Rodríguez said.

Video shared online appeared to show dozens of people, some lying on the ground and others on hospital beds, being treated outside a hospital in La Guaira. While Venezuela sits near multiple fault lines, its position straddling the South American and Caribbean plates makes strong earthquakes much less common than in other parts of Latin America.

Rodríguez appealed to businesses to make heavy construction equipment available for rescue operations, adding that search and rescue teams certified by the United Nations were on their way to Venezuela.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the first earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.2, hit west of Moron on the Caribbean coast, about 170 kilometers (105 miles) west of Caracas. It had a depth of 22 kilometers (about 14 miles). Just a minute later, USGS reported a second 7.5 magnitude earthquake, with a depth of 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) and an epicenter 16 kilometers (10 miles) southwest of Moron.



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## Senate Republicans reject war powers resolution

## White House seeks \$87.6 bln from Congress for Iran war costs, Ebola response

WASHINGTON, June 25, (AP): The White House has formally requested \$87.6 billion mostly to replenish the Pentagon after the US war against Iran, submitting the request to Congress at a politically difficult time as Republican and Democratic lawmakers have objected to any further military action.

The Office of Management and Budget sent the supplemental spending request on Wednesday. It arrived just hours after President Donald Trump assailed Republican senators during a private lunch - engaging in a shouting match with one - over their votes to approve a war powers resolution that would halt further hostilities.

The request is mostly for expenses incurred by the Defense Department as part of Operation Epic Fury, the US-led attack on Iran. But it also includes a range of other items, including \$11.1 billion toward economic assistance for American farmers, \$1.4 billion for the Ebola virus outbreak in Central Africa and \$500 million to support ongoing efforts "to complete restoration and

construction projects in and around Washington, DC."

"I urge the Congress to take action on these important and urgent requests as soon as possible," said OMB Director Russ Vought in a letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said, "President Trump is asking taxpayers to clean up his messes, to the tune of \$87.6 billion."

"After dragging America into a reckless war, he now wants Congress to hand him tens of billions more to paper over the damage - while families are still paying higher prices."

It's unclear how quickly the House and Senate could act on the White House's request, or if Congress takes up the matter at all. The funding faces a difficult path because many lawmakers could view any votes as a reflection of test of their support for the war effort.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth returned to Capitol Hill on Wednesday briefing House GOP lawmakers from the conservative Republican



US Vice President JD Vance speaks to members of the media before boarding Air Force Two at Emmen Military Air Base, Emmen, Switzerland on June 22, after the US and Iran held high-level talks at the Lake Lucerne Summit. (AP)

Study Committee on the Pentagon's budgetary needs. The White House is seeking as much as \$1.5 trillion in defense spending in this year's

budget, a nearly 50% increase over previous levels.

But many lawmakers have complained they have yet to receive any

formal briefing from the administration on the Iran war, nearly four months after it was launched, and as Trump's team is now working to secure a fragile ceasefire and bring an end to the conflict.

Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the lead Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the request is not merely to pay for "the president's disastrous war, but an attempt to secure tens of billions of additional dollars for unrelated Pentagon priorities."

Murray said she would review to ensure servicemembers are taken care of, "but I will not rubberstamp tens of billions more for this disastrous war of choice."

Yet the White House was clear to include provisions to interest lawmakers from various regions, including \$1 billion to assist "the final design and construction of a modernized Penn Station in New York City," which would be of interest to Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, both of New York.

Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Cal., who chairs the panel's subcommittee on Defense, said in a joint statement, "President Trump's request reflects the reality that our defense strength must be maintained, not merely demonstrated."

Meanwhile, Senate Republicans who were berated by Trump over opposition to his war in Iran held a late-night vote Wednesday to try to appease him, rejecting a war powers resolution a day after a similar measure passed.

Trump harangued GOP senators face to face earlier in the day for allowing a vote to block his war in Iran on Tuesday, further escalating a feud that has diverted GOP efforts to focus on election-year affordability issues and brought much of the chamber's business to a halt. He exchanged particularly harsh words with Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of four Republicans who had voted with Democrats on the measure.

## Trump turns America 250 kickoff into campaign-style rally on National Mall

WASHINGTON, June 25, (AP): US President Donald Trump formally kicked off celebrations for America's 250th anniversary on Wednesday night by working to get the country excited again - about himself.

The president hosted a rally on Washington's National Mall, including a series of booming flyovers by stealth bombers, music from military bands, and Lee Greenwood singing "God Bless the USA."

"There has never been anything like the United States of America, and together we are making it bigger and better and stronger and far more exceptional than ever before," Trump said.

He said he'd restored the country to greatness, proclaiming, "Nobody's laughing at us anymore."

As he does in all rally speeches, Trump championed his crackdown on the US-Mexico border and opposition to transgender rights. However, perhaps in a nod to the anniversary celebrations, he was far less critical of Democrats than usual - at least to a point.

"The American Dream is alive again. It's something that nobody thought they'd be saying when you went through that last four years of incompetence," Trump said.

The president also mentioned



US President Donald Trump speaks at the opening of the Great American State Fair on June 24, on the National Mall in Washington. (AP)

his tumultuous effort to revamp the Reflecting Pool near the Lincoln Memorial and build a ballroom at the White House.

Surprisingly, Trump wrapped his speech in less than half an hour - making it one of the shortest rally addresses of his second term and perhaps his entire political career. Just Tuesday, while addressing workers at a truck factory in Pennsylvania, Trump spoke for well over an hour.

Still, he found time to note that he'll again be addressing a Washington rally on July Fourth, exploring, "Your favorite president will be speaking so please show up."

For Wednesday's speech, the crowd was contained to a segment

of the National Mall that was nearly full. From the stage, Trump could likely see the neon colors of the giant Ferris wheel erected in front of the Capitol.

Trump is working to convince Americans ahead of critical November elections that he's put the unpopular Iran war in the rearview mirror, with oil prices easing as the Strait of Hormuz has started to reopen in the wake of an interim deal to end the war with Tehran.

The rally launched weeks of celebrations about America and its 1776 founding as part of "The Great American State Fair" on the mall, the national park that stretches from the U.S. Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial.

## Federal judge bars WH from implementing proof of citizenship requirement to vote

WASHINGTON, June 25, (AP): A federal judge on Wednesday permanently barred President Donald Trump's administration from implementing most of his first executive order on elections, part of which sought to require people to show documentary proof of citizenship when they register to vote.

The ruling by US District Court Judge Denise Casper in Boston effectively converts a preliminary injunction she issued a year ago, in which she temporarily blocked many of Trump's efforts to overhaul elections, into a permanent ban.

Casper rejected the Republican administration's argument that the lawsuit to block the changes brought by Democratic state attorneys general was premature because the rules had yet to be put in place. Instead, she agreed that the Constitution gives states and Congress the authority to regulate elections, and that Trump's requirements violated the separation of powers.

The Constitution "does not grant the President any specific powers over elections," wrote Casper, who was nominated by former Democratic President Barack Obama.

Among other proposed changes, Trump's order would have required people to provide documentary proof of citizenship when registering to vote,



People cast their votes at the Upper Marlboro Community Center on June 23, in Upper Marlboro, Md. (AP)

prevented mail ballots from being counted if they arrive after Election Day, even if they were postmarked by then, and punished states that failed to comply by withholding certain federal grants, including those intended to beef up election security.

In a statement, New York Attorney General Letitia James said she was grateful the court had blocked Trump's "unconstitutional attempt to seize control of our elections" and would continue to defend voting

rights in this year's midterm elections.

"Generations of Americans fought tirelessly for the right to vote, and we honor their legacy by protecting that right against anyone who tries to undermine it," said James, a Democrat.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta, whose state was the lead plaintiff in the case, said the ruling reaffirmed the constitutional principle that it's up to the states and Congress to set election rules.

## US President Trump renews criticism of NATO allies over Iran war support

WASHINGTON, June 25, (Agencies): NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte laid on the flattery with President Donald Trump on Wednesday, pressing the case for a military alliance that the volatile U.S. leader has sharply criticized as the Pentagon reviews the size of the US military footprint in Europe.

Trump has repeatedly slammed NATO, arguing the US carries more than its fair share of military spending. But his grievances have been louder since the Iran war, as he fumed over the fact that some member countries ignored his call to help him restart oil trade through the shuttered Strait of Hormuz.

"They weren't too nice to us in our recent little military skirmish," Trump said of NATO allies as he introduced Rutte during their Oval Office meeting.

Subsequently pressed on what key US allies could do to get back on his good side, Trump responded, "Just be loyal."

"We don't need their money - we don't need anything," the president added. "We have the most powerful military in the world by far. But I just want loyalty."

Trump has renewed his threats to leave the 77-year-old alliance, raising the stakes before the NATO leaders' summit in Turkey next month. But Rutte, who has become known as a Trump whisperer for his ability to charm the president, took on the now-familiar role of attempting to appease him anew.

Rutte pushed back gently against Trump's complaints, saying, "I know there have been isolated cases about which you are really disappointed, but generally speaking, your European allies have been there with you."

He also noted that 4,000 to 5,000 US planes took off from bases in Europe before Iran and the U.S. agreed to a ceasefire.

Rutte gushed about Trump having been "very harsh" with defense contractors, saying, "I had one of them over in my office. He was still trembling."

That was a reference to Trump having held a series of meetings with Pentagon officials and leading military contractors at the White House recently, discussing ways to increase munitions production after the Iran war raised concerns about the US eating into its stocks of missiles.

"This is your president, but also the leader of the free world, taking



Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer attend a press conference at the E5 NATO Summit in Berlin, Germany on June 24. (AP)

the leadership role, as is necessary," Rutte told reporters in the Oval.

The visit, Rutte's fifth since Trump returned to power last year, comes after U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth last week lashed out at allies during a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. His department is in the midst of a six-month review of US forces in Europe.

Hegseth echoed some of Trump's critiques, faulting European allies for not letting the U.S. use bases in Europe to attack Iran. NATO allies were not consulted about the war before the US launched it with Israel on Feb. 28, and some have been openly critical of Trump's strategy.

Trump argues that NATO allies were not there for the US and suggested leaving the alliance, which was founded in 1949 to counter the Cold War threat posed to European security by the Soviet Union. At the heart of their treaty is a mutual defense agreement in which an attack on one is considered an attack on all. The only time it has been invoked was in 2001, to support the United States after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

The Pentagon's warning that it will reduce its military presence in Europe to focus on threats elsewhere was the latest upheaval for the 32-member alliance since Trump returned to office.

The Republican leader stunned European allies last year when he threatened to annex Greenland, a semiautonomous island that is part of

ally Denmark.

Earlier Wednesday, the leaders of five big European NATO allies - Germany, France, the UK, Italy and Poland - met in Berlin to prepare for next month's summit in Ankara, and Rutte joined them remotely.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said in remarks to reporters that the Ankara summit also should send the message that "we will do our part when the conditions are in place" to support an Iran peace deal.

French President Emmanuel Macron said, "We are in a moment of convergence between the Europeans and the Americans," and indicated that he hopes this will continue at the summit.

During the meeting, Rutte gave a presentation using three boards on easels, touting US-NATO ties. Joining Trump were Hegseth, Vice President JD Vance and other top administration officials.

After he was done, however, Trump spent long stretches not talking about NATO but instead boasting about his effort to beautify Washington. He even suggested that, two years ago, before he deployed the National Guard, the NATO chief might have "had a good chance of being mugged, although you're a very big guy."

"They would have mugged him up. They would have beaten the hell out of him," Trump said to laughs. He further suggested that, previously, "nobody wanted to go out" in the nation's capital and "even if you got into the restaurant, they'd rob when you were in."



Redwood Valley Market owner Alex Chehada looks at items which fell off the shelves after an earthquake in Redwood Valley, Calif on June 24. (AP)

## Rural area in N. California jolted by biggest quake since 1940

A rural area of Northern California experienced its strongest earthquake since 1940 on Wednesday morning, causing some injuries but no immediate reports of major damage, officials said.

The epicenter of the quake, with a preliminary magnitude of 5.6,

was about 7 miles (12 kilometers) northwest of the agricultural town of Willits, according to the US Geological Survey. It was widely felt, including in the coastal city of Fort Bragg. The initial quake was centered inland about 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Fort Bragg at

8:10 am PT, and the USGS said it was about 5 miles (8 kilometers) deep.

The area in Mendocino County dotted with small, agricultural towns is 140 miles (225 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco. (AP)

## 'Russia always ready for Ukraine negotiations'

MOSCOW, June 25: Russia is open to negotiations on Ukraine at any time, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday.

"When we sit down at the negotiating table, if there are any sensible ideas, proposals and proper people on the other side, we will not trust anyone on their word alone," Lavrov said during the 12th International Forum "Primakov Readings."

He said that a political-diplomatic settlement of the situation around

Ukraine is still quite possible.

According to Lavrov, Russia proposed that Ukraine significantly raise the rank of its delegation heads at the negotiations and also establish three working groups covering humanitarian, political and military issues, respectively.

Moscow continues to discuss a possible visit by US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner, and remains ready to listen to their proposals, Lavrov said.

He stressed that Russia's vital national interests must be respected by Western countries.

Also:

MOSCOW: The pilot of a Mi-2 agricultural helicopter was killed when

the aircraft crashed in the Slaviansky district of Russia's Krasnodar region on Wednesday, the regional branch of the Ministry of Emergency Situations confirmed.

The helicopter went down while carrying out aerial crop-spraying operations. "Information has been received that a Mi-2 agricultural helicopter crashed during field treatment operations on the afternoon of June 24. 21 specialists and eight pieces of response equipment are working at the scene," the ministry said in a statement.

Investigators from the Western Interregional Transport Investigation Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia have been dispatched to the crash site, with initial investigative activities underway.



Lavrov

## Subcontinent

**Pakistan rescues French woman, 5 kids:** Pakistan police said Wednesday they rescued a French woman and her five children after she told authorities she had been held captive by her husband for more than a decade and subjected to years of domestic abuse in the country's northwest.

The woman, identified as 54-year-old **Sylvie Yasmina**, was rescued earlier this week from a mud-brick home in Bara, a town in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province near the Afghan border, district police chief Waqar Ahmad said.

He said Yasmina's husband, Ahmad Khan, had been arrested and investigations are underway.

Domestic violence remains a significant problem in Pakistan. Human rights groups say hundreds of women report physical and psychological abuse by husbands and other family members each year, although many cases are believed to go unreported. Scores of women are murdered in Pakistan each year for violating conservative norms on love, marriage and public behavior. (AP)



Yasmina

**6 suspected terrorists killed in Pakistan:** Six suspected terrorists were killed Wednesday in a Counter Terrorism Department operation in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local authorities said Wednesday.

The operation was launched in the Lower Dir district following intelligence reports about the pres-

ence of militants linked to a banned terrorist group, according to a statement released by the department.

