



Amir receives Crown Prince, Premier & senior ministers Page 2



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CONDEMNATION MOUNTS AFTER IRAN TARGETS KUWAIT, BAHRAIN

Fresh missile horror over Kuwait

Lebanon says it will not be a launchpad for attacks on GCC states

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (Agencies): Kuwait's Armed Forces intercepted two hostile ballistic missiles in the country's airspace on Sunday, the Ministry of Defense announced, as a wave of regional condemnations followed renewed Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait and Bahrain.

In a statement, Ministry of Defense spokesperson Colonel Staff Saud Al-Atwan said the missiles were detected and neutralized in accordance

with approved operational procedures, confirming that no casualties or material damage were reported. He stressed the Armed Forces' continued readiness to safeguard national security and protect citizens and residents.

Kuwait strongly condemned the attacks, describing them as a flagrant violation of its sovereignty, a direct threat to national security and a breach of international law. The Foreign Ministry said the escalation undermines regional and international efforts to de-escalate tensions and reaffirmed Kuwait's right to

take all necessary measures in line with international law and the UN Charter.

Kuwait also denounced renewed Iranian drone attacks on Bahrain for a second consecutive day, which caused damage to civilian facilities. The ministry described the strikes as a dangerous escalation and reiterated full solidarity with Bahrain, emphasizing that the Kingdom's security is integral to that of all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The framework agreement ends Iranian influence in Lebanon

FOR the first time since 1984, Lebanon is moving away from Iranian hegemony and becoming the master of its own destiny through a framework agreement signed between Lebanon and Israel, brokered by the United States.

For the first time in four decades, the Beirut government is emerging from the strong influence of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement. Even though there are ministers representing these two organizations, the Lebanese government's decisions are no longer fully tied to sectarian alignments.

There is a consensus that Lebanon has escaped the hell into which Hezbollah led it, for the benefit of Iran, which has negatively affected the region and transformed some Arab countries into proxies for Iranian terrorism and activities that include drug trafficking and hostile actions against neighboring states.

This situation is beginning to change because the United States and the GCC countries will not

accept the resurgence of the Iranian regime and will not allow the destabilization of Arab national security, especially in the four countries that were part of an Iranian axis targeting the Arabs.

What was agreed in Washington between Beirut and Tel Aviv is not a casual agreement, but rather a platform aimed at promoting stability and peace in the region. It is a real test for the Lebanese who have suffered the consequences of Iranian interventions for decades. Throughout that period, Lebanon appeared as a sick person infected with the plague, prompting many, both Arabs and foreigners, to distance themselves from it.

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Kuwait revokes six citizenships

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Two decrees were published on Sunday in the official gazette "Kuwait al-Youm" revoking Kuwaiti citizenship certificates and nationality from six individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Decree No. 101/2026 stipulates the revocation of citizenship certificates from five individuals, as well as from those who acquired citizenship through dependency on the certificate holder.

Decree No. 102/2026 stipulates the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship from one individual and from anyone who acquired it through dependency on him.

Interior Minister gets 'anti-terror' mandate

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Cabinet issued Resolution No. 718/2026 designating the minister responsible for implementing Law No. 47/2026 on Combating Terrorism Crimes, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The resolution, which was published on Sunday in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm," stipulates that First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah is the minister tasked with implementing the provisions of the Law on Combating Terrorism Crimes.

The resolution is effective from the date of its issuance, and the Prime Minister and ministers are tasked with its implementation, each within their respective capacities.

E-passport, crime-fighting tech showcased

Lebanese Minister lauds Kuwait's security edge

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Lebanese Interior and Municipalities Minister Ahmad Al-Hajjar visited Kuwait's General Department of Nationality and Travel Documents and the Criminal Security Sector as part of his official visit to the country.

Kuwait's Interior Ministry said Al-Hajjar praised the ministry's advanced security systems, operational efficiency and use of modern technologies in delivering services in line with international standards.

The minister was briefed on the development of the Kuwaiti passport, including the electronic passport, and the systems used to issue secure travel documents.

He also reviewed criminal investigation procedures, crime-fighting technologies and anti-narcotics efforts, with both sides stressing the importance of continued security cooperation and information exchange.

The visit concluded with an exchange of commemorative shields, reaffirming the strong ties between the two countries and their commitment to expanding security cooperation.



Ministry of Interior photo
Lebanese Interior and Municipalities Minister Ahmad Al-Hajjar during a visit to security facilities in Kuwait.

GCC energy unity strengthens security: KPC

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Cooperation among national oil companies in the GCC constitutes a key pillar for strengthening energy security, said Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah.

In a statement Sunday, KPC said Sheikh Nawaf made the remarks during a meeting with the UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Managing Director and Group CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) Dr. Sultan Al-Jaber at the Ahmad Al-Jaber Oil and Gas Exhibition.

The meeting discussed ways to



KPC photo
KPC CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah during his meeting with UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology Dr. Sultan Al-Jaber

enhance bilateral cooperation in support of Gulf integration in the energy sector.

Sheikh Nawaf said Kuwait and the UAE share a long-standing partnership spanning decades, adding that the meeting reflected both sides' commitment to expanding cooperation in the oil sector and benefiting from lessons learned from the current regional situation in addressing crises and strengthening the preparedness of their institutions for the future of energy.

According to the statement, the meeting also reviewed several joint initiatives aimed at deepening cooperation and establishing a long-term strategic partnership that supports the sustainability of the region's energy sector.

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Day by Day

FOR centuries, Arabic proverbs have always been the key to guiding us to the right path and often offer solutions to problems. People frequently find a solution to their predicament or solace in a proverb.

Among these significant proverbs is - "Three things prolong life - a spacious house, a swift horse, and an obedient wife." Having these things, especially the last one, relieves a person of anxiety.

If you find yourself in a difficult situation, look to Arabic proverbs and the ancient people's experience. You will often find the solution to your problem.

Always remember that everything in our lives goes on according to our fate. We must live life with its joys and sorrows.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Amiri Diwan photo
Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Head of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receive Omani Ambassador Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi.

Outgoing Oman envoy praised for strengthening bilateral ties

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Head of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Omani Ambassador Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi on the occasion of the end of his tenure.

The meeting reviewed the longstand-

ing fraternal relations between Kuwait and Oman, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation, and regional developments, alongside issues of mutual interest.

The two officials praised the ambassador's efforts to strengthen cooperation between the two countries and wished him success in his future duties.



KUNA photo
Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait during a meeting with six working groups tasked with reviewing debtors' files.

Justice minister hails campaign success

Kuwait debt relief campaign reaches 2,422 needy debtors

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Yousef Al-Sumait affirmed that the donation campaign to settle the debts of those in financial distress continued to achieve its humanitarian and social objectives

in accordance with strict regulations. Al-Sumait announced that, as of the end of the working day on Thursday, June 25, 2,422 cases had been approved, and KD 7,505,987 had been disbursed out of a total collected amount of KD 16.5 million, representing approximately 45 percent.

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PACI deletes 464 addresses, warns of KD 100 fine

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced the removal of 464 residential addresses from its records, as published in the official Kuwaiti gazette, "Kuwait Al-Youm", on Sunday.

PACI explained that the removal decision is based on the declaration of the homeowner or due to the demolition of the building. Those affected by the decision are urged to contact PACI to register their new address or update such information through the Sahel application after providing the required supporting documents.

It emphasized the necessity of completing the address update procedures within 30 days of the publication of the announcement in the official gazette, warning that those who will fail to do so will be penalized as per Article 33 of Law No. 32/1982, which imposes a maximum fine of KD100 per person.

Saudi helicopter crash claims 14

RIYADH, June 28, (KUNA): Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Energy reported on Sunday that all 14 people aboard a helicopter operated by Saudi Aramco were killed after it crashed in Ras Tanura.

The ministry said the helicopter went down at 6:00 am local time, all those on board were Saudi nationals.

It added that an investigation is underway, with the participation of the relevant authorities, to determine the cause of the crash.

The ministry extended its deepest condolences to the families of the victims, wishing them patience and solace.

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4 Door of recovery always open, drugs-hit can visit rehab center: minister



8 UNHCR and Zain commemorate World Refugee Day



9 NBK Wealth named Kuwait's Best for UHNW Clients by Euromoney

10 KFH wins MEA Finance's Best Risk & Compliance Implementation Award



Prayer Timings
 Fajr 03:16 Asr 15:25
 Sunrise .. 04:51 Maghrib .. 18:51
 Zohr 11:51 Isha 20:24

Kuwait reiterates pledge to curb human peddling

Cooperation with global partners crucial: Mansouri

VIENNA, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and its readiness to continue cooperating with international partners to strengthen efforts to combat human trafficking.

The statement was delivered by Diplomatic Attache at Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zainab Mansouri, during the 16th meeting of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, held within the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in Vienna.

Mansouri expressed Kuwait's appreciation

for the efforts of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in monitoring the implementation of the protocol.

She said Kuwait, since acceding to the protocol in 2006, has viewed the review mechanism as a key tool for strengthening the effective implementation of international commitments through promoting dialogue among states, exchanging expertise and building institutional capacities.

Mansouri noted that Kuwait continues to develop its national framework for combating human trafficking through an integrated institutional approach, highlighting the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2025-2028).

Kuwait is also working to further develop its national referral mechanism to improve the

identification of victims and ensure they receive protection and care in line with international standards, she added.

She pointed out that the Permanent National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, chaired by the Minister of Justice, plays a central role in coordinating national efforts.

Mansouri said Kuwait places great emphasis on institutional capacity-building by implementing specialized training programs for judges, public prosecutors and law enforcement personnel.

Mansouri also underscored the importance of ensuring that the review mechanism keeps pace with evolving patterns of organized crime.

She reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to continued cooperation with UNODC, states parties and all international partners in support of joint efforts to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.



Zainab Mansouri



HH the Amir

HH the Crown Prince

Amir receives Crown Prince, Premier & senior ministers

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness also received Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Crown Prince audiences

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Sunday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Other Voices

What does Brian McGlinchey say?

By Ahmad alsarraf

IN a recent lecture, Brian McGlinchey, a former soldier and independent American author, who is known for revealing some of the secrets of the September 11, 2001 attacks, said, "I will begin my analysis of US-Israeli relations with a journey to an unexpected place... to December 20, 1989, when the United States invaded Panama, overthrew Noriega, kidnapped him, and took him into custody, where he later died in prison."

A total of 350 American soldiers were killed or wounded in that operation. Several weeks later, I had a conversation with a Panamanian military colleague, and I apologized to him for what we had done to his country. Without hesitation, he replied, "We knew you were coming; the Israelis had informed us."

About 36 years ago, under the scorching Panamanian sun, my journey began to understand the unusual relationship between two nations - one, the greatest economic and military power in history, and the other, a tiny state. Yet, the smaller state systematically forces the superpower to transfer its wealth, unconditionally adopt its geopolitical agenda, and take extraordinary measures on its behalf, often inflicting grave damage on our interests and causing the death, displacement, and despair of millions of innocent people.

U.S. support for Israel comes at a high and multifaceted price. The costs of this relationship are not measured solely in dollars, but we will begin there, bearing in mind that every dollar is an interest-bearing loan. The figure most often cited is \$3.8 billion, which is the amount the United States committed under the current memorandum of understanding between the two parties.

However, the total aid often far exceeds this amount. In the first year following October 7, 2023,

Congress approved an additional \$8.7 billion in aid to Israel.

Israel is among the largest recipients of U.S. aid. Since its founding, it has received roughly twice as much aid as the next-largest recipient. Although it accounts for only 0.12 percent of the world's population, it has received between 20 percent and 30 percent of total U.S. foreign aid since World War II.

This becomes even more striking when we consider that Israel is among the wealthiest countries in the world. It ranks 20th globally in GDP per capita, ahead of countries such as Austria, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Israel receives twice as much aid as the United States provides to all of sub-Saharan Africa combined, in addition to the substantial sums that the United States spends on Israel's behalf.

Moreover, the aid provided to Egypt is, in effect, aid that benefits Israel, as it has contributed to Israel's security under the Camp David Accords. The same applies to Jordan. Bureaucratic mechanisms are used to obscure the true extent of aid to Israel by arranging separate arms deals for amounts that fall just below the threshold requiring congressional reporting. As a result, Israel receives more than half of all U.S. military aid worldwide.

Surprisingly, Israel's share of military aid is so large that its supporters lobby the United States to increase military assistance to other countries. This occurs despite the fact that U.S. law prohibits providing aid to countries that possess nuclear weapons and have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Iran has signed the treaty, whereas Israel has not.

Therefore, the wars in Iraq and Syria alone have cost nearly \$3 trillion, largely to appease Israel. Part of this amount has been directed towards veterans' welfare - patriots who joined to defend America but ended up becoming pawns in the hands of a small state on the other side of the world."



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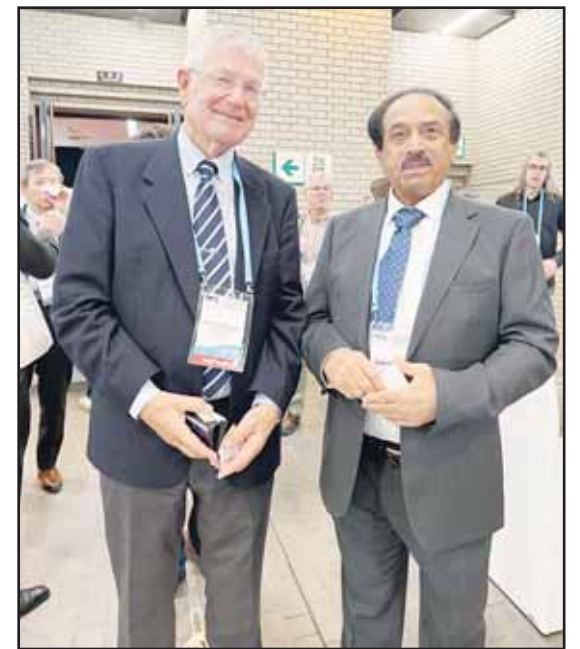
alsarraf

World hails Kuwait for providing safe drinking water: Dr Al-Muzaini

'KWA is committed to supporting plans to reinforce water security'



Dr. Saleh Al-Muzaini with Katsuki Kimura from Hokkaido University.



Dr. Saleh Al-Muzaini with Dr. Hallvard Ødegaard

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Kuwait Water Association (KWA) participated in the international conference "Micropollutants, Microbarriers and Smart Technologies for Water Sustainability," organized by the World Water Organization in Sapporo, Japan. The event brought together senior executives from the water sector, internationally renowned experts, scientists, researchers, engineers, water utility managers, representatives of universities and scientific research centers, as well as executives from leading industrial companies specializing in water technologies. The Association was represented by its Chairman, Dr. Saleh Al-Muzaini.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Muzaini said that the Association's participation reflects its strategic commitment to supporting Kuwait's efforts to develop ambitious plans for strengthening water security management, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035 for sustainable water resources.

He noted that this commitment also aligns with international initiatives and global frameworks, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, particularly SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). He emphasized that these efforts support the country's policy of safeguarding water resources to ensure long-term water security, while recognizing water's direct contribution to food security and advancing sustainable water management across Kuwait.

Dr. Al-Muzaini explained that the Association's participation highlighted Kuwait's water management framework, the Government Water Action Program, and statistical projections of the country's current and future water demands. He added that Kuwait's achievements in securing safe drinking water despite its extremely limited natural water resources received significant recognition and praise from international experts and scientists attending the specialized global event.

In his scientific paper, "Integrating Drinking Water Management with Treated Wastewater for Water Sustainability in Kuwait," Dr. Al-Muzaini emphasized that maximizing the use of treated wastewater is a key priority within Kuwait's comprehensive development plans. He noted that the Kuwait Water Association has actively supported national efforts by proposing and implementing water-related initiatives aimed at strengthening integrated water management and improving water production efficiency in line with sustainable development objectives. He also stressed the importance of continued collaboration with relevant government entities to achieve fully integrated water resources management.

Dr. Al-Muzaini stated that the conference addressed a broad range of issues related to water conservation, including presentations on advanced technologies capable of controlling

and eliminating suspended contaminants in water, smart technologies for purifying contaminated drinking water, artificial intelligence applications for water sustainability, and computational engineering models designed to optimize the management of waterborne pollutants. Discussions also focused on best practices for sustainable water resources management.

He added that an accompanying exhibition showcased the latest technologies for treating contaminated water—one of the major sources of environmental pollution—presented by leading technology manufacturers. The conference also featured a series of specialized scientific workshops aimed at strengthening technical cooperation and promoting policies that support long-term water sustainability.

Dr. Al-Muzaini concluded by noting that the conference presented numerous scientific proposals offering practical solutions for securing clean, safe water through the integration of smart systems and advanced technologies. He added that the event explored several key dimensions of water sustainability, including water availability and accessibility, the role of water in enhancing food security and improving nutrition, and strategies to strengthen water's contribution to sustainable development. The conference also produced a number of recommendations that provide a clear roadmap toward achieving ambitious and resilient water.

Two accords inked at OECD headquarters

Kuwait committed to tax transparency

PARIS, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait signed two international agreements at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris on Sunday, reaffirming its commitment to international tax transparency standards and strengthening cooperation in combating tax evasion and avoidance.

The agreements were signed by Ministry of Finance Undersecretary Aseel Al-Saad Al-Munaifi and include the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement on the Exchange of Country-by-Country Reports and the CRS MCAA 2.0 Addendum on financial account information exchange.

The agreements support Kuwait's implementation of the Country-by-Country Reporting standard under the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework, enabling automatic exchange of multinational enterprise reports among tax authorities to improve transparency and compliance.

The Country-by-Country Reporting agreement provides participating tax authorities with aggregated information on multinational companies' revenues, profits, taxes and business activities across jurisdictions, strengthening tax risk assessment capabilities and helping identify potentially unlawful tax practices effectively.

Meanwhile, the CRS MCAA 2.0 Addendum broadens the scope of automatic financial account information exchange by introducing additional reporting requirements covering financial accounts and assets, reflecting evolving interna-



KUNA photo

Kuwait signed two international agreements at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris.

national financial standards and enhancing cross-border tax cooperation.

The Ministry of Finance said the agreements reinforce Kuwait's position within the global financial transparency framework, protect the domestic tax base, promote tax fairness and demonstrate the country's commitment to supporting a more transparent international financial system.



Top and above: Some pictures taken at the ceremony.

'Purest Hearts' ... talents of Down Syndrome

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): In a display of community solidarity and joy, the Kuwaiti Down Syndrome Association hosted a specialized event titled "Purest Hearts," highlighting the creative potentials, resilience, and societal inclusion of youth with Down syndrome.

Held at the association's headquarters in the Khaldiya district, the event offered an interactive platform for self-expression.

Approximately 40 participants, alongside their families, engaged in drawing workshops, skill competitions, and athletic games designed to foster cognitive development and social integration.

The event was organized in strategic coordination with the "Manara Team," a volunteer organization licensed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Underscoring a growing institutional commitment to disability

empowerment, the gathering drew the active participation of 15 community support organizations.

Beyond recreational activities, the program featured health and behavioral awareness sessions, including specialized presentations on pediatric dental hygiene.

The day concluded with a communal dinner and the distribution of honorary gifts aimed at strengthening civic bonds among attendees, families, and volunteers.

KUNA photos

After crisis: Is Kuwait ready for the future?

"COUNTRIES sometimes experience exceptional events that reveal their strengths and weaknesses. Crises often become true tests of the readiness of institutions and the ability of societies to adapt and persevere," columnist **Bassam Fahad Thunayan Al-Ghanim** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The rapidly evolving circumstances and challenges Kuwait faced in 2026 are a national opportunity to reflect, review, and build for the future. Events have shown that the concept of national security is no longer limited to protecting borders or possessing military capabilities alone, but has become an integrated system encompassing political, economic, food, pharmaceutical, water, cyber, and energy security. This also includes the readiness of infrastructure and vital services, and the state's ability to continue performing its functions under various circumstances.



Al-Ghanim

"On the political front, Kuwait has once again demonstrated its national unity, the cohesion of its society, and the support of citizens and residents for their leadership and institutions. Political security is the foundation upon which the other elements of security are built, and it is the bulwark that protects the state from unrest, tensions, and external influences.

"Regarding border and military security, recent developments have underscored the importance of continuing to develop defense capabilities, strengthening surveillance and early warning systems, and enhancing coordination among various security and military agencies.

"The next phase requires serious consideration of localizing part of the military industry and transferring modern defense technologies, rather than relying solely on imports. This can be achieved by building strategic partnerships with advanced countries and companies.

"The importance of investing in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies and their associated defense systems is paramount, whether for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes or for protecting vital installations and borders.

"Modern warfare has demonstrated that possessing the knowledge and capacity for local manufacturing and development has become an essential component of comprehensive national security.

"On the economic front, experience has shown that diversifying income sources, strengthening local investments, and supporting the private sector are integral parts of national security. A state capable of maintaining its economic activity during times of crisis is best positioned to overcome such crises with minimal losses.

"Global experience has also proven that food and medicine security represent the first line of defense for societies in exceptional circumstances. This necessitates the continued building of strategic reserves, the development of supply chains, and the enhancement of self-sufficiency in vital sectors as much as possible.

"Water security is no less important, especially in a region where water is a sensitive strategic resource. Cybersecurity has also become one of the most important modern defense fronts. Cyberattacks can disrupt vital facilities and services that are no less important than any physical infrastructure.

"Another important lesson is the need to strengthen energy security and protect oil and electricity facilities and vital infrastructure, as they are the lifeblood of the national economy and essential services. Experience has also demonstrated the importance of developing flexible education systems and online learning, enabling educational institutions to continue fulfilling their mission regardless of circumstances.

"The need has also become apparent to raise awareness of First Aid and train as many citizens and residents as possible, because the first few minutes in an emergency often mean the difference between life and death. Hence, the importance of expediting the completion of the National Center for Emergency, Crisis, and Disaster Management project to serve as a unified national umbrella for coordination, planning, and response.

"Recent events have reaffirmed the importance of having strategic alternatives in the air transport sector, studying the establishment of new airports, and distributing vital infrastructure across multiple locations.

"Successful nations do not wait for the next crisis to prepare; rather, they learn from every crisis and turn every challenge into an opportunity for development.

"Today, Kuwait has a historic opportunity to move from crisis management to building comprehensive national preparedness through a long-term strategy that integrates political, border, military, economic, food, wa-

ter, cyber, and energy security within a single national vision.

"True security is not only what we possess today, but also what we prepare and build for future generations."

Also:

"During my visit to my loved ones at Sulaibikhat Cemetery on Sunday afternoon, June 21, I was pleased by the excellent organization implemented by Kuwait Municipality at the beginning of this month, which involved scheduling burials after dinnertime," Kuwaiti writer **Zaid Al-Jalawi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"I hope Kuwait Municipality will prohibit the receiving of condolences at cemeteries to ease the burden on grieving families. People would welcome such a step, as it would spare them the hardship of customs that are not rooted in our society.

"Cemetery workers would also benefit, as it would reduce their workload, particularly the physically demanding work during the intense midday heat of summer.

"As I mentioned in a previous article, cemeteries are meant for burial of the deceased, not for receiving condolences. Those wishing to offer condolences can do so at the family's home. I hope the day comes when we no longer see death announcements ending with the phrase, "Condolences will be received at the cemetery."

"Although this practice places an additional burden on grieving families, many feel obliged to follow this unfamiliar custom.

"In Islamic countries, condolences are generally not received within cemetery grounds. I hope Muslims will take the initiative to ease the burden on themselves and on those who attend funeral prayers and burial processions.

"I hope the family of the deceased will simply announce that condolences will not be received at the cemetery and express their gratitude to everyone who attended the funeral, as well as to those who were unable to attend because of unavoidable circumstances.

"A funeral should not become a social gathering or an occasion to criticize those who could not attend. Funeral rites are different from wedding celebrations where it is permissible to express disappointment at those who did not attend.

"Wedding celebrations are worldly occasions that can be postponed out of respect for the passing of a loved one, or at the very least conducted without loud music and singing.

"Once again, I thank Kuwait Municipality for its decision to schedule burials after the Isha prayer. I also hope the Municipality will issue a regulation prohibiting the receiving of condolences at cemeteries."