The statement said the militants were involved in several terrorist activities, including a recent attack on the Badwan Bridge Police Checkpost that killed a police constable. (Xinhua)

**India warehouse collapse kills 3:** Three people were killed and at least 18 were injured when an under-construction warehouse collapsed in India's eastern state of West Bengal on Wednesday, confirmed the state's Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari.

All the victims were workers at the construction site. The chief minister said rescue and relief operations were currently being carried out on a war footing. (Xinhua)

**5 killed in Afghanistan vehicle accident:** At least five commuters have been confirmed dead and seven others injured after their vehicle turned turtle in eastern Afghanistan's Parwan province, a local police official reported on Sunday.

The accident occurred in the Mandiqol area of Kohi Safi district when the vehicle veered off the road due to a suspected technical failure and turned over, killing five passengers on the spot and injuring seven others, according to provincial police spokesman Fazul Rahim Muskenyar.

The injured were rushed to medical facilities in Kabul for treatment, Muskenyar said. (Xinhua)

## Cambodia's Supreme Court upholds treason convictions of 2 journalists

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, June 25, (AP): Cambodia's Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the treason conviction and 14-year prison sentence of two journalists who posted photographs on Facebook last year related to border clashes with Thailand, prompting new accusations from rights groups that Prime Minister Hun Manet's government is influencing the courts to quash press freedoms.

The high court issued its decision after a short hearing, ruling that the convictions of Phorn Sopheap of Battambang Post TV Online and Pheap Pheara of TSP 68 TV Online were firmly grounded in Cambodian law, said Kang Pothe Vireak, one of the defense team.

"The bogus prosecution and draconian prison sentences handed down to these two journalists shows the Cambodian authorities' disdain for media freedom," Bryony Lau, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, told The Associated Press.

"By criminalizing journalism and jailing reporters, Hun Manet's government is restricting independent



Rong Chhun, a prominent Cambodian opposition politician, (right), leaves his Supreme Court hearing in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on June 15. (AP)

sources of information for the Cambodian people and hampering the ability of journalists to tell stories about Cambodia to the world."

Cambodia's Minister of Information Neth Pheaktra defended the de-

cision, saying the court had reached an independent decision based upon the law, which he said "protects journalism while also safeguarding national security, political stability and national defense."

Reported plan to nationalize defense equipment factories sparks concern

## Powerful 7.2-magnitude quake strikes off northern Japan, no tsunami warning

TOKYO, June 25, (Agencies): A powerful earthquake struck off Japan's northern coast on Thursday, but the country's meteorological agency said there was no danger of a tsunami.

The quake had a magnitude of 7.2 and occurred off the eastern coast of Iwate, upgraded from an initial reading of 6.9, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The quake had a depth of about 50 kilometers (30 miles), it said. The US Geological Survey also reported a magnitude of 6.9.

The rattling occurred in an area where strong earthquakes have repeatedly been reported in recent months, including one that triggered a weeklong mega-quake caution advisory in December.

The quake, which struck Japan's northeastern region during Thursday's morning rush hour, also mildly shook Tokyo. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, according to top government spokesperson Minoru Kihara.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters in Tokyo that her government's emergency team is

"putting people's lives first," while assessing information and preparing for relief operations, if needed. She urged residents in the affected regions to use caution against possible aftershocks.

Tomoko Nagane, a primary school principal in the town of Hashikami in Aomori prefecture, told NHK that she was driving when the quake alert went off and that she felt moderate sideway shaking. Children already gathered at the school were safe, she said, though some were crying in fear. Classes were canceled for the day and children have all returned home safely, Nagane said.

Footage on Japan's NHK public television quoted its journalists from a number of strongly hit towns, including Sendai and Morioka, saying they felt the shaking for a couple of minutes but have not seen any damage. Footage showed people commuting as usual.

The East Japan Railway Co., which operates trains in northeastern regions, said some bullet trains and other local lines have been suspended for safety checks.



The wall of a building is seen partly damaged following an earthquake in Hachinohe, Aomori prefecture northern Japan on June 25. (AP)

Nuclear power plants and facilities, including the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant which was damaged by the 2011 massive quake and tsunami, and a spent fuel reprocessing plant

in Aomori, have not reported any abnormalities from Thursday's earthquake, Kihara said.

Japan, which sits on what is known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, is one of the

world's most earthquake-prone areas.

## Also:

**TOKYO:** Five major Japanese opposition parties on Wednesday reiterated their demands for parliament to thoroughly discuss a smear video scandal involving Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and her election team, after reports emerged alleging that one of Takaichi's secretaries had participated in creating and spreading defamatory videos targeting rival candidates during election campaigns, local media reported.

According to Jiji Press, the opposition parties called for the secretary in question to appear before lawmakers as an unsworn witness, for the House of Representatives Budget Committee to convene intensive deliberations on the scandal, and for political party leaders to hold a debate on the matter in July.

The five opposition parties include the Centrist Reform Alliance, the Democratic Party for the People, the Sanseito, the Japanese Communist Party, and Team Mirai.

Their requests were conveyed to

**Hiroshi Kajiyama**, parliamentary affairs chief of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the report said.

**TOKYO:** The Japanese government is considering nationalizing factories that produce defense-related equipment such as ammunition, and plans to submit a relevant bill to parliament next year, Kyodo News reported Wednesday, citing sources familiar with the matter.

The report said the measure is intended to ensure that Japan can sustain combat operations in the event of a contingency.

One possible proposal would be for the state to acquire the land and facilities necessary for manufacturing defense equipment while entrusting their operations to the private sector.

The potential move has triggered widespread concern. Japanese netizens voiced concern in the report's comment section, with some calling the development "a dangerous sign" and others saying they could "deeply feel that Japan is sliding in a troubling direction."

Cepeda concedes defeat

## De la Espriella declared winner of Colombia presidential election

BOGOTA, Colombia, June 25, (AP): Conservative outsider Abelardo de la Espriella, a millionaire political neophyte, will be Colombia's next president after electoral authorities on Wednesday declared him the winner of Sunday's runoff election.

The businessman and lawyer, whose ventures include a clothing line, wine and rum brands, and a restaurant, earned U.S. President Donald Trump's endorsement despite never having run for office. He defeated progressive lawmaker Iván Cepeda by 1 percentage point, or more than 251,000 votes.

The result effectively was an indictment of outgoing President Gustavo Petro's government, whose policies Cepeda had promised to continue, including a largely failed effort to establish dialogue with multiple armed groups.

Electoral authorities published all but a fraction of the vote count hours after polls closed Sunday. Petro and Cepeda did not accept those results, with the latter saying he would wait for a recount to do so. Authorities finished the recount before declaring de la Espriella's victory.

De la Espriella's win adds Colombia to a growing list of countries that have turned to political outsiders in search for solutions to complex social, security and economic challenges.

The self-proclaimed representative of "the never-before-seen" promised voters fearful of renewed internal conflict to take a heavy-handed approach to combating violent crime with strategies borrowed from Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's playbook, including building mega-prisons. Those tactics

have lowered homicide rates in the Central American country but have fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

Earlier Wednesday, Cepeda conceded the election to de la Espriella and accepted a Senate seat reserved for the runner-up in the presidential contest.

"We assume with serenity, responsibility and absolute resolve - and let there be no doubt about it - the role that circumstances demand of us," Cepeda said in an address to the nation. "We will exercise a democratic, vigilant and constructive opposition."

De la Espriella, 47, will begin a four-year term Aug. 7.

In a statement on Wednesday, his campaign said the president-elect's "purpose is to work for national unity, with the people and for the

people." The campaign also stated his government will be committed to guaranteeing "the right to political opposition and peaceful protest, within the framework of the Constitution, the law and respect for democratic institutions."

A day earlier, de la Espriella announced he was putting together his cabinet. He also said he plans to add Colombia to the Trump-dubbed "Shield of the Americas," a coalition of countries purportedly aimed at cracking down on criminal groups in Latin America.

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

## Zimbabwe's Senate OKs bill to delay presidential election, overhaul vote

HARARE, Zimbabwe, June 25, (AP): Zimbabwe's Senate on Wednesday approved constitutional amendments that would remove direct presidential elections, delay the next one and extend the tenure of the country's 83-year-old leader, whose signature is the final step for them to become law.

Seventy-five senators voted in favor of the bill that would postpone elections scheduled for 2028 to 2030 and extend President Emmerson Mnangagwa's term by two years. Four senators opposed the measure, with some lawmakers from the fractured opposition joining ruling party colleagues in backing the changes.

The bill overhauls the way presidents are chosen, replacing direct popular elections with selection by lawmakers. It also extends the terms of the president and members of parliament to seven years from five.

Critics, including human rights lawyers, activists and some opposition figures, argue that extending presidential terms requires approval through a referendum. Mnangagwa's supporters counter that Parliament can enact the changes because the constitutional two-term limit would remain intact, even if each term is longer.

The proposed amendments have heightened political tensions in Zimbabwe. Critics of the bill have faced arrest and detention, while others have alleged harassment and intimi-



Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa, (center), stands next to his chief election agent and Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi, (left), outside the nomination court in Harare, Zimbabwe on June 21, 2023. (AP)

ation. The southern African country's courts are yet to rule on several legal challenges to the proposal.

Mnangagwa has been in power since 2017, when the military backed the ouster of his mentor and Zimbabwe's longtime ruler, Robert Mugabe, who died in 2019.

## Also:

**LAGOS, Nigeria:** The Nigerian Senate on Wednesday approved a bill to allow states to have their own police forces, paving the way for a major reform that would reshape the policing

structure of the conflict-racked nation.

The proposed constitutional change will decentralize the country's police force, which is currently controlled by the federal government, but has been overstretched by an escalating insecurity crisis. The state police forces will operate alongside the federal police.

A lack of police presence in vast rural areas has worsened the country's security woes, analysts say, allowing militant groups to operate without challenge. Criminal groups and jihadis have killed tens of thousands of people, according to the United Nations.

## Kenya police set up roadblocks around Nairobi ahead of anti-govt protest

NAIROBI, Kenya, June 25, (AP): Police in Kenya set up roadblocks on Thursday to prevent access to the capital, Nairobi, ahead of a planned demonstration marking two years since at least 60 people died in anti-government protests that also saw protesters storming the parliament.

Families whose loved ones died in the 2024 protests have said they would protest the delay in justice for the victims. The government has been accused of a lack of transparency in an ongoing process to compensate those who suffered human rights abuses during the protests.

Last week, President William Ruto said people would be allowed to protest, but the government would also protect the rights of children to go to school and workers to work, warning against any attempts by the demonstrators to "shut down the country."

Interior Minister Kipchumba Murkomen said Wednesday that police would escort the protesters but warned that criminals disguised as protesters would not be allowed to infiltrate and raid businesses.

On Thursday morning, police erected roadblocks on all major highways around Nairobi, blocking motorists from accessing the city. Parliament buildings remained barricaded and businesses were closed.

Opposition leaders have backed the protests, calling for transparency



Protesters sing and wave Kenyan flags near parliament during a demonstration to mark two years since more than 60 people died in anti-government demonstrations that resulted in the storming of the parliament, as police officers stand behind a razor-wire barricade in Nairobi, Kenya on June 25. (AP)

in the government's compensation program.

Several opposition figures - including former Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka, former Justice Minister Martha Karua, and former Chief Justice David Maraga - marched alongside activists and the families of the 2024 crackdown victims, laying wreaths at the barbed-wire barricades around Parliament on Thursday.

Nairobi police chief Issa Moham-

ud said the roadblocks around the capital were aimed at "sieving out criminals" and were not intended to prevent law-abiding citizens from entering the city. He confirmed the arrest of "several" people and said the exact figures would be announced later.

For Edith Wanjiku, whose son Ibrahim Kamau died of two gunshot wounds to the neck, life has been difficult without her 19-year-old son.

## Kuwait oil price drops to \$79.44 pb

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil dropped USD 4.15 in Wednesday's trading to reach USD 79.44 per barrel compared with USD 83.59 pb the day before, Kuwait Pe-

roleum Corporation (KPC) said on Thursday. Brent future lost USD 3.34 to USD 73.74 pb and West Texas Intermediate dropped USD 2.87 to USD 70.34 pb.

# Business



### KCCI hosts Al-Ahleia Insurance delegation

The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) warmly welcomed a delegation from Al-Ahleia Insurance Company, headed by Chairman of the Board of Directors of the company Ahmed Al-Shaya and Chief Executive Officer Yousef Al-Saad. During the visit, the company honored KCCI for the more than five decades of continuous and fruitful cooperation, expressing its appreciation for the vital role of the chamber in supporting the private sector and developing the business environment in the country.



KCCI, Al-Ahleia mark decades of cooperation.



The delegation indicated that the company is proud of its long-standing partnership with KCCI and reaffirmed its commitment to maintain coordination in the years ahead.

The company deeply appreciates the significant national role of the company in representing the interests of the business community and establishing strategic partnerships that fortify the position of Kuwait as a leading economic and commercial hub in the region.

### All indices decline

## Boursa Kuwait ends lower

KUWAIT CITY, June 25, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Thursday's trading session in negative territory, with all major indices recording losses amid moderate trading activity.

The General Index declined by 23.35 points, or 0.27 percent, to close at 8,687.40 points. A total of 342.2 million shares changed hands through 22,458 transactions, with a combined value of KD 80.3 million (approximately USD 246.5 million).

The Main Market Index dropped 48.24 points, or 0.55 percent, to 8,742.92 points. Trading activity reached 205.7 million shares across 11,161 transac-

tions, valued at KD 25.15 million (around USD 76.9 million).

The Premier Market Index also edged lower, shedding 19.27 points, or 0.21 percent, to settle at 9,126.44 points, totaled 135.5 million shares through 11,297 transactions, with a value of KD 55.17 million (approximately USD 169.3 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index recorded a marginal decline of 7.54 points, or 0.08 percent, closing at 9,674.84 points. The index saw 180.3 million shares traded via 8,626 transactions, valued at KD 20.8 million (about USD 63.8 million).

### As part of its ongoing support for 'Let's Be Aware' initiative

## NBK warns about the risks of public Wi-Fi networks in airports and cafes

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: As part of its ongoing support for the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association, National Bank of Kuwait reiterated its warnings to customers and the public about the risks of using public Wi-Fi networks, especially in crowded places such as airports, cafes, and shopping malls, due to their security threat to personal and banking data.

The "Let's Be Aware" campaign aims to promote financial literacy and raise awareness about digital security principles across all segments of society, through educational messages on how to protect against fraud, fake advertisements, and hacking of banking applications, while emphasizing the importance of reporting any suspicious activity.

NBK pointed out that the increasing reliance on the internet for daily transactions that include banking services necessitates avoiding the use of public Wi-Fi networks, as they are insecure, high-risk, and a potential area for cyber fraud. Hackers can exploit their weak security to access users' personal and banking information.

Moreover, the Bank noted that among the most prominent risks associated with these networks is the ability of hackers to intercept transmitted data or create fake networks with names similar to legitimate ones to deceive users into connecting to them, which in turn allows them to steal pass-



words, bank card details, or even control some applications on connected devices.