"As children, we used to sing a rhyme at school, especially when the weather became hot and humid in the days before classrooms were equipped with air conditioning," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"On those sweltering days, classes would be suspended, and the children would sing. "School is canceled today. Why, why? We reached the school gate, only to be told to go back home."

"That old rhyme carries many meanings that can be applied, in a different way, to the current situation, particularly following Kuwait Municipality's announcement that it will impose fines on those it considers to be encroaching on state property.

"Temperatures around the world are rising significantly. Europe, long known for its relatively cool climate, has already begun experiencing unusually high temperatures since the start of this summer. In France, Spain, Italy, and other countries, dozens of people have died because of the extreme heat, even though the season is still in its early stages.

"Kuwait is among the hottest countries in the world, where summer temperatures often exceed 50 degrees Celsius. In such conditions, shade is not a luxury but a necessity, especially for people and their vehicles.

"In the past, urban planning did not adequately take this into account. As a result, some citizens made use of vacant spaces in front of their homes by installing awnings or planting trees, helping to provide shade and reduce the intense heat.

"The measures currently being taken seem to overlook the extreme temperatures, especially given the growing issue of electrical load increases that lead to power outages every summer for up to three hours a day in some areas. In this situation, some institutions appear to take decisions that, in their impact, are as harsh as the intense sun and heat faced by Kuwaitis."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

9 exam center heads dismissed for violations

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Ministry of Education announced that it has taken immediate action against several examination centers where grade 12 students are sitting their final exams, based on reports submitted by the national supervisor at the Inspection and Audit Office of the Minister of Education, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The violations included breaches of exam

regulations and instructions.

Minister of Education Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei issued directives to dismiss the heads of two examination centers where violations occurred and refer them for immediate administrative investigation. This brings the total number of dismissed examination center heads during the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade exams to nine. This underscores the ministry's

commitment to strictly enforcing regulations.

Al-Tabtabaei also directed the immediate appointment of new administrative and supervisory teams to manage the relevant examination committees, ensuring the smooth continuation of the exams.

The ministry emphasized that regulations and bylaws will be applied impartially and fairly to all, without exception.



Map shows total closure of Fourth Ring Road opposite Yarmouk.

4th Ring Road opposite Yarmouk totally closed

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The General Traffic Department announced the full closure of Hussein Bin Ali Al-Roumi Road (Fourth Ring Road), opposite Yarmouk, for maintenance works, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The closure includes the lane extending from the upper bridge of the Fourth Ring Road intersection with Airport Road (No. 55) to the intersection of the Fourth Ring Road with King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Road (Riyadh Road). The closure will begin on Sunday, June 28, and will continue until Friday, August 7.

Traffic will remain open via the Airport Road (No. 55) intersection towards Salmiya for vehicles coming from Jahra towards Salmiya during the closure period.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department announced the full closure of the roundabout on Othman Bin Affan Street to traffic coming from all directions, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

Traffic is being diverted through the openings and U-turns located before the roundabout. The closure began on Friday, June 26 and will continue until Tuesday, June 30.

11 warnings in building safety breaches: report

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Kuwait Municipality announced that its safety inspection teams in Hawally Governorate conducted field visits to construction and renovation sites to ensure compliance with safety and security requirements, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The campaign resulted in the issuance of 11 warnings, along with 6 safety certificates, 10 release letters for financial guarantees, one storage permit, and 14 hygiene and safety certificates.

Affirming that such field visits will continue, Kuwait Municipality stressed that it will not tolerate any violations of safety and security requirements at construction and renovation sites.

It emphasized that necessary legal measures will be taken against those who fail to comply.



Farwaniya Governorate photo Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives Dr. Abdullah Mutair Al-Shuraika, Director of the Center for Promoting Moderation, affiliated to the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

Solidify moderation and up social cohesion: Gov.

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah on Sunday met with Dr. Abdullah Mutair Al-Shuraika, Director of the Center for Promoting Moderation, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

During the meeting, they discussed several topics of mutual interest, as well as ways to strengthen cooperation between the governorate and the center and raise community awareness.

The Governor underscored the importance of concerted efforts among various state institutions to solidify the principles of moderation and strengthen social cohesion. He commended the role of the center in promoting moderate thought and reinforcing national and humanitarian values.

On the other hand, Al-Shuraika expressed his gratitude to the Governor for the warm reception, while affirming the commitment of the center to expand cooperation for the benefit of the community and to spread the culture of moderation.

Coast Guard pulls out an SUV, jet ski stuck in sand

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Coast Guard successfully retrieved an SUV and a jet ski that were stuck in the sand near Abdullah Port, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to security sources, a report was received by the relevant authorities stating that a person was struggling to pull a jet ski with an SUV in a coastal area when the SUV also became stuck in the wet sand. Coast Guard patrols immediately responded to the scene, successfully retrieving both the SUV and jet ski and removing them from the area.

The source urged beach-goers to exercise caution when using vehicles in areas near the sea, especially during high and low tide.

Drug addict stabs expat

Drunk delivery biker to be deported

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: An Arab expatriate born in 1988 was detained on charges of attempted murder and drug possession, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report of an attempted murder near a local bank in Khaitan. A patrol was immediately dispatched and found an Arab expatriate, born in 1991, with a stab wound to his hand.

The assailant was apprehended by passersby, who restrained him and kept the knife until police arrived.

It was determined that the assailant was under the influence of drugs, and a search revealed he was in possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia.

Drunk delivery biker: Director General of Farwaniya Security Command ordered the referral of an Asian delivery worker to the Administrative Deportation Department for being drunk in public, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to a security source, an official at a food supply company reported to the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room that a worker (born in 1989) was causing problems among company staff and appeared to be under the influence of alcohol.

Security patrols immediately responded to the report and apprehended the worker, who was found to be heavily intoxicated and unable to stand for more than one minute.

Wild party revelers held: The Capital Support Patrol referred four Kuwaiti citizens to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD), as well as an Arab expatriate to the Deportation Department, after they were apprehended inside a black SUV in possession of two bottles of imported liquor, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to security sources, the support patrol approached the vehicle after hearing loud noises coming from the passengers while passing through Bneid Al-Gar. After stopping the vehicle, it was found that the driver was an Arab expatriate, and three of the passengers appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Personal data removed: The Court of Appeals overturned a lower court ruling that dismissed the lawsuit filed by a citizen who requested the deletion of his criminal case data from the computer records and systems of the Ministries of Justice and Interior.

The higher court ordered both ministries to delete the data and remove all consequences.

The citizen filed the lawsuit, stating that he had several criminal cases in the past, but the continuous appearance of this data in official electronic systems negatively impacted his future, employment opportunities and social life despite the completion of the legal proceedings.

Attorney Mohammad Al-Haifi explained that the ruling affirmed his client's right to have his data and criminal record removed from official electronic records, as the legal requirements were met.

Kuwaiti acquitted in fraud case

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Court of Appeals acquitted a citizen of embezzling KD40,000 in a case, in which he was accused of receiving the money for promoting products and goods owned by a company, valued at about KD5 million, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

Attorney Hussein Al-Asfour, lawyer for

the citizen, argued that the elements of the crime of embezzlement are not present, asserting that the incident is merely a civil and commercial dispute between the two parties and does not meet the criteria for a criminal offense. He explained that the disputed sums are related to the commercial relationship and transactions between the parties.

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Door of recovery always open, drugs-hit can visit rehab center: minister



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah announces the conclusion of the awareness exhibition for the comprehensive national anti-drug campaign, "A Homeland That Protects You", held at The Avenues Mall.

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA) : Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah announced Saturday the conclusion of the awareness exhibition for the comprehensive national anti-drug campaign, "A Homeland That Protects You", held at The Avenues Mall.

Speaking to KUNA upon the wrapping-up of the exhibition, organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the minister underlined that the campaign's awareness programs would last for a whole month.

She emphasized that the campaign's efforts would extend over a whole month through ongoing campaigns and

media messages aimed at reaching the widest possible segment of society.

The minister noted that these purposeful programs signal the political leadership's interest, directives and staunch commitment to the well-being of the Kuwaiti family and to measures that protect society and safeguard its youth.

She emphasized that the door of recovery is always open, calling on any individual or family in need of assistance and treatment to visit the Ministry of Health's Addiction Treatment Center in order to receive the necessary medical care and psychosocial support in absolute confidentiality.

Stick to salary scales, co-ops told

PADA promotes 275 staff, nods bonus for 1,057

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) approved the promotion of 275 employees and the granting of periodic bonuses to 1,057 employees.

The decisions included the promotion of 146 employees by selection, in addition to 129 employees promoted based on seniority, in accordance with the regulations and bylaws governing employee affairs.

PADA also approved the disbursement of periodic allowances to 1,057 employees.

All decisions were issued after the completion of administrative and technical procedures and a review of payrolls by the relevant authorities, ensuring fairness and transparency.



Stick to pay scale: The Ministry of Social Affairs mandated that cooperative societies adhere to the approved salary scale, allowances, and bonuses, and not exceed the financial limits stipulated in the relevant ministerial decrees.

In a circular addressed to the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS), the ministry called on all cooperative societies to comply with the provisions of the Cooperative Law, its executive regulations, and relevant decrees, particularly regarding the organizational structure and the minimum and maximum limits of salary scales, allowances, and job benefits.

The ministry emphasized that the boards of directors and executive administrations of cooperative societies bear full responsibility for adhering to these regulations and for taking the necessary measures to prevent any financial or administrative violations.

'Merging bodies key reform step'

'Work system streamlined'

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tariq Al-Jalahma described the Cabinet's decision to abolish the Public Authority for Youth and merge it with the Public Authority for Sports under the name "Public Authority for Youth and Sports" as a step in the state's administrative reform program.



Dr. Al-Jalahma

In a press statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sunday, Dr. Al-Jalahma explained that the merger aims to create a more efficient and flexible government body capable of meeting future requirements and providing integrated services to youth and athletes.

He emphasized that the merger goes beyond administrative reorganization and reflects a comprehensive vision to unify efforts, eliminate overlapping responsibilities, optimize human and financial resources, and improve the quality of services and programs in line with best institutional practices.

Dr. Al-Jalahma noted that youth and sports are fundamental pillars in building the Kuwaiti individual.

He added that the coming phase will witness a more integrated work system

linking youth programs with sports projects to discover talents, develop capabilities, expand community participation, and empower youth to actively contribute to national development.

The new authority will prepare a unified strategy focused on developing infrastructure, enhancing sports investment, expanding partnerships with government entities, the private sector, and civil society institutions, as well as supporting youth initiatives in innovation, entrepreneurship, and volunteering - all in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, he said.

He underlined that the merger will be implemented through a well-studied transitional plan to ensure continuity of services without affecting beneficiaries, while preserving employee rights and benefiting from national expertise.

Dr. Al-Jalahma affirmed that the ministry and the authority will continue working as one team with all relevant bodies - especially sports clubs and federations - to ensure the success of this phase and achieve its objectives.

The coming period will be one of qualitative development based on governance, transparency, and innovation, serving the interests of Kuwait's youth and athletes and strengthening the country's regional and international standing in youth and sports field, he explained.

He concluded that this decision reflects the political leadership and government's commitment to developing government work, advancing the youth and sports sector, and providing a modern institutional environment capable of creating achievements and fulfilling the aspirations of Kuwait's youth as key partners in development and future-building.

News in Brief

\$170mIn sought for Jerusalem

ISTANBUL, June 28, (KUNA): Kuwait participated in the fifth meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Al-Quds Empowerment Fund for Development, chaired by the Vice Chairman of the Board, Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah, and attended by representatives from the Kuwaiti Zakat House, the Chairman of the Union of Kuwaiti Charitable Societies, and political, economic, and development figures.



The meeting is part of the Fund's efforts to promote sustainable development projects in Jerusalem and support the economic and social resilience of Jerusalemites.

The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Prince Turki Al-Faisal, with the participation of representatives from the Turkish government, the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in addition to representatives from numerous governmental, private, and non-profit donors, as well as charitable organizations from various Arab and Islamic countries and beyond.

The meeting's main topics included reviewing the progress achieved since the fourth meeting, evaluating the development projects in Jerusalem,

adopting strategies for the next phase to strengthen the resilience of Jerusalemites through sustainable projects, and exploring mechanisms to expand partnerships with governments, financial institutions, and the private sector.

The meeting also discussed plans to mobilize financial resources and expand endowment investments to ensure the sustainability of funding. The meeting presented a vision to mobilize approximately USD 170 million to finance sustainable development projects within Jerusalem through Arab, Islamic and international partnerships.

Three contracts added: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy added three contracts to its current fiscal year procurement program aimed at developing and modernizing the main electricity transmission substations that connect power generation plants to the distribution stations serving consumers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The first contract is for the supply, installation and commissioning of digital fault recorders for 132 kV main substations in various areas. These devices record electrical faults and accurately identify the type and location of each fault.

The second contract is for the supply and installation of electrical protection devices for 11 kV, 33 kV and 132 kV systems at 25 substations in the northern part of the country.

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High-tech project integrates solar, AI-controlled greenhouses

Smart farm takes shape in Kuwait

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The 'Sustainable Economic Farm Using Modern Technologies' project will be completed in 2031, with the aim of strengthening food security and reducing imports, say reliable sources.

Sources said the current completion rate of the project is at 55 percent, stressing that the government is keen on establishing three greenhouse units with high-precision control over humidity, temperature and lighting, equipped with 6,000 square meters of solar panels.

Sources revealed that the project includes the development of six ponds and reservoirs for sustainable aquaculture using 3,000 square meters of solar panels, a recycling unit to utilize agricultural waste, various models for crop, livestock and fish production, and an integrated pest management system.

Sources stated that animal feeds

will be produced using raw materials, while certain agricultural production models will be developed based on the required agricultural commodities. They confirmed that this project will strengthen the food security system, especially since the country relies on imports for about 95 percent of its food needs.

Sources added that the project will raise the efficiency of agricultural practices in crop, vegetable, fruit, livestock, fish and poultry production through the use of modern technologies. They also indicated that the project will minimize agricultural losses by establishing modern storage facilities and light industries for agricultural crops, while curbing energy waste in agricultural facilities and irrigating crops using renewable and alternative energy sources.

Meanwhile, food security expert and former member of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for

Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Mohammad Al-Furaih stressed the need to expedite the implementation of agricultural development projects in order to strengthen food security and reduce imports. He pointed out that the recent geopolitical crises in the region negatively affected supply chains and threatened global food security, leading to higher shipping costs and food prices.

He emphasized the necessity to establish at least two feed mills through the public or private sector, with a production capacity of not less than 100 tons per hour to cover the poultry, livestock and cattle needs of the country. He stated that the feed mills will regulate feed production rates and eliminate the haphazard mixing of feeds. He explained that producing one kilogram of chicken meat globally requires around 1.4 kilograms of fodder. He added that the haphazard feed mixing results in a kilogram of

chicken meat requiring about 2.4 kilograms of feeds.

He also affirmed the importance of forming a technical team to determine production specifications, vaccination standards and sterilization procedures.

Regarding the problem in marketing fresh eggs, Al-Furaih said small companies suffer from limited development capabilities and high transportation costs, suggesting that the solution lies in the establishment of a unified center for collecting and sorting eggs. He hinted on the possibility of utilizing broken eggs by converting them into sterile liquid eggs for restaurants, in accordance with international standards.

He then underscored the need to learn from advanced international models, such as vegetable sorting centers in the Netherlands and neighboring countries, as well as to collaborate with the concerned consultants from high-level agricultural universities.



AU building

AU awarded Investors in People Gold Accreditation

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The Human Resources Department at the Australian University (AU) has been awarded the Investors in People (IIP) Gold Accreditation, an internationally recognized benchmark of excellence in people management and workplace practices.

Investors in People is the international standard for people management, defining what it takes to lead, support, and manage people effectively to achieve sustainable results. Underpinning the standard is the Investors in People framework, reflecting the latest workplace trends, essential skills and effective structures required to outperform in any industry. Investors in People enables organizations to benchmark against the best in the business on an international scale.

Ms. Kathrine Chapman, CEO of Investors in People, said: "We'd like to congratulate the Australian University. Gold accreditation on We Invest in People is a fantastic effort for any organization and places the Australian University in fine company with a host of organizations that understand the value of people."

The achievement marks a significant milestone in the University's journey of continuous improvement, progressing from Standard Accreditation to Silver, and now to Gold. The accreditation reflects Australian University's strong and sustained commitment to best people practices, employee engagement, leadership, and fostering a culture that enables staff and faculty to perform at their best.

Ms. Dalal Dawwas, Senior Manager of Employees Relations said: "Progressing Gold accreditation, reflects AU's sustained commitment to strengthening its people practices and organizational culture where our people feel supported, valued, and empowered to contribute to the University's aspirations. This achievement reinforces our belief that engaged staff and faculty are central to academic excellence and to creating the environment our students need to thrive."

Commenting on the award, Professor Isam Zabalawi, President of AU, said: "At Australian University, we firmly believe that delivering an exceptional student experience begins with investing in our people. This accreditation further reinforces our commitment to expanding our regional and international reach while strengthening our alignment with global standards of organizational excellence and workplace culture."

Further commenting, Ms. Sondos Al Haddad, Senior Manager - Human Resources said: "We are proud to achieve the IIP Gold Award, which demonstrates our strong commitment to people practices and our continuous pursuit of higher standards."

The IIP Gold Accreditation reaffirms the University's belief that investing in its people is fundamental to achieving long term organizational success and positive student outcomes, while reinforcing its commitment to continuous improvement and excellence across all areas of the institution.

Continued from Page 1

The framework

Today, the opportunity is available, despite Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri's attempts to portray the agreement as a "discord." Berri's statement is not surprising, as the agreement undermines the influence he enjoyed through Hezbollah and Iran.

It is well-established in political science that every step must be carefully calculated, especially concerning Lebanon, which is considered a barometer of the region. The peace process in the region has begun, and neither Lebanese nor Iranian voices will stop it, particularly since the memorandum of understanding between Tehran and Washington may not hold for long because the Iranian Revolutionary Guard continues to attack US allies and maintains camps in Lebanon.

The recent Iranian attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain are Iranian attempts to circumvent the agreements reached in Switzerland and Islamabad.

The Lebanese-Israeli framework agreement has begun to pose a challenge for the Iranian regime, especially due to Arab and international diplomatic support. The deployment of the Lebanese army in the areas from which Israel is withdrawing is affecting Hezbollah and Iran's calculations.

The Lebanese must deal wisely with these new developments. They must be wary of falling into Hezbollah's trap of threatening a return to civil war. Hezbollah leaders are well aware that brandishing the specter of civil war is like playing with fire, which will burn Hezbollah first.

Today, there is no place in Lebanon for the voice of terrorism. The entire region has begun liberating itself from Iranian arrogance. That era has ended irrevocably.

As the saying goes, "Every era has its state, every people its power, and nothing lasts the same forever."

The moment of Lebanon's liberation or salvation can be seen on the horizon.

The death of the Iranian regime will start from Beirut.

Fresh missile

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman issued strong condemnations of the attacks, rejecting them as violations of international law and affirming full support for Kuwait and Bahrain. The statements warned that continued escalation threatens regional security and called for restraint and diplomacy.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi described the attacks as a direct threat to regional stability and said they undermine ongoing efforts to restore security. He reaffirmed the bloc's backing for all measures taken by Kuwait and Bahrain.

Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon also condemned the strikes, stressing their impact on sovereignty and regional stability. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged swift international action to prevent further escalation, while Egypt called for adherence to diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions.

Arab and international organizations echoed the condemnation. Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit called for an immediate halt to what he described as Iranian aggression, warning of its impact on regional peace efforts. Arab Parliament Speaker Mohammed Al-Yamahi rejected the attacks as an unjustified escalation threatening Arab security.

Yemen described the strikes as part of a broader pattern of destabilizing behavior, warning of risks to regional and international security, including air and maritime navigation. The Muslim World League also condemned the attacks, calling them violations of international law and humanitarian norms.

Iran launched drone and missile attacks Sunday targeting Bahrain and Kuwait in response to U.S. airstrikes that hit the Islamic Republic, and threatened a "complete halt" in negotiations to end the war if Washington continues its attacks.

Efforts to reopen the Strait of Hor-

muz without Iran's direct oversight sparked the crossfire now gripping the region and have imperiled negotiations for a lasting ceasefire. A multinational maritime body overseen by the U.S. Navy said Saturday that it would expand a route near Oman for both inbound and outbound traffic, setting up a new flashpoint with Tehran.

The global community has long considered the strait an international passageway, despite its sitting in Iran and Oman's territorial waters. In recent days, Iran has twice attacked vessels going through a route on the Omani side of the strait backed by a United Nations agency.

Iran insists that it alone must govern the strait, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf that once carried a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated the claim during a state visit to Iraq on Sunday.

"Any interference in this matter, any attempt to establish new or separate arrangements from those currently being carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran, will only lead to further complications, delay the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and increase the level of tension, just as over the past two nights we witnessed incidents in the Strait of Hormuz that led to an increase in tension and confrontation," he said in Baghdad.

The United States and Iran are still debating the terms of an interim peace deal, including shipping arrangements through the strait, removing a U.S. blockade and sanctions and addressing the future of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium. Under the memorandum of understanding signed earlier this month, the U.S. and Iran have 60 days to iron out the details.

The strikes threaten to torpedo the deal before it can be finalized. Continued fighting in Lebanon, where an Israeli soldier was killed by Hezbollah fire early Sunday, has also threatened the agreement.

In a social media post, Trump said the U.S. had "struck Iranian missile and drone storage locations, and coastal radar sites, for violating the Cease Fire Agreement, AGAIN!" He warned of a point where the U.S. may no longer be able to be reasonable "and will be forced to militarily complete the job."

"If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The incident follows a similar back-and-forth that occurred just days prior, when an Iranian drone struck a merchant vessel off the coast of Oman on Thursday, and the U.S. military retaliated with strikes.

Iran has consistently said the ceasefire must include a halt to fighting in Lebanon, where Israel has been battling the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group. Days after the U.S. and Israel launched the war against Iran in February, Hezbollah began firing at Israel in solidarity with its Iranian allies. Israel responded with an invasion that has occupied large swaths of southern Lebanon and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Israel has said it will not withdraw its troops until Hezbollah is disarmed.

Last week, Israel and the Lebanese government signed a framework agreement to end the conflict. But their deal did not include Hezbollah or Iran. Hezbollah has criticized the deal and rejected calls to disarm.

On Sunday, Araghchi again said during a visit to Iraq that the U.S. must force Israel to halt attacks and withdraw. Israel occupies around 600 square kilometers (231 square miles) in southern Lebanon, which it says it needs as a security buffer to halt attacks from Hezbollah.

But sporadic clashes have continued between Israel and Hezbollah.

The leader of the Iran-backed group said Saturday that Hezbollah would continue fighting until Israel withdraws from Lebanon, adding that the group considers the Israeli-Lebanese agreement signed on Friday to be "nonexistent."

Lebanese soil will not be used for attacks against Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, Lebanon's Interior Minister Ahmad Al-Hajjar said on Sunday, hailing bilateral security ties as having set a precedent for pan-Arab cooperation.

Lebanese security forces have developed a solid rapport with their counterparts in Kuwait and other Gulf Arab countries, keeping coordination steady in the fight against organized crime, including drug trafficking, the visiting Lebanese interior minister told a press conference.

On his visit to Kuwait, he said it aims to follow up on the visit of his Kuwaiti opposite number First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah to the Lebanese capital Beirut, citing it as a "watershed" in bilateral security relations.

The minister went on to say that he intends amid his visit to look into the progress Kuwaiti security services have made, while security cooperation includes the exchange of information and joint operations, both of which led to "tangible results" in the fight against drug smugglers.

He spoke of "rapid changes" around the region that have ushered in progress in the fight against narcotics, expecting security cooperation between Kuwait and Beirut to remain on an upward trajectory in a bid to clamp down on drug traffickers and manufacturers who pose a grave threat to regional security, the minister underlined.

The Lebanese minister assured Kuwaitis of their security when visiting Lebanon, saying that security forces there would cater to their needs and do their utmost to protect their "interests and properties" alike, he added.