NBK also stressed the importance of avoiding any banking transactions or entering sensitive financial data while using public Wi-Fi networks. It urged customers to rely on secure internet networks or personal data plans when completing banking transactions to maintain information confidentiality.

Additionally, the Bank recommended following a set of preventative guidelines, including using antivirus software and ensuring it is regularly updated, avoiding automatic connection to public networks, not saving network information on personal devices, verifying network names before connecting, and taking heed of any suspicious messages or links that may appear while browsing.

The Bank also urged users to turn off Wi-Fi when not in use and to activate additional security measures such as two-factor authentication for banking applications, which should enhance account security and reduce spam chances.

Finally, the Bank emphasized the importance of user awareness and adherence to security guidelines as the first line of defense against the risks of online fraud. It called on everyone to be cau-

tious and take necessary precautions when using the internet in public places.

NBK's efforts to educate its customers are a part and parcel of its strategy, as it consistently utilizes all its communication channels to remind customers of the importance of safeguarding their passwords and financial and personal account information and never sharing it with anyone claiming to represent the Bank.

Having the most followed digital channels among Kuwaiti banks, NBK is committed to utilizing its extensive communication capabilities to support CBK's efforts to protect customers and the economy.

NBK is a key partner and supporter of all CBK's campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising financial awareness and promoting banking education across all segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, the Bank has consistently organized various events to educate the public on all issues relevant to the banking sector, including workshops and training courses on combating fraud and financial crimes.

As one of the largest financial institutions in the region, NBK is committed to its social responsibility towards the communities in which it operates. It is always proactive in taking the initiative to provide all means of support for important and strategic campaigns, such as the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, which serves the interests of the national economy and society.

### One of four Kuwaiti companies recognized

## KIPCO listed on Forbes Global 2000 list

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has been listed on the Forbes Global 2000 list for 2026, one of the world's most recognized rankings of publicly listed companies. KIPCO is one of only four Kuwaiti companies included in this year's list.

Published annually by Forbes, the Global 2000 ranks the world's largest public companies using four key financial indicators - sales, profits, assets and market value - making it one of the most comprehensive and widely followed assessments of corporate scale and performance.

KIPCO's inclusion reflects the strength of its diversified portfolio, disciplined financial management and long-term investment strategy, as well as the resilience of its business model across multiple sectors and markets.

Commenting on this achievement, Sheikhha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said:

"Being recognized in the Forbes Global 2000 is an independent endorsement of the strength and resilience of KIPCO's business. It reflects the disciplined approach we have taken to building a diversified



Sheikhha Dana Naser Al Sabah

portfolio, strengthening our financial position and creating sustainable long-term value for our shareholders."

She added: "This recognition is also a testament to the dedication of our teams across the Group and the collective performance of our portfolio companies. As we continue executing our strategy, we remain focused on prudent capital allocation, sound governance and identifying opportunities that support sustain-



able growth across the markets in which we operate."

KIPCO has continued to execute a strategy focused on strengthening its portfolio, enhancing financial flexibility and supporting the long-term growth of its operating companies. Over the past several years, the Group has completed a number of strategic transactions, strengthened its balance sheet through proactive liability management and continued to advance its sustainability and governance frameworks.

The Forbes Global 2000 recognition further reinforces KIPCO's position as one of the region's leading investment holding companies and reflects the Group's continued commitment to delivering long-term value through disciplined execution, portfolio diversification and responsible growth.

## 'GCC retail real estate faces shift beyond space models'

DUBAI, June 25: GCC region's retail real estate sector is expanding rapidly, but traditional space-centric models are insufficient. A new report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) titled "Imagining the Future of Retail: Beyond Space" offers a comprehensive examination of the strategic readiness of retail real estate developers across the Middle East.

Drawing on BCG's project experience and interviews with senior leaders across the GCC's major mixed-use, retail, entertainment, and lifestyle developments, the report says that the region's retail real estate sector is witnessing its most ambitious physical expansion in generations, with millions of square meters of gross leasable area (GLA) under development across megaprojects in Riyadh, Jeddah, Dubai, and Doha. In several GCC markets, luxury retail space expansion has already outpaced growth in addressable consumer spending, reshaping sales per square meter and current development strategies. In addition, competition is intensifying as new supply comes online. Up to 25% of revenue at leading assets comes from non-GLA sources. Assets that lack digital and data capabilities may need to evolve to stay relevant in future customer journeys.

"The forces reshaping retail are converging faster than most operators recognize, and traditional space-centric models are no longer sufficient for what lies ahead," said Andrea Pierobon, Partner at BCG Middle East. "The GCC has built world-class retail destinations, and the opportunity now is to rethink what retail real estate actually delivers in terms of moving from space-centric models to capability-led

approaches."

Factors Transforming the Traditional Retail Operating Model

The report identifies five converging forces that are systematically transforming traditional retail operating models. Retailers are reducing store size and numbers, opening smaller formats, and experimenting with new space as online commerce grows. The omnichannel imperative means retailers and developers can no longer treat digital and physical as separate strategies. Experience-led consumption is fundamentally shifting what consumers expect from physical retail environments, demanding immersive engagement rather than transactional convenience.

Retail media monetization represents an emerging value stream that most GCC operators have yet to capture, with global retail media revenues forecast to grow by \$213 billion by 2028. AI-powered discovery is transforming how consumers navigate their shopping journeys, with more than half of consumers under 34 already using AI tools as part of their purchasing decisions.

BCG outlines two disruption scenarios (not predictions) that retail real estate leaders must actively plan for now:

1. What if: over 50% of retail sales move online, fundamentally challenging the economics of traditional mall development, as we see in advanced markets around the world

2. What if: Data replaces product margins as the primary value driver, shifting power toward operators who can capture and monetize customer intelligence, as we already see with many leading global retailers

## Waldorf Astoria Kuwait announces the appointment of 3 distinguished leaders joining its executive team

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: Waldorf Astoria Kuwait is honored to welcome three accomplished and visionary professionals to its leadership team, each bringing a distinguished record of excellence, an unwavering commitment to luxury, and a rare ability to elevate every dimension of the guest and commercial experience. These appointments reflect the hotel's steadfast dedication to assembling world-class talent as it continues to set the standard for refined hospitality in the region.

Saleh Bataineh, General Manager of Waldorf Astoria Kuwait, reflects: "We are privileged to welcome these three remarkable women to the Waldorf Astoria Kuwait family. Each of them brings an extraordinary depth of expertise, a passion for excellence, and the kind of leadership that will not only strengthen our team but will resonate deeply with every guest who walks through our doors. Their presence is a powerful testament to the standard and ambition that define this hotel."

**Arseli Bedia Harput | Commercial Director**  
With over 15 years of leadership experience across the most prestigious addresses in luxury hospitality, Arseli brings to Kuwait a formidable combination of strategic vision, deep market knowledge, and an instinctive understanding of what it takes to position a hotel at the very pinnacle of its competitive landscape.

Her career has been defined by an ability to generate transformative commercial outcomes in highly competitive environments. At Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel in Kuwait, she led a strategy that delivered a significant increase in room revenue year on year. At the iconic Jumeirah Carlton Tower in London, she played a central

role in the hotel's repositioning, overachieving the reopening total budgeted revenue and driving a remarkable uplift in average daily rate within a single quarter. Her tenure at Bulgari Hotel London further cemented her standing as one of the most effective commercial leaders in ultra-luxury hospitality, where she consistently secured the hotel's position at the top of its competitive set.

A graduate of Bilkent University in Ankara with an honors degree in Tourism and Hotel Management, Arseli is equally at home in the boardroom and in the field, with a proven record of building and inspiring high-performing commercial teams whose results speak for themselves.

**Haryani Ary | Director of Spa**

A career of rare depth and an unparalleled sensitivity to the art of wellness in a luxury context precede Ary as she steps into the role of Director of Spa. Having led spa operations at some of the world's most celebrated resort addresses, including the St. Regis Jakarta, Le Meridien Maldives, Patina Maldives under the Capella Hotel Group, and JW Marriott Maldives, she has consistently elevated spa experiences from functional excellence to genuine experiential distinction.

Throughout her career, Ary has been recognized for her ability to elevate spa operations while creating meaningful wellness experiences that resonate with today's discerning luxury traveler. Her expertise encompasses spa concept development, treatment menu curation, team leadership, financial performance, and the delivery of bespoke wellness journeys that reflect the unique identity of each destination.

A certified yoga teacher and graduate of the

Bali International Spa Academy, Ary brings a philosophy of wellness grounded in authenticity, innovation, and a genuine care for the guest experience. Her vision is centered on creating a sanctuary where luxury, mindfulness, and personalized service come together to inspire well-being and lasting memories.

**Hind Alnahas | Marketing Manager**  
Born and raised in Kuwait, Hind Alnahas brings to her role a deep understanding of the local market and extensive experience across the country's dynamic hospitality, retail, and lifestyle sectors.

Prior to joining Waldorf Astoria Kuwait, she held senior roles with Seazen Group and M.H. Alshaya Co., where she led integrated marketing campaigns, seasonal activations, digital initiatives, and brand communications across a diverse portfolio of brands. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated a strong ability to combine strategic thinking with creative execution, delivering campaigns that drive both engagement and business results.

Holding a Diploma in Graphic Design, Hind brings a distinctive blend of creative expertise and commercial acumen to her role. Her passion for storytelling, brand development, and guest engagement positions her to further elevate the presence of Waldorf Astoria Kuwait and its collection of luxury experiences.

Together, Arseli, Ary, and Hind represent the very best of what Waldorf Astoria Kuwait aspires to be: a hotel led by exceptional people, defined by impeccable standards, and committed to delivering an experience that is nothing short of extraordinary.



Arseli Harput



Haryani Ary



Hind Alnahas

Highlighting commitment to community protection

# Government commends KFH's support of 'A Nation Protects You' campaign



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Minister of Justice, Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait, and KFH Chairman, Hamad AlMarzouq.



Campaign wing at The Avenues Mall.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Minister of Justice, Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait, and KFH Chairman, Hamad AlMarzouq.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, and KFH Chairman, Hamad AlMarzouq.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awady, and KFH Chairman, Hamad AlMarzouq.

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: As part of its ongoing dedication to social responsibility and government-led initiatives, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) took part in the "A Nation Protects You" national campaign. The initiative aims to protect young people and raise awareness about the dangers of drugs and their negative impact on individuals, families, and society.

The campaign was launched at The Avenues Mall in the presence of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah; the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah; the Minister of Justice, Nasser Yousef Mohammed Al-Sumait; the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Abdel Wahab Ahmed Al-Awady; and KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen AlMarzouq.

The ministers commended KFH for its role in supporting the campaign, praising its diverse social contributions and strong commitment to community initiatives.

KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen AlMarzouq emphasized the bank's ongoing commitment to supporting national initiatives that protect society and make a lasting, positive impact. He noted that this aligns with KFH's mission, core values, and its role as a model private-sector institution. Highlighting the "A Nation Protects You" campaign, AlMarzouq praised it as a prime example of effective institutional teamwork in tackling the drug epidemic and addressing its security, health, and social fallout.

AlMarzouq noted that KFH has a long history of driving impactful community initiatives, particularly in tackling critical social issues like substance

**Al Marzouq: Continuing support for national initiatives to protect society and make a positive impact**  
Building community awareness is the first line of defense against challenges

abuse. Last year, the bank helped inaugurate the tenth ward of the Addiction Treatment Center, marking another milestone in its ongoing mission to build a dedicated addiction recovery hospital. This project is already delivering tangible results, helping combat addiction and build a stronger, more resilient Kuwaiti community.

According to AlMarzouq, KFH's CSR strategy is rooted in the belief that nation-building starts with protecting its people. Furthermore, building community awareness is the first line of defense against challenges to society's stability, security, and future.

**KFH's high-impact community initiatives**

- A KD 15 million pledge to fund the construction and state-of-the-art equipping of the new Cardiac Diseases and Research Center at Mubarak AIK-abeer Hospital.

- The inauguration of the 10th ward at the Addiction Treatment Center, successfully wrapping up a KD 4.5 million initiative to establish a dedicated, comprehensive rehabilitation facility.

- A contribution of KD 8 million for the reconstruction of the damaged area in Al Mubarakiya.

- A contribution of KD 20 million to build 15 ambulance centers.

- KFH spearheaded a landmark initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to relieve defaulting debtors, bringing KFH's total contributions to over KD 61 million since 2019.

- KFH also participated with a major share in the Covid19 Government Relief Fund amounting to KD 10 million, alongside additional standalone contribution.

KFH remains a driving force in sustainable community development, actively supporting healthcare, education, youth sports, innovation, and environmental initiatives. The bank also champions individuals with special needs while continuously fostering a strong sense of social solidarity.

**A Nation Protects You**

This national campaign moves beyond traditional awareness by offering a holistic approach that integrates prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support. The initiative is designed to empower recovering individuals, facilitating their reintegration into society and helping them build stable, productive futures. As Kuwait's largest collaborative effort of its kind, it represents a major milestone in cross-institutional cooperation. Strategically launched on June 26 to coincide with the International Day Against Drug Abuse, the campaign amplifies its societal reach and reinforces a culture of prevention dedicated to safeguarding future generations.

# Tankers use new Hormuz route amid Iran warning

Oil prices dip as Hormuz traffic improves

**DUBAI, June 25, (AP): Several tankers made their way out of the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday using a new route promoted by a U.N. maritime agency. Iran has threatened vessels using the path, which runs along the coast of Oman.**

The opening of an alternative passage through the vital waterway would relieve pressure on the world economy and remove Iran's main source of leverage in ongoing peace talks with the United States. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, on a visit to the Gulf to reassure American allies, said Washington was committed to the new route.

Traffic through the strait has increased but is still well below prewar levels. Oil on Thursday briefly dipped below its last prewar price of just under \$73 per barrel, a sign that the market believes the situation is improving.

The two sides are still debating terms of an interim peace deal - from getting ships through the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf to the future of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

Under the memorandum of understanding signed last week, the U.S. and Iran agreed to a 60-day period to iron out the details. As talks are held behind closed doors, U.S. President Donald Trump and Iranian leaders have seemed to negotiate in public, trading threats and claiming concessions the other side denies.

The flare-up of fighting in Lebanon between Israel and Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants has meanwhile threatened the wider truce. Israel's first airstrike on Lebanon since a ceasefire took effect over the weekend killed two people on Wednesday, according to Lebanon's state-run news agency.

The oil tankers, led by the Stoic Warrior vessel, sailed along the coast of the United Arab Emirates and then Oman early Thursday, passing by Oman's Musandam Peninsula fairly close to the shore. The route was laid out by Oman and the International Maritime Organization, a U.N. agency.



Tankers and cargo vessels are seen in the Gulf of Oman, along shipping routes linking the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea, Tuesday, June 16, 2026. (AP)

North of the route is the Traffic Separation Scheme corridor, in the center of the strait, where ships had moved through freely before the war, transporting about a fifth of all the world's oil and natural gas.

Iran said it mined that passage after the U.S. and Israel attacked it on Feb. 28, and at least one mine has been sighted there.

Though some ships had been getting out of the strait, with U.S. military support, the U.N. agency's effort is the latest to free trapped vessels. The shipping company Maersk said its container ship, the Maersk Baltimore, and another chartered vessel had also made it out of the strait on Thursday.

Last week, 125 vessels crossed the strait, up from 33 the week before, according to marine data and analysis firm

Lloyd's List Intelligence.

According to S&P Global, Wednesday saw 78 transits, the most since the war began. Among the vessels were 10 crude oil tankers, including five outbound large carriers that can carry up to 2 million barrels of oil.

Still, that daily total is below the average of 130 or more from before the war.

"Opportunistic operators - and there are many of them - emboldened by the lower transit risk, or at least the perceived lower transit risk, have begun chasing the backlog of trapped cargoes that built up during the conflict," said Richard Meade, editor-in-chief at Lloyd's List.

The naval arm of the Revolutionary Guard, apparently reacting to the new shipping route and increased traffic, issued a warning Thursday, carried by

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency.

It said the new route was established "without notice or coordination with the Islamic Republic of Iran," calling it "unacceptable and completely dangerous."

"The only authorized route for passing through the Strait of Hormuz is the one declared by the Islamic Republic of Iran," the Iranian force said. "Vessel traffic outside these routes is extremely dangerous and prohibited."

"Violators will be dealt with," it added, without elaborating.

There were no immediate reports of any incidents in the strait. On Wednesday, however, the Guard threatened one tanker over the radio, with a soldier warning "you are in range of my missiles and maybe (1) fire on you," according to the private security firm Ambrey.

Rubio met with foreign ministers from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council to assure them that their interests would be protected in any agreement with Iran.

Those countries, including major energy producers reliant on the Strait of Hormuz for exports, came under attack by Iran after the start of the war.

"There is no part in this deal that's undertaken that in any way undermines the security, the stability or the prosperity of any of our partners in the Gulf region," Rubio said at the meeting in Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

He later told journalists the U.S. and Gulf allies would ensure there would be no fees charged on ships moving through the strait.

He also criticized Iran's hard-liners for going "on their official media and making all kinds of pronouncements" that he described as not true.

He said the U.S. wanted to make sure the Oman route continued for ships to transit the strait. "If that stops, then we're going to have a problem," Rubio said.

The GCC countries have expressed reservations about the limitation of the U.S.-Iran deal signed last week, including conflicting claims over the strait and the fact that the memorandum of understanding does not specifically cover Iran's nuclear or ballistic missile programs.

Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani thanked the U.S. for its support, saying that because of the agreement, "today we see a glimmer of hope for our region" but stressed that it was "critically important that Iran adheres to its obligations."

Israel's military said on Thursday that a reservist soldier was killed and another hurt in southern Lebanon, where troops are occupying swaths of the country. At least 37 soldiers have been killed in Lebanon or northern Israel during the fighting, as well as one civilian defense contractor. Two civilians in northern Israel have also been killed.

Over 4,000 people in Lebanon have been killed in Israeli strikes since the latest Israel-Hezbollah war began in March, two days after the Iran war started and when the Lebanese militant group fired at Israel.

# What's On

## SPOTLIGHT



Got a birthday or event?

Share your story and snapshots with Arab Times!  
Email your write-up and photos to  
arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com  
We'll feature it on our What's On page!

'First KD 200,000 draw'

## Gulf Bank sets June 30 deadline for AIDanah draw entry

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: In preparation for the launch of the newly enhanced AIDanah Millionaire Account draws starting from next September, Gulf Bank announced that June 30 is the final date to deposit and enter in the first draw, in line with the new draw structure. The first draw, for a prize of KD 200,000, will take place on September 9, under the supervision of international audit firms, and will be broadcast live on the Bank's social media channels.

Under the new draw structure for the AIDanah Millionaire Account, the total value of prizes has increased to KD 3,500,000. The prizes include a grand prize of KD 1,500,000, a prize of KD 1,000,000, in addition to five winners receiving KD 200,000 each across five different draws throughout the year.

In parallel, AIDanah Millionaire Account customers are looking forward to the announcement of the winner of the semi-annual KD 1,000,000 draw on July 8, in addition to the announcement of 10 winners in the monthly draw for June, with each winner receiving KD 1,000.

On another note, and with the start of the summer holiday season, Gulf Bank's sales team will be present at 360 Mall starting today for three days to answer visitors' inquiries about the Bank's various products, primarily the salary account, the newly enhanced AIDanah Millionaire Account draws, and Gulf Points, the most rewarding loyalty program in Kuwait.

**AIDanah Account: Savings, Prizes, and Millionaire Opportunities**

The AIDanah Millionaire Account from Gulf Bank is one of the most prominent prize-linked savings accounts in Kuwait. Since its launch in 1998, it has continued to empower customers to build a more stable financial future. The account was designed to promote a savings culture, making it a suitable option for all segments of society, from children to adults, and across different nationalities.

With a minimum deposit of KD 200, cus-

- As part of the newly enhanced AIDanah Millionaire Account draws
- Semi-annual KD 1,000,000 draw to be held on July 8

tomers become eligible to enter all draws, including the KD 1,000,000 and KD 1,500,000 draws, offering multiple opportunities to win throughout the year. Customers' chances of winning also increase as their savings grow and as they maintain their balance for longer periods, within a distinctive loyalty program that enhances the customer experience.

The account offers full flexibility in deposits and withdrawals at any time, while maintaining the customer's eligibility to enter the draws. The AIDanah Millionaire Account is more than just a savings account; it is an integrated savings experience that combines financial discipline with opportunities to win, reflecting Gulf Bank's commitment to empowering its customers to achieve their financial goals with confidence and sustainability.

**Gulf Points: The Most Rewarding Loyalty Program in Kuwait**

Gulf Points is one of the fastest-growing and most comprehensive loyalty programs in Kuwait, offering customers rewarding opportunities to earn points when using their credit cards, and then redeem them easily through the Gulf Bank mobile app.

The program provides several key redemption options, including shopping through an innovative online marketplace, the first of its kind in banking, where customers can purchase a wide range of products using Gulf Points. The program also allows customers to share points with family and friends as flexible digital gifts, convert points into cash credit added directly to the selected credit card, and use points to book flights, hotels, and car rentals around the world.



LuLu Kuwait marks 25 years with up to 50% discounts.

Bringing big savings for shoppers

## LuLu celebrates 25 years with major retail offers

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait marking a significant milestone in its retail journey, and has launched its much anticipated 25th Anniversary Celebration, unveiling a spectacular promotion featuring LuLu On Sale up to 50% discounts on selected brands and products across all LuLu outlets in Kuwait.

The anniversary campaign was officially inaugurated at LuLu Hypermarket Al Rai by the senior management, alongside well-wishers and customers, commemorating 25 years of serving shoppers in Kuwait with quality products, exceptional value, and world-class shopping experiences.

As part of the celebrations, customers can enjoy special offers across a wide range of categories, including daily essentials, groceries, household items, home furniture, toys, luggage,

fashion, footwear, and much more. The promotion is designed to thank loyal customers for their continued support while providing families with exceptional savings on their everyday and lifestyle needs.

Adding further excitement to the anniversary festivities, LuLu has also launched its biggest technology promotion of the year, "Let's Connect." The campaign features outstanding deals on the latest electronics, home appliances, smartphones, mobile accessories, laptops, gadgets, and digital lifestyle products from leading international brands.

LuLu management extends its sincere gratitude to its valued customers, employees, suppliers, and business partners whose trust and support have been instrumental in its success. The anniversary celebration reflects LuLu's

continued commitment to delivering quality, value, innovation, and an enhanced shopping experience to consumers across the country.

Customers are invited to visit any LuLu Hypermarket branch in Kuwait to take advantage of the anniversary offers and explore the exciting promotions available during this special celebration.

As LuLu celebrates 25 years of retail excellence in Kuwait, the lulu reaffirms its commitment to customer satisfaction by continuing to offer high-quality products, a diverse product selection, and outstanding value at affordable prices. With customers at the heart of its success, LuLu remains dedicated to delivering a great shopping experience while meeting the evolving needs of families and communities across Kuwait.

Over 200 donate blood in 'Red Salute' campaign

## Mega Blood Drive honors fallen defense personnel

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: A large gathering of people came together for the "RED SALUTE - MEGA BLOOD DONATION CAMPAIGN" to honor the brave Kuwaiti Defense Personnel who sacrificed their lives protecting the nation during challenging times.

The event was successfully organized by VVTNS- Kuwait Velinadu Vazh Tamilar Nala Sangam and Trust, under the leadership of its Medical Secretary John Ramesh. It was held on Friday, 19th June 2026, at the Kuwait Jabriya Central Blood Bank.

**Dr. S.M. Haider Ali, Founder of M.A. HYTHAR GROUP - Cargo, Travels & Umrah Services, graced the occasion as the Special Guest.**

Also present on the dais were Ramdas, CEO of Ramdas Global Technology Company, "Sevai Tamilar" D. Raja, KNPC Engineer and Global Technology Company CEO, and Mr. Shaik Esdani Basha, Branch Manager, - City Clinic - Mahboula

Treasurer Mani Kandan delivered the welcome address and spoke to the gathering.

The program was presided over by Engineer Manivasagam, with senior leaders and advisors sharing the stage, including Senior Advisor Engineer Hameed Rafiq Mohammed, Tamil Marabu Santhai President and VVTNS - Kuwait Advisor Vazhum Vallalar Mr. Seetharaman Tamil Scholar and VVTNS - Kuwait Advisor Vasu Ramanathan & MDMK Kuwait President and VVTNS Kuwait Advisor Engineer Manivasagam

Mr. Shahjahan from the Indian Embassy attended the event and presented Certificates of Appreciation to all blood donors.

More than 500 people from various walks of life, including Tamils from Kuwait, other Indian states, Sri Lanka, and Arab communities, participated in the noble cause. Out of them, over 200 donated bloods.

Several prominent organizations and individuals actively supported the event, including: TVK, DMK, AIADMK, MDMK, Kuwait Thalpathy Peravai, PMMK, VCC, DMDK, MMMK, MJK, KTIC Jamaat, MISK Jamaat, Poondiari Basarai, Kuwait Tamil Makkal Sevai Mayyam, Kuwait Tamil Otunar Sevai Maiyyam, Tamilargal Otunar Maiyyam, Nandava-



Photos during the event.



nam, Moovendhar Munnetra Kazhagam, Bollywood Srinivasan, Aranthai Foundation, Golden Singer Chamundeshwari, Social Worker Alibai, Kala Kalapu Friends Group, Ameer John, various press and media outlets, and Tamil Sri Lankan organizations.

**A commemorative memento was presented to the Management and Medical Team of the Kuwait Jabriya Central Blood Bank in appreciation of their humanitarian service.**

The entire program was efficiently coordinated by the dedicated administrators of Velinadu Vazh Tamilar Nala Sangam and Trust: Saidai Geejo, Noorappa, Naushad, Muthuramalingam, Jayakumar, Rajkumar, Ayyappan, Venkatraman, Ananda Ravi, Pandi, Srinivasan, and the women's wing administrators Mulla Selvi, Unnamalai, Shanthi, Ayesha, Vijayalekshmi, Dhana Lekshmi, Sakila, Chandra, Geetha.



Gulf Bank team welcomes visitors to Mall 360.

To support Kuwaiti talent

## Warba partners with FZ SPORTS to promote youth development

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: Warba Bank has announced a strategic partnership with FZ SPORTS Academy, an initiative aimed at supporting young athletes and fostering local sports talent. This partnership aligns with the bank's corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy and its commitment to investing in young national talent.

The sponsorship is part of Warba Bank's ongoing efforts to support community sports programs that encourage healthy lifestyles and teamwork across various segments of society.

**Direct Support for Athletic Talent:**

Under the partnership agreement, Warba Bank will provide direct backing to the FZ SPORTS Academy team, enhancing its athletic programs and community activities. The academy specializes in the physical and technical training of youth, developing young athletes capable of competing at higher levels and representing Kuwait in competitive sporting events.

**Executive Commentary:**

Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi, Senior Director of Public Relations and Corporate Communications at Warba Bank, stated:

"We believe that supporting youth is a core pillar of sustainable development, and sports serve as an effective platform for character building and promoting positive values. We are proud of this partnership with FZ SPORTS Academy, which plays a key role in identifying and nurturing athletic talent."

"Through this sponsorship, we aim to provide a supportive environment that helps young people develop their capabilities and achieve their ambitions, in line with our focus on high-impact social initiatives," Al-Mutairi added.

**Academy Perspective:**

Khalidoun Mohammad Al-Shammari, Representative of FZ SPORTS Academy, welcomed the partnership, stating:

"We are proud to have Warba Bank join us as a strategic partner. This collaboration will enable us to expand our training programs and sports activities, providing critical support for our young athletes to succeed, which ultimately benefits Kuwait's sports sector."

**Partnership Framework:**

The agreement includes structured branding and media exposure. The Warba Bank logo will be displayed on the team's official jerseys and featured across the academy's social media platforms. Additionally, the two entities will collaborate on joint community events to promote the importance of sports and healthy living.

**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.



Warba Bank backs youth sports with FZ Academy tie-up.

## Working parents struggle to balance jobs and family

NEW YORK, June 25, (AP): Most mothers and fathers who work full-time say they sometimes parent while at work and vice versa. Most are upset to miss out on events with their kids, and many don't have enough time to exercise. But moms and dads seem to have different perceptions on who does most of the chores, and mothers were more likely than fathers to say that having children made it harder to advance at work.

Those are some of the findings about full-time working parents from a newly released Pew Research Center study, which surveyed 2,242 working parents between March 2-15. Here's a look what full-time working parents want, by the numbers:

That's according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data looking at the work arrangements of mothers and fathers with children under 18 who are married or live together. A decade ago, 46% of such families had two full-time working parents. In 1975, it was just 31%.

The increase has been driven largely by mothers who have bachelor's or postgraduate degrees. It has occurred during a period when women have outpaced men in obtaining college educations.

In families where mothers and fathers live together, about 56% of moms with bachelor degrees and 69% of mothers with postgraduate degrees worked full time in 2025. That's an increase from 50% and 59% in 2000, respectively.

In contrast, the number of mothers without college degrees working full time stayed

largely constant at 43%, compared to 46% in 2000.

Many parents are single, divorced or live with same-sex partners. In total, 89% of fathers and 59% of mothers with children under 18 work full time.

In the new survey, moms were more likely to say they sometimes handle parenting tasks at work at least "sometimes," at 81%. But a majority of dads - 62% - said they same. Most moms and dads - 63% and 57% respectively - say they sometimes take on work tasks while they are with their kids.