The minister said that Lebanon is pursuing a diplomatic path, facilitated by the US that aims to liberate occupied Lebanese territories and redeploying the Lebanese army and security forces to the southern region in a bid to "prevent the presence" of any armed groups that lie outside the framework of the state.

In response to a question about the Lebanese government's efforts to limit arms to state forces, the minister said the measure aims to avert slipping into a new "civil war that the Lebanese people wanted to avoid at all costs, while he also expressed his confidence in the ability of state forces to regain full control of Lebanese territories.

GCC energy

The ADNOC delegation included several of the group's senior executives, while the Kuwaiti side was represented by Sheikh Nawaf, Kuwait Oil Company CEO Ahmad Al-Eidan, and several chief executives of KPC subsidiaries and KPC managing directors.

Kuwait debt

This came during Al-Sumait's meeting with six working groups tasked with reviewing debtors' files, in the presence of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Awatif Abdul Latif Al-Sanad, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Technical and Administrative Affairs Nouf Al-Qabandi, and several officials from the ministry and the General Department of Sentences Enforcement.

Minister Al-Sumait explained that the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the head of the General Department of Sentences Enforcement Counselor Abdullah Al-Qasimi, has developed a mechanism for reviewing cases by forming six working groups tasked with studying files according to governorates, in preparation for presenting them to execution judges for review and to ensure they meet the required conditions.

The approved regulations require the existence of an active enforcement file and a valid enforcement order, with priority given to the most needy cases, particularly those facing imprisonment or arrest warrants, alimony cases, private housing rent cases, and personal debts. Consideration is also given to the seniority of the enforcement file and the value of the debt, with the amount allocated to each debtor not exceeding KD 10,000, whether in one file or multiple files.

Minister Al-Sumait expressed his gratitude and appreciation to all do-

nors who contributed to the success of the debt relief campaign, emphasizing that this achievement reflects the values of solidarity and compassion that characterize Kuwaiti society.

Saudi helicopter

The secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi extended his condolences to Saudi Arabia on Sunday after a helicopter belonging to state oil giant Aramco crashed in the kingdom's eastern city of Ras Tanura.

The six-member bloc stands in solidarity with Riyadh in the wake of this horrific incident, he said in a statement, wishing Saudi Arabia continued peace, security and development.

Secretary-General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Khaled Al-Otaibi expressed his sincere condolences on Sunday to Saudi Arabia following the crash of a Saudi Aramco helicopter in Ras Tanura, which claimed the lives of all those on board.

In a press statement, he extended his heartfelt condolences to the leadership, government and people of Saudi Arabia, as well as to the Ministry of Energy, Saudi Aramco and the families of the victims.



Appreciation and Gratitude

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Future Communications Company, which falls on 29th June, we extend our deepest appreciation and sincere gratitude to our valued customers, as well as to all ministries, institutions, founders, shareholders, employees and everyone who has contributed over the years to supporting our journey and strengthening our position.

We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to operating in accordance with the highest standards of quality and professionalism, as we continue to evolve, achieve further excellence and build on our success.



Florida's 'Alligator Alcatraz' immigration detention center closed: gov

New law could create list of all immigrants illegally living in Mississippi

LOS ANGELES, June 28, (AP) — A new Mississippi law will authorize the state's top law enforcement agency to compile a list of all immigrants illegally living in the state.

What's to be done with that information is a bit open-ended. But the law set to take effect Wednesday is sparking alarm among immigrant advocates, who fear it could become a new tactic to target immigrants in conjunction with President Donald Trump's plan to deport millions of people lacking legal approval to live in the US.

The law says the state Department of Public Safety "may use all reasonable lawful investigative means available" to determine the number and identities of all "illegal aliens" in Mississippi. That includes collecting their names, addresses, country of origin and whether they are an adult or minor. It also includes noting any criminal history and the date, location and status of deportation proceedings.

The department is directed to share information on those suspected of violating laws with state and local authorities. The measure neither requires nor prohibits the database from being shared with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Republican state Sen. Angela Hill, who sponsored the measure, said states have a right and obligation to assist the US government in discouraging illegal immigration, which she said facilitates crimes such as human and drug trafficking.

The new law "seems like commonsense to me," Hill said. "In order to address the problems caused by illegal immigration, we need to understand the magnitude of the problem. Identifying the number and identity of illegal aliens in Mississippi is a concrete way to better understand the problem."

Nationwide, states already have enacted more than 100 immigration-related laws this year, according to an Associated Press tally.

In Republican-led states, those measures generally have aligned with Trump's agenda by requiring local sheriffs to sign cooperative agreements with ICE, reinforcing eligibility restrictions for public benefits and directing election clerks to check voter rolls against the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements system in an attempt to flag noncitizens.

Democratic-led states generally have pushed back against Trump with new laws banning cooperative pacts with ICE, forbidding ICE tactics like wearing masks and restricting immigration enforcement actions in schools, hospitals



The Mississippi Capitol is seen in Jackson, Miss on July 6, 2020. (AP)

and other sensitive locations without judicial warrants.

The closest thing to Mississippi's new law appears to be a 2021 executive order by Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. That measure directed the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to "use all lawful investigative means available" to determine the number and identities of all "illegal aliens" who had been transported from the nation's southwest border to Florida.

The Florida agency did not respond to an AP request for information about the results of the executive order.

Trump's administration, meanwhile, has stepped up enforcement of a decades-old federal law that requires noncitizens to register with the U.S. government.

The Mississippi law envisions more than a one-time count. It prescribes an ongoing effort to keep track of immigrants illegally in the state for the next

two years. That could get complicated as people overstay visas, apply for new forms of legal status and move into and out the state.

"You can be undocumented today, and then have status tomorrow, and then lose it again next month, and then regain it three months from now," said Efrén Olivares, vice president of litigation and legal strategy at the National Immigration Law Center, a nonprofit that advocates for low-income immigrants.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The Florida Everglades immigration detention center known as "Alligator Alcatraz" has served its purpose, Gov. Ron DeSantis said Thursday, closing the makeshift facility heralded by the Trump administration and denounced as inhumane by civil rights groups.

DeSantis said the center, which opened in July 2025, was always meant to be only temporary until more permanent detention centers could be secured and federal officials now have that capacity.

"We stepped up because there was a gap, but my hope is that they'll be able to handle that," the Republican governor said at a news conference at the facility.

Officials announced a temporary closure of the facility earlier in June and sent all of the detainees to other facilities, saying hurricane season made it unsafe to keep them in the Everglades.

Immigration advocates said the center's tents were never safe or humane for holding people. Detainees at the facility have talked about their difficulty accessing lawyers and described poor physical conditions, including worms in the food, toilets that didn't flush, floors flooded with fecal waste, and mosquitoes and other insects everywhere.

They described large white tents with rows of and rows of bunk beds surrounded by chain-link cages. The air conditioning could shut off abruptly in the sweltering Florida heat. Detainees could go days without showering or getting prescription medicine.

Advocates for immigrants said the closure of "Alligator Alcatraz" does nothing to stop the harm to people who spend months in custody as their families suffer. The Florida Immigrant Coalition said the only winners were corporations and contractors who profited millions of dollars as Republicans pushed an immigration emergency that does not exist.

America

Kentucky floods kill 4 - Gov Beshear: Four people have died due to flooding from thunderstorms in Kentucky, Gov. **Andy Beshear** said Saturday, and he declared a state of emergency with additional rainfall expected.

Flash flood warnings were in effect Saturday for parts of Kentucky and Indiana amid heavy rainfall, according to the National Weather Service.



Beshear

The agency late Saturday afternoon said between 4 and 10 inches of rain had already fallen in some parts of southwestern Indiana, with more possible. Beshear's office said up to 7 inches of rain were expected in parts of his state through the late evening.

He said on social media that three people had died in Madison County and one in Jackson County due to flooding.

Two of the flood victims, a man and a woman, were found dead inside their house after floodwaters inundated a section of the city of Richmond, Kentucky, and trapped residents inside their homes, according to the Madison County coroner's office.

Another victim was extracted from a vehicle trapped in floodwaters on Tates Creek Road near Lexington, the coroner's office said. (AP)



'3 firefighters killed while tackling wildfires': Three firefighters died and two were injured while tackling fires on the Colorado-Utah border, the US Wildland Fire Service reported Sunday.

The agency - created earlier this year to streamline firefighting and fire reduction across public lands - said the firefighters had been part of an interagency response to the Knowles and Gore fires on Saturday.

"The US Wildland Fire Service stands united with the USDA Forest Service in grief and in our unwavering support for the loved ones left behind. Their bravery, dedication, and sacrifice will never be forgotten," it said in a statement on Facebook.

Wildfire activity has intensified across the western United States, as consecutive days of hot, dry and windy weather have fueled flames in Utah, Arizona and elsewhere as new fires popped up across the region. (AP)

Touring Trump's Washington: How United States president putting imprint on nation's capital

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP) — The United States is celebrating its 250th year. And what better way to mark that anniversary than with an American summer staple - a trip to the nation's capital.

But visitors to Washington will find that the city is undergoing tremendous change, courtesy of President Donald Trump's takeover.

Since returning to office 17 months ago, Trump has demonstrated a continuing fixation with the District of Columbia. The Republican president has slapped his image and name on buildings, torn down storied structures, altered others, started massive construction projects and deployed armed military personnel.

The traditional tourist sights remain. But with slight detours, an open mind and a critical eye, the ambitious walker can see all the ways the president has pushed to remake the capital.

On the eve of the United States' birthday, take a trip with The Associated Press across a changing Washington.

We start our tour at Union Station and Metro Center, the city's main transit hubs. Notice the Greco-Roman architecture of the former, the Brutalist design of the latter.



Members of the National Guard walking in the lobby of Union Station in Washington on May 27. (AP)

Now see the ongoing, indefinite deployment of armed National Guard troops there and in many other parts of the city.

National Guard members from the district and several states have been in the city since August 2025, deployed under an emergency order issued by Trump in what he called a bid to fight crime. Trump has portrayed the deployment as a lifeline for the city. They will be here for most, if not all, of 2026 and are expected to number 5,000

this summer.

It's not the first time the military has deployed to the capital. Troops were in Washington throughout the Civil War, to quell riots after Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 assassination and, famously, hours into the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot.

But in Trump's Washington, Guardsmen at street corners and metro stations have become an increasingly normal part of the city's scenery.

And no one knows when they will

leave.

Exit Union Station, take in the view of the Capitol and turn right down Pennsylvania Avenue. There sits a building now synonymous with the Department of Government Efficiency, the Trump administration's effort to shrink the federal government.

The US Agency for International Development was the first major federal agency targeted by then-DOGE leader Elon Musk in the remake of the federal government, when cost-cutting measures prompted the terminations of tens of thousands of workers. USAID spent billions on humanitarian aid worldwide and was credited with saving millions of lives over time.

By eliminating 90% of foreign aid contracts, the Trump administration effectively cut some \$60 billion in funding.

After workers cleared their desks in February 2025, the USAID offices on Pennsylvania Avenue were repurposed for other government uses.

The shuttering of the agency also contributed to a massive increase in unemployment in the region where about one-fifth of the workforce lives.

Many workers still ask: When their lives were upended, what was saved?

Ukrainian strike sets fire to oil refinery in Russia

KYIV, Ukraine, June 28, (AP) — Ukraine kept up its heavy drone assault on Russia, setting fire to a major oil refinery in the south and killing at least two people, Russian authorities said Sunday.

Ukraine has markedly stepped up its long-range attacks on Russian military industries and energy facilities in recent months, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for its invasion - now in its fifth year - and make Russians feel the consequences.

The campaign has choked Russian fuel supplies and military deliveries. According to Western analysts, it has also slowed Moscow's efforts on the battlefield, heaping pressure on the Kremlin to come to the negotiating table.

"Tonight, our 'long-range sanctions' reached two oil refineries in Russia," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on the Telegram messaging app on Sunday. "Each (strike) means a reduction in the resources that fuel the Russian war machine, and another step toward peace."

Debris from downed Ukrainian drones sparked a blaze at the refinery in Slavyansk-na-Kubani, a town in Russia's Krasnodar region, east of occupied Crimea, according to Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev. The falling debris killed one person in Slavyansk and injured another in a nearby village, according to regional authorities.

The Slavyansk site is one of southern Russia's major refineries, processing close to 4 million tons of crude per year, according to its operator's website.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, sappers remove a fragment of the Russian missile in a residential neighbourhood following an air attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on June 28. (AP)

ing presidency of the Council of the European Union. (Xinhua)



France skydiving plane crash kills 11: A skydiving plane crashed in northeastern France on Sunday, killing all 11 people on board, the region's prefect said.

The plane crashed near the city of Nancy at 11 a.m. local time, Yves Ségué, the prefect of the Meurthe-et-Moselle region, told reporters near the scene of the crash.

Emergency services responded immediately, and authorities were collecting witness statements, he said. (AP)



3 injured in blast at Bosnia steel plant: Three workers were injured after a gas explosion triggered a fire at the largest steel production complex in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), local authorities said on Friday.

The explosion occurred late afternoon on Thursday during the transfer of liquid oxygen from a tank operated by industrial gas supplier Messer, according to the steelworks Nova Zeljezara Zenica.

Police in central BiH's Zenica-Doboj Canton said one of the injured people suffered serious burns and was transferred to the Clinical Center of the University of Sarajevo for treatment. (Xinhua)

Europe

Lithuania prez submits PM nomination: Lithuanian President **Gitanas Nausėda** submitted the nomination of Mindaugas Sinkevičius as prime minister to Seimas, the country's parliament, after political parties agreed to form a new governing coalition.

The Seimas is expected to vote on the nomination on Tuesday. Sinkevičius is also scheduled to meet parliamentary factions that day.

The nomination came after a political reshuffle in which the ruling coalition ended its agreement with political party Nemuno Austra and former Prime Minister Inga Ruginienė stepped down, paving the way for a new government majority.

Nausėda said Sinkevičius' experience in government, local administration and municipal representation would help build broader political consensus and facilitate constructive policymaking.

He stressed the need to maintain defence spending at no less than 5 percent of gross domestic product, ensure efficient use of security funding, continue support for Ukraine, and prepare for Lithuania's upcoming



Nausėda

Burnham distances himself from Starmer, but may be stuck with premier's policies

LONDON, June 28, (AP) — Britain looks set to get a change of tone at the top, replacing stolid, unpopular Prime Minister Keir Starmer with popular, affable Andy Burnham.

But the charismatic Burnham may have difficulty - at least initially - distancing himself from policies set in motion by his predecessor.

Burnham, the former mayor of Greater Manchester who was sworn into Parliament hours after Starmer announced his resignation on Monday, will be constrained by the platform the center-left Labour Party was elected on that decisively ended 14 years of Conservative rule in 2024.

It's not entirely clear how he'll navigate those limits and bring his unique brand of politics to the revolving-door post that would make him the 7th prime minister in a decade. He'll lay out his economic vision in a speech next week.



Labour candidate Andy Burnham gestures, surrounded by supporters at the Stubshaw Cross Community and Sports Club as voting is underway in the Makerfield by-election, in Ashton-in-Makerfield, England on June 18. (AP)

Serbia's populist President Vucic to resign within weeks as election nears

BELGRADE, Serbia, June 28, (AP) — Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic said Saturday he will resign his post within weeks, paving the way for early elections following youth-led protests that shook his tight grip on power.

Vucic did not specify exactly when he would resign or when an election, either for Parliament or for a new president, could be held.

He has said in the past that he could leave the post amid speculation that he would try to switch to the formally more powerful position of prime minister of the Balkan country.

Vucic, who is currently serving his second term, cannot run again for president, according to Serbia's election law. Both regular presidential and parliamentary elections are due next year.



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic waves a Serbian flag during a rally of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in Belgrade, Serbia on June 27, where he announced that he will resign in the coming weeks. (AP)

"I will be president for several weeks more and then I will submit my resignation," Vucic told thousands of his supporters in downtown Belgrade. He said he will help his right-wing Serbian Progressive Party at upcoming elections.

"We will win more convincingly than ever before," he said, telling the crowd that this was probably the last time he addresses them as Serbia's president.

University students behind more than a year of protests against Vucic's increasingly autocratic rule in Serbia have been demanding early parliamentary elections for over a year but Vucic so far has refrained from setting the date.

Vucic has gradually tightened his grip on power since his populist party took over the Serbian government 14 years ago.

Asia

Quake off northeastern coastline hits Japan: A magnitude-6.1 earthquake rattled northeastern Japan early Sunday, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency, the latest in a series of major temblors hitting the region.

No tsunami warning was issued and there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. But the recent spate of quakes coming during typhoon season has set off worries about mudslides.

Sunday's quake struck off the coast of Iwate Prefecture at 7:25 a.m. local time, with a depth of about 40 kilometers (25 miles), and shook Aomori Prefecture and nearby areas, which are near Mount Fuji and other nearby regions.

Japan is prone to quakes and tsunamis. A series of quakes have hit lately, including a 7.2 magnitude quake that struck Thursday in the area close to Sunday's quake. That magnitude was revised upward from a preliminary estimate.

The agency has warned other quakes may follow. A magnitude 5.6 earthquake shook Yamanashi Prefecture and nearby areas, which are near Mount Fuji and west of Tokyo, on Friday. (Xinhua)

3 drown in Philippine lake: Two girls and a boy drowned in a lake in Santa Rosa city in Laguna province, south of Manila, on Thursday evening, police said on Friday.

According to a police report, the children were playing in the rain before entering the lake and wading into a deeper portion of the water.

Their grandmother later noticed that the children were drowning and neighbors managed to pull the

victims from the water. They were taken for treatment to a nearby hospital, where they were declared dead. (Xinhua)

Severe winds batter NZ's lower North Island: Severe winds and heavy rain disrupted transport and infrastructure across New Zealand's lower North Island on Friday, with authorities urging residents to stay home as a deep low-pressure system moves over the country.

The Wellington Airport in New Zealand's capital has canceled most flights on the day, with about 200 services expected to be grounded because of strong winds. Conditions are forecast to ease on Saturday, allowing flights to resume.

The MetService has extended orange strong wind warnings for Wellington, Taranaki and parts of Marlborough, forecasting gusts of up to 130 kmh in exposed areas.

A peak gust of 153 kmh was recorded at Wellington's Mount Kaukau. Severe weather is expected to persist into Friday night before gradually easing, according to the MetService.

Emergency services said they had responded to dozens of incidents, including fallen trees, damaged roofs and debris. One man was seriously injured after a tree struck his vehicle in New Plymouth.

Power outages have affected roughly 4,000 customers in the Wellington region, with authorities warning restoration could take several days due to unsafe working conditions, Radio New Zealand reported.

Flooding, slips and road closures have been reported, particularly in Lower Hutt of northeast Wellington. Motorists have been advised to avoid non-essential travel. (Xinhua)



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, meets with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in Beijing, capital of China, June 26. (Xinhua)

China's top legislator meets Bangladeshi PM

Zhao Leji, chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, met with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Friday in Beijing.

Zhao said China is willing to work with Bangladesh to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, carry forward and practice the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, deepen political mutual

trust, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and promote the continuous development of China-Bangladesh relations.

China's NPC is ready to work with Bangladesh's National Parliament to deepen the exchange of experience in legislation and supervision and create a favorable legal environment for practical cooperation between the two countries, Zhao said. (Xinhua)

International Organization for Migration says over 6 million could be affected

Frustration grows in Venezuela as earthquake death toll reaches 1,430

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela, June 28, (AP): Tensions flared Saturday as desperation grew in Venezuela's state of La Guaira as rescuers and civilians searched for earthquake survivors and the death toll rose sharply to 1,430.

Families reported at least 68,900 people missing Saturday, three days after the one-two punch of 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes devastated the South American nation.

Venezuelans looking for loved ones and neighbors used shovels, heavy equipment, ropes and bare hands atop mounds of toppled concrete throughout La Guaira, one of the hardest-hit states. They were joined by a growing number of international rescue teams who began to climb through the rubble, offering a small glint of hope to anguished families.

Tensions peaked over what many Venezuelans viewed as an inadequate response by the government, whose soldiers, firefighters, police and military cadets were evidently underprepared to respond to the scope of the tragedy. Frustration was amplified by efforts to project the image of a robust state response.

Aid agencies consider the first 48 to 72 hours as crucial for retrieving people alive, though that can be extended if they have access to food and water. Venezuelan officials said 17 flights carrying more than 1,600 rescue team members had touched down by Saturday.

As 72 hours passed since the earthquakes struck, many felt every minute ticking away as they ran out of time to rescue people alive.

"There's a pile of bodies over there from last night. Newborn babies," said Mileidy Romero, who was among those searching in the seaside town of Caraballeda. "At 8 p.m. (yesterday) there were people alive down there, and they haven't bothered to rescue them. We've located several bodies, and they haven't helped us recover them either. What are they waiting for?"

Acting President Delcy Rodríguez said on state television that more than 14,000 members of the military and police are patrolling the area, where access is now blocked and special permits are required to enter. But many in disaster zones said they had seen little of their government.

Some people climbed the remnants of buildings and cried out names, hoping for any proof of life. Dust coated coastal communities. In punishing heat, more people wore masks as the stench of decomposition spread. In other parts of La Guaira, teams loaded stacks of bodies - some in white bags, other naked - onto white trucks from the ground of a dirt hospital parking lot, where they were being identified.

Without hard hats or other gear, rescuers and civilians instead wore motorcycle helmets as they searched piles of debris that were once people's belongings: Eddie Murphy and



Soldiers guard an area damaged by the earthquakes in La Guaira, Venezuela, on June 27. (AP)

Nemo DVDs, a kitchen sink, mattresses and shoes.

Some, frustrated by the government's response, blocked an excavator from leaving the site of a collapse and pulled the operator from its cabin shortly after state workers took selfies in front of flattened buildings and left without helping. The ruling party's officials often take selfies to show participation in government-related events.

A few feet away, at least five bodies wrapped in blankets.

A member of the crowd, Yeison Marcano, said those searching had

received some assistance from an investigations unit but neither police nor the National Guard helped.

"They came to eat arepas and take pictures to make it look like they were working," Marcano said. "They didn't even get their uniforms dirty like we have. We've been here for three days."

A minute later, a man tried to grab a firefighter, shouting and cursing. "Silence! Silence!" rescuers shouted as they tried to confirm whether someone was trapped alive.

Meanwhile, an older man was pulled from the rubble of a public

housing building. Visibly disoriented, he begged a nurse for water. He fought with personnel who put him into a pickup truck, screaming, "My family! My family!"

The International Organization for Migration said over 6 million people could be affected, some 2 million in the capital, Caracas, alone.

Experts said the destruction was amplified by the quick succession of shallow quakes. For days, smaller aftershocks occasionally shook the capital, Caracas and areas hit by the quakes, including one measuring 4.8 on Saturday.

The disaster poses a huge challenge for Rodríguez, the former vice president who took office in January after the US capture and removal of then-President Nicolás Maduro. Venezuela has been facing economic disarray for more than a decade, and many people reject the legitimacy of the political movement Rodríguez represents.

Search teams and foreign aid continued to arrive from Mexico, the U.S., Brazil, El Salvador, France and elsewhere.

On Saturday, Mexican rescue teams climbed over collapsed buildings and pushed their heads into holes in the pancaked concrete to search for signs of life, occasionally hearing movement.

"We're rescuers from the Mexican military, if there's anyone down there still alive, make noise or scream. Now!" one man shouted.

For many, the images of international aid teams arriving and climbing through the rubble alongside them offered a glimmer of hope. Yonahí Regalado has been calling out the names of her sister and 1-year-old nephew and godson since 1 a.m. the day after the earthquakes until aid workers began to arrive.

"It doesn't matter who it is, whoever, whether it's family or somebody else. If there is anyone alive, let's get them out," she said, as helicopters circled overhead.

Small moments of humanity mixed with grief and terror.

Rescue teams carefully handed down a 18-day-old swaddled in pink blankets from a building after 12 hours of searching for the baby boy and his mother, Telemundo reported. One 69-year-old woman, saved by Salvadoran teams, asked for a Coca-Cola upon being pulled out of the rubble, Salvadoran authorities said.

One video showed a Venezuelan rescuer comforting an elderly woman trapped beneath the rubble, scared that the structure would cave in if she moved.