"One of the major findings we have from this study is just a large share of parents who experience these blurred boundaries between family and work. And we find that moms often carry more of the mental load that comes with trying to balance what their family needs with what their work demands," said Luona Lin, a Pew Research Center research associate who co-authored the study.

Full-time working moms and dads almost universally dislike missing out on a child's concert, sporting match or other activity thanks to their jobs. About 9 in 10 said they were "extremely," "very," or "somewhat" upset when this happened, including 55% who were "extremely" or "very" upset.

But the unhappiness is deeper among full-time working mothers: 65% said they were "extremely" or "very" upset when they missed out, compared 45% of fathers who said the same. About 31% of mothers said

they were "somewhat upset," compared to 42% of dads who said the same.

"It's not to say dads aren't experiencing any of challenges in balancing work and family lives. It's just that moms are experiencing more of it," Lin said.

This was a bigger issue for moms than dads. While 65% of moms who work full time said they didn't have enough time to exercise, 52% of dads said the same. Full-time working moms were also more likely to say they had too little time for hobbies, friends, relaxing and spending time with their spouse or partner.

But mothers and fathers seem to disagree here.

Among full-time working mothers, 63% say they do most of the chores. However, 50% of working fathers said chores were equally divided and only 25% said moms do most of it.

A similar dynamic plays out when it comes to parenting. About 63% of moms say they do most of the daily parenting tasks but only 41% of dads agreed. Instead, about 47% of dads say daily parenting tasks are split equally.

This was another area with a sharp gender divide. While about half, 52%, of full-time working mothers said being a parent made it "a lot" or "somewhat" more difficult to advance in their job or career, only 38% of fathers said the same. And while 61% of mothers said their job made it "a lot" or "somewhat" harder to be a good parent, 45% of fathers felt that way.

## Charlie Brown ... unfiltered



This image released by Apple TV shows "Peanuts" characters, including Snoopy, center, in a scene from the animated movie "Snoopy Unleashed" coming to Apple TV in 2027. (AP)

## Peanuts introduces its first major new character in years

NEW YORK, June 25, (AP) — Charlie Brown began writing to a pen pal not long after the comic strip "Peanuts" debuted in newspapers back in 1950. No one has gotten a look at whoever was on the other end of his letters — until now.

Her name is Mia, and she's a young girl from London of South Asian descent who uses a wheelchair. She glides into the spotlight in the animated movie "Snoopy Unleashed," coming to Apple TV in 2027, helping Charlie Brown, Snoopy and the gang explore what being a pal is really all about.

"The story is really about what real friendship is about, and I think that continues to be something that's relevant not only to kids, but adults," says producer Bonnie Arnold.

"True friends love you for who you are. And that's something that we not only have to learn as kids, but we have to remind ourselves as we become teenagers and young adults and adults and even in older age," she added.

In the 80-minute movie, Mia makes a surprise visit to a suddenly flustered Charlie Brown, who has to live up to the curated version of himself that he has presented in his letters. His relationship with Snoopy is then strained, and the dog bolts for a nearby city. Naturally, Charlie Brown and the gang, plus Mia, give chase.

With Mia, the creators wanted to birth someone as different from Charlie Brown as possible — a girl, not from a suburb or a rural town, who moves through the world differently, without a pet, and someone with confidence.

"Charlie Brown is probably one of the most insecure human beings that we know. That's what makes him charming. It's how we see ourselves in him. So we felt that we wanted Mia to be more comfortable with who she is," says director Steve Martino, adding: "A big part of her role in the movie is to be a mirror to Charlie Brown, to journey with him and to reflect some things that he couldn't see himself."

They landed on London as Mia's home since that elevated the stakes.



This image released by Apple TV shows "Peanuts" characters, including Snoopy, center, in a scene from the animated movie "Snoopy Unleashed" coming to Apple TV in 2027. (AP)

"If this pen pal was going to come to visit, it would be a much stronger story if she came from much further away," says Martino. "He has one shot to make a good impression." (Plus, it gave Lucy the chance to believe somehow that Mia might be a royal.)

In the city, Mia is more comfortable than Charlie Brown and the gang, who are fish out of water, like en-

countering their first revolving door with amazement. The jazz score grows more frenzied as the children navigate honking traffic and the urban energy.

Snoopy's trip to the city also introduces another new character: a nameless, gold-haired stray mutt who becomes his opposites-attract pal, like Mia and Charlie Brown.

"Snoopy definitely is more of a human-type character. He walks on twos and not fours," says Arnold. The stray, on the other hand, "walks on fours, he barks, he pants, he's more doglike, but he befriends Snoopy. Even though his actions are a bit puppylike, he's a little bit more seasoned in the ways of being on the road."

The script was written by Craig Schulz — "Peanuts" creator Charles M. Schulz's son — and his own son, Bryan Schulz, along with Cornelius Uliano and Karey Kirkpatrick. To accurately portray life in a wheelchair, the creators consulted several groups, including Disability Belongs.

Lara Mehmet, a wheelchair user who lives just outside London, was picked to voice Mia after a long audition process and helped the script sound more authentic.

While viewers today are more familiar with texts, instant messages and social media posts, the moviemakers hope they'll see the same issues of authenticity and presentation in a story sparked by snail mail letters.

"On social media, we like to curate and project a life that is the very best of who we are. And I thought that is such rich story material to dig into," says Martino. "We communicate differently today, but feelings that are universal."

"Peanuts" ran in more than 2,600 newspapers, reaching millions of readers in 75 countries before ending in 2000. Charlie Brown and Snoopy have since thrived in the digital age with fresh specials and series.

In addition to "Snoopy Unleashed," Apple TV has season two of "Camp Snoopy" on tap for June, a new special "Snoopy Presents: There's No Place Like Home, Snoopy" premiering at the end of July, and the "Peanuts" classics "This Is America, Charlie Brown" and "The Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show" will be available on the platform in early July.

The moviemakers credit Schulz for leaving a legacy of very believable kids and an ability to tap into the human experience, with all its vulnerabilities.

"What Charles Schulz did in the comic strips so well is kind of touch on things that affect us all at all ages, right? Some universal truths about relationships," says Arnold.

### Variety

LOS ANGELES: As Usher prepares to launch a stadium tour with Chris Brown, he says the criticism and legal troubles surrounding the singer never factored into his decision to embark on the tour.



Usher works hard for his fans, and his fans support him."

Brown has remained one of R&B's biggest stars despite years of legal troubles and controversy. Last year, he pleaded not guilty in London to charges stemming from an alleged 2023 assault at a nightclub after previously being released on bail to continue touring. He also pleaded guilty in 2009 to felony assault for attacking then-girlfriend Rihanna.

For Usher, their North American tour — which kicks off Friday in Denver — represents something much bigger than two of R&B's brightest stars sharing a stage.

The 33-date tour follows blockbuster solo runs for both artists. Fresh off headlining the Super Bowl halftime show in 2024, Usher's "Past, Present, Future" tour sold more than 1.1 million tickets across North America, while Brown's "Breezy Bowl XX" grossed nearly \$300 million. (AP)

## Supergirl swaps capes for chaos in DC's latest adventure

Last year's "Superman" ended with Iggy Pop singing "Because I'm a punk rocker, yes I am" — an ironic coda for a superlatively square hero. But it rings straightforwardly true for Superman's cousin.

Milly Alcock's Kara Zor-El, or Supergirl, sports not a spandex suit but a Blondie T-shirt. When we meet her in Craig Gillespie's "Supergirl," she's been on an interstellar bender for days. She's more Courtney Love than Clark Kent.

Nonchalant and sarcastic, Kara is also a little Han Solo-ish, you might say, given that she moves capriciously through the galaxy in her junky spaceship while getting in fights in extraterrestrial bars. She's a welcome, jagged riff on more buttoned-up superheroes, and Alcock is terrific in the role. If only "Supergirl" was as good as she is.

While the latest DC release, and second under James Gunn's stewardship, has its moments, "Supergirl" struggles to match Kara's punk-rock energy with an equally spirited supporting cast and story.

Skepticism seems to have gathered for "Supergirl" ahead of its release. Many fans have argued it wasn't the right next step for DCU. But I'm not so sure. Alcock's breezy cameo in "Superman" was one of that movie's highlights. Handing the follow-up to her, and her faithful floating dog Krypto, strikes me as an extremely natural next step. When in doubt, follow the dog.

And much of "Supergirl" is winning. It resides almost entirely in space, touching down only mo-



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Milly Alcock, left, and Matthias Schoenaerts in a scene from "Supergirl." (AP)

mentarily on Earth. In its consistently creative production design, clever needle drops and underdog story arc, "Supergirl" resides a little closer to Gunn's "Guardians of the Galaxy" movies than other DC entries. Its outer space is filled with cosmic detritus, mean characters and cute critters. Seth Rogen as the voice of a tiny alien co-piloting a space bus is an inspired concoction, as is a shabbier sci-fi realm with rest stops along the intergalactic highway.

Kara, drunk and disheveled as she celebrates her 23rd birthday, prefers such environs even if it means, thanks to the distance from a yellow sun, her powers don't work. But as much as she'd like to remain off the superhero grid, Kara is reluctantly compelled into action. A young girl, Ruthye Marye Knoll (Eve Ridley), whose family is slain by space pirates known as the Brigands, enlists her to avenge their deaths. Kara wants no part in it, but when the Brigand leader,

Krem (Matthias Schoenaerts), poisons Krypto, she sets off to get the antidote that hangs around Krem's neck.

Little in the story, scripted by Ana Nogueira and inspired by the comic-book series "Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow," will bowl you over for its originality. But it's a sturdy enough vessel — a Western, really, with Kara playing the hired-gun part of John Wayne in "True Grit." It inevitably leads Kara to superhero maturity, with Krypton

flashbacks that reveal the roots of the pain she's trying to drink away.

Less ideal are some of Kara's companions. Ruthye is too soberly hellbent on revenge to be much fun. Jason Momoa's bounty hunter, Lobo, who rides a space motorcycle and looks ready to sing for a Kiss cover band, is a bit much even for a movie with a flying dog. Schoenaerts menacingly grins his way through the movie, with appealingly bulging eyes. But no characteristic of the bland Krem is as interesting as his studded face.

His metallic touches and the movie's biker-gang flourishes, not to mention a plot that involves "brides" trapped by the all-male Brigands, will no doubt bring "Mad Max" to mind. But to the credit of "Supergirl," the film often feels like it's striving for fresh ground in big-screen superhero-dom. Modest Mouse and Jenny Lewis are heard here, after all. Gillespie, who made "I, Tonya" and "Dumb Money," utilizes the IMAX cameras to vivid effect, even if his grip on the material isn't convincing.

The zip the movie needs isn't quite there, though. Alcock does her best to keep "Supergirl" aloft, but she's let down by too much of what's around her — most of whom are men, truth be told. Maybe the mistake all along was taking the dog out of the story. John Wayne, after all, always had his horse.

"Supergirl," a Warner Bros. release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for sequences of strong violence, action, language, and smoking. Running time: 107 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. (AP)

# PARIS

**MEN'S FASHION**



Models wear creations as part of the Dior Homme Spring Summer 2027 collection presented in Paris, France, Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (AP)

## Grace in disarray

# Untucking of Dior

PARIS, June 25, (AP) — Dior moved its men's Paris Fashion Week show to 9 a.m. Wednesday to avoid the extreme heat sweeping much of Western Europe. It still was not early enough.

Guests arrived at the Musée Nissim de Camondo as a heat wave gripped Paris. Cold towels, strawberries and parasols were offered at the door.

Inside the mansion, where Northern Irish designer Jonathan Anderson showed his latest Dior men's collection, the temperature rose quickly. Some guests appeared overcome and water was in limited supply.

The front row still delivered the expected star power. LaKeith Stanfield, Little Simz, James Marsden, Drew Starkey, Mike Faist, 070 Shake, Alexander Ludwig and Sam Nivola were among those at the show.

Anderson's collection was about formality losing its grip — tuxedos loosened, denim ripped, sequins flashing, disco-ball boots stepping through a house built on old-world taste.

Dior described the mood as "a soiree turning into a house party." Anderson called it "something quite formal becoming undone."

That was the show's clearest idea: the Dior man was not arriving at the party; he had stayed until morning.

Anderson opened with tailoring, but made it lighter and less fixed. Pinstripes and houndstooth were printed onto silk chiffon rather than woven, creating a look that was formal, yet transparent.

The collection pushed Dior's codes into rougher territory. Sequined trousers resembled jeans, while ripped denim was finished with fine silver chains. A tuxedo came in a looser fit and pink denim shorts appeared under formal coats.

Accessories included crystal sunglasses, disco-ball boots and patchworked Japanese denim shirts.

The best looks worked because they kept Dior visible while disturbing it. A scarf motif came from 1979 Dior haute couture; silver embroidery borrowed from an 18th-century gentleman's coat.

Boots were made to look deliberately disheveled, with tiny ladybirds across them.

It was not a rejection of Dior's past. It was a way of making it move.

The Musée Nissim de Camondo gave the show weight. The mansion, now closed for restoration, was built around Moïse de Camondo's collection of 18th-century decorative arts, the same century that fascinated Christian Dior.

Anderson showed a collection about loosened formality in a house also caught between preservation and repair. Dior's own notes described that "in-between" state as part of the point: beauty in imperfection.

The history of the place is also dark. Camondo's son died in World War I, and later members of the family were deported and killed during the Holocaust.

The mansion now stands as both a museum and a memorial to loss.

Against that background, the show's playfulness gave the clothes some tension. Anderson took things Dior already owns — the tuxedo, the Bar shape, couture embroidery, 18th-century decoration — and shifted them into a younger, messier register.

The result was one of Anderson's clearest Dior outings so far.



## HEALTH/SCIENCE

## Astronomers find biggest super-puff planets yet that are lighter than cotton candy

WASHINGTON, June 25, (Agencies): Astronomers have uncovered a pair of giant planets that are lighter than cotton candy - super-puffs the size of Jupiter.

The featherweight pair - orbiting a star 1,110 light-years away - are the biggest exoplanets found to have less density than cotton candy.

That makes them the lightest known planets of their size, said the University of Oxford's George Dransfield.

"These two planets have densities comparable to a nice blob of shaving foam, fresh from the can," Dransfield said in an email. She and her team reported their findings Wednesday in Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Dransfield suspects these fluffy, wispy worlds are probably white or blue, depending on whether the skies there are cloudy - no shades of cotton-candy pink. The planets are probably mostly hydrogen and helium, although it will take follow-up observations by NASA's Webb Space Telescope to confirm their chemical makeup.

Detected by NASA's TESS satellite over the past decade, these two especially puffy-puffs orbit a star in the southern constellation Volans, known as the flying fish. The researchers studied the planets' orbits using telescopes on Earth to determine their density, from 1,110 light-years away. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (9.7 trillion kilometers).

Jupiter, by comparison, is as much as 35 times denser than these two lightweights.

Considered rare in the cosmos, super-puffs are thought

to form around the disk of gas and dust around a newborn star where there is more gas than dust. They shed much of the material over time, stripping down even more.

NASA's tally of worlds outside our solar system currently stands at nearly 6,300 confirmed. Fewer than 40 are super-puffs, according to Dransfield.

"Ultimately, by studying exotic systems containing rare planet types, we add further pieces to the puzzle of planet formation and learn more about our place in the cosmos," she said.

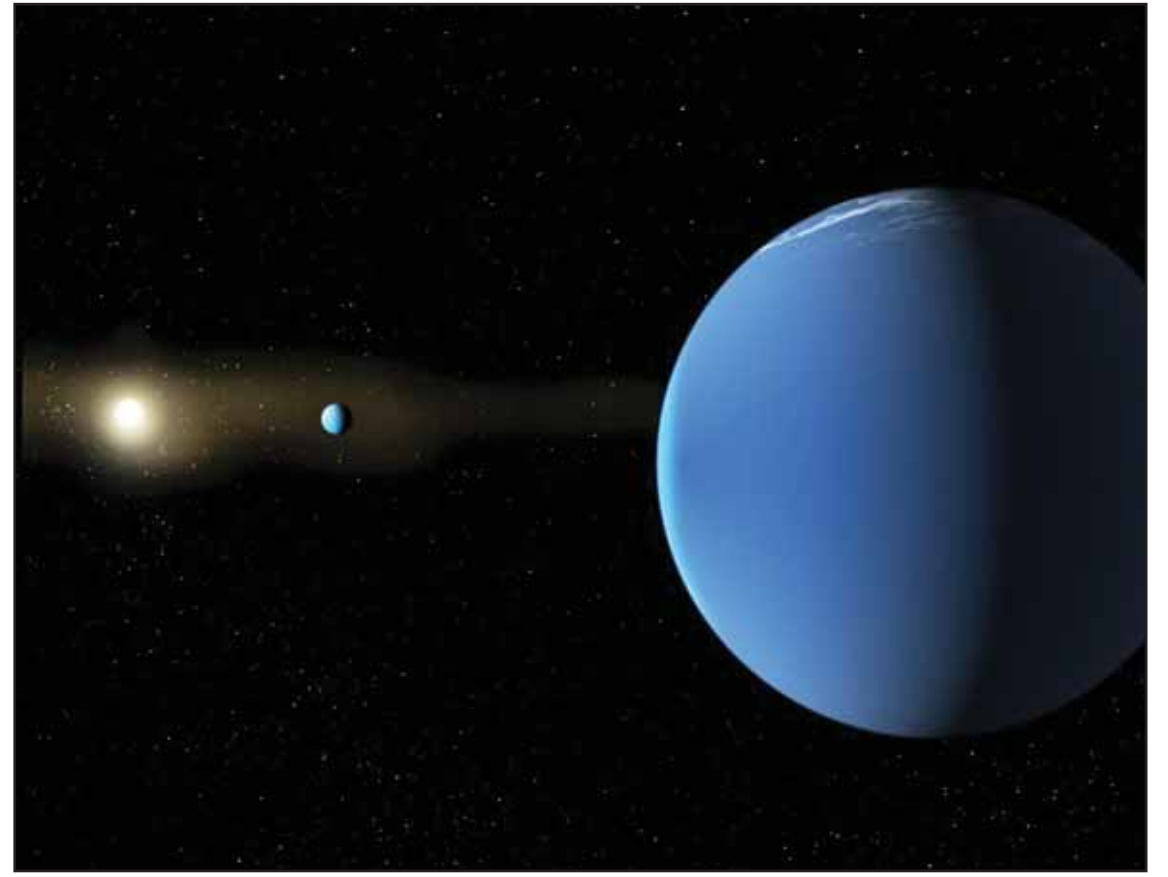
### Also:

**MOSCOW:** Russia plans to launch its new Spectr-UV space telescope, designed to succeed the Hubble Space Telescope, on Oct 24, 2031, a senior official said Wednesday.

Speaking at the Ultraviolet Universe-2026 conference, held in Moscow from June 24 to 26, Alexander Shakhnov, head of a department at the Lavochkin Association, part of Russia's state space corporation Roscosmos, said work on detailed engineering documentation for launch-related systems and ground infrastructure is expected to begin in January 2027.

"The launch vehicle has already been included in the national space project and is currently under production," Shakhnov said.

The space observatory is scheduled to be carried into orbit by an Angara-ASM launch vehicle equipped with a Persei upper stage manufactured by Energia Rocket and Space Corporation, both part of Roscosmos.



This illustration provided by NASA depicts the Sun-like star TOI-791, background left, and two giant planets that NASA's TESS space telescope discovered in its orbit. (AP)

## CDC concludes hantavirus response effort, no US cases detected

## Global Ebola risk remains low despite rising cases in Africa: WHO director general

GENEVA, June 25, (Agencies): The global risk posed by the ongoing Ebola outbreak in Africa remains low despite rising case numbers in the affected region, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a press briefing in Geneva, Tedros said the Ebola outbreak centered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has so far resulted in 1,094 reported cases, including 277 deaths. Neighboring Uganda has also recorded 20 confirmed cases, including two deaths.

Despite efforts to scale up response measures and strengthen disease surveillance and detection capacities, significant challenges remain, Tedros said, warning that "the outbreak is continuing to outpace the response."

Contact tracing remains below the required level, while treatment and isolation capacities are insufficient and safe, dignified burials continue to pose major challenges, he said. The health system is under pressure, border closures are hampering response efforts, security incidents persist, and funding remains inadequate, he added.

Tedros said clinical trials of two Ebola therapeutics are expected to begin next week. The current outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, for which there is no approved vaccine or specific treatment.

Meanwhile, France has reported an Ebola case involving a healthcare worker with the NGO ALIMA who recently returned from the DRC after caring for Ebola patients, according to WHO.

The patient has been monitored since arriving in Paris and is receiving treatment, said Abdurahman Mahamud, director of WHO's Health Emergency Alert and Response Operations.

"At present, the patient is doing well, experiencing mild symptoms and fever," Mahamud said, adding that WHO appreciated the swift response by French authorities in providing care and implementing recommended public health measures. France has identified and isolated five people who may have been exposed to Ebola after sharing a flight with a doctor who tested positive for the virus. French Health Minister Stephanie Rist said on Wednesday that the doctor had worked in the Democratic Republic of the Congo before returning to France.

According to the minister, the patient is an "experienced doctor returning



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), speaks to the media regarding the epidemic of Ebola and global health issues during a press conference, at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland on June 24. (AP)

from a mission" who did not know he had contracted the virus. "He had no symptoms when he boarded the plane, and he was not contagious (...) As he is a doctor and developed headaches on the plane, he raised the alert" so that he could be taken care of upon arrival in Paris.

The man was placed in isolation at hospital as soon as his flight landed. He will remain there "for 21 days, the duration of the incubation period," she added.

According to Congolese health authorities, the cumulative number of confirmed cases in the country has risen to 1,094. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control estimates that the risk of infection for people

living in Europe is very low.

Mahamud also warned that healthcare workers responding to the outbreak were operating in an exceptionally high-risk environment. As of Wednesday, seven security incidents targeting Ebola response personnel had been reported.

A total of 82 healthcare workers have been infected during the outbreak response, including 78 in the DRC and four in Uganda, he said.

The DRC is facing its 17th Ebola outbreak, which was declared in mid-May. The outbreak has affected the eastern part of the country and spread to neighboring Uganda.

qqq

Hantavirus: The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Wednesday announced the conclusion of public health response to the hantavirus exposure event associated with the MV Hondius cruise ship, with no confirmed cases reported in the United States.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the final 42-day monitoring period ended on June 21, and no individuals in the country remain under public health monitoring related to the event.

HHS said federal, state and local health authorities worked together to identify potentially exposed individuals, conduct medical monitoring, provide clinical guidance and prepare healthcare systems for a possible response. No sustained transmission of the virus occurred in the United States during the monitoring period.

According to the CDC, 18 potentially exposed US passengers were repatriated from the MV Hondius cruise ship in May and placed under public health monitoring. All 18 completed the monitoring period without any confirmed infections.

The outbreak involved Andes virus, a strain of hantavirus capable of limited person-to-person transmission. The CDC said the overall risk to the U.S. public remained low throughout the response.

"The successful conclusion of this response demonstrates the strength of a coordinated response to infectious disease threats that occur outside of our borders," said CDC Acting Director Jay Bhattacharya.



Workers walk outside a data center building under construction in Johor Bahru town at Johor state on Sept 28, 2024. (AP)

## 40 mayors worldwide endorse pact to shape data center development

WASHINGTON, June 25, (AP): Forty mayors from around the world have signed onto a pact announced Tuesday to try to shape how urban data centers are built and operated.

It's their vision for how urban data center development can be done sustainably - and not at the expense of their cities' natural resources, energy prices or climate targets. C40 Cities, an alliance of nearly 100 cities seeking to impact climate change, launched it during London Climate Action Week.

Many new data centers are coming to rural areas for cheap land. Experts at C40 say metropolitan areas are under tremendous pressure too, with about 1,700 data centers located in their network of cities so far. Development of data centers is expected to grow by over 40% in 50 of those cities.

C40 got involved because the mayors of Phoenix and Melbourne, Australia, came together over worries about data centers using a lot of their cities' electricity and water, and competing with housing developers for available land.

"We found out that the challenges in every region around the world were very similar," said Cassie Sutherland, a managing director at C40. "Our approach was to say OK,

how do we now use a global mayoral voice to come together with the conditions under which they will accept data centers."

Data centers are built in cities to be close to firms that want systems powered by artificial intelligence to respond instantaneously. Major companies locate data centers in cities to be near their business operations. And data centers tend to be built in clusters, forming ecosystems in metropolitan areas that might outweigh factors like land costs. It's just more recently that data centers have moved out into rural areas, said Andrew Batson, global head of data center research at JLL.

Political and local opposition has been growing because of fears about blackouts, rising electricity bills and the centers' voracious water needs. Some states are suspending tax breaks or considering moratoriums on data center construction.

About half of participating mayors are from the US. That includes Seattle and the California cities of Palo Alto and Riverside. In the Southwest, Phoenix and Albuquerque, New Mexico, joined. On the East Coast, Beverly, Massachusetts, signed, as did Lincoln, Nebraska; Chicago and Cleveland in the Mid-

west and Miami in the South.

European cities in Greece, Spain, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and Norway joined, as did Montreal in Canada. The pact includes African cities in Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Kenya, as well as Asia-Pacific cities in India and Australia, and Lebanon in the Middle East.

Sutherland said their vision needs to be translated into action, with each city using it as a framework for their own regulations or guidelines. Mayors are limited in what they can do unilaterally, so they'll need buy-in from other government officials, utilities and the private sector.

The pact lists several standards for data center developments. Urban data centers should be built on abandoned or underutilized land in an area that minimizes negative impacts on noise, heat and air pollution. Developments should be fueled by renewable energy and battery storage, and data centers should reduce water use and emissions, as well as capture waste heat.

And, the mayors want data centers that create jobs, buy local goods and services, pay for their own infrastructure upgrades and listen to community feedback.

## US infant mortality rate fell to all-time low, though it still trails other similar nations

NEW YORK, June 25, (AP): Infant mortality in the US dropped to a new all-time low in 2025, according to preliminary government data.

There were slightly fewer than 5.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2025, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While that appears to be a small decline from about 5.5 in 2024 and 5.6 in the two years preceding, researchers say it is statistically meaningful and translates to hundreds of fewer infant deaths per year.

It's difficult to pinpoint what's driving the recent developments, but "this is an encouraging data point, and we hope that this trend will continue," said Dr. Michael Warren, chief medical and health officer for the March of Dimes.

The overall numbers, too, have been going down. US infant deaths fell to about 19,350 last year, according to provisional CDC data that may rise a little as additional analysis is completed. The final tally is still expected to be down from about 20,050 in 2024 and about 20,160 in 2023, according to the agency.

The US rate has inched down over the decades - it was at 7.5 per 1,000 three decades ago - thanks to medical advances and public health efforts.

But it has remained worse than



The toes of a baby peek out of a blanket at a hospital in McAllen, Texas on July 29, 2020. (AP)

other high-income countries, which experts have attributed to poverty, inadequate prenatal care and other problems. A study published last year found the US infant mortality rate in 2022 - when the rate rose - was nearly twice as high as what was seen in several other high-income democratic nations, including Italy, Japan, Spain and Sweden.

That was the year of the first statistically significant jump in the US rate in about two decades. Experts

attributed that rise to a rebound in RSV and flu infections.

In 2023, US health officials began recommending two new measures to prevent the toll on infants: one was a lab-made antibody shot for infants that helps the immune system fight off the virus, and the other was giving an RSV vaccine to women between 32 weeks and 36 weeks of pregnancy. A March of Dimes expert last year said the effort likely contributed to the improvement in 2024.

## Chinese meteorologist awarded meteorology's 'Nobel Prize'

GENEVA, June 25, (Xinhua): Chinese meteorologist Xu Jianmin, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a leading satellite meteorology expert with the China Meteorological Administration (CMA), was presented with the 70th International Meteorological Organization (IMO) Prize on Wednesday in Geneva.

At the award ceremony, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Celeste Saulo praised Xu for his lifelong commitment to advancing satellite meteorology and ensuring that satellite data are reliable, practical, and operationally effective.

Saulo noted that under Xu's leadership, the applications of China's FENGYUN (FY) meteorological satellites have steadily expanded, while their operational systems have been continuously refined, providing strong support for global weather monitoring, forecasting, and evidence-based decision-making.

She also highlighted the important role of FY satellites in providing observational data for West Asia, East Africa, and the Indian Ocean region.

In particular, the orbit optimization of the FY-2H satellite helped fill a longstanding gap in geostationary meteorological observations over the Indian Ocean, significantly supporting the WMO's Indian Ocean Data Coverage Plan.



World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Celeste Saulo (left) presents the 70th International Meteorological Organization (IMO) Prize to Chinese meteorologist Xu Jianmin, also an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a leading satellite meteorology expert with the China Meteorological Administration (CMA), in Geneva, Switzerland on June 24. (Xinhua)

# Kuwait wraps up campaign on high note with 12-medal haul



Kuwaiti athletes celebrated on the podium with officials after winning medals at the Arab Athletics Championships in Egypt.



Kuwaiti athletes celebrated victory on the podium with officials at the recently concluded Arab Athletics Championships in Egypt.



Kuwaiti athletes celebrated victory on the podium with officials at the recently concluded Arab Athletics Championships in Egypt.



Sultan Al-Rais, bronze medalist, celebrated his win with the Kuwaiti flag at the Arab Athletics Championships in Egypt.

## Federation hails team's success

**CAIRO, June 25, (KUNA):** Kuwait's national athletics team wrapped up its campaign at the Arab Athletics Championships for U-16 and U-23 categories in Egypt with a total of 12 medals, highlighting a strong showing across multiple events.