"The roof won't cave in. If it falls, I'll be here with you," he said.

Simón Bolívar International Airport, which serves Caracas, was badly damaged. One runway was operational as U.S. teams worked to repair the crucial thoroughway, Jeremy Lewin, a senior State Department official in charge of foreign assistance, told reporters.



Paramilitary soldiers examine a damaged area after a militant attack at the provincial headquarters of the paramilitary Pakistan Rangers in Karachi, Pakistan on June 28. (AP)

Pakistan's military says three soldiers killed in Karachi militant attack

KARACHI, Pakistan, June 28, (Agencies): Pakistan's military said Sunday that three members of its paramilitary Rangers force were killed and four others wounded in fighting after militants launched an attack the previous night on a regional headquarters in the southern port city of Karachi.

A militant rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into the provincial headquarters of the paramilitary Pakistan Rangers in Karachi on Saturday night, triggering an intense exchange of gunfire with security forces, according to police and witnesses.

In a statement, the military said security forces had killed three attackers and captured a fourth, who was wounded. It identified the captured suspect as an Afghan national.

The military said operations were continuing in the area and warned that Pakistan would retaliate against those responsible for the assault. Pakistan has carried out airstrikes inside Afghanistan in recent years, saying they targeted militants responsible for attacks inside Pakistan. Kabul has repeatedly denied allowing militant groups to use Afghan territory to launch cross-border attacks.

The militant group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a breakaway faction of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed the attack shortly after it occurred.

The military described the group as an Indian proxy, but provided no evidence to support the allegation. There was no immediate comment from India, and New Delhi

has denied similar allegations in recent years.

President Asif Ali Zardari paid tribute to the three Rangers personnel "martyred" in the assault, expressed condolences to their families and wished the wounded a speedy recovery in a statement issued by his office. He also praised the sacrifices of Pakistan's security forces in the fight against militancy and reaffirmed the nation's resolve to eliminate terrorism.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also condemned the attack and praised security forces for repelling the assault.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in militant attacks targeting police and security forces in recent years.

The military said operations were still underway to eliminate any remaining accomplices of the attackers.

Also:

PESHAWAR, Pakistan: A magnitude 5.9 earthquake struck parts of Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan on Saturday, sending panicked residents across Pakistan rushing out of their homes, authorities said. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The epicenter was in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department. The US Geological Survey measured the quake at magnitude 6.1.

Tremors were felt in Islamabad, as well as in the eastern province of Punjab and the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which borders Afghanistan. It was also felt in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Milei's top aide, Cabinet chief resigns over spiraling corruption scandal in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, June 28, (AP): Argentine President Javier Milei's Cabinet chief and close ally, Manuel Adorni, resigned Saturday following a corruption scandal that has roiled the libertarian government, undermining its flagship campaign pledge to stamp out endemic graft in the political elite.

The departure of Adorni - who, as Milei's former spokesperson, emerged in 2023 as the face of his harsh austerity program and anti-corruption drive - costs the president one of his most trusted and longtime aides.

A political outsider like the president, Adorni became a lightning rod for criticism in recent months as revelations about his extravagant spending and real estate purchases dominated headlines. Milei named Adorni Cabinet chief last year, giving him huge influence over negotiations with governors and other stakeholders in Congress.

Federal prosecutors are investigating Adorni for illicit enrichment stemming from alleged excesses of the sort that Milei, and Adorni him-



Argentina's President Javier Milei, right, embraces Manuel Adorni, a contender in the upcoming elections for the Buenos Aires city legislature, during the closing campaign rally in Buenos Aires, Argentina on May 14. (AP)

self, regularly criticized Argentina's left-leaning populist opposition. Adorni denies wrongdoing.

"For the first time since December 10, 2023, I am going against your wishes," Adorni wrote in his resignation letter to Milei that he

posted to social media, referring to the date that Milei entered office. "Thank you for always trusting me and thank you for supporting me through this unjust, painful and exhausting process for me and my family."

Gunmen attack farming community, killing at least 15 in northwest Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria, June 28, (AP): Gunmen attacked a farming community in a part of northwestern Nigeria that has been no stranger to violence killing at least 15 people, an official said Saturday.

The assault took place Friday in the Talata Mafara area of conflict-battered Zamfara state. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack in the region, which has experienced recurring violence.

Abdullaziz Yari, a lawmaker representing the district at the national level, described the assault on the community as a "terrorist attack" in a statement on social media.

Yahaya Yari, no relation to Abdullaziz Yari, is the elected local government chairman overseeing the area. He appeared in a viral video during the victims' funeral on Friday evening, where he made an emotional appeal to President Bola Tinubu and the junior defense minister, who hails from the area, to intervene and end the widespread killings.

Earlier this month, gunmen killed 17 farmers and wounded at least 13 others as they worked in their fields in Goron Namaye in another part of Zamfara state.

An insurgency in northern Nigeria has killed thousands



Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu gives a joint statement with Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, in Brasilia, Brazil, Monday, Aug. 25, 2025. (AP)

of people and displaced millions over the years, according to the United Nations.



Group photo featuring Khaled Khalifa, Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, and attendees.

Celebrating 10 years of partnership, supporting forcibly displaced people

UNHCR and Zain commemorate World Refugee Day

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in the State of Kuwait, and Zain Group, a leading TechCo providing innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications in the Middle East and Africa, organized an event to mark World Refugee Day and to celebrate a decade of partnership dedicated to supporting forcibly displaced communities around the world.

The event, held under the patronage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, convened representatives from government entities, private sector partners, civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic community, and other supporters of humanitarian action.

During the event, Zain's contributions to UNHCR's campaign over the past decade were showcased, such as winter and Ramadan campaigns that enabled the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance to more than 11,000 individuals (2,000 families) across the MENA region through the provision of cash assistance. This partnership has helped

vulnerable refugees and displaced families meet their basic needs while preserving dignity and improving their living conditions during times of crisis.

The programme also included a panel discussion featuring Jennifer Suleiman, Chief Sustainability Officer at Zain Group, on the role of corporations in addressing growing humanitarian needs, as well as the role of artificial intelligence and emerging industries in supporting development and humanitarian action. Supporting Kuwaiti partners were acknowledged in recognition of their support to UNHCR throughout the past years, which is a solid reflection of Kuwait's role as a humanitarian center, and its steadfast commitment to support humanitarian efforts to help those in need.

Khaled Khalifa, Senior Advisor and UNHCR's Representative to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, commended the decade-long partnership with Zain, stating: "Over the past decade, Zain Group has emerged as a strategic humanitarian partner,



Al-Gharabally speaking during the ceremony.

having recognized early on the vital role of the private sector in supporting humanitarian action and amplifying its impact. This partnership has contributed to providing humanitarian assistance to thousands of refugees and displaced individuals and families, while also supporting the most vulnerable individuals through programmes aimed at preserving human dignity and helping families rebuild their lives." He added: "In the spirit of this occasion, we were keen to launch a special slogan celebrating this distinguished partnership with Zain Group under the theme: 'Giving is the Finest of Deeds', in recognition of a decade of collaboration, generosity, and shared commitment."

On his part, Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Zain Kuwait CEO, said: "Over the past decade, our partnership with UNHCR has reflected Zain's belief that meaningful progress is built through collaboration, shared responsibility, and sustained impact. Guided by our '4WARD - Progress with Purpose' strategy and our purpose of creating 'Better Lives and

Lasting Connections', we remain committed to using our regional reach, digital capabilities, and solid partnerships ecosystem to support communities in times of need and help create a more inclusive and compassionate world. On World Refugee Day, we reaffirm our solidarity with forcibly displaced people and our commitment to advancing humanitarian action that protects dignity, strengthens resilience, and leaves a lasting positive impact."

This year, World Refugee Day is marked under the theme "Until Everyone is Safe", reaffirming safety as a fundamental human right and a shared societal lifeline that benefits everyone. At a time when global displacement continues to affect millions of people around the world, the campaign calls for renewed solidarity with refugees and greater support for host countries and communities who continue to show generosity, while highlighting the importance of leadership, strong partnerships, and sustained investment in humanitarian action.

Main market gains

Boursa Kuwait ends mixed

KUWAIT CITY, June 28, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Sunday's trading session on a mixed note, with the General Index edging up by 6.42 points, or 0.07 percent, to close at 8,693.82 points. Trading activity saw 237.9 million shares change hands across 16,988 cash transactions, with a total value of KWD 62 million (approximately USD 201.7 million).

The Main Market Index posted solid gains, rising 91.37 points, or 1.05 percent, to reach 8,834.29 points. A total of 142.6 million shares were traded through 9,420 transactions, valued at KWD 24.2

million (around USD 78.7 million).

In contrast, the Premier Market Index declined by 11.30 points, or 0.12 percent, closing at 9,115.14 points. Trading volume stood at 95.2 million shares executed via 7,568 transactions, with a total value of KWD 37.7 million (approximately USD 120.3 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index advanced by 97.22 points, or 1 percent, to settle at 9,772.06 points. The index recorded 119.1 million shares traded across 6,766 cash transactions, with a value of KWD 19.9 million (about USD 64.7 million).

Kuwait marks 80 years since first oil export

KOC unveils new enterprise risk platform

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) has provided a vital information platform, as part of the development of the comprehensive risk management system, in coordination with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation KPC, say reliable sources.

Sources pointed out that this system saves time and effort, indicating the total cost is about \$1 million. Sources said the system eases the preparation of risk reports of KPC and its subsidiaries, and improves the decision-making process.

Sources confirmed that KOC is keen on using the latest digital technologies to improve decision-

making and achieve more efficient operational results, adding that these efforts include using advanced data analysis systems, such as industrial intelligence and automation of processes to improve performance and reduce costs.

Sources revealed that the company optimizes drilling operations by applying techniques, which provide predictive analyses contributing to the improvement of the quality of decisions. The company aspires to move forward in the implementation of the Wadi Ahmadi Innovation Project.

Meanwhile, the overall risk management team organized a two-day training workshop on the new institutional risk management system in the oil sector with the participation of the representatives of risk management teams in the eight subsidiaries of KPC.

Risk analyst in the Risk Management Team Sheikha Al-Subaie presented a detailed explanation of the functions of the modern system and how to use it in the introduction, modernization and effective risk data. Al-Subaie reviewed the tasks of other officials, particularly the user management mechanisms and groups within the institutional work environment.

Moreover, sources revealed that June 30, 2026 is the 80th anniversary of the first Kuwaiti oil export loaded on a British tanker at 7:00 am on 30 June 1946 under the patronage and in the presence of HH the then Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. A huge number of British officials, including British Political Agent in Kuwait Colonel Harold Dickson and many citizens attended the event.

As part of the 'Summer Together' campaign

talabat and Al Salam Hospitals hold First Aid workshop for delivery riders



Snapshots from the First Aid training workshop for delivery riders.

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: As part of talabat's "Summer Together" campaign for riders and Al Salam Hospitals' ongoing commitment to community health and safety, talabat and Al Salam Hospitals hosted a comprehensive First Aid training workshop for delivery partners.

In alignment with the Ministry of Interior's instructions and safety directives regarding outdoor work during the summer months, this initiative emphasizes keeping riders safe and hydrated. By equipping participants with crucial, life-saving skills, both organizations reinforce their shared commitment to rider health, ensuring delivery partners are fully prepared to handle emergencies and prioritize their wellbeing during the peak of summer.

"Supporting our riders goes beyond ensuring they have the tools to do their jobs — it means investing in their health, safety, and overall wellbeing," commented Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait. "Through workshops like this, we aim to equip them with practical skills and the confidence to respond effectively in emergencies and make a meaningful difference when it matters most."

"At Al Salam Hospitals, we believe that healthcare is not limited to clinical

- Strategic partnership embodying sustainable corporate social responsibility
- Empowering delivery riders through a specialized first aid training workshop

care alone but also includes empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to protect their health and wellbeing. We are delighted to partner with talabat on this initiative, which supports delivery riders with practical first aid training and reinforces the importance of preparedness, safety, and community awareness. Such collaborations reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing public health and creating a positive impact across Kuwait," said Dr. Raghad Abdulmutaleb Al-Kazemi, Deputy CEO and Chief Medical Officer at Al Salam Al Assima Hospital.

To ensure maximum accessibility, the workshop was delivered in both English and Arabic to accommodate participants' diverse language preferences. Combining theoretical instruction with hands-on practical training, the work-

shop covered essential first aid topics, including how to recognize and respond to medical emergencies such as heart attacks, strokes, choking incidents, low blood sugar, and common injuries. Given the summer season, special emphasis was placed on the prevention, recognition, and management of heat-related conditions, helping riders stay safe while working during the hotter months.

This workshop builds directly on talabat's comprehensive "Summer Together" campaign for riders, which features a range of supportive initiatives including the "Summer Kit Relief" and designated "Rest Stops" to ensure rider comfort, hydration, and heat mitigation during the intense summer months. Furthermore, talabat continues to spearhead Road Safety Week—a collaborative national initiative that unites government entities and prominent community organizations to champion a safer working environment for riders across Kuwait.

Complementing this effort, Al Salam Hospitals leverages its expertise to advance community health education. This training is part of the hospital's ongoing commitment to delivering vital health awareness, first aid, and CPR training to schools, government bodies, banks, and private sector organizations throughout Kuwait.

Reaffirming its leadership in wealth management and private banking

NBK Wealth named Kuwait's Best for UHNW Clients by Euromoney

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: NBK Wealth, the region's leading wealth management group, has been named Kuwait's Best for Ultra-High-Net-Worth (UHNW) Clients by Euromoney magazine as part of its 2026 Private Banking Awards. The accolade recognizes the Group's leadership in wealth management and its success in delivering highly personalized banking services and innovative investment solutions that enhance the client experience.

Euromoney's selection criteria for this award focused on institutions that demonstrated exceptional business performance through superior client service, innovative product offerings, and a clear strategic vision, while upholding the highest standards of fiduciary responsibility. The award recognizes institutions that excel in providing comprehensive wealth management solutions, ranging from traditional portfolio management and advisory services to advanced digital platforms and alternative investment opportunities.

The award for Kuwait's Best for Ultra-High-Net-Worth (UHNW) Clients reflects NBK Wealth's commitment to delivering tailored solutions designed specifically for this client segment, including bespoke portfolio management, access to a diverse range of global investment opportunities, and high-caliber advisory services, with a strong focus on building long-term client relationships.

The award also underscores the strength of the NBK Wealth brand, which is the largest wealth management group in Kuwait and among the largest in the region. Its strength is derived from the reputation and legacy of National Bank of Kuwait Group, a leading financial institution regionally and globally, whose distinguished track record is marked by numerous achievements and international accolades recognizing its excellence across the banking industry.

This recognition reflects the Group's exceptional performance and unwavering commitment to delivering innovative personalized banking services and



The Group aspires to be the partner of choice in wealth management, empowering clients to build and preserve lasting legacies for generations to come.

sophisticated investment solutions that seek to meet clients' aspirations in line with the highest global standards. It also highlights the strength of its team, the effectiveness of its investment strategies.

Euromoney's Private Banking Awards are among the most prestigious global awards programs in the wealth management and private banking industry. The awards recognize institutions that demonstrate excel-

lence and innovation in the sector, with winners selected based on rigorous criteria that include strong growth, strategic initiatives, and digital excellence.

NBK Wealth's role extends beyond seeking to help clients grow their wealth. The Group strives to be the trusted partner and preferred choice in wealth management by delivering innovative, specialized, and comprehensive solutions that evolve with clients' needs,

seek to create lasting value, and generate meaningful impact. Through this approach, NBK Wealth seeks to help clients build enduring legacies that can be preserved and passed on to future generations.

About NBK Wealth

NBK Wealth is a locally leading wealth management institution, one of the largest in the region, and a cornerstone of NBK Group, one of the largest financial institutions in the Middle East. This provides it with a strong foundation and extensive experience in local, regional, and global markets. It also has a broad geographic presence across nine cities in five countries, offering a comprehensive range of services.

The Group follows an approach focused on providing customized solutions tailored to each client's needs, seeking to meet the unique financial objectives of Ultra-High-Net-Worth individuals and institutions. It also offers a comprehensive suite of private banking and wealth management services, including wealth planning, portfolio management, and specialized advisory services in areas such as family offices, real estate, cash and credit management, offshore trusts, and wills.

NBK Wealth is distinguished by its focus on understanding each client's unique financial goals and designing customized strategies that aim to maximize returns while effectively managing risk.

It is worth noting that NBK Wealth is a brand registered under the name of National Bank of Kuwait S.A.K.P. ("NBK"), for use by the Asset Management business of, among other NBK group entities, Watani Investment Company K.S.C.C., a leading investment firm and its affiliates worldwide, combined with the Private Banking services of NBK worldwide.

For more information about the Euromoney Private Banking Awards 2026, please visit: <https://www.euromoney.com/awards/private-banking-awards/>

The Conversation

Greenspan: The data-driven policymaker

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

By Simon Bowmaker
New York University

Alan Greenspan, who died on June 22, 2026, at the age of 100, is best remembered for his 18 years at the helm of the Federal Reserve. What many people don't know is that an earlier and more obscure stint during the administration of President Gerald Ford shaped him as a public servant.

As professors of economics, we haven't just covered Greenspan's legacy for our students. We also knew him personally, in different capacities: One of us interviewed him in 2016 for a book on public service, and the other was present as a young professor when Greenspan defended his dissertation at New York University in 1977.

To us, one of the most notable aspects of his career was his commitment to public service, cemented while he served as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers from 1974-77, during the Ford administration.

The younger Greenspan cut a different figure.

He studied clarinet at the Juilliard School and worked as a professional musician while attending New York University in the late 1940s. He was briefly married to Joan Mitchell, a noted abstract expressionist painter who introduced him to the libertarian writer Ayn Rand.

Through the 1950s Greenspan was part of Rand's inner circle - which emphasized radical individualism, self-interest and laissez-faire capitalism - while he developed the building blocks for an economics career.

Greenspan later came under criticism for his early association with Rand. But we believe that his approach to economics was essentially practical and fact-based, not ideological.

"You begin with a conceptual framework of cause and effect," is how he put it in the book interview. "And then you observe reality, and try to anticipate what is going to happen in the future, even though you can never see beyond a certain horizon."

"Data are a measure of what is going on in reality," he continued. "If you want to endeavor to try to lower the probabilities of forecasting mistakes in the future, the more information you have about the structure of the system, the better off you will be."

After completing his undergraduate degree at NYU, Greenspan moved on to graduate study at Columbia University, one of the preeminent economics departments in the country at the time. But he left academia in 1954 to join a consulting firm while still managing to publish academic work in economics.

One example was a piece that foretold economist James Tobin's "Q theory of investment," a tool to estimate whether a business or market is overvalued or undervalued. That insight was prominently noted in Tobin's Nobel Prize 1981 citation.

Meanwhile, as he built his consulting firm, Greenspan took great pride in its data-based work.

"My reputation was as an economic forecaster of the United States," he recounted in the book interview. "Through my company, I became an expert in about 15 different industries. I brought to the table types of analysis which no one else had."

It wasn't until 1974 that Greenspan first considered public service.

Arthur Burns, a close adviser to President Richard Nixon who also served as Fed chairman from 1970-78, had mentored Greenspan and prevailed upon him to join the Nixon administration. While he shared the Republican conservatism of the administration, Greenspan had qualms about some of Nixon's policies,

such as the 1971 price and wage controls. He told Nixon's chief of staff, Al Haig, that he would quit if Nixon went too far.

Greenspan never had to make that call - Nixon resigned before he took up the post - and he went on to lead the Council of Economic Advisers under Ford, advising the president on economic policy.

"It turned out that working for Ford was more interesting than my eighteen-and-a-half years at the Federal Reserve," he explained in the book interview.

That job turned Greenspan into a dedicated public servant. "I saw Ford three or four times a week for one-on-one meetings," Greenspan recalled. "I would just do what I did for my clients before I got into the cauldron of politics. And he responded like a regular businessman. We had a very good rapport."

Ford was an "extraordinary man" who "always acted as though we were equals, which was quite remarkable," Greenspan added. "I've never run into anything like it before or since."

Greenspan was called back to public service in 1987 as Fed chair, ultimately serving five consecutive terms under both Democratic and Republican presidents - Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. He cut a commanding presence in policy circles and congressional appearances, carefully using measured language to explain - or, just as often, to avoid explaining - what he chose to share with the public.

His long tenure as chair coincided with increasing U.S. prosperity, when free markets, free trade and deregulation seemed to serve the global economy well. It was also a period of enormous political change with the demise of the Soviet Union and the opening up of China. And central banks rose in prominence and power, as monetary policy replaced fiscal policy as the primary tool of macroeconomics.

Against this backdrop, Greenspan developed a more public role than most central bankers, in part because the new focus on monetary policy demanded it. At the time, he seemed to relish the attention, but later he looked at it differently.

"I did what I had to do, and I made decisions when I had to make them. I could argue with senators when I had to go up to Capitol Hill, and I held my own very well because I knew a lot more than anybody up there," he said in his 2016 interview. "But it wasn't an enjoyable function since none of the people were analytical or conceptual. They had opinions without any reasoning."

Greenspan's obsession with data notwithstanding, it's sometimes difficult to uncover an analytical framework underlying his approach to macroeconomics - aside from his preference for a very light regulatory hand, particularly in financial markets. But to his credit, he acknowledged the inadequacies of the frameworks that led to the financial crisis in 2008. While the crash happened after his watch, many scholars point to monetary policy under his Fed in the preceding years as a key factor.

"Each of us has a model in our heads; some of them work, and some of them don't," he conceded in the 2016 interview. "What you need to measure is continuously evolving. I know that because the Federal Reserve had an extraordinarily good and very sophisticated model, but it did not capture what was wrong that led to the crisis in 2008."

Greenspan was often accused of excessive self-confidence. But his own description of his role - an introvert and the "side man" in the dance band - might be more accurate. The man who began his career reading scores written by other people in the band ended up with the whole world trying to read him. (AP)

Inflation divergence & political uncertainty cloud the global outlook

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global markets this week navigated a complex backdrop of resilient economic data and persistent inflationary pressures, as policymakers across major economies grappled with the challenge of sustaining growth without entrenching elevated prices. In the United States, upward revisions to Q1 GDP and a surge in manufacturing activity painted a broadly constructive picture, though a notable pullback in consumer spending and PCE inflation running well above the Fed's 2% target reinforced expectations that monetary policy will remain restrictive through the remainder of the year. In the United Kingdom, deteriorating services activity and Prime Minister Starmer's resignation injected fresh political uncertainty into an already fragile economic landscape, even as markets drew early comfort from the prospect of a relatively orderly transition to Andy Burnham. The Eurozone presented a similarly mixed picture, with the ECB striking a measured tone on further tightening despite inflation remaining above target, while Germany's deepening contraction underscored the uneven nature of the bloc's recovery. Across the Asia-Pacific region, Tokyo core inflation ticked higher and the Bank of Japan signaled continued rate hikes, yet the yen remained pinned near multi-decade lows as the wide US-Japan rate differential continued to dominate. Against this backdrop, the divergence in monetary policy trajectories and the resilience of services-driven inflation remain the dominant themes shaping near-term market direction.

United States

US Manufacturing Activity Strengthens

The S&P Global US Manufacturing PMI rose to 55.7 in June, its highest level since May 2022 and above market expectations, signaling a continued strengthening in factory activity. The improvement was driven by the fastest production growth since 2021, a sharp increase in new orders, and stronger inventory building. However, the positive momentum was partly offset by the steepest decline in manufacturing employment since 2020, highlighting ongoing weakness in factory hiring.

US Q1 GDP Revised Higher

The US economy grew at an annualized 2.1% in Q1 2026, revised up from the previous estimate of 1.6%, driven by a smaller drag from net trade and stronger business investment. However, consumer spending was revised sharply lower to 0.5%, reflecting weaker demand for services, while residential investment remained soft. Government spending rebounded following the end of the shutdown, supporting overall growth despite signs of moderating consumer activity.