The final medal tally included three gold, five silver, and four bronze, following a bronze medal secured on Wednesday by decathlete Sultan Al-

Rais in the U-23 decathlon, where he recorded 5,921 points.

Farouk Al-Shaer, Board Member of the Kuwait Athletics Federation and Head of the Media Committee, praised the team's overall performance, noting that the championship marked the first international appearance abroad for the U-16 athletes.

Despite limited international exposure, the young athletes managed to reach multiple podium finishes and achieved several personal bests, underlining the success of their development pathway.

Al-Shaer also highlighted the importance of the 12-day preparatory train-

ing camp held in Egypt ahead of the competition, which helped prepare the athletes for the demands of continental-level competition while also strengthening sporting ties with other Arab nations.

He expressed gratitude to the Egyptian Athletics Federation for its organization of the event, as well as to the Arab Athletics Federation for ensuring smooth logistical operations throughout the championship.

The third edition of the Arab Athletics Championships for U-16 and U-23 categories took place at the Suez Canal Authority Stadium in Ismailia from June 20 to 24, featuring participation from 14 Arab national teams.

## Early training key to strong players: Al-Mousawi

# Kuwait handball teams gear up for competitions



Kuwait handball national teams pose for a group photo with coaches ahead of the match.

**By Khaled Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: Kuwait's national handball teams have intensified preparations for a series of upcoming regional and international commitments through a comprehensive development program targeting various age categories. The initiative reflects the Kuwait Handball Federation's commitment to strengthening its talent pipeline and ensuring players are fully prepared for future challenges.

The U-18 team is currently focusing on the Asian Championship scheduled for August. However, the event's hosting arrangements remain uncertain after Uzbekistan officially withdrew from organizing the tournament, prompting the Asian Handball Federation to search for a replacement host.

At the same time, preparations are continuing for the U-16 team, which is expected to participate in an overseas training camp in Egypt next

month. The federation is also implementing a long-term development plan for younger age groups aimed at identifying and nurturing promising talent.

Training sessions for the youth and cadet teams are being overseen by national coach Khaled Al-Mulla, while Hassan Al-Mousawi is leading the cadet squad's preparations. The camps have witnessed strong commitment and enthusiasm from the players.

Faisal Siwayan, Director of National Teams at the Kuwait Handball Federation, stressed the importance of developing players according to modern technical and scientific standards to ensure they reach optimum levels of readiness before competing internationally.

"We have clear objectives and carefully designed preparation programs," Siwayan said. "We believe the youth team has a strong opportunity to perform well at the Asian Championship, and we are determined to showcase the quality and reputation of Kuwaiti handball."

He added that the planned training camp in Egypt will focus on enhancing players' physical condition, tactical awareness and overall team chemistry ahead of future competitions.

Coach Khaled Al-Mulla praised the players' potential, noting that they possess the qualities needed to achieve success at higher levels if they continue to work hard and remain committed.

"We have important international competitions ahead, and our goal is to prepare the players in the best possible way to achieve positive results," Al-Mulla said, while also expressing appreciation for the support provided by the federation and the cooperation of players' families.

Meanwhile, Coach Hassan Al-Mousawi emphasized the significance of investing in youth development, describing grassroots programs as the foundation for building future national teams. He noted that proper training and guidance at an early age help produce players with strong technical skills and physical capabilities.

## Clubs step up recruitment

Big names enter market as transfer window heats up

**By Khaled Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 25: Local handball clubs have moved early in the summer transfer window as preparations intensify for the upcoming season, with several teams reshaping their squads ahead of new challenges.

Burgan Club has secured the signatures of goalkeeper Fahad Karam and winger Faraj Salem, both arriving from Qadsia following the latter's withdrawal from senior competitions next season. The signings are part of Burgan's strategy to strengthen its roster and maintain its competitive edge after recently winning the Asian Club Championship, with the team also set to compete in the World Club Championship in Cairo this September.

The club's management continues to be active in the market, holding talks with multiple local players while also evaluating several foreign professionals to reinforce the squad further ahead of the new campaign.

Sources indicate that a significant pool of experienced players has become available in the summer "mercato" following the disbanding of Qadsia's first team, alongside the expiry of several player contracts across other clubs. This has intensified competition in the transfer market, with names such as Abdullah Al-Attayah, Mohammed Amer, Mishaal Abbas, and Mishari Siwayan among the most notable available options.

On the other hand, Kuwait Club is preparing for the return of several players from loan spells at Burgan, including Mohammed Ghanem, Mohammed Bouyabes, and Hussein Al-Mutairi. The "Whites" have also strengthened their squad with the addition of Haider Dashti as they gear up for upcoming competitions.

Meanwhile, Sahel Club has completed the signing of Nasser Faraj as part of its plans for the 2026-2027 season. The move reflects the club's ongoing efforts to reinforce its squad under both administrative and technical planning aimed at improving competitiveness.

Sahel had already added Serbian



Al-Otaibi and Najeeb pose with Faraj Salem.



Burgan Club official poses with new goalkeeper Fahad Karam.

player Jovan Milisavljević, Brazilian Leandro da Silva, and Frenchman Nicolas Claire to its roster, in addition to appointing national coach Hussein Habib.

Kazma Club has also been active, securing Abdulaziz Salem from Qadsia on a two-season loan deal to strengthen its technical options for the coming season.

Further movement in the transfer market is expected in the coming days, as clubs continue to finalize their squads ahead of the new campaign.

## Wimbledon hit by player media protest

# ITF officially renamed as World Tennis

LONDON, June 25, (AP): The International Tennis Federation is changing its name to World Tennis.

The organization oversees the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup team competitions, as well as tennis at the Olympics and Paralympics.

"Today is an opportunity to redefine our role at the heart of world tennis and pledge our commitment to ensuring

a strong, sustainable future for this brilliant sport," World Tennis president David Haggerty said Thursday. "World Tennis reflects who we are, our global footprint and unique mandate."

Other international sport federations have made similar name changes in recent years, such as World Athletics, World Aquatics, World Gymnastics and World Rugby.

The name switch was ratified last October by member national tennis associations voting at the governing body's annual general meeting.

London-based World Tennis works together with the ATP and WTA Tours and the four Grand Slam tournaments - the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and the U.S. Open - to organize the professional side of the sport.

"A lot of people think of the T7 as seven governing bodies when in fact they're not seven governing bodies.

They actually have different purposes, which all add together to equal a big pie of a sport," World Tennis chief executive Ross Hutchins said, adding that the renaming reflects the organization's "global nature."

Wimbledon, where Serena Williams will play singles after nearly four years away, starts on Monday.

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Top tennis players at Wimbledon will extend their protest over prize money by limiting their media appearances at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament next week.

The decision means the players will only talk to media for 15 minutes after each match during the first week of the tournament.

The protest began at this year's French Open where players complained that the total prize money only made up 14.3% of the clay-court tournament's revenue.

Wimbledon responded by hiking its total prize money by 20 percent this year - with the singles champions to get 3.6 million pounds (\$4.75 million) each.

However, a statement put out Wednesday by an advisory firm representing the players said the "direct action protest" will continue during the first week at the All England Club.

"Players will limit their contractual media commitments at the tournament to 15 minutes - reflecting that Wimbledon currently pays slightly below 15% of revenues to players as prize money - for the duration of the first week of the Championships," the statement said. "Following detailed consultation with players across both tours, player representatives have written to Wimbledon's leadership to inform them of the planned action, while acknowledging the welcome recent 20% in-

crease in prize money compared to last year's Championships."

The statement said the the players' share of Wimbledon's projected revenues this year is 14.4%, which would be below the 14.9% share they received 10 years ago.

The players had written a proposal last year asking for 16% of revenues.

The statement did not specify which players would take part in the protest.

At the French Open, No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, Coco Gauff and Iga Swiatek were among the top-10 ranked women who limited their media appearances, as did men's No. 1 Jan-nik Sinner. However, Novak Djokovic did not take part in the protest.

In announcing Wimbledon's 20-percent increase in prize money two weeks ago, All England Club chair Deborah Jevans said she hoped it would satisfy the players.

## Best of the Rest

**Stéphanie joins UEFA staff:** The first woman to referee a men's World Cup game, Stéphanie Frappart, is joining the staff of UEFA.

Frappart is taking a full-time job as a UEFA refereeing officer working to train match officials and help appoint them to games in European competitions. She will replace Czech former top referee Dagmar Damková, UEFA said on Thursday.

The 42-year-old French referee has been a trailblazer for women match officials in men's soccer.

At the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Frappart handled Germany's 4-2 win against Costa Rica in the group stage. (AP)

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**Wrexham open season with Welsh derby:** Wrexham's latest bid to reach the lucrative Premier League will start with a Welsh derby against Cardiff in the Championship.

The match will take place at Cardiff City Stadium on Aug. 17 and wraps up the first round of fixtures in England's second-tier league.

The Championship published its season's schedule on Thursday, with play starting a week before the Premier League begins. (AP)

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**French soccer player drowns:** A 21-year-old French soccer player with a second-division club has died after drowning during the heat wave that has gripped France.

Kenzo Kies, who played for the Guingamp reserve team, died after being pulled from the Rhone River this week. Both Guingamp and Saint-Etienne, where Kies spent seven years in the club's academy system, paid him a tribute in statements late Wednesday.

France recorded its hottest ever day for the second day running on Wednesday. The Meteo France weather agency said the national thermal indicator - an average of temperatures measured at 30 weather stations - hit a new record of 30 C (86 F), the latest in a series of never-before-registered highs. The mercury surpassed 40 C (104 F) in some locations, including in Paris. (AP)

## Change Name

I, Habeeb (old Name) s/o Patan Basheer Khan, R/o 1/177, Piler Road, Sundupalle, Annamayya Dt Ap. I Have Changed My Surname & Name To PATAN HABEEB KHAN, S/O PATAN BASHEER KHAN Hence forth, I Will Be Known As PATAN HABEEB KHAN



# Switzerland wraps up first place in Group B with victory over Canada

Manzambi comes off the bench to score two goals



Canada's Promise David (24) takes a shot on goal as Switzerland's Granit Xhaka (10) defends during the World Cup Group B soccer match between Switzerland and Canada in Vancouver, British Columbia. (AP)

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia, June 25, (AP): Switzerland put a damper on Canada's World Cup party.**

The Swiss got goals from Rubén Vargas and Johan Manzambi to beat Canada 2-1 and win Group B. Switzerland will get a week of rest before returning to Vancouver to face one of the eight best third-place finishers on July 2.

"I think that we deserve to be where we are right now," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "In three days from now, we will know the opponent of the next match, and

now we have the possibility to watch this tournament, and to watch the matches, and we will take what we will get."

Canada dropped to second place in the group and will play in the knockout round for the first time in team history. But the Canadians had been hoping for a win or a draw on Wednesday so they would play their round-of-32 match on home soil.

Instead, Canada will travel Inglewood, California, to play Sunday against South Africa, which beat South Korea 1-0 Wednesday night in Monterrey, Mexico, to finish second in Group A.

"We wanted to be here in Vancouver, but we still have a massive opportunity ahead of us to find a way to still elec-

trify the nation, even though it'll be from Los Angeles," Canada coach Jesse Marsch said.

After Manzambi came off the bench and scored two goals in Switzerland's 4-1 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina on Thursday, he earned a spot in the starting lineup against Canada. The 20-year-old midfielder became the youngest player to score two goals off the bench in the World Cup and is among the breakout young stars of the tournament.

Vargas broke through for Switzerland about 40 seconds into the second half with a strike that sailed past sliding Canada goalkeeper Maxime Crépeau, hit the post and went into the net.

Breel Embolo then crossed the ball to Manzambi, whose shot went through the hands of Crépeau to put the Swiss up 2-0 in the 57th minute. The goal quieted the red-clad sellout crowd, which included Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani.

Canada pulled a goal back in the 76th. Promise David scored with a volley on his first touch of the game about a minute after he came on as a substitute. But despite a flurry of chances, the Canadians couldn't find the second goal to keep them at home.

Switzerland captain Granit Xhaka had a chance in the scoreless first half but his free kick in the 37th minute and sailed over the net as he let out a yell.

Ali Ahmed had one of Canada's best attempts of the first half in the 42nd minute, but his shot to the near post was smothered by Switzerland goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

On Thursday, Canada won its first World Cup match, 6-0 over Qatar, and put itself in position to advance. But the historic victory was bittersweet because Ismaël Koné was stretchered off with a broken left leg. Koné was at Wednesday's game on crutches.

The Swiss opened the World Cup with a lackluster 1-1 draw against Qatar before they routed Bosnia with a flurry of late goals. Considered the favorite in Group B, Switzerland has played at the last five World Cups and advanced to the round of 16 in the past three.

"We needed some time to get really into this tournament, for many nations that was the case," Yakin said. "There were big teams who won against small countries, so we really needed to get into this tournament fast, and the way we play football now, I'm very happy with that."



Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha catches the ball during the World Cup Group H soccer match between Uruguay and Cape Verde in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

## Vozinha seeks new club after World Cup stardom

WASHINGTON, June 25, (AP): Vozinha, one of the sensations of the World Cup, is looking for a new club.

And the 40-year-old Cape Verde goalkeeper hasn't ruled out playing in Brazil, where fans helped him reach immediate stardom on social media.

Vozinha said in an interview with Brazilian journalist and influencer Daniel Braune that his contract with second-division Portuguese club Chaves has ended and he wants to keep playing and is keen on finding a new team following his success in the tournament in the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

Vozinha attracted the attention of the soccer world after an outstanding performance in Cape Verde's 0-0 draw with European champion Spain in their opener on June 15. Cape Verde then drew 2-2 with Uruguay, one of South America's soccer powerhouses.

"I ended my contract with my previous club, Deportivo Chaves, and at the moment I still don't have anything," he said. "I'm open to everything. Let's see what comes up."

Vozinha said he wouldn't mind playing in Brazil, the country where another influencer, Casimiro Miguel, known as Cazé, helped him go from about 50,000 Instagram followers to nearly 16 million by promoting the goalkeeper's account.

"It would be good," Vozinha said, smiling, in the interview published in Braune's YouTube channel. "We'll see."

Vozinha said he definitely wants to try to make it to Brazil, at least to visit.

"If I have the opportunity, I'd like to go, also to thank everyone for all of their support," he said. "And I think that many of my teammates want to go as well."

Vozinha said he spent time in Brazil when his former team in Angola, Progresso do Sambizanga, did its preseason in the country.

He said his idols while growing up included Belgian goalkeeper Michel Preud'homme, Dutchman Edwin van der Sar and Gianluigi Buffon of Italy.

His dream right now is to help Cape Verde - competing in the World Cup for the first time - advance from the group stage.

A win over Saudi Arabia on Friday in Houston will be enough to secure the nation of about half a million people a spot in the round of 32.

"My dream, and the dream of all Cape Verdeans, is to reach the next round," he said. "It's huge just to be in the World Cup, and to advance when no one thought that we could even get a point, would be extraordinary."

## WC reaches halfway mark as knockout race heats up

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., June 25, (AP): It's halftime at the World Cup. Take a break, everyone.

Wednesday marked the midpoint of the 104-match tournament - technically, just past the midpoint, with 54 matches now in the books and 50 remaining before a World Cup champion is crowned in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on July 19.

The U.S. has reached the Round of 32, which shouldn't be surprising. Mexico and Canada, the other host nations for this biggest World Cup in history, are also through to the knockout stage. And the stars are positively shining: Argentina's Lionel Messi has five goals to kick-start what he hopes is a run toward a second consecutive World Cup title. France's Kylian Mbappé has four, as do Norway's Erling Haaland and Brazil's Vinicius Júnior.

Stadiums are mostly filled; FIFA is touting record attendance. And there have been some feel-good stories, most notably the tale of Cape Verde goalie Vozinha and how his mother was able to come to this World Cup.

"The best is yet to come," FIFA President Gianni Infantino told SNTV earlier this week.

In other words, the second half of this tournament - just like the second half of matches - is when things might get really good.

Through Wednesday's games, 14 teams have clinched spots in the Round of 32.

Mexico won Group A, Switzerland won Group B, Brazil won Group C, the U.S. won Group D, Germany won Group E and Argentina won Group J.

France, Norway, Canada, Morocco, Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and are assured of moving into the knockout stage.

"I know how it feels, but it's very difficult to explain how it feels," South Africa coach Hugo Broos said after his team clinched its first-ever appearance in the knockout stage. "I'm very happy for the guys."

A handful of teams already know they'll be among the 16 that don't survive the group stage and reach the Round of 32.

The Czech Republic, Haiti, Turkey, Tunisia, Jordan, Qatar and Panama are certain to not advance.

With 13 teams into the knockout round and seven eliminated, that leaves 28 teams for 19 remaining spots in the Round of 32.

Some key matches left:

■ Australia-Paraguay is a win-and-you're-in game.

■ A winner of Japan-Sweden would be assured a Round of 32 spot, as would a winner of Austria-Algeria.

■ Tiny Cape Verde would be into the knockout round with a win over Saudi Arabia.

■ Colombia-Portugal will decide the winner of Group K.

This much is clear: The only match the U.S. might play in the Eastern time zone will be the World Cup final.

The Americans will begin the Round of 32 in Santa Clara, California, on July 1. If they win, they'll go to Seattle for the Round of 16. Win that, and it'll be off to Inglewood, California, for the quarterfinals. Win that, and Arlington, Texas, will be calling for the semifinals.

The most likely opponent for the U.S. in the Round of 32 is Bosnia and Herzegovina. After that, it would seem likely that Egypt could be waiting.

Once group play ends, the drama really begins.

It's called the knockout stage for a reason - if you don't win in this round, you're knocked out of the tournament. (The only time that won't apply is the semifinals, since the losers of those games will get sent to Miami Gardens, Florida, to decide third place.)

A team will have to win five elimination games to win the World Cup title.

Everybody should have predicted that the record for total goals in a World Cup would get smashed in this tournament. After all, there are 104 matches in this event, compared with just 64 matches in the format that was used over the previous seven World Cups.

And the record for most goals will fall, almost certainly on Thursday or Friday. There were 172 scored at Qatar four years ago; there have been 161 goals through 54 matches so far this year.

But what is noteworthy in this tournament is that scoring per game is at its high-

est level in more than 50 years - 2.98 goals per match.

An average of 2.81 goals per match were scored at Spain in 1982, 2.97 goals per match at Mexico in 1970, and 3.60 goals per match at Sweden in 1958.

That said, this year's games have been defensive battles compared to what happened in 1954 in Switzerland, when games featured a staggering 5.38 goals on average. That tournament included a game with a 7-5 final score, still the highest-scoring game in men's World Cup history.

By the end of Day 17 of the World Cup on Saturday, 72 matches will be done, 32 will remain. That's the day the group stage ends and the knockout stage - where every match until the semifinals is of the win-or-go-home variety - begins.

And then things slow down. A bit, anyway.

There is only one Round of 32 game on the schedule for Sunday - South Africa vs. Canada at Los Angeles. Things pick up again after that and matches are planned every day until July 8. That means the tournament will have 27 consecutive days of play before everyone gets a day off.

Argentina and France gave us an epic World Cup final in 2022. It's not outside of the realm that we get a rematch this year; the way the bracket is looking at this point (and this could easily change), they should be on opposite sides, making a collision in the final possible.

### Fan Zone



Fans create a festive atmosphere during FIFA World Cup group-stage matches across host cities in Canada, Mexico and the United States. (AP)



Morocco fans watch warmups before the World Cup Group C soccer match between Morocco and Haiti in Atlanta. (AP)

# Sports

Haiti finally scores again at World Cup

## Late surge sends Morocco into knockouts

ATLANTA, June 25, (AP) — Soufiane Rahimi and Gessime Yassine came off the bench to help Morocco rally for a 4-2 victory over Haiti and erase the Caribbean nation's hopes of a first ever point at the World Cup.

Morocco, which became the first African team to reach the World Cup semifinals four years ago in Qatar, twice came from behind against a team playing on soccer's biggest stage for the first time in 52 years.

Rahimi's deflected shot in the 78th minute put Morocco ahead 3-2 and Yassine killed off any chance of an upset with a goal in the 89th.

Morocco advanced to the round of 32 in second place behind Brazil in Group C and will next play the runner up in Group F - Netherlands, Japan or Sweden - in Monterrey. The five-time champion Brazilians beat Scotland 3-0 in the other group match.

"At times we lacked humility and paid the price for it," Morocco midfielder Bilal El Khannouss said. "We weren't fully committed in the duels, we gave them confidence and allowed them to grow into the game and score twice. At halftime, the coach told us we needed to be more aggressive, win the second balls and bring greater intensity to our attacking play."

Morocco, which won the most recent Africa Cup of Nations, has ambitions to go deep again after making history at the last World Cup. But the team was given a scare by Haiti, which took a surprise lead in the 10th minute with a

goal that was more than five decades in the making.

Lenny Joseph's back-heeled flick at the near post went in off the back of Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou for the country's first World Cup goal since Emmanuel Sanon in 1974, Haiti's only other appearance at the tournament. Bounou was officially credited with an own-goal on the play.

Morocco pushed for an equalizer and Achraf Hakimi finally got it in the 39th minute. Haiti keeper Johnny Placide managed to get a hand to El Khannouss' deflected cross, but couldn't prevent Hakimi from bundling the ball over the line.

Although Morocco looked to be ready to explode for more goals, it was Haiti that again took the lead four minutes later when Wilson Isidor scored from outside the box with a shot that flew into the top corner.

There was still time for another goal at the end of a thrilling half with Ismael Saibari sweeping Hakimi's cross past Placide in stoppage time to make it 2-2 at the break.

It was Saibari's third goal of the tournament.

"I am disappointed for the Haitian fans," Haiti coach Sébastien Migné said. "Disappointed, but also, I want to say we managed to show that we were worthy of this qualification. We were in the right place. Now we need to make some improvements and not wait for another 52 years."



Morocco's Achraf Hakimi (2) gets past Haiti's Ruben Providence (15) to control the ball during the World Cup Group C soccer match between Morocco and Haiti in Atlanta. (AP)

## Brazil clinches Group C as Neymar makes comeback



Brazil's Matheus Cunha (9) shoots and scores their third goal against Scotland's Jack Hendry (13) during the World Cup Group C soccer match between Scotland and Brazil in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

Vinicius dismantles Scotland

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., June 25, (AP) — Vinicius Júnior made it look easy. So did Brazil.

Vinicius scored two goals - one of them practically into an empty net to open the scoring - and five-time World Cup champion Brazil beat Scotland 3-0 on Wednesday, advancing to the knockout stage as the Group C winner.

Vinicius - who has a goal in all three of Brazil's group matches - scored in the seventh minute and again just before halftime, tying Norway's Erling Haaland and Kylian Mbappé with of France with four goals, one behind Lionel Messi of Argentina.

Matheus Cunha also scored for the Seleção, who reached the knockout rounds for the 15th consecutive World Cup. Morocco finished second in the group and also advanced, rallying to beat Haiti 4-2.

After a lackluster 1-1 draw against Morocco in its

opener, Brazil - facing pressure to win its first World Cup title since 2002 - followed with a 3-0 win over Haiti, and coach Carlo Ancelotti said he saw gradual improvement from his team during the group stage.

"We are working to play the best that we can," he said. "But the goal is not to play well. We know that playing well is easier to win, but the goal is to win. ... If we win the World Cup, we played well. If we don't win the World Cup, we played really bad."

Taking advantage of an early Scotland mistake on Wednesday, Vinicius received a pass from 19-year-old striker Rayan and took a quick touch to get by goalkeeper Angus Gunn for an easy finish and a 1-0 lead. He capitalized on another miscue by the Scots later in the first half with a header from close range.

"It's always important to be scoring goals," Vinicius said in Portuguese. "It's important to be playing great matches, and I managed to do that. I was able

to perform very well and improve. Throughout my years with the national team, there were times when I couldn't quite show my true game."

Neymar entered as a substitute in the 76th, making his debut after a right calf injury sidelined him for Brazil's first two matches. The majority-Brazilian crowd at Hard Rock Stadium began chanting his name midway through the second half as he got off the bench and began doing warmup sprints on the sideline - and fans roared as he trotted onto the pitch.

"I think he deserved the opportunity to play, which is why I gave him the opportunity to play," Ancelotti said through an interpreter. "I think he did well even though he played for just a few minutes."

Neymar is Brazil's career scoring leader with 79 goals in 130 international appearances. The 34-year-old forward appeared in each of the past three World Cups for Brazil, scoring eight goals.

## Mexico remains unbeaten at World Cup

MEXICO CITY, June 25, (AP) — Javier Aguirre has been saying for a while now that the key to the Mexican team's success at the World Cup is that they are a family. This family, it seems, is on a historic journey.

Mateo Chávez and Julián Quiñones scored in a six-minute span early in the second half, and Mexico beat the Czech Republic 3-0 to complete wins in all three of its World Cup group-stage matches for the first time.

The 22-year-old Chávez, in his first World Cup, opened the scoring in the 55th minute and Quiñones scored his second goal of the tournament in the 61st. Alvaro Fidalgo added a goal in stoppage time.

"It was something very beautiful,



Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa (13) is celebrated by his team after the World Cup Group A soccer match between Czechia and Mexico in Mexico City. (AP)

and I'll take it with me to the grave," Chávez said of his goal. "I imagined it many times; I dreamed of this."

Mexico's previous best group-stage performance was two wins and one draw, done in 1986 and 2002 and both featuring Javier Aguirre, the first as a midfielder and the second as El Tri's coach. Aguirre is back as coach this year, his third stint leading the national team.

After topping Group A, Mexico will play again at Estadio Azteca on Tuesday in a round-of-32 match against an opponent to be determined.

"Now comes the knockout stage; statistics and data don't matter. We're achieving things, but what lies ahead is what counts," Aguirre said. "Neither the players nor I dwell

on what we've just done; we're thinking about what's next."

Mexico is undefeated at nine World Cup matches at the massive stadium, which was packed with 80,824 fans on Wednesday. El Tri has only two losses at Azteca, most recently in World Cup qualifying against Honduras on Sept. 6, 2013.

The match Wednesday included nods to Mexico's past and future. Gilberto Mora, at 17, became the youngest Mexico player to start in a World Cup. And 40-year-old goalkeeper Guillermo "Memo" Ochoa entered in the 77th minute, joining Argentina's Lionel Messi and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo as the only players to appear in six World Cups.

## South Africa reaches WCup knockout round for first time

GUADALUPE, Mexico, June 25, (AP) — South Africa advanced to the knockout phase of the World Cup for the first time with a 1-0 victory over South Korea on Wednesday night.

Thapelo Maseko scored in the 63rd minute off a precise cross from Tshepang Moremi and South Africa finished in second place in Group A behind Mexico, which won all three of its group-stage games.

South Africa will take on Canada, the second-place finisher in Group B, in a knockout game Sunday at Inglewood, California.

Maseko had five total shots in the match and leads South Africa with eight shots in the tournament.

When Maseko was asked what he would tell his younger self about his accomplishment, the Mamelodi Sundowns forward said: "The one thing I would say is 'keep dreaming.'"

South Africa had opened its World Cup with a 2-0 loss to Mexico before using a late goal to earn a 1-1 draw with Czech Republic. It entered its final group-stage needing to defeat South Korea in order to advance. Bafana Bafana had failed to advance from the group stage in 1998, 2002 and as host in 2010.

South Africa head coach Hugo Broos described the faith he had in his team despite the difficult start to the tournament.

"The mentality in this group is amazing," Broos said. "Everybody is working for everybody. We are not afraid of other teams."

Sphephelo Sithole, who received a red card in the opening game against Mexico, also earned a start

and helped South Africa keep a clean sheet.

"In the first two, three days, it wasn't easy," Sithole said. "I needed to pick myself up. I'm very proud of myself because I did."

Maseko, who plays for South African club Mamelodi Sundowns, missed two big chances early in the match before scoring the winner.

The 22-year-old received the ball from a cross on the right side of the box - cut inside - and struck the ball low with his left foot through a defender's legs and into the bottom corner.

South Africa's bench players ran across the sideline to celebrate with Maseko for his first World Cup goal.

When the final whistle was blown, the bench stormed the field and the players embraced each other.

"(The final whistle) for me was a rush of emotions not only because we won the game, but also because it will probably be one of the last games of my career," the 74-year-old Broos said. "When you can end a career in this way, I think every coach dreams of it."

South Korea head coach Hong Myung-bo raised some eyebrows when he decided not to start Son Heung-min, and instead bring him in as a substitute. He said that he preferred to bring Son onto the field when the South African defenders were lower on energy.

"If I knew the result beforehand, I probably would have made some different choices," Hong said. "On the world stage like this, the responsibility is ultimately down to the head coach."



South Africa's Ronwen Williams (1), Sphephelo Sithole (13) and teammates dance after winning the World Cup Group A soccer match between South Africa and South Korea in Guadalupe, near Monterrey, Mexico. (AP)

### World Cup Fixtures

**Iraq vs Senegal 22:00**

**France vs Norway 22:00**

**Saturday**

**Saudi Arabia vs Cape Verde 03:00**

**Spain vs Uruguay 03:00**

**Egypt vs Iran 06:00**

**Belgium vs New Zealand 06:00**

**Sunday**

**England vs Panama 00:00**

**Ghana vs Croatia 00:00**

**Uzbekistan vs DR Congo 02:30**

**Portugal vs Colombia 02:30**

**Jordan vs Argentina 05:00**

**Algeria vs Austria 05:00**