US PCE Inflation Remains Elevated

US PCE inflation rose 0.4% month-on-month in May, slightly below expectations, while core PCE increased 0.3%, in line with forecasts. On an annual basis, headline PCE inflation accelerated to 4.1%, its highest level since April 2023, while core PCE edged up to 3.4%, the highest since October 2023, highlighting persistent inflationary pressures. The data supports the Federal Reserve's cautious stance, with policymakers recently raising their 2026 inflation forecasts and expecting both headline and core inflation to remain well above the 2% target.

The Greenback was last seen trading at 101.357.

United Kingdom

UK Services Contract While Manufacturing Holds Up

The UK services sector remained in contraction in June, with the Services PMI falling to 48.7, its weakest reading since January 2023, as elevated price pressures and weaker customer confidence weighed on activity. New business, employment, and backlogs all declined, although input cost inflation eased slightly. Meanwhile, the Manufacturing PMI slipped to 53.1, a

Currencies	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1465	1.1324	1.1473	1.1383	1.1270	1.1430	1.1427
GBP	1.3192	1.3137	1.3273	1.3201	1.3100	1.3250	1.3202
JPY	161.26	161.06	161.94	161.73	160.60	162.20	160.55
CHF	0.8067	0.8061	0.8139	0.8096	0.8050	0.8200	0.8015

three-month low but remained in expansion territory. Manufacturing output reached its highest level in 21 months, supported by temporary customer stockpiling ahead of potential price increases. However, slower new order growth suggests this boost may fade, while supply chain disruptions and cost pass-through to customers continued.

UK Political Transition

Following months of growing pressure and a drop in political support, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced his resignation, clearing the path for an expectedly smooth transition of power to Andy Burnham, who could become the UK's seventh leader in a decade as early as next month. Starmer acknowledged that he was no longer the right person to lead the Labour Party into the 2029 election, a decision that followed a pivotal weekend of reflection and a significant parliamentary victory by Burnham in northern England. While Starmer's departure could have triggered a divisive leadership battle, the contest is instead looking like a swift coronation, especially after Burnham secured the backing of key rivals like Wes Streeting, a predictability that has already reassured financial markets and boosted the British pound. However, this transition comes at a turbulent time, as the Labour government is grappling with widespread voter anger over unfulfilled promises a decade after Brexit, and Farage's surging Reform UK party is already demanding an immediate general election.

The GBP/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3201.

Europe

ECB President Lagarde on Inflation Outlook

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde stated that while the current inflation shock facing the euro zone is too significant to ignore, it remains manageable enough that it hasn't pushed up long term price expectations or triggered dangerous wage price spirals. Following a recent interest rate hike after inflation surpassed 3%, investors are closely watching to see if the central bank will tighten policy further to protect its 2% target. For now, Lagarde views the situation as a moderate scenario requiring measured adjustments rather than aggressive action, which aligns with market expectations that interest rates will peak within a neutral range of 1.75% to 2.50% that neither restricts nor stimulates growth. She noted that the current economic strain is less severe than the massive inflation spike of 2021/22, thanks to stronger labor markets, higher incomes, resilient investments in AI, and solid household balance sheets that help cushion the impact of elevated energy costs. However, Lagarde warned against complacency, emphasizing that the ECB will remain agile and data dependent because wages may now be more sensitive to price shifts, leaving the economic outlook clouded by upside risks for inflation and downside risks for growth.

Eurozone Manufacturing Expansion Moderates

The S&P Global Eurozone Manufacturing PMI eased to 51.3 in June, remaining in expansion for a fifth consecutive month but indicating a slower pace of growth. Factory activity continued to benefit from inventory building and a modest recovery in new orders as businesses purchased ahead of expected price increases and supply disruptions. However, employment continued to decline, business confidence remained subdued, and although input and output price pressures eased, inflation remained elevated.

Germany Private Sector Contraction Deepens

The S&P Global Germany Composite PMI fell to 48.0 in June, marking a third consecutive month of contraction and the sharpest decline since December 2024. The downturn was driven by a significant weakening in the services sector, while manufacturing output continued to expand modestly. Weak demand, declining new orders, and ongoing job losses weighed on business activity, although input and output price inflation eased further. Business confidence also deteriorated amid heightened economic uncertainty.

The EUR/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.1383.

Asia-Pacific

Australian Inflation Cools More Than Expected in May

Australia's annual inflation rate unexpectedly eased to 4.0% in May 2026 from 4.2% in April, coming in below market expectations of 4.3% and marking the slowest pace since February. The slowdown was mainly driven by softer goods inflation, particularly lower transport and fuel price pressures. Inflation also moderated in health and recreation. However, price growth accelerated for food and non-alcoholic beverages and housing, while services inflation edged higher to 3.7%, indicating underlying price pressures remain. Core inflation measures remained elevated, with both the trimmed mean CPI and weighted median CPI rising 3.6% year-on-year, suggesting persistent inflation above the central bank's 2-3% target range. On a monthly basis, CPI fell 0.7%, its first decline since August 2025 and a larger drop than expected.

The AUD/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 0.6897.

Tokyo Core Inflation Picks Up in June

Core consumer inflation in Tokyo accelerated to 1.6% year-on-year in June, the fastest pace in three months and the first increase since September 2025, matching market expectations.

Underlying inflation, which excludes fresh food and energy, also strengthened to 1.9% from 1.6%, signaling broader price pressures. Despite the pickup, headline core inflation remained below the Bank of Japan's 2% target for a fifth straight month, with fuel subsidies and favorable base effects helping contain higher raw material costs linked to the Middle East conflict. The data follows the BOJ's 25-basis-point rate hike in June, its first since December, aimed at preventing higher oil prices from driving sustained inflation.

Japanese Yen Remains Near Multi-Decade Low

The Japanese yen traded near its weakest level since 1986 on Friday at around 161.7, despite Tokyo's core inflation accelerating, reinforcing expectations that the Bank of Japan will continue raising interest rates. Governor Kazuo Ueda and board member Naoki Tamura both signaled support for further rate hikes ahead of the BOJ's July 31 policy meeting.

However, the yen remained under pressure as the stronger US dollar and the wide interest rate gap with the US outweighed hawkish BOJ expectations, despite repeated warnings and currency intervention by Japan's Finance Ministry.

The USD/JPY currency pair was last seen trading at 161.73.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30790.

At the 2026 MEA Finance Awards Ceremony

KFH wins MEA Finance's Best Risk & Compliance Implementation Award

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) won the "Best Risk & Compliance Implementation Award for 2026" in the Middle East and Africa at the MEA Finance Banking Technology Awards. This recognition highlights the Compliance and Governance Department's outstanding commitment to adopting the industry's best practices.

KFH secured this prestigious regional award following a comprehensive evaluation of financial institutions across the Middle East and Africa. The evaluation was based on precise criteria, including the institutions' ability to mitigate regulatory compliance risks, drive innovation, execute strategic plans accurately, and contribute effectively to the development of financial services.

Head of Group Compliance and Governance at KFH, Meshal Alshayee, expressed pride in this achievement, stressing that the award recognizes the continuous efforts of the Compliance and Governance Department to enhance the Group's risk and compliance management framework while embedding leading governance practices.

Alshayee said: "This award reflects KFH's success in building an integrated framework for risk and compliance management that aligns with the highest international standards, best practices, and regulatory guidelines. It boosts the confidence of our customers, shareholders, and stakeholders while supporting business sustainability and cementing the Group's position as a leading regional Islamic financial institution."

Meanwhile, Executive Manager Regulatory Compliance at KFH, Ahmad Alobaid said that KFH continues to invest in developing its compliance and governance framework. By implementing advanced frameworks to manage associated risks, adopting clear policies and procedures, strengthening control and monitoring mechanisms, and leveraging modern technical solutions, the Bank aims to drive the efficiency of the department's operations and achieve the highest levels of effectiveness.



Meshal Alshayee receiving the award.

Alshayee: The award reflects KFH's success in building an integrated compliance risk management framework in line with top global standards

Alobaid pointed out that KFH is keen to promote a culture of compliance and risk awareness across the Group, keeping pace with the accelerated



Ahmad Alobaid

ingful innovation, strong execution and measurable contributions to the advancement of financial services across the MEA region.

The selection process evaluated all nominations using participating institutions' published reports and supporting file data. The MEA Finance editorial team initially reviewed and shortlisted entries, which an independent panel of senior banking, technology, and industry experts then evaluated to select the final winners.

About MEA Finance

MEA Finance is a leading financial media platform specializing in the financial and banking sectors across the Middle East and Africa. The publication covers the latest developments and trends in banking, financial services, fintech, digital payments, capital markets, and insurance. It also hosts a series of annual conferences and awards that celebrate excellence and innovation within the financial industry.

Apple raises Mac and iPad prices

US inflation gauge surges to 3-year high, mortgage rate climbs

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP): The economy, inflation and how those forces could impact the lives of Americans were front and center over the past week. Trips to the grocery store or gas station are more painful than they were last year, and rising costs are impacting the decisions of both households and businesses.

Here's a snapshot of prominent economic data and news that occurred over the past week and what it potentially means for you.

The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge rose to a new three-year high in May as gas prices peaked, a sign rising costs could pose political problems for President Donald Trump and his political party as midterm elections near.

Consumer prices rose 4.1% in May from a year earlier, the Commerce Department said Thursday, the largest annual increase since April 2023. On a monthly basis, inflation was 0.4% last month, matching April's increase and down from 0.7% in March.

The increase was largely driven by more expensive gas, as well as pricier semiconductors and other computer equipment that are in high demand for the AI buildout.

Apple announced an increase in prices for Macs and iPads, citing a memory chip shortage brought on by the artificial intelligence boom.

The company called the demand spike an "unprecedented challenge" for the consumer electronics industry. "We have never seen a component price increase this much, this quickly," the company said in a written statement.

The new, entry-level MacBook Neo will now cost \$699, up from \$599. The 512 gigabyte MacBook Air now costs \$1,299, up from \$1,099. The one terabyte MacBook Pro is \$1,999, up from \$1,699. The 128 gigabyte iPad Air is now \$749, up from \$599, while the 256 gigabyte iPad Pro Wi-Fi is now \$1,199, up from \$999.

The U.S. economy expanded at a solid and unexpected 2.1% annual pace from January through March, the Commerce Department reported Thursday in its final estimate of first-quarter growth.

The growth in gross domestic product - the nation's output of goods and services - marked a rebound from a sluggish 0.5% in the last three months of 2025 when a 43-day federal government shutdown weighed on the

economy. Thursday's numbers were an upgrade from Commerce's previous first-quarter estimate of 1.6% growth.

Business investment surged, likely due to an investment boom in artificial intelligence. But consumer spending, which accounts for around 70% of U.S. economic activity, fell sharply from fourth-quarter 2025 and from Commerce's previous estimate in a sign that consumers may be cutting back in the face of higher gasoline prices caused by the war with Iran.

The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate edged higher this week, staying close to 6.5%, where it's been the last six weeks.

The benchmark 30-year fixed rate mortgage rate rose to 6.49% from 6.47% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. One year ago, the average rate was 6.77%.

When mortgage rates rise they can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, reducing their purchasing power.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, often sought by borrowers refinancing a home loan, also rose this week. That average rate ticked up to 5.84% from 5.81% last week. A year ago, it was at 5.89%, Freddie Mac said.

Fewer Americans applied for jobless aid last week as layoffs remain low despite economic headwinds that are creating uncertainty for businesses.

U.S. applications for unemployment benefits in the week ending June 20 fell by 12,000 to 215,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's fewer than the 225,000 new applications forecast by analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet.

Weekly filings for unemployment benefits are considered representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

US markets rose on the final day of trading during the week after oil prices eased back to where they were before the war with Iran, but drops for AI stocks kept the market in check.

The S&P 500 had its second losing week in the last 13, largely because of a retreat in the tech sector, particularly artificial-intelligence companies and related technology.

War-induced fertilizer shortage may be reducing US soil & water pollution

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

By Kimberly Van Meter
Penn State

American farmers are expected to plant several million fewer acres of corn in 2026 than they did in 2025, as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz throttles a key fertilizer trading corridor, along with the energy and raw materials needed to produce and transport fertilizer.

The closure is disrupting deliveries of about one-third of the world's traded agricultural fertilizers. Fertilizer prices are rising, and farmers worldwide are cutting back on fertilizer use or shifting to less fertilizer-intensive crops.

Corn is one of the most fertilizer-intensive and widely grown crops in the United States, but the disruption extends far beyond a single crop or a single nation.

These changes are often discussed as a threat to global food supplies - and they are.

But as researchers who study agricultural nutrient cycles and nutrient pollution of our waterways, we suspect that the picture is more complicated, and in some ways more hopeful, than the headlines suggest.

That is because decades of farmers using more fertilizer than they needed have quietly built up large reserves of nutrients in the soil, which crops can draw on, even when farmers aren't applying fertilizer. Indeed, research has shown that in highly intensive agricultural systems, fertilizer application can be cut substantially with little to no effect on crop yields.

For decades, farmers in the United States and around the world have steadily increased the amount of fertilizer they use, seeking to produce enough crops to feed a growing population. Despite several years of encouragement to apply less, farmers consistently apply more nitrogen and phosphorus than their crops actually need, our research suggests.

The nutrients that are not taken up by plants accumulate in soils, providing large stores of nitrogen and

phosphorus long after they were first applied. They also leach into groundwater or run off into rivers and lakes, driving dangerous algal blooms, coastal dead zones and greenhouse gas emissions.

But in the current crisis, they may also serve an unexpected purpose.

As shortages and price hikes force farmers to use less fertilizer, crops may be able to draw on legacy nutrient reserves already in the ground.

Our analysis of phosphorus use across U.S. croplands found that in parts of the central Midwest and livestock-dominated regions in the East, soil phosphorus reserves are large enough to maintain crop production levels without as much new fertilizer.

In these nutrient-saturated systems, reductions in fertilizer applications can lower costs and reduce environmental losses without proportionately reducing production. Applying less also means fewer nutrients running off into rivers and streams.

The current shortage may also help shift where farmers find fertilizer.

Livestock produce manure that is high in both nitrogen and phosphorus, which makes excellent fertilizer. It can even be processed into a slurry with an even richer mixture of nutrients in anaerobic digesters, which generate electricity as a byproduct of their chemical reactions.

Processing more manure in digesters, and delivering that slurry to crop farmers, could reduce the nation's dependence on foreign fertilizer supplies.

The details are important. Not every farm or field has enough leftover nutrients to maintain yields with less fertilizer, and the buffers that do exist in some fields will not last indefinitely. In parts of the world where the soil is low in nutrients, such as regions of sub-Saharan Africa, improving access to fertilizers remains essential for increasing food production and supporting livelihoods.

In places where nutrients have accumulated over decades of intensive use, the soil may serve as a buffer against losses in yield, at least for some amount of time, though exactly how much will vary with each field. The current growing season may provide opportunities to discover how strong that buffer is, and whether reducing fertilizer applications improves downstream water quality. (AP)

Electric scooters fuel China's overseas growth

NANJING, June 28, (Xinhua): As fuel prices have risen in many parts of the world, an unlikely export from China is quietly gaining traction overseas: the electric motorcycle.

The global reach of Chinese electric mobility is becoming increasingly difficult to miss. Across social media feeds and city streets alike, American teenagers ride Chinese-brand electric motorcycles to school, Southeast Asian couriers zip through traffic on battery-powered scooters, and young Parisians navigate narrow urban lanes on e-scooters.

For Wang Hao, an export manager in eastern China, demand has rarely been stronger. Orders from Europe continue to pour in, driven by consumers seeking cheaper, cleaner and increasingly capable alternatives to conventional motorcycles.

One of the company's flagship models, the Keeness, can travel up to 129 kilometers on a single charge and reach speeds of 100 kilometers per hour. "The model has become a bestseller in Europe, and our overseas order schedule is already booked through October," said Wang, who oversees overseas marketing for China's electric two-wheeler giant Yadea.

Once associated primarily with low-cost urban commuting, Chinese-made electric motorcycles are increasingly competing on performance, technology and design. Equipped with longer-range batteries, intelligent connectivity features and improved power systems, they are attracting riders ranging from daily commuters to recreational users.

Yadea's products are now sold in more than 100 countries and regions worldwide. The company has built extensive sales and service networks throughout Europe. In the first quarter of this year, its overseas sales surged by 70 percent year on year.

"For Europe, we design with rainy weather in mind. For Latin America, we adapt to more complex suburban and rural road conditions," Wang said. "We also offer a growing range of smart features and accessories, giving customers stronger value for money."

Official data show that China exported more than 26.7 million electric two-wheelers in 2025, with export value reaching nearly 6.83 billion U.S. dollars. In the first quarter of 2026, such exports climbed to approxi-

mately 7.2 million units, a year-on-year increase of 68.2 percent.

According to industry observers, behind the surge lies a combination of global market forces and industry-specific trends that are reshaping transportation choices across both developed and emerging economies.

"Global energy supplies have been under pressure, keeping fuel prices at relatively high levels," Wang Hao said. "At the same time, electrification is becoming the future of transportation, while carbon-reduction goals are gaining broader public support."

The global shift from gasoline-powered vehicles to electric mobility has created a rare generational opportunity for the two-wheeler industry, said Han Jian, a professor at Nanjing University's Business School.

Across Southeast Asia, several countries have introduced policies ranging from subsidies for electric vehicles to plans to phase out the sale of gasoline-powered models. Meanwhile, persistently high fuel prices in Latin America and Africa have driven strong demand for affordable, practical modes of transportation, he added.

"These trends are creating favorable conditions for electric two-wheelers, particularly in emerging markets where cost efficiency remains a key consideration for consumers," Han noted.

Yet rising demand alone does not explain why Chinese brands have emerged as some of the biggest beneficiaries of the global shift toward electric mobility. Equally important is their ability to supply increasingly sophisticated products at competitive prices.

"The underlying logic of the export boom lies in China's integrated industrial ecosystem," Han said.

China's comprehensive supply chain, spanning batteries, electric motors, and control systems, enables manufacturers to produce high-performance vehicles at costs significantly lower than those of many of their Western competitors, providing a fundamental driver behind the sector's rapid export growth, according to the scholar.

The advantages are particularly visible in Xishan District of Wuxi City, east China's Jiangsu Province. The industry's supply chain is concentrated within a 50-square-kilometer radius. The cluster hosts many of China's leading electric two-wheeler manufactur-

ers, operating alongside suppliers that cover nearly the entire industrial chain.

The district now produces more than 15 million electric bicycles and motorcycles annually, making it China's largest hub for electric two-wheeler production, research and component distribution.

According to Segway-Ninebot, a renowned electric two-wheeler maker with cumulative global shipments exceeding 10 million units, China's electric two-wheeler industry benefits from a highly integrated and largely self-sufficient supply chain. A single model can draw on hundreds of specialized suppliers, allowing manufacturers to source components efficiently and bring products to market at speed.

Meanwhile, innovation has become another differentiating factor. Product-development cycles of the company have been shortened to six to eight months, compared with 12 to 18 months for many overseas rivals, the company's e-mobility division said.

Local customs authorities in Wuxi said that electric two-wheeler exports from the city have maintained steady growth for nine consecutive years. During the first four months of 2026, exports from Xishan's two-wheeler sector reached 287 million U.S. dollars, up 33.7 percent from a year earlier.

The industrial cluster is also benefiting from policy support. To strengthen the sector's long-term competitiveness, local authorities have established a dedicated development fund focused on battery technologies, advanced materials, vehicle manufacturing, charging and battery-swapping infrastructure, and intelligent mobility solutions.

"The global success of Chinese electric motorcycles demonstrates the growing international competitiveness of China's new energy industries," Han said. "Chinese manufacturing has proved itself to be no longer defined by low-cost contract production. Increasingly, its strength lies in the integration of technology, products and services into complete solutions."

For companies like Yadea, the ambition extends beyond selling vehicles. "Ultimately, what we hope to export is not only stylish electric motorcycles," Wang Hao said. "We want to bring Chinese standards, Chinese innovation and Chinese brands to the global stage."

Exhibitors target coatings market

Chinese innovation leads the way in Johannesburg

JOHANNESBURG, June 28, (Xinhua): Chinese companies have emerged as a prominent presence at the Coatings For Africa exhibition, held from Wednesday to Friday in Johannesburg, presenting innovative products while deepening engagement with Africa's growing coatings and construction industries.

Hosted in association with the South African Paint Manufacturing Association (SAPMA), the exhibition, held every two years, is regarded as the continent's largest dedicated coatings industry event, bringing together manufacturers, raw material suppliers, distributors and industry experts to showcase new products and discuss market trends.

Chinese firms occupied a significant share of this year's three-day exhibition at the Sandton Convention Center, displaying products ranging from industrial and decorative coatings to pigments, additives, resins, manufacturing equipment and environmentally friendly solutions.

"Chinese companies have a significant presence at this year's exhibition, accounting for about 30 percent of exhibitors," said Tara Benn, chief executive officer of SAPMA.

It reflects the important role Chinese companies play in supplying raw materials and other inputs to South Africa's coatings industry, with many local manufacturers already importing and using their products, she added.

Noting that face-to-face engagement remains valuable, Benn said: "Events like this provide manufacturers with a platform to network, build relationships, and engage directly with suppliers."

For many Chinese exhibitors, Africa remains a promising market, driven by rapid urbanization, infrastructure expansion and increasing demand for sustainable construction materials.

At the booth of Shandong Shengshi Guohua New Material Co., Ltd., titanium dioxide pigments and other raw materials used in paints, coatings, plastics and inks were on display.

Wang Dianbin, the company's foreign trade manager, said the exhibition had attracted strong interest from African customers. "We've had a steady stream of visitors to our stand since the exhibition opened, which shows the growing demand in Africa," he said.

"We are optimistic about the African market and hope to establish stable, long-term cooperation with customers here," Wang added.

For Lu Jianwen of Colomax New Materials (Huzhou) Co., Ltd., a manufacturer of tinting systems, color dispensers and intelligent coating equipment from China's Zhejiang Province, South Africa remains a key market and serves as a gateway to the rest of the continent.

"We've met many potential partners during the exhibition and had productive discussions. That gives us confidence about future cooperation in Africa," Lu said.

Throughout the exhibition, Chinese booths drew a steady flow of visitors exploring new products and business opportunities. Local industry participants said Chinese suppliers have become increasingly important to the sector by offering competitive products tailored to market needs.

Dakarayi Mukwakwami, managing director of Johannesburg-based GDM Coatings, said Chinese suppliers have made a significant contribution to the development of Africa's coatings industry.

"They continue to bring new technologies and products that help companies improve efficiency and respond to changing market demands," Mukwakwami said.

After health scare, country star returns reenergized with new release

'Banks of the Trinity' showcases Johnson's expanding sound

NEW YORK, June 28, (AP): There's a moment at every Cody Johnson show where the Texas-born and bred country star asks the crowd: "How many of you tonight are watching me and this band live for the very first time?" he told The Associated Press. "And every night, I would say at least 80% of the crowd raises their hands."

It's not the kind of reaction most veteran artists receive. "And I'm thinking, you know, 20 years is a long time to work for something. But when you see that ... What's the next 20 years look like?" he asks.

The rancher, rodeo competitor and onetime prison guard started his two-decade career playing honky tonks and dive bars. That led to slow and steady growth for the country traditionalist, but in the last few years, something has shifted. He landed his fifth career No. 1 song with "The Fall." He was named entertainer of the year at the 2026 Academy of Country Music Awards, the show's highest honor. That was a month after he headlined Stagecoach Music Festival. For an artist with legions of fans, it looked like he was accessing new heights.

"I feel like I'm closing a book and I'm opening another one and it's all blank pages," he says of this period. "Let's get to the next chapter."

On Friday, that new era began with the release of his album "Banks of the Trinity."

It hasn't been an easy road. Last fall, Johnson had to cancel a bunch of tour dates after upper respiratory and sinus infections caused a burst eardrum that required surgery - an intimidating medical procedure for anyone, but especially nerve-wracking for a musician. "I was scared," he said simply. But "in a roundabout



Cody Johnson performs at the Braves Country Fest in Atlanta on June 13, 2026. (AP)

way, it's one of the best things that's ever happened to me."

It forced him to take three months off, which allowed him to be home during the birth of his son. It also re-

juvenated his approach in the studio. Before the incident, he thought the album was complete. It was not: The additional time resulted in the inclusion of a few songs that now feel

inextricable from the record: "Thank Somebody Country," "Take Me Back (Leave Me There)," "Cricket on a Hook," and the resilient "I Have" among them.

"What a blessing to have that kind of song fall in your lap when you're kind of up against the ropes," he says of the latter. "I mean, we thought we had the record done. It wasn't done."

At the heart of "Banks of the Trinity" is its title track, which recalls Eagles' cover of "Seven Bridges Road" meets bluegrass and Southern gospel. Lyrically, it's an ode to Johnson's childhood. "I grew up on the banks of the Trinity (River.) Fishing for catfish, not so much out of pleasure or sport but for necessity to put food in the freezer. Deer season for me was not a trophy thing," he said.

And while that track inspires a feeling of nostalgia within the listener, he doesn't consider this album a throwback collection. He says it's about showcasing his evolving sonic diversity. "The rest of the album for me is a musical journey from track one to track 16," he said. "There's a little bit of a flavor for everybody. It does kind of hit Motown. It does kind of hit Bluegrass. It does hit progressive country. It does it old country. It does a little rock here and there."

It's the result of a new kind of freedom, one that is at least partially due to his recent accomplishments, including taking home the top prize at the ACM Awards. "I just did the thing that I've aspired to do in my career my entire life," he says. "A really good place is a really good way to describe where I am."

And now that the album is out, he's ready to take a breather. "I will be shirtless with no shoes on a beach at an undisclosed location," he jokes about the days after record release. "Cause I have already done all the prep work. I've been working on this album for two years. I've done all of the interviews. I've shook all the hands. Me and my wife and kids are gonna disappear for 10 days and I'm gonna become, I guess, every Kenny Chesney song ever."

It's not a bad place to be.

Star power and sequels dominate streaming lineup

'Confessions II' drops as Enola Holmes returns to Netflix

LOS ANGELES, June 28, (AP): "Enola Holmes 3" and a new album from Madonna are some of the new television, films, music and games headed to a device near you.

Also, among the streaming offerings worth your time this week, as selected by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists: the "Legally Blonde" prequel series, a look at Ralph Lauren's stamp collection celebrating America's 250th birthday and "Obsession" arriving on premium video-on-demand services.

■ Unexpected box-office staying power pushed back its home release, but Curry Barker's "Obsession" arrives Tuesday, June 30, on premium on demand. Despite a production budget of \$750,000, the Focus Features release has amassed more than \$337 million in worldwide ticket sales since opening in mid-May. In it, Bear (Michael Johnston) uses a One Wish Willow to wish that his crush (Inde Navarette) loves him.

■ Millie Bobby Brown returns as the younger sister of Sherlock Holmes in "Enola Holmes 3" (July 1, Netflix). In the series' third film, Enola prepares for her impending wedding to Lord Tewkesbury (Louis Partridge) when her brother, Sherlock (Henry Cavill), is kidnapped.

■ AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

■ Madge hath returned. "Confessions II," the sequel to Madonna's beloved 2005 album "Confessions on a Dance Floor," arrives Friday - 21 years after the original. The original has been widely regarded as a return to the top of her pop powers. The critically acclaimed release, which produced such hits as "Hung Up," "Sorry," "Get Together" and "Jump," was dance-pop disco for a new era of clubgoers. So, what will this new era bring? Judging by the previously released "Confessions II" tracks, the breathy "I Feel So Free," the house rhythms of "Love



This combination of images shows promotional art for the film, "Enola Holmes 3," left, the film "Obsession," center, and the series "Elle." (AP)

Sensation" and the Sabrina Carpenter collaboration "Bring Your Love," a good time is on the horizon.

■ AP Music Writer Maria Sherman

■ Oscar winner Jean Dujardin ("The Artist") stars in "Zorro," a new limited French series about Don Diego de la Vega, a dashing, wealthy nobleman living in 1821 Los Angeles. This Diego de la Vega hasn't tapped into his Zorro alter ego for 20 years, but when he unexpectedly becomes the mayor of L.A., he finds himself in a battle against corruption threatening his city. The Zorro persona is reborn, and de la Vega must balance politics, family and his secret role as a vigilante. The show will stream on MHz Choice and its subscription channels on Prime Video and Roku beginning Tuesday, June 30.

■ We learn in the new Prime Video series, "Elle," that before she went to Harvard law school, Elle

Woods was a happy teen living in the Los Angeles sunshine in a McMansion, until her father gets a new job in...Seattle. The bubbly pink-loving teen quickly finds out that her new school is in its grunge period where Nirvana rules, and even the school's cheerleaders wear flannel. Despite a variety of setbacks, Elle eventually finds her people and comes to love her new school. Newcomer Lexi Minetree plays the younger Elle, but at certain angles and in certain moments you'll swear you're looking at Reese Witherspoon. Season 2 just wrapped filming. It premieres on Wednesday, July 1.

■ You may have heard that Ralph Lauren has designed a USPS Stamp Collection in time for America's 250th birthday. Thirteen stamps were chosen that honor quintessential American images. A new special by The History Channel called "Ralph Lauren's American Icons" dives deeper into the intention behind the project and features both

previously unseen archival material and interviews with David Lauren, Ken Burns and more. It streams Sunday, July 5 on the History Channel app, History.com and On Demand.

■ AP Writer Alicia Rancilio

■ Dating as far back as the Game Boy, Nintendo consoles have long appealed to players who like a little toe-tapping with their alien-zapping. "Rhythm Heaven Groove" continues that tradition, challenging gamers to chop vegetables, punch fruit and swing sledgehammers while keeping to the beat. Those are just a few of the 80 single-player minigames in this package, which also features Beatspell, a rhythmic role-playing adventure that requires nimble finger-work to cast spells. You can also round up three friends for 30 multiplayer contests, some competitive, some cooperative. Get into the groove Thursday, July 2, on the Switch.

■ Lou Keston



In this combination photo, Kevin Hart attends the "Lift" premiere in New York on Jan. 8, 2024, left, Kim Kardashian attends the SNL50: The Anniversary Special in New York on Feb. 16, 2025, center, and Issa Rae appears at the premiere of "Barbie" in London on July 12, 2023. (AP)

From phone to fame

Microdramas reshape how stories are told

While much of Hollywood was consumed by the streaming wars, Issa Rae was studying a different mode of entertainment thousands of miles away: microdramas.

No stranger to creating a successful online series, the Emmy-nominated actor and producer became intrigued by China's booming market for the short, mobile-first soap operas, seeing its potential to build audiences and intellectual property.

In May, Rae's Hoorae Media released the thriller "Screen Time," one of the first major studio-quality microdrama projects developed by an established Hollywood production company. The TikTok-backed series drew nearly 75 million views during its first week.

Rae believes the format offers advantages traditional media often cannot.

"Because the price point is lower than TV and film, there's an opportunity to take risks," she told The Associated Press. "The turnaround time is also a lot quicker than TV and film, which allows us the opportunity to be more topical and relevant."

With vertically shot episodes often running one to three minutes, microdramas have emerged as one of entertainment's fastest-growing formats. That's drawing interest from celebrities, creators and major media companies looking for new ways to reach audiences who increasingly consume stories on their phones.

Beyond speed and cost, Rae said microdramas foster a more interactive viewing experience between creators and audiences.

"The communal experience is also amazing," said Rae, whose web series "The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl" helped launch her career. "You can see what other viewers think and engage with their commentary in real time."

At first glance, the formula seems deceptively simple: smartphone-friendly bingeable miniepisodes featuring tales of romance, betrayal and redemption with titles like "The Double Life of My Billionaire Husband." The first few episodes are generally free and viewers have to pay to unlock more.

The model that first emerged in China during the pandemic has exploded - global microdrama revenues

will hit \$14 billion by the end of 2026, technology research and advisory group Omdia estimates - and the U.S. entertainment industry is taking note.

Peacock recently launched a dedicated microdrama hub. Fox Entertainment invested in microdrama producer Holywater and committed to producing hundreds of vertical titles, while TelevisaUnivision is producing serialized short-form dramas for ViX.

Kevin Hart's HartBeat has expanded into vertical comedy, Kim Kardashian is backing scripted mobile-first content through her investment in microdrama platform ReelShort, Taye Diggs has starred in vertical series aimed at the growing audience consuming serialized stories on smartphones, and filmmaker Deon Taylor is developing the sports-focused vertical series "I Am Hoop."

At this year's MIP London television market, executives said some of the largest microdrama platforms are spending as much as 90% of their budgets on marketing as competition for audiences intensifies.

Hoorae Media spent more than two years researching the format before launching "Screen Time." The company became convinced microdramas represented more than a passing trend after studying how audiences were consuming entertainment on their phones.

"The connective tissue being the phone, and how much time people are already spending on their phone," said Dzifa Yador, head of digital at Hoorae Media. "We're meeting audiences where they are."

Yador believes the format gives creators something increasingly difficult to find in traditional Hollywood: Instead of waiting years for a studio decision, creators can test ideas, build an audience and retain ownership.

"You definitely get rid of the gatekeepers," she said. "You can greenlight your own show."

Long before Hollywood began paying attention, creators were already proving audiences would spend hours following serialized stories online.

Among the most successful is Kountry Wayne, who transitioned from the comedy sketches that made him famous to a universe of interconnected relationship dramas after noting those had a longer shelf life. (AP)



Carín León, winner of the award for best contemporary Mexican music album for "Palabra De To's," poses in the press room during the 2025 Latin Grammys on Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025, at MGM Grand in Las Vegas. (AP)

León to make history at Messi's field

MIAMI, June 28, (AP): Carín León sees the World Cup as something that pulls different cultures together. He wants his music to be viewed the same way.

León is a huge World Cup fan, a huge Real Madrid fan and someone who can't believe he got to meet Inter Miami co-owner and soccer icon David Beckham. And on Sunday, the Mexican singer-songwriter will become the first person to headline a concert at Inter Miami's newly opened stadium - Lionel Messi's home field.

"Being the first one to play in this iconic stadium - it's new but already iconic because of the team - I see this with much responsibility," León told The Associated Press in an interview. "For me, it's like a big soccer match and I want to inspire a lot of new artists in my genre and in all the root genres that nothing is impossible. We're coming here to this big stage, making history with the music we grew up with."

León is a back-to-back Grammy winner in the Best Regional Mexican Music Album category, plus a four-time Latin Grammy winner. Except, with León, it's short-sighted to simply call him a Mexican artist.

He's a little country. A little rock. Maybe some reggaeton. He has played Coachella and the Grand Ole Opry. He's in line to become the first

Latino artist to have a residency at the Sphere in Las Vegas, with shows scheduled in September. His appeal is all over the map, which is why Inter Miami wanted someone like him to be the first show on the field that the reigning Major League Soccer champions call home.

"There was a time when I was going to do music because it was trending right then, and then nothing was happening for me," León said. "There was a time when I was going to quit music. But in two weeks, I was back because I'm a musician. I decided to do what I love, what I love, what I like, what I feel, what made me happy. I never did music because of money or to be famous."

He released some music that wasn't expected to be a hit, and fans couldn't get enough of it. "That's when I knew to just be honest with the music," León said. "And now I prefer to be a trendsetter than looking for the trend."

That approach has opened countless doors - including the one leading from Messi's locker room to the field where he plays. And it's not lost on León that soccer fans in Miami won't have any World Cup matches to watch Sunday night when he takes the stage; there's only one game on Sunday's tournament schedule, and it's in the afternoon.

Heritage

UNESCO collaborations, exhibitions, & heritage restoration show resilience

Lebanon's cultural scene thrives despite war and instability

BEIRUT, June 28, (KUNA): Since assuming office as Minister of Culture, Ghasan Salameh has become a distinctive figure in the trajectory of Lebanon's official cultural sector.

Drawing on his academic and diplomatic background, his profound belief in culture as a bridge for dialogue and a tool for peace, he has worked to strengthen the Ministry's role as a key driver of cultural life and to restore culture's status as a form of soft power during times of crisis.

His initiatives have been carefully planned, his partnerships were both local and international, and his approach was comprehensive, reflecting a deep understanding of Lebanon's diversity and rich cultural heritage.

The Ministry's accomplishments have been numerous, particularly during 2025-26 despite the war in Lebanon.

Salameh has repeatedly emphasized that "difficult circumstances do not eliminate responsibility," stressing that "war weighs heavily on us, but it will not prevent us from fulfilling our duties."

The Ministry of Culture placed the network of public libraries outside the capital at the top of its priorities, preparing studies to support them and equip them with modern technological resources.

It also relaunched the Lebanese Cinematheque in cooperation with the French Ministry of Culture, more than a quarter-century after its original establishment, in an effort to reopen a window onto the nation's collective memory.

A variety of year-round cultural activities were introduced, including Leba-

nese Cinema Week, during which films from Lebanon's cinematic heritage were screened free of charge across theaters nationwide to revive the country's film legacy.

Other initiatives included book exchanges, Lebanese Theater Week, celebrations of International Human Rights Day, and World Arabic Language Day.

Among the events restored to Lebanon's cultural calendar through Salameh's efforts was Museum Night, which returned after a six-year hiatus. The event allows the public to visit museums across Lebanon free of charge and discover archaeological artifacts and rare collections that tell the story of Lebanese civilization.

The Ministry also hosted Arab and international figures for intellectual seminars and dialogue sessions at the National Library in Beirut, which has become a distinguished cultural center.

Another major achievement was the laying of the foundation stone for a cultural center at the Mar Mikhael-Gemmayzeh Railway Station, in cooperation with UNESCO and funded by a grant from the Italian government. Construction began in September 2025.

An international campaign was also launched to restore the Grand Theatre in cooperation with UNESCO and other partners, with the aim of reviving opera and theatrical performances.

Efforts further resulted in the inclusion of the Beirut Port grain silos on the list of historic buildings, transforming them into a memorial landmark in response to

requests from the families of victims of the August 4, 2020 Beirut Port explosion.

In addition, a project to rehabilitate homes in Mar Mikhael-Nahr area damaged by the explosion was completed through cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, the Directorate General of Antiquities, UNESCO, UN-Habitat and ALIPH.

Other achievements of the Ministry of Culture include: ratifying accession to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, launching Lebanon's Cultural and Creative Industries Strategy to regulate cultural affairs, protect heritage, support creators and contribute to economic recovery.

They also included organizing an exhibition "Byblos: An Ancient City" at the Arab World Institute in Paris, featuring archaeological artifacts from the ancient site of Byblos.

The ministry also strengthened cooperation with the Louvre Museum in Paris, and completing restoration of key sections of the Citadel of Tripoli, including the Northern Tower and the Eastern Facade, through cooperation between the Ministry, the Directorate of Antiquities, and "Rooted for Lebanon," with funding from the Principality of Monaco and the Kofi Annan Foundation.

The historic Hammam Ezzeddine in downtown Tripoli was also rehabilitated, in addition to securing funding from the Honor Frost Foundation to digitize the archaeological journal BAAL in Arabic, French and English after a six-year publication hiatus, and obtaining support for the National Library to preserve and digitize part of its historical collections.

Cultural stories go global

Chinese developers gain ground in global gaming



People pose for photos at the photo area of "Black Myth: Wukong" during Gamescom 2024 in Cologne, Germany. (Xinhua)

WARSAW, June 28, (Xinhua): From the global success of Black Myth: Wukong to the enduring popularity of Genshin Impact, Chinese-developed video games are reaching wider international audiences than ever before, reflecting the growing global appeal of the country's gaming industry.

According to the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association, overseas sales revenue of Chinese self-developed games exceeded 20.45 billion U.S. dollars in 2025, marking the sixth consecutive year that annual overseas revenue exceeded 14 billion dollars.

Industry observers attribute this growing international recognition to a combination of factors, including a mature industrial ecosystem, advancing technological capabilities and culturally rooted storytelling that resonates with overseas players.

Mature gaming ecosystem

Over the past decade, China's gaming industry has evolved from being known primarily for its vast domestic market into a mature ecosystem spanning game development, publishing, live operations and global distribution.

The industry is now home to a diverse range of companies, from established giants such as Tencent and NetEase to internationally active studios including miHoYo, Lilith Games, Game Science and iDreamSky, reflecting an increasingly diversified development landscape.

According to Newzoo, a leading gaming market research and analytics firm, Chinese publishers continue to lead some of the fastest-growing mobile game genres, including merge and 4X strategy games.

The firm attributed this to Chinese companies' sophisticated live-service operations and substantial investment in user acquisition, underscoring their growing competitiveness in the global mobile gaming market.

Monika Michalak, founder of Poland-based gaming recruitment firm 8Bit, shared this perspective. Speaking to Xinhua at DevGAMM Gdansk 2026, one of Central and Eastern Europe's leading game industry conferences, she said China has become an increasingly important part of the global gaming talent and business network.

Michalak has worked with both Chinese and international gaming companies and spent six years working in Beijing and Shenzhen. She said China's mature ecosystem enables studios not only to develop games efficiently but also to operate and scale products for international markets.

The industry's rapid evolution has also drawn attention from international veterans.

Former PlayStation Studios head Shuhei Yoshida said Chinese studios have developed remarkable advantages in both development speed and production scale.

Newzoo also expects China to outperform both the global average and Western developed markets in PC game growth over the forecast period, supported by the continued recovery of major game franchises and the launch of new flagship titles.

Visual and technological advancement

Industry observers say China's gaming industry is also gaining recognition for its edges in visual presentation and technical capabilities.

Reviewing Black Myth: Wukong, international media outlets said the game featured "state-of-the-art graphics" and praised its visual ambition.



An exhibit of video game "Black Myth: Wukong" is pictured at the tenth China International Copyright Expo in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province, Oct. 16, 2025. (Xinhua)

In 2024, Black Myth: Wukong won both Ultimate Game of the Year and Best Visual Design at the Golden Joystick Awards, one of the gaming industry's longest-running awards programs.

Technical advances are also evident in production methods. For Black Myth: Wukong, developers used photogrammetry technology to digitally capture ancient Chinese architecture and cultural heritage sites across the country, helping create highly detailed and realistic in-game environments.

Not only Black Myth: Wukong, games such as Genshin Impact and Wuthering Waves have also been widely discussed by international media and players for their visual design, animation quality and large-scale open-world experiences, highlighting the progress Chinese developers have made in delivering increasingly complex and technically demanding projects.

Niko Partners, an Asia-focused gaming market research firm said in a recent report that it has become more optimistic about China's video game market than in its previous forecast, citing stronger-than-expected performances from both newly released titles and long-running evergreen games.

Cultural storytelling

If artistic quality and advanced technology have helped Chinese games attract attention, cultural storytelling may be helping them stand out.

Several developers interviewed by Xinhua said the global success of Black Myth: Wukong highlights the growing appeal of culturally authentic content.

"No other country could have made this game in the same way," said Gabriela Siemienkiewicz, communications lead at 11 bit studios, a Polish game developer and publisher. "Its mythology and cultural background make it feel authentic."

Tobias Stolz-Zwilling, communications director at Czech video game developer Warhorse Studios, echoed Siemienkiewicz's view, describing Black Myth: Wukong as "the first giant single-player game carrying Chinese ideas into the world." He said the title has helped introduce Chinese narratives to a broader global audience.

The influence of Chinese culture can be found across a growing range of internationally successful games.

Drawing on Chinese martial arts traditions, historical weapons and Eastern aesthetics, Naraka: Bladepoint has built a substantial international following.

Set during China's Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-979), Where Winds Meet combines historical settings with traditional wuxia storytelling, bringing elements of Chinese history and martial arts culture to global players.

Obituary

A standout star of Hollywood's studio system

'Mildred Pierce' breakout Ann Blyth dies

LOS ANGELES, June 28, (AP): Ann Blyth, a versatile Hollywood star who received an Oscar nomination at 17 as Joan Crawford's wayward daughter in "Mildred Pierce," sang opposite Mario Lanza and Howard Keel in such MGM musicals as "The Great Caruso" and ended her film career before age 30, has died at age 98.

Blyth died Wednesday of "natural causes" at her home in Rancho Santa Fe, California, according to her daughter, Eileen McNulty. Blyth's family was at her side.

One of the last surviving actors from the Hollywood studio system, Blyth appeared in youth movies as well as dramas such as "Another Part of the Forest," and her co-stars included Bing Crosby, Tyrone Power, Gregory Peck and Robert Mitchum. Blyth had stopped appearing in films by the end of the 1950s when she chose to spend more time with her children. But she would work in TV musicals and dramas and tour in concerts and musicals from "Show Boat" to "The Sound of Music."

She was acting and singing from an early age and her first big break came at 13 when she was cast as Paul Lukas's daughter in Lillian Hellman's anti-Nazi play, "Watch on the Rhine," which also starred Bette Davis. She stayed with the play for almost a year on Broadway and a year on the road.

When "Watch on the Rhine" appeared in Los Angeles, Universal Studio signed her to a term contract starting at \$175 a week. A dark-haired actor with a melodic singing voice, she appeared with a young Donald O'Connor in low-budget musicals such as "Chip Off the Old Block" and "Bowery to Broadway." The loan-out to Warner Bros. for "Mildred Pierce" elevated Blyth's career and led to grown-up roles.

Like "Double Indemnity," adapted for the screen by Billy Wilder in 1944, "Mildred Pierce" was a James M. Cain thriller about vengeance and calculation. Crawford won the 1945 Oscar as a waitress who rises to own a string of Los Angeles restaurants. Blyth was nominated in the supporting role as Mildred's spoiled daughter, Veda, who seduces her mother's second husband (Zachary Scott), then riddles him with bullets in a jealous rage.

Directed by Michael Curtiz of "Casablanca" fame, "Mildred Pierce" was a memorable piece of film noir that took place mostly at night. For Blyth it was a major change from the cheery musicals she had been known for. It was also a stretch for an actor who was the subject of magazine articles entitled



Ann Blyth, left, and Mitzi Gaynor hold an Oscar presented by the Motion Picture Academy for the best short subjects documentary, in Hollywood, Calif., April 4, 1960. (AP)

"Incorruptible!," "Angelic Annie" and "Ann Blyth: Success Without an Enemy."

In 1946, Blyth broke her back in a toboggan accident, and it appeared her career might be over. She spent seven months in a body cast and another seven months in a wheelchair, relying on her Roman Catholic faith for courage.

"The busy, exciting world I had known faded away, and my life slowed down to little things," she later told The Associated Press. "But even here I found myself blessed, for a new sense of prayer began to unfold to me."

Once recovered, she appeared as the love interest for Tony Tufts in "Swell Guy," Howard Duff in "Brute Force" and Mickey Rooney in a prizefight

movie, "Killer McCoy." She displayed her dramatic skill as the young woman in love with a suspected wife-killer, Charles Boyer, in "A Woman's Vengeance."

Her strongest role after "Mildred Pierce" came with "Another Part of the Forest," Hellman's prequel to her stage and film drama "The Little Foxes." Blyth appeared as the young Regina Hubbard, created as an adult on Broadway by Tallulah Bankhead and in the film by Bette Davis.

Blyth's career made a turn in 1951 when she starred with Mario Lanza in "The Great Caruso." Her lilting soprano made an ideal match for his tenor, and they were cast in "The Student Prince." But the temperamental Lanza

dropped out after recording his songs, and British actor Edmund Purdom acted his role and mouthed the songs. Blyth co-starred with Howard Keel in "Rose Marie" and "Kismet."

Her other films included "Top o' the Morning" with Crosby, "The World in His Arms" (Peck) and a reunion with O'Connor, "The Buster Keaton Story." Her last film was in 1957, "The Helen Morgan Story," which co-starred Paul Newman.

Born in 1928 in Mount Kisco, New York, to an Irish mother and English valet father, she grew up in New York City. After the father left the family, Nan Blyth supported herself and two daughters by washing clothes and working in beauty parlors.

Calls grow for stronger protections

Global gap in kids' social media rules

NEW YORK, June 28, (AP): Amy Neville describes Kristin Bride as her "soulmate." But the day that forged their bond - June 23, 2020 - was the worst of each of their lives.

Both Bride and Neville lost their teen sons that day. Their kids lived a thousand miles apart and never met, but they both died from harms related to their social media use.

When the two mothers met, early in their advocacy work to protect other kids, Bride said she had felt "totally alone." But they have since seen the online child safety movement blossom, with scores of other parents who lost kids pursuing stronger social media safeguards and legislation to protect children online.

With that momentum, advocates say the tide seems to be turning. A pair of landmark jury verdicts this year showed a way forward for holding tech companies accountable. And while the U.S. is nowhere near embracing social media bans for children like those seen from Australia to Indonesia, a push for regulation is simmering again in Congress.

"Moving forward for me, it's this groundswell. We now have the court of public opinion on our side, and that is powerful. That has brought things to the next level," Neville said in an interview.



Dustin and Kaira Rysdam stand next to the memorial for their son, Breton, during the 2026 Social Media Victims Remembrance Day on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, June 23, 2026 in Washington. A memorial of 272 placards were placed across Upper Senate Park, each featuring the picture and forever age of a child lost to online harms including sextortion, drug poisoning, cyberbullying, addictive algorithms pushing suicide ideation, and other dangerous social media challenges. (AP)

Her son Alexander Neville was "brilliant and intense," Neville said, with an entrepreneurial spirit and "the best laugh in the world." When he was 14, a drug dealer connected with him on Snapchat and sold him the pill

that killed him. Carson Bride was the "bright light" of his family, a funny and caring kid who loved connecting with people, his mother said. He died by suicide at age 16 after severe cyberbullying.

The teenagers were honored in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday alongside 270 other children and young people who died because of online harms. It was the sixth anniversary of the boys' deaths, a date their families have worked to establish as Social Media Victims Remembrance Day.

Growing awareness of the dangers social media poses for young, developing brains has shown up in a wave of new restrictions globally. Australia, the U.K., Turkey, Indonesia and others have passed bans on kids under 16 or 15 from using platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram.

In the U.S., the movement turned a corner with two jury verdicts against Meta and one against Google that galvanized proponents for kids' online safety. Evidence in the court cases revealed some of the tech companies' inner workings, including communications of employees who likened their products to drugs and casinos.

That the Los Angeles trial accusing social media platforms of causing deliberate harm to children was allowed to move forward was itself a watershed moment, said Matthew Bergman, head of the Social Media Victims Law Center, which represents more than 1,000 plaintiffs in lawsuits against social media companies.

HEALTH/SCIENCE

Watch Duty, fire tracking app used by millions, expands to help monitor dangerous floods

WASHINGTON, June 28, (AP) — When a fire broke out a few miles from his Altadena, California, home the evening of Jan. 7, 2025, Matt Blea and his family needed to make a crucial decision: Should they stay home, or evacuate?

A friend who did mountain rescue told Blea to download a free app called Watch Duty. On the app, he could see the fire's perimeter, track evacuation orders and read updates about the emergency response. "It influenced me to leave the home sooner than later," said Blea, who left with his wife and son that evening, before the Eaton Fire destroyed their home.

Blea was one of more than 2.5 million people who used Watch Duty to track fires burning across Los Angeles County that week. The information was collected, vetted and disseminated by about two dozen Watch Duty staff and over 100 volunteers who monitored emergency radio traffic, aircraft reports and local agency communications.

The service proved vital, said David Hertz, a Malibu resident and captain of his community's fire brigade, especially when some areas received



A person uses the Watch Duty app to track floods on June 18, in San Diego, Calif. (AP)

little-to-no warning about the Eaton and Palisades fires that killed 31 people. "It's like a democratization of data that empowers people."

This month, Watch Duty began helping people track another deadly and destructive climate hazard: flooding.

The expansion comes as peak flash flood season begins in the U.S. and nearly one year after last July's

deadly Texas floods that killed more than 130 people, prompting outcry over why Texas Hill Country residents and visitors didn't receive better communication about the impending danger.

"This is painful that this keeps happening," said John Mills, CEO and co-founder of the donor-supported nonprofit behind the app. "We're not spreading enough information fast enough on as many channels as humanly possible."

Mills founded Watch Duty in 2021 after not receiving official alerts or evacuation instructions when a fire burned near his Northern California home.

It's a problem seen in many recent disasters. While the U.S. has systems for sending alerts by text, radio, and other means, the process to issue a specific warning or evacuation order can get tangled in bureaucracy and often depends on humans making difficult decisions under pressure.

Often the information people need to understand their risk is out there, Mills said, but it is hard to find and use. "The systems are really struggling to meet people where they are."



People wade through a recreational vehicle park flooded by a king tide on Jan. 3, 2026, near Corte Madera in Marin County, Calif. (AP)

Heat records smashed in Switzerland, Denmark and Czech Republic

Europe's extreme heat would be impossible without climate change, say scientists

The record-breaking heat that's scorching Europe day and night this month would not have been possible without climate change, according to a new study.

The World Weather Attribution rapid study released found that the heat would have been virtually impossible just five decades ago, and is 200 times more likely today than it would have been 20 years ago.

Millions in France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe are experiencing extreme temperatures and humidity this week associated with a heat dome. Daytime temperatures have topped 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in many places, while high nighttime temperatures have also made it harder to cool down and recover.

The scientists estimated that a heat wave with similar characteristics occurring in the climate of June 1976 would have been about 3.5 degrees Celsius (6.3 Fahrenheit) cooler during the day and about 2 degrees Celsius cooler (3.6 Fahrenheit) in 2003. The nighttime temperatures would have been about 2.4 degrees Celsius (4.3 Fahrenheit) cooler in June 1976 and about 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 Fahrenheit) cooler in 2003.

They chose 1976 and 2003 for comparison because those years saw extreme heat in Europe.

"The increase in temperatures was so dramatic that we would have expected to have never seen this event

in the 1976 climate," said the study's lead author Theodore Keeping, also a climate scientist at the Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College London. "And it would also still have been very, very rare, even 23 years ago in 2003."

World Weather Attribution, a Europe-based collaborative of scientists who study the causes of global extreme weather events, began assessing in 2015 the extent to which those could be attributed to climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. The organization's rapid attribution studies, including this one, aren't peer-reviewed but use peer-reviewed methodology.

The current study used observed temperature data and forecasts for an analysis of the heat wave that started on June 18.

It also found that 45% of the 850 cities analyzed across 30 European countries have broken, or are expected to hit, records for heat stress levels, a measure that includes humidity and temperature.

"It directly relates to the heat stress on the human body and our ability to cool ourselves down, and it's a really good metric for the expected health impacts we expect to see from this heat wave," Keeping said. Heat and humidity make for a dangerous combination for humans.

Ultimately, this marks the most severe heat wave to have ever been



A view of a thermometer next to a pharmacy reading 39 degrees Celsius, in Berlin on June 27. (AP)

recorded in this region of Europe and most severe humid heat event, WWA researchers said.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing at twice the speed as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. In a separate study last year, WWA researchers found there were about 1,500 climate change-caused deaths during a European heat wave last summer.

Temperatures soared to record

highs from Switzerland to the Czech Republic and Denmark on Saturday, as a heat wave that baked western

European countries this week moved to central and eastern parts of the continent.

Unusually high temperatures were recorded even in the Nordic countries not known for sweltering summers. Denmark's Meteorological Institute reported a record 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in Odum north of Aarhus - the warmest day since records there began in 1874.

Germany's famous Autobahn was overwhelmed, too, as temperatures were expected to hit 40 C (104 F). In two places outside Berlin, the concrete of the A2 burst due to the high temperatures and the highway had to be closed. Other highway damage was reported across the country, according to the German daily Bild.

Train operator Deutsche Bahn and other rail companies advised against all nonessential train travel this weekend.

"Germany's transportation infrastructure is being severely affected by the record-breaking heat this weekend," Deutsche Bahn said in a statement.

The Czech Republic also saw its hottest day on record, with 40.8 C (105.4 F) in the northern town of Doksan. Forecasters said it may still rise.

In the western German city of Dormagen, dozens of residents of a nursing home were evacuated for medical care due to dangerous heat conditions in the building.

The local fire department reported that temperatures inside the home had reached 35 C (95 F). Air conditioning is not widespread in Germany and many countries in Europe because the continent is largely unused to such oppressive heat.

A resident at the home died overnight, but it was not yet clear

whether the heat was the cause, a city spokesperson told German news agency dpa.

In France, multiple towns in the east of the country saw their highest-ever temperatures Saturday, with some above 40 C (104 F) even though the worst of the heat wave was starting to pass in some regions.

Paris and 36 other regions, stretching from the center to the east and northeast, remained in the extreme-heat red zone on Saturday, down from a peak on Thursday of 72 regions that were under such warnings.

The capital continued to see unrelenting pressure on its hospitals, with a second consecutive day of nearly 3,000 people seeking care in public hospital emergency rooms, about a third more than normal.

The Paris public hospital authority, AP-HP, said it activated its emergency response plan across all 38 hospitals to cope. Phone calls to its medical dispatch centers were up nearly 80% compared with the same period in 2025, it said.

The temperatures this week have been higher than those during a historic 2003 heat wave that was blamed for 15,000 heat-related deaths, many of them older people. The AP-HP's director, Nicolas Revel, said he doesn't expect as many deaths this time, at least in Paris hospitals, in part because treatment for overheating has since improved. (AP)



Cyprus' President Nikos Christodoulides, center, Malta's Prime Minister Robert Abela, (center left), pose for a family photo during the high-level conference 'Strengthening Islands and Coastal Communities of the European Union' in the southwestern coastal city of Paphos on the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus on June 26. (AP)

EU unveils plan to help bloc's overlooked islands and coastal communities

PAPHOS, Cyprus, June 28, (Agencies) — Improving transportation links, ending energy isolation and building more homes are some of the key initiatives the European Union's executive arm is looking to enact under a pair of first-ever strategies designed to help the bloc's islands and coastal communities flourish, EU officials said Friday.

Some 17 million people live in more than 4,000 islands across the EU, including three island members - Ireland, Malta and Cyprus. Another 95 million live along the coasts of 22 member states.

"Islands have been overlooked in the past, but now that comes to an end," European Parliament Vice President Younous Omarjee told a conference on strengthening EU islands and coastal communities.

The strategies aim to do away with piecemeal approaches to overcoming the unique challenges that islands and coastal communities face, offering a comprehensive approach, said Raffaele Fitto, European Commission executive vice president for cohesion and reforms.

Given their distance from mainland markets and dependence on air and maritime connections, the costs for transport, housing and public services are much higher on islands

than on the mainland.

"This is what we call the cost of insularity - a cost that millions of EU citizens and businesses pay every day, simply because of where they live and work," Fitto said.

The strategy on islands is built around four pillars that aim to improve transportation links and digital infrastructure, tackle the effects of climate change and energy needs, address shrinking populations and housing shortages, and bolster security and crisis preparedness.

"From the Baltic to the Mediterranean, islands are on the front line of geopolitical challenges," said Fitto.

There are currently no details on specific projects that will receive funding. That will come from member states themselves who will forward proposals once the bloc's new budget is unveiled. Fitto said projects such as desalination plants and housing will be among the priorities.

Fisheries Oceans Commissioner Costas Kadir said EU coastal communities contribute some 265 billion euros (\$302 billion) annually to the bloc's budget but are also under strain from climate change, demographic decline, lack of affordable housing and difficult access to services.

The strategy on coastal communi-

ties aims to make them less reliant on a single source of revenue by diversifying economic activity and creating new jobs. Kadir said among the strategy's proposals is a blue carbon credit program that would fund carbon-absorbing coastal wetlands, marshes and mangroves.

Also:

BEIJING: The cross-border mobility and synergy of top scientists are becoming a key variable in reshaping the global innovation ecosystem, said a report on global scientists mobility and collaboration recently issued by a Beijing-based thinktank.

The report, titled 2026 Global Mobility and Collaboration of Top Scientists, was published by the Beijing Institute of Talent Development Strategy, according to the China Science Daily on Friday.

Based on Elsevier's Scopus global research data, it provided a systematic analysis of cross-regional mobility among the world's top scientists over the past two years from multiple dimensions including intercontinental, national, urban, and disciplinary perspectives. It also detailed the mobility patterns and the collaborative networks formed during the process.

Melatonin can be effective sleep aid but improper dosing leads to real harms

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

By Sally Ibrahim

Case Western Reserve University

Melatonin - a go-to sleep aid for kids and adults alike in many households in America - continues to create media buzz, with conflicting messages that leave people uncertain about its safety.

Some headlines point to melatonin's supposed immunity boosting power, while others point to unestablished links between melatonin and heart failure.

I'm a pediatrician and sleep medicine doctor specializing in children, adolescents and adults.

In my experience, many families go through difficulties with sleep for several months and even years before they seek out specialty care, and often they come across information online that isn't tailored to the right age group or sleep condition. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration hasn't approved any insomnia medications for children, so pediatricians don't have many options.

Melatonin is the most widely studied sleep aid in children. Still, I find that many parents feel uncertain about using melatonin, and some even experience guilt if they do, despite some clear benefits with appropriate use.

Adequate, regular and healthy sleep is essential for functioning our best throughout the day, and people deserve to get sleep information that is supported by evidence.

Melatonin is released during evening hours by a tiny, pine cone-shaped endocrine gland deep in the brain called the pineal gland.

Melatonin levels peak in the middle of the night and plummet by morning. Once the melatonin signal starts to come on, it rises and then falls during the night. This process is "circadian" in that it happens daily.

Light is the strongest inhibitor of melatonin production. Darkness removes that inhibition and allows the pineal gland to release melatonin. This is why sleep specialists often advise against exposure to bright light and encourage natural light exposure during the day - particularly in the morning - to solidify natural sleep patterns based on circadian rhythms.

Unlike other over-the-counter sleep aids, melatonin affects two pathways that encourage sleep. One pathway results in the "hypnotic" effect, which increases sleepiness and helps us fall asleep, like most other sleep aids. The other pathway, which is unique to melatonin, results in the "chronotropic" effect, which helps support and regulate sleep-wake timing and circadian rhythms.

Having insomnia, which includes difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep or waking too early, can lead to daytime dysfunction. When used at night, melatonin can reduce the time it takes to fall asleep and may also shift the circadian clock to an earlier time.

A circadian rhythm disorder refers to a problem with the timing of sleep in relation to our environment.

The most common circadian rhythm disorder in some teenagers and young adults is the delayed type. This re-

lates to having a later internal clock compared with actual clock time. In other words, people are not tired enough to go to bed until later - even after midnight. This affects the time of sleep onset, making it hard to fall asleep and hard to wake up, and ultimately shortens sleep duration.

Melatonin can be helpful in these cases because it signals the delayed brain clock that it's time for sleep earlier than the person would naturally feel tired.

Importantly, taking synthetically produced melatonin does not affect or interfere with the body's own production of melatonin.

Melatonin products can be made in a regular immediate-release formulation, which is found in most liquids and chewables. These provide a fast peak effect - usually within 10 to 30 minutes of taking it - for helping with falling sleep.

It can also be made in an extended-release formulation. These products have a gradual onset, sometimes even peaking mid-sleep and making it easier to stay asleep.

Some brands provide both immediate and extended-release benefits for falling asleep and staying asleep.

Many children with insomnia before bedtime who use melatonin will be able to fall asleep faster and increase total sleep time by about a half-hour; some do not respond.

For this and other reasons, it's important to consult with a healthcare provider before taking melatonin or giving it to a child.

Melatonin comes with some potential downsides, the most obvious of which is that because it is considered a dietary supplement in the U.S., it is not regulated by the FDA as a prescription medication.

In other parts of the world, such as the European Union, melatonin is available only by prescription, with appropriate dosing by a licensed clinician.

Because melatonin is labeled only as a supplement in the U.S., many parents are giving it to their children without the guidance of a healthcare professional and without trying nonpharmaceutical therapies for insomnia first. And many people use melatonin for undiagnosed sleep conditions that may not warrant its use. It is important to seek medical attention before using any sleep aid, including melatonin.

Another major variable is brand quality. One brand might deliver spot-on doses backed by rigorous testing for quality, while another might have wildly different concentrations than the label claims.

For instance, a 2023 study showed that some brands labeled a chewable gummy product as melatonin even though it contained no melatonin. Even more disturbing, some brands whose products were labeled as melatonin in the study actually had cannabidiol, or CBD, in them instead.

The same study found that among 30 commercial melatonin products, melatonin content ranged from -83% to +478% of the labeled content. And even within a single lot of a given brand, melatonin content varied by as much as 465%.

High doses of melatonin in children have not been tested for safety. While reported overdoses are generally associated with mild symptoms, some children have been hospitalized. (AP)

All-new RAV4 arrives with a full model change

ALSAYER & Toyota introduce the all-new RAV4, designed for your journey



KUWAIT CITY, June 28: Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L and Toyota have launched all-new RAV4, marking a full model change for one of the brand's most consistently popular vehicles worldwide. Evolving with a refined new design, enhanced driving performance, and a suite of advanced technologies, the latest RAV4 reinforces Toyota's commitment to deliver vehicles that seamlessly integrate everyday usability with a spirit of adventure.

Since its introduction in 1994 as a pioneer of the monocoque SUV, the RAV4 has continuously redefined expectations of what a recreational vehicle can be. Designed to bridge the gap between city driving and outdoor exploration, the RAV4 created an entirely new category that combined the comfort and accessibility of a passenger vehicle with the versatility of an SUV. Over nearly three decades, it has grown into a global success, embraced by customers across diverse markets and lifestyles.

With this latest generation, Toyota builds on that legacy by delivering a RAV4 that is more capable, more efficient, and more intelligent than ever before. The all-new RAV4 has been developed around the philosophy that "Life is an Adventure," ensuring drivers can move confidently between their everyday routines and extraordinary moments, supported by comfort, safety, and peace of mind.

Electrification remains central to the RAV4 story. As one of Toyota's earliest and most successful platforms for hybrid adoption, the RAV4 has played a key role in advancing electrified mobility in line with the company's multi-pathway approach. The new model continues that journey through the adoption of Toyota's 5th generation hybrid electric system, delivering stronger acceleration, improved fuel efficiency, and a smoother driving experience without the need for external charging.

As the core powertrain - the hybrid system offers the convenience and familiarity of a petrol vehicle, combined with the benefits of electrification. Drivers can enjoy responsive performance and confident power delivery, while also benefiting from excellent fuel efficiency suited to both urban commuting and longer journeys. By making electrification accessible and practical, the new RAV4 supports Toyota's broader efforts toward carbon neutrality while enhancing everyday usability for customers across the region.

Commenting on the all-new RAV4, Yoshinori Funotagane, Chief Engineer at Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "The challenge we faced during development was exactly an adventure. 'Life is an Adventure' is the core philosophy behind RAV4, and in developing this new



Top and above: A closer look at the Toyota RAV4's interior and exterior design.

generation, we focused on the values of 'Go anywhere' and 'Do anything.' Our goal was to ensure that customers feel comfort and peace of mind in both their ordinary and extraordinary lives, while also designing a vehicle that captures the spirit of adventure from within."

Visually, the all-new RAV4 introduces a refined yet confident design that reflects its evolved capabilities. The model is offered in two renewed styles: Core and Adventure, each expressing a distinct interpretation of the RAV4 character. The Core style emphasizes a clean, modern appearance suited to urban environments, while maintaining the robust proportions expected of an SUV. The Adventure style adopts a more rugged design language, highlighting RAV4's readiness for light off-road use and outdoor exploration.

Inside the cabin, the new RAV4 focuses on functionality and driver engagement. An updated interior architecture groups key controls and displays intuitively, reducing eye movement and enhancing ease of operation. High-quality materials, improved ergonomics, and thoughtful layout choices create a welcoming space that supports both daily driving and longer journeys. Enhanced body rigidity and platform refinements contribute to improved ride comfort, reduced noise, and a more composed driving feel across varying road conditions.

Further enhancing driver comfort and awareness, select variants of the all-new RAV4 are equipped with a Head-Up Display that projects essential driving information directly onto the windshield, allowing drivers to access key data without taking their eyes off the road. A Panoramic Moon Roof is also available, filling the cabin with natural light and creating an open, spacious atmosphere from front to rear. An electric sunshade helps block direct sunlight when needed for consistent clarity in all driving conditions.

Driving performance has been further elevated through

a combination of platform improvements and intelligent control systems. The new RAV4 benefits from enhanced body rigidity, optimized suspension tuning, and strengthened off-road capability through features such as Trail Mode, which supports confident progress on uneven or low-grip surfaces. These advancements allow the vehicle to remain stable and composed whether navigating city streets, highways, or light off-road terrain.

Technology plays a central role in the new RAV4's evolution. The model is equipped with an all-new version of Toyota Safety Sense (TSS4), offering enhanced detection capabilities and broader operational support across a wide range of driving scenarios. Improvements to systems such as the Pre-Collision System and Dynamic Radar Cruise Control contribute to smoother, more intuitive assistance, supporting the driver in avoiding hazards and reducing fatigue on longer journeys.

Complementing these safety enhancements is Toyota's latest-generation Audio Multimedia system, designed to deliver a more personalized and connected experience. Available with a 10.5-inch or 12.9-inch display, paired with a 12.3-inch combination meter, the system offers improved graphics, faster responsiveness, and enhanced customization. Drivers can tailor information displays to their preferences, ensuring key data is presented clearly and intuitively.

Everyday convenience has also been elevated through features such as enhanced parking assistance. The new RAV4 offers Panoramic View Monitor (PVM) with 3D view, allowing drivers to better visualize their surroundings when maneuvering in tight spaces. Auto Parking functionality further supports stress-free parking in urban environments, reinforcing the RAV4's suitability for city life.

Additional functional enhancements include the introduction of Shift-by-Wire technology, contributing to smoother operation and a cleaner cabin layout. These re-

Highlights

- Features refined design, improved driving performance, and advanced technologies
- The new RAV4 offers hybrid model featuring electrified technology that is more accessible and practical
- Equipped with Toyota's 5th generation hybrid system, new Toyota Safety Sense (TSS4), and latest-generation Audio Multimedia for a safer, more connected drive
- Offered in two distinct styles, Core and Adventure, the new RAV4 blends urban comfort with light off-road capability

finements collectively ensure that the new RAV4 delivers a balanced driving experience that feels confident, modern, and engaging.

Customers can personalize the all-new RAV4 through a wide range of carefully curated interior and exterior color options. Both styles are each offered with two distinctive interior color choices alongside nine exterior mono-tone finishes, including the all-new Urban Rock. Additionally, the Core style offers further customization with five Bi-tone exterior combinations, allowing customers to express their individuality while enhancing the RAV4's dynamic design.

Complementing the exterior styling, each variant of the all-new RAV4 comes pre-configured with a variety of alloy wheel designs and finishes, including 20-inch alloy wheels in two colors, 18-inch alloy wheels in three colors, and 17-inch alloy wheels finished in Dark Gray Metallic, depending on style and specification.

Through this full model change, Toyota has ensured that the RAV4 continues to evolve in step with customer expectations, without losing sight of the qualities that have made it a global success. By combining electrification, advanced safety technologies, updated design, and versatile capability, the all-new RAV4 remains a vehicle equally at home in the city and beyond it.

The launch of the new RAV4 represents Toyota's continued commitment to offering vehicles that enrich everyday life while inspiring a sense of adventure. As customers across the region look toward a future shaped by innovation and sustainability, the all-new RAV4 stands ready to support every journey, wherever life may lead.

Qadsia clinches external spot as race tightens

Night of coronation for Kuwait Club

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The curtain comes down today on the Zain Premier League, with Kuwait Club set to be crowned champions for a fifth consecutive season and the 21st time in their history, as three matches conclude the final round of the championship group.

Kuwait Club, which sealed the title as early as the third round of the championship group, faces Qadsia at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 7:05 PM. At the same venue, Al-Arabi meets Al-Fahaheel at 10:15 PM, while Al-Salmiya takes on Kazma at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium at the same time.

Kuwait Club leads the table with 52 points, followed by Qadsia in second place on 38. Al-Salmiya sits third with 37. Al-Arabi fourth with 36, Kazma fifth with 35, and Al-Fahaheel sixth with 22.

Qadsia has already guaranteed a top-four finish, securing qualification for an external competition next



A tight soccer duel as a Qadsia player shields the ball from two Kuwait Club opponents under bright lights.

season. The fight remains fierce, however, between Al-Arabi, Kazma, and Al-Salmiya for the remaining two continental and regional qualification spots.

Second place earns a playoff route to the AFC Champions League 2,

third place qualifies for the AFC Challenge League, while fourth position leads to the GCC Champions League.

Qadsia's final match against Kuwait Club will not affect its qualification status, but the "Yellows" will

be eager to avenge their 2-1 defeat in the first round and become the first side to beat the champions this season after a 1-1 draw in the return fixture.

Kuwait Club, meanwhile, aims to finish unbeaten, seeking either victory or a draw to complete a dominant campaign.

The match will be officiated by Somali international referee Omar Artan, who arrived in Kuwait last week following an invitation from Kuwait Football Association chairman Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef. His appointment is seen as a gesture of recognition after he was denied a U.S. visa for potential involvement in World Cup 2026 officiating duties.

Attention turns to Al-Salmiya vs Kazma, where Al-Salmiya needs just a point to confirm qualification for external competition, while Kazma must win to stay in contention.

In the final fixture, Al-Arabi requires a victory to guarantee qualification regardless of other results, or a draw combined with an Al-Salmiya win over Kazma to progress.

Kuwait opens Cairo camp ahead of Asian campaign



Kuwait national volleyball team in action at training camp.

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 28: The national men's volleyball team departs today for Cairo, Egypt, to hold a training camp as part of its final preparations for the West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship, scheduled to take place in Oman from July 11 to 22.

The delegation is headed by board member Ziad Al-Anzi and includes administrative and technical staff: Abdullah Al-Ali (team administrator), Argentine head coach Julian Alvarez, assistant coach Zaid Al-Kazemi, fitness coach Agustin Javier, analyst Lux Borsch, and physiother-

apist Mohammed Al-Yamam.

The squad for the camp includes Abdunnasser Al-Anzi, Rashid Anbar, Nasser Dashti, Ahmed Al-Munaies, Fares Suleiman, Abdullah Fares Al-Anzi, Adhbi Al-Anzi, Omar Al-Anzi, Mohammed Al-Dhafiri, Abdullah Al-Muwaineh, Fahd Saad Yaqoub, Ali Sadoon, Talal Ahmed Abdulrazzaq, and Saud Al-Duwaisan.

The technical staff is hopeful the Cairo camp will significantly boost the team's physical and technical readiness, helping the squad reach peak condition ahead of the West Asia Championship, where "Al-Azraq" aims to deliver strong performances and positive results.

Stokes announces retirement

LONDON, June 28, (AP): England captain Ben Stokes stunned the world of cricket on Sunday by announcing his impending retirement from the international game - in the middle of a test match he was playing against New Zealand.

News of the imminent end of Stokes' 15-year England career came in a statement released by the team

15 minutes before the tea interval on Day 4 of the third and deciding test at Trent Bridge.

With the first ball he bowled after the announcement went public, Stokes took a wicket when he got an edge off New Zealand batter Zak Foulkes to second slip where the catch was taken by Harry Brook - possibly the next captain.

Russell wins Austrian GP in hot conditions

SPIELBERG, Austria, June 28, (AP): George Russell showed he can stand the heat in more ways than one as he won the Austrian Grand Prix to revive his Formula 1 title chances.

Racing in a heatwave with a broken drinks system, Russell held off Max Verstappen and his own teammate Kimi Antonelli to turn his controversial pole position into a dominant win.

It's the first win for Russell, excluding sprint races, since the season-opening Australian Grand Prix. Russell said it was "incredible to be back on the top step" after a "tricky run of form."

Verstappen took the fight to Mercedes with his upgraded Red Bull car at the team's home race, but couldn't get close enough for a shot at Russell and finished up on the defensive against



Mercedes driver George Russell of Britain celebrates on the podium after winning the Austrian F1 Grand Prix, in Spielberg, Austria. (AP)

Antonelli. The top three were separated by just two seconds at the finish.

Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari failed to build on his breakthrough win at

the Barcelona-Catalunya Grand Prix last time out, fading badly in the race despite qualifying well, with the seven-time champion fifth and team-

mate Charles Leclerc eighth.

Russell takes back second in the standings from Hamilton with his seventh career win and cuts Antonelli's lead to 40 points.

Russell took pole Saturday with a lap time set as a yellow flag was displayed for a crash by Verstappen. Russell argued he'd lifted off enough to be safe and the stewards agreed.

Sunday's win showed off Russell's smart approach to racing in a different way as he managed his pace and stayed out of trouble, even as those behind him lost time battling each other for position.

Leclerc had started second, with Hamilton third, but they gradually dropped back through the field on a track where they lacked power compared to Mercedes and also had difficulties with tire wear.

Serena talks herself into Wimbledon return

LONDON, June 28, (AP): Serena Williams had to talk herself into accepting Wimbledon's offer to play singles.

The All England club was holding one last wild card entry and the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion - who had already announced she'd play doubles with her sister Venus - had a decision to make.

"I thought I should really take this opportunity. Who knows if I'll ever make it here again. This could be it," the 44-year-old Williams said

Sunday at a press conference.

"I was like, 'What's wrong with me, Serena? What are you thinking? Are you nuts? Like you really should do this,'" she added. "People live to be an athlete. I have this great opportunity to showcase what I do, what I do best, I suppose. Yeah, I think ultimately I was like that is pretty cool, so I should do it."

Williams' first match at the grass-court Grand Slam since 2022 will take place on Centre Court on Tuesday evening when she faces

20-year-old Maya Joint of Australia as part of her evolving tennis comeback.

Williams had been away from the sport since her farewell at the 2022 U.S. Open.

Her most-recent appearance at Wimbledon was in 2022 when she lost in the opening round to Harmony Tan, who was then-ranked 115th. The American great walked away from tennis - she described it as "evolving" away - after losing in the third round to Ajla Tomljanovic at Flushing Meadows.

Change Name

I, Fasivuddin Mathavudin indian nationality passport holder No. Z5425156, Residing 11B OLD street T.Mavidanah village and P.O south arcot, villupuram tamil nadu india 606305, would like to change my name to Mathavudin Fasiuddin

Change Name

I, HUSAIN holder of Passport No. B6041919 having permanent address - nahliwala Hakimi mohalla Partapur, banswara, Rajasthan. Pin code- 327024. Residing in kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Husain (Given name) Nahaliwala (surname)

Change Name

I, Saifuddin holder of Indian Passport No. CO49491 having permanent address- Bohrabari, Salambar, Rajasthan India-313027 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given, name - Saifuddin and Surname - Semari



Our focus is on Croatia: Costa

Colombia wins Group K after draw with Portugal

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., June 28, (AP): Colombia's plan was nearly perfectly executed. The only thing missing was a goal.

Didn't matter - it goes into the knockout stage as a group winner.

Colombia finished the World Cup's opening round as the Group K winner after playing Portugal to a scoreless draw at Hard Rock Stadium in front of an electric crowd of supporters, the majority of whom were clad in Colombia's bright yellow jerseys.

"We were the better team and deserved to win," Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo said. "I think we created so many chances. We just lacked finishing. The players were outstanding against a top contender ... not only did we play them on equal terms, we dictated the terms. I think playing

against a rival like that, showing this kind of football to all these people, in this heat, was incredible."

He wasn't wrong. Colombia had 24 of the game's 37 attempts on goal, never wiling despite the game-time temperature topping 90 degrees (32 degrees Celsius).

Both squads had already secured spots in the knockout stage before the match, needing only to learn their opponents for the next round.

Colombia opens the knockouts on July 3 against Ghana, which entered with one of the lowest FIFA rankings but also played England to a scoreless tie during the group stage. Portugal will face Croatia, which beat Ghana 2-1 earlier Saturday, on July 2 as the Group K runner-up - potentially needing to go through Spain to reach the quarterfinals.



Colombia's Daniel Muñoz (2) challenges Portugal's Rafael Leão (17) during the World Cup Group K soccer match between Colombia and Portugal in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

"Win, losing or having a draw today didn't make a difference," Portugal coach Roberto Martínez said through an interpreter. "Our goal really is to play eight matches. The path for us really doesn't make a difference. We tried to win the match. Our opponent did the same."

Both squads put forth lively efforts. Bruno Fernandez came close to putting Portugal ahead in the first half, but was denied by Camilo Vargas. Portugal's Diogo Costa had six saves, more than in the team's first two matches combined. Davinson Sanchez thought he had given Colombia a lead with a back-post header just a minute into stoppage time, but he was ruled offside - barely, by the tip of a toe, if that much - and the goal was disallowed as those yellow-clad fans whistled in disbelief.

Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal squad, looking for its first World Cup title and a favorite to win the tournament, heads to the knockout stage after an up-and-down group stage.

Portugal opened group play with a surprising 1-1 draw against Congo. Ronaldo faced criticism after failing to score in that match, and answered by becoming the first player to score in six World Cup with two goals in Portugal's 5-0 win over Uzbekistan.

"First of all, we are satisfied to have made it past the first phase, obviously," Costa said. "But clearly, we aren't fully satisfied because we always want to win. That's what we work for every day. Our focus is on Croatia. We'll be paying even closer attention to them now in this World Cup."

England ends group stage on top

Kane and Bellingham lead Three Lions past Panama

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J., June 28, (AP): Jude Bellingham, Harry Kane and England's fervid fans made MetLife Stadium feel like Wembley. They hope for a repeat at next month's World Cup final.

With supporters' red-and-white St. George's Cross signs circling the field on an afternoon of sporadic rain, Bellingham and Kane scored early in the second half for a 2-0 win over Panama. England earned first place in its group and a more favorable knockout phase bracket.

The Three Lions even wore the red jerseys made famous when England beat Germany for its only title in 1966, a sartorial similarity connecting North Jersey and that famous day in north London.

"Amazing support. Crazy white wall behind the goal. Perfect weather to play football for us," England coach Thomas Tuchel said.

England finished Group L with two wins and a draw for seven points and plays its round of 32 match Wednesday at Atlanta against Congo. The team that advances faces Mexico or Ecuador in Mexico City.

If the Three Lions had dropped to second, they would have encountered Portugal, with the winner meeting Spain or Austria.

"I know some people have already made plans," Bellingham said, "so it was nice they don't have to cancel anything."

Fans filled the field walls with flags displaying club names that included Tottenham, Watford and Wolves plus less-celebrated clubs such as Crawley Town, Bristol Rovers and Faversham Town.

Panama held the England scoreless through a



England's Elliot Anderson (8) and Panama's Jorge Gutierrez (26) battle for the ball during the World Cup Group L soccer match between Panama and England in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York. (AP)

first half in which Kane had 10 touches, the fewest of any player. Croatia added pressure by taking the lead in the 31st minute against Ghana in simultaneous match in Philadelphia.

"All the lads were ready to go after halftime," Bellingham said. "We realized we had a couple of more gears to go."

Bellingham put the Three Lions ahead in the 62nd minute from Bukayo Saka's corner kick. Held in bear hug by Jorge Gutiérrez at the top

of the 6-yard box, Bellingham stuck out his left leg and stabbed the ball past goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera for his third World Cup goal, his second this year.

Five minutes later, Bellingham crossed from the left flank and Kane outjumped Andrés Andrade to head in the ball for his 82nd international goal. Kane became England's record World Cup scorer with his 11th goal, one more than Gary Lineker.

'We want to see Egypt win again'

Egyptian fans dream big after World Cup breakthrough

CAIRO, June 28, (Xinhua): Loud cheers were heard from cafes, homes and apartment balconies across Egypt in the early hours of Saturday as the national team secured its first ever group-stage progression to the knockout stage at the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The Pharaohs held Iran to a 1-1 draw in the final Group G match to book the qualification, with fans believing the Pharaohs can continue their World Cup journey.

"I watched every minute of the match with my family. We couldn't believe the final whistle," said Sherief Helmy, who watched the match at a cafe in Cairo's Al-Haram district before taking to the streets with his two children, singing patriotic songs and waving Egyptian flags.

"We've already made history," Helmy told Xinhua. "Now we don't want to stop here. We want to see Egypt win again." The result moved Egypt to five points from three matches, securing second place behind Belgium, who defeated New Zealand 5-1 in the other group match. Egypt will face Australia in the Round of 32 on July 3.

"Goal for Egypt!" residents shouted from the windows of apartment buildings in Cairo's Zahraa El Maadi district after Mahmoud Saber gave Egypt the lead in the fifth minute.

"This team has shown courage and

determination," said Ahmed Yahia, another fan, adding that reaching the next round proved Egyptian players could compete with the world's best. "Now we believe they can go even further." Egyptian Minister of Youth and Sports Gohar Nabil also congratulated the national team, describing the achievement as a milestone for Egyptian football.

"You have written your names in golden letters in the history of Egyptian football," the minister said in a statement, praising the players and coaching staff.

Nabil said the achievement reflected the team's determination and deserved recognition, adding that the country's political leadership had full confidence in and support for the national team throughout its World Cup campaign.

He expressed optimism that the breakthrough would become another milestone in Egyptian sports and bring joy to millions of fans across the country.

Sports analyst Mahmoud Ali said that although the knockout stage would present tougher opponents, Egypt's confidence, tactical discipline, and team spirit gave it a realistic chance of progressing further.

"The players have already proved they can compete under pressure," he said. "This qualification will boost their confidence, and anything is possible in knockout football."

Fan

Zone



World Cup supporters bring color and energy to the stands during FIFA World Cup group stage matches across the United States, Canada and Mexico. (AP)



Jordan's Abdallah Nasib (3) and Yazan Alarab (5) hold a flag on the field after the World Cup Group J soccer match between Jordan and Argentina in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

Sports

Stunning draw sends Algeria and Austria through as Iran eliminated



Algeria's Nabil Bentaleb (19) and Austria's Phillip Mwene (16) compete for the ball during the World Cup Group J soccer match between Algeria and Austria in Kansas City, Mo. (AP)

'Unexpected trajectory'

KANSAS CITY, Mo., June 28, (AP): Algeria and Austria knew that a pedestrian draw would have sent both to the knockout round of the World Cup.

They delivered a thrilling 3-3 draw instead.

In the wildest finish of the group stage, Algeria took the lead in stoppage time only for Austria to answer on the final play of the game, making it a win-win result for those teams and a heartbreaking loss for Iran, which was eliminated from the tournament.

"I've been a coach for about 40 years. I don't remember a game that had such a dramatic course, and such an unexpected trajectory," Austria coach Ralf Rangnick said, shaking his head. "Even at the beginning of the match, if someone would have said it would be 3-3, nobody would have believed it. Somebody would have won an incredible bet, I guess."

The game was tied 2-2 in the closing minutes, and Algeria looked as if it was content to run out the clock and allow both teams to advance, when Riyad Mahrez scored his second goal of the game. That put Austria on the verge of elimination, only for Sasa Kalajdzic to head

in the equalizer a couple of minutes later, rescuing Das Team's World Cup hopes.

"The locker room is madness," Rangnick said with a smile. "If Alfred Hitchcock - who had nothing to do with soccer, didn't really like soccer - if he had written such a drama, I would have said he was completely mad."

Marko Arnautovic and Marcel Sabitzer also had goals for Austria, which finished second behind Argentina in Group J to advance for the first time since 1982. Its reward is a matchup with European champion Spain on Thursday in Los Angeles.

Rafik Belghali also scored for Les Fennecs, who became the ninth of 10 teams from Africa to advance. They finished third in the group but get a potentially easier Round of 32 matchup with Switzerland on Thursday night in Vancouver, British Columbia.

"It's a feeling of being extremely happy," Mahrez said. "We're obviously happy, and it was the objective when we arrived - it was to go beyond the first round. That's what we did, and we're all very happy."

Iran would've advanced as one of the eight best third-place teams had Austria or Algeria won. But when Kalajdzic scored in stoppage time to tie the game one last time, it meant

Team Melli was eliminated in heartbreaking fashion.

"When you have 3-3," Rangnick said, "nobody can assume that it was an agreement (to tie) or anything like that."

The first three World Cup matches at Arrowhead Stadium had seen the home of the Kansas City Chiefs flooded in the light blue of Argentina, yellow of Ecuador and high-lighter orange of the Netherlands. But in the city's group finale, the Algerian green and red of the Austrians were complemented by thousands of locals just happy to score a less expensive World Cup ticket.

Many of those locals appeared to be rooting for Algeria, though, which has made its training base in nearby Lawrence, Kansas, and has struck up a unique friendship with the small college town home to the University of Kansas.

Few of those new fans of Les Fennecs probably knew about the "Disgrace of Gijón."

Yet longtime Algeria supporters had been waiting 44 years for some World Cup revenge against Austria. At the 1982 tournament, Austria and West Germany seemingly quit playing after the latter took a 1-0 lead, because that outcome ensured both would advance at the expense of Al-

geria, which protested to FIFA to no avail and was eliminated from the World Cup.

Some were curious whether the expanded 48-team field would result in a "Disgrace of Kansas City," since both teams knew by kickoff that a draw would send them through. Instead, a crowd of 69,045 on Saturday night was treated to a dramatic 90-plus minutes.

Austria struck first when Arnautovic perfectly timed a run between two Algerian defenders, found himself one-on-one with goalkeeper Oussama Benbot, and overcame a stumble to score his record-extending 49th career goal for his nation.

World Cup Fixtures

Brazil vs Japan 20:00

Germany vs Paraguay 23:30

Tuesday

Morocco vs Netherlands

04:00

Argentines sweep Group J

Messi continues historic run as Argentina cruises past Jordan

ARLINGTON, Texas, June 28, (AP): Lionel Messi didn't have much time to try to become the first to score in seven consecutive World Cup games.

Argentina's superstar did it anyway as a second-half substitute.

Messi made it seven straight while extending the all-time men's World Cup scoring record with his 19th goal in Argentina's 3-1 victory over Jordan in a group stage finale.

In his first match since turning 39 three days earlier, Messi scored on a free kick in the 80th minute after being taken down just outside the penalty area. The low kick barely above the grass surface split two Jordan defenders into the left corner of the net.

It was his 72nd career goal on a free kick, including his 12th for Argentina. Messi now has 123 international goals - second all-time to Cristiano Ronaldo's 145 - in 202 appearances.

Messi had been one of only three players to score in six consecutive World Cup games along with France striker Just Fontaine and Brazil great Jairzinho.

"What you're seeing, I'm seeing the same thing," coach Lionel Scaloni said through a translator. "It's a little bit of an uncomfortable situa-



Argentina's Lionel Messi (10) celebrates scoring his side's 3rd goal during the World Cup Group J soccer match between Jordan and Argentina in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas. (AP)

tion every single time people ask because I no longer know what to say."

Messi also scored on a free kick against Nigeria in the 2014 World Cup and is among six players since records are available dating to 1966 who scored two free kick goals in the World Cup. He joined Pelé, Rivelino, Téofilo Cubillas, Bernard Genghini and David Beckham.

"I am very happy for him, for the moment he is having," Giovanni Lo Celso said in translated remarks after becoming the first Argentine other than Messi to score in this tournament, also on a free kick in the 19th minute. "The truth is that seeing him every day excites, excites and infects a lot. So obviously seeing him like that for us is

very important."

Messi didn't start because Argentina had already clinched first place in Group J, and the game was further meaningless because Jordan was already eliminated from the knockout stage.

Nevertheless, the decidedly pro-Argentina crowd of 70,649 at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys was eager to see him.

Fans started chanting Messi's name as soon as the second half started, and cheered loudly when he came off the bench merely to go through warmups.

The roar was louder when he stepped onto the field in the 60th minute, replacing Lautaro Martinez, who scored on a penalty kick in the first half.

For all the accomplishments of the eight-time winner of the Ballon d'Or as the best player in Europe, Messi has never won the golden boot as the top scorer in each World Cup. This is his sixth.

Messi now has six goals in this tournament, two clear of Kylian Mbappé, Vinicius Júnior and Erling Haaland.

Messi had been dealing with a minor hamstring injury with Inter Miami that slowed him in the lead-up to the World Cup.

Eighth African nation to advance

DR Congo makes history with first World Cup knockout berth

ATLANTA, June 28, (AP): For 52 years, DR Congo's standout World Cup memory was a humiliating 9-0 rout at the hands of Yugoslavia in its only other appearance on soccer's biggest stage.

Not anymore. Not after a new generation of players made history by advancing to the knockout stage of the World Cup for the first time and set up a clash with England.

"The weight on our shoulders was hard to bear," said striker Yoane Wissa whose two goals helped DR Congo rally to a 3-1 win against Uzbekistan.

Fiston Mayele was also on target in a dramatic second-half comeback as DR Congo joined Cape Verde as another surprise qualifier for the round of 32.

"We told ourselves we can't give up, we have to get that win because getting a tie would kick us out. So we got that win," Mayele said.

After holding Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal to a surprise 1-1 draw earlier in the tournament, DR Congo topped that with its first win at a World Cup.

Trailing to Eldor Shomurodov's lobbed goal in the 10th minute, Sébastien Desabre's team fought back after the break and equalized in the 68th when Wissa was brought down by Abdukodir Khusanov for a penalty.

Wissa picked himself up and sent Uzbekistan goalkeeper Abduvohid Nematov the wrong way by rolling the ball into the bottom corner to spark a late flurry of goals.

Substitute Mayele fired Congo ahead 10 minutes later when flicking past Nematov at the near post and was mobbed teammates. Congo's substitutes even raced off the bench and across the field to join in the wild celebrations.

And there were even more joyous scenes when Wissa put the result beyond doubt in added time with a curling shot into the bottom corner.

"We're a team that knows how to respond when we concede a goal; we keep fighting with determination," Desabre said.

DR Congo is making a return to the World Cup for the first time since competing as Zaire in 1974 when it lost all three games, including the rout by Yugoslavia.

The draw against Portugal was its first point on this stage and it needed to follow that up with a win to advance as one of the best third-place teams.

"We're going to savor this moment because it's been tough," said Wissa.

"All the guys - the substitutes, those who've worn the jersey before, and those who'll wear it tomorrow - we should be proud. Thank you to all the Congolese people; it's for moments like these that we do what we do. We did it!"

DR Congo became the eighth African nation to advance from the group stage at this tournament.

Uzbekistan's debut at the World Cup ended in three straight defeats.

"I hope this tournament will give us big experience. I hope this experience will give us more motivation for the future," said coach Fabio Cannavaro.



DR Congo's Yoane Wissa (20) celebrates scoring their third goal during the World Cup Group K soccer match between DR Congo and Uzbekistan in Atlanta. (AP)

Vlašić scores winner

Croatia edges Ghana to advance

PHILADELPHIA, June 28, (AP): Luka Modrić lined up for a corner kick intent on trying to float the ball to the top of the 6-yard box. Nikola Vlašić jumped high among the scrum and headed it in for a goal - good enough to advance Croatia in the World Cup and give Modrić a slice of tournament history.

The 40-year-old Modrić became the oldest player in World Cup history with an assist, and Vlašić and Petar Šučić scored to help Croatia earn a spot in the knockout round with a 2-1 win over Ghana 2-1.

"I told him after the game, you play like you're 20 years old," Šučić said. "He was incredible today. He runs a lot. He goes into every duel. He was incredible with the ball. He is our leader; he is our best player and we're so happy he can lead us in this World Cup. He can play until he wants, he's so good."

Ghana had already secured advancement from the group stage for the first time since 2010.

Vlašić headed home Modrić's corner in the 83rd minute to score the winner and put Croatia back in contention after it finished third in 2022. The win means Croatia finished second behind England in Group L, with Ghana third.

"On the goal, I think I needed to do a block," Vlašić said. "But the ball arrived to me so I shot it with my head. It's not like it was some action but thank God the goal went in and we won the game."

Modrić at 40 years, 291 days set the assist record back to records kept since 1966.

Modrić won the Ballon d'Or in 2018, the only time from 2008-21 that Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo didn't win it. He played in his 200th international game in this World Cup and remained the best player for the Vatreni in this tournament.

"Luka was unbelievable today," Vlašić said. "I swear, it seems like he turned time (back) 10 years. Really, one of the best performances I saw him doing in a Croatia shirt."

Šučić scored in the 31st minute for Croatia on an absolute rocket from outside the box for his second career international goal.



Ghana's Gideon Mensah (14) kicks the ball against Croatia's Mario Pasalic (15) during the World Cup Group L soccer match between Croatia and Ghana in Philadelphia. (AP